

Language learning strategies and English language proficiency: an investigation of Japanese EFL university students

Norman Fewell
Japan

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Abstract

This paper is a study of language learning strategy (LLS) utilization by Japanese college EFL students. A comparison of differences in LLS utilization and English language proficiency levels revealed that the selection of LLS chosen may have been a critical source in determining language learning success or failure.

Introduction

The complexity surrounding individual language learner differences continues to inspire scholarly discussion as to the source and significance attributed to a number of possible influential factors. Initial attempts to categorize characteristics of successful language learners (Rubin 1975; Stern 1975; Naiman et al. 1978) have generated interest to better understand individual differences and the numerous variables that exert influence in language learner outcome. Among a number of widely acknowledged internal and external influential factors in second language acquisition (SLA), many practitioners and scholars have embraced language learning strategies (LLS) as an effective and workable component of the language learning process. The ability to directly manipulate and manage this element for improved language learning efficiency distinguishes it from other uncontrollable variables that impact language learning process. Advocated as an important and teachable component for language learning (Oxford and Nyikos 1989; Chamot 2001), the enormous potential and practicability of LLS have eventually led to a number of language strategy training programs (Nunan 1996; Yang 1996; Cohen 1998; Sengupta 2000; Macaro 2001) encouraging further interest in this area. In addition, suggestions for an increase in learner autonomy have begun to emerge as the direction towards more individualized learning and responsibility is being sought as a viable alternative to total classroom dependency and LLS is seen as a key factor in accomplishing this goal (Wenden 1991; Brown 1994; Oxford 1996; Skehan 1998; Yang 1998).

The randomization of LLS adoption by both successful and unsuccessful learners has provided insight into understanding the influence and enormous potential of this key SLA variable. Similarities in patterns of LLS utilization among high proficiency learners and differences shared by low proficiency learners suggest this variable is a significant determinant of eventual success or failure in language learning. A discussion of relevant LLS research along with an examination of data collected from several sample groups shall be

presented in this paper.

A Developing Interest in LLS

As practitioners noted and scholars documented individual differences and began to discount theories too dependent on generalizations, research began focusing attention on the diversity and distinction of the individual language learner. Studies that once monopolized SLA research with an examination of language and methodology began to shift towards investigating learner characteristics. Once the research of Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) established precedence for focus on good language learner characteristics, a new area of interest in SLA began to emerge. *The Good Language Learner* (Naiman et al. 1978) was soon published afterwards and the concept of investigating individual language learner characteristics would continue to be an integral part of SLA research. Among numerous individual language learner variables that have been studied quite extensively in SLA since the mid-70s, research contributing to an understanding of the impact of LLS has continued to increase in interest because of the success in identifying and linking effective LLS with language proficiency. Although the vast majority of early research has found a positive association between increased LSS utilization and increased second language (L2) proficiency, this equation is not as simple as it may initially seem. Reiss (1983 cited in Kaylani, 1996, 78) found that it was not merely the quantity but the quality of LLS used that was a recognizable element distinguishing successful from less successful learners. Similarly, other studies have suggested that although more successful learners tended to use more strategies, the number of strategies was less important than the relevance of strategy application to a given task (Rubin 1975, 1987; Naiman et al. 1978; Bialystok 1979; Oxford 1990, 1993; Chamot and Küpper 1989).

There are a number of factors that may ultimately influence the choice and degree of LLS utilization, including: cultural background, educational experiences, language learning goals, motivation, attitude, age, and gender variability (Cohen 1998; O'Malley et al. 1985a, 1985b; Oxford 1990; Politzer and McGroarty 1985). Additional factors, such as, stage of learning, task requirement involved, and individual learning styles can also influence selection and frequency of LLS (Oxford 1990; Reid 1987, 1995), not to mention factors relating to personality (Oxford and Cohen 1992) sensory preferences (Oxford et al. 1991; Reid 1987, 1995) and individual language learner beliefs (Horwitz 1987, 1999; Wenden 1987, 1999; Yang 1999). The only consistent factor that can be guaranteed is the fact that the background and experience of each learner is going to be different. In a sense, the criteria for conventional LLS research is based, in part, on the premise of 'all things being equal' to discount other known influential variables to some extent. Further limitations in LLS research may be attributed to the obvious problems encountered in the retrieval of information from external observations, such as, think aloud protocol, interviews, diary entries, questionnaires, or other participant conscious methods; certainly susceptible to falsification. Despite these noted limitations, shared LLS patterns within similar groups of learners have been largely consistent in a variety of studies. This could indicate that language learners were identifying and reporting their use of learning strategies accurately, as numerous researchers have continued to argue in support of self-report techniques in

investigating LLS (Chamot and Küpper 1989; Oxford and Crookall 1989; O'Malley et al. 1985a, 1985b; O'Malley and Chamot 1990). Understanding the functional role of LLS with its enormous potential for improving language learning is crucial for all those involved in language education and the current difficulties mentioned in its investigation should not discourage further research into this area.

Definition and Categorization of Language Learner Strategies

Language learner strategies are the actions learners employ to improve the development of their language learning skills (Oxford 1990). Classification of language learner strategies varies somewhat, depending on the definition of the researcher in question. Since this study has used the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) as an initial measuring instrument of LLS, the classification system advocated by Oxford (1990) was utilized. Oxford developed a system of classification organized around a division of two strategy groups, direct and indirect. Among these, six strategy groups exist in total. Those strategies that directly involve learning the target language (TL) include memory, cognitive, and compensation. Memory strategies concern the storage and retrieval of new language. Cognitive strategies are the mental processes associated with manipulating, transforming, and interacting with the target language (TL). Compensation strategies are utilized by learners to offset inadequate knowledge needed for understanding and production of the TL. The second set of strategies suggested by Oxford (1990) includes indirect strategies or those involving actions or processes which learners regulate, manage, and self-direct in learning. Indirect strategies are those strategies limited to a supportive role without being directly related to the interaction of the language itself. Strategies categorized within this group include metacognitive, affective, and social. Metacognitive strategies are aspects associated with planning, monitoring, and evaluating the TL. Affective strategies refer to strategies that learners employ to control emotions and attitudes about language learning. Finally, social strategies are characterized by facilitating engagement in the TL through interaction with others.

Assessment of LLS Utilization

Interest in LLS has been steadily growing since researchers began discussing and investigating its potential influence in language learning some thirty years ago. Creation of the SILL (Oxford 1990) has since benefited numerous researchers with its attempt to establish some standardization in gathering comparable data. Its popularity has yielded an enormous sum of research to date that has established the importance of LLS. Given the information concerning LLS that has been widely available for some time, the unquestionable importance of it to language learning, and the elapse of time since the conception of LLS research, periodic studies in this area are still needed to assess if the necessary measures are being initiated in language education to encourage learner use and awareness of LLS.

The majority of early LLS research is limited to observations of sample groups of unguided and unknowing language learners randomly adopting LLS by their own initiatives. During this period, researchers were only beginning to investigate LLS and practitioners have not yet integrated this concept into their

classes. As LLS was an unfamiliar concept to most learners, success or failure in a language was dependent, to an extent, on instinct and guesswork by the language learner in the selection of appropriate LLS. Eventually, researchers were able to identify more preferable LLS for learning efficiency. Since this data was initially retrieved from the miscalculations of less successful learners and the lucky guesswork of more successful learners in their unguided selection of LLS, one may assume that this method of inquiry was restricted to an era in history of less complete knowledge and that current circumstances reflect a completely different situation with the widespread availability of information concerning LLS. The current language learning environment with its evolved teaching methodologies and technological innovations is remarkably different from that of earlier observed LLS settings. The additional factor of the inclusion of LLS knowledge, in itself, presents a situation much different from that of earlier observations.

This study shall examine the relation between English proficiency level and the selection of LLS by two groups of learners. In addition, the recently added variable of LLS knowledge availability to language educators will be assessed as to whether students are being taught this important aspect of language learning. It should also be noted that this study has investigated language learners in an EFL environment, an undertaking quite rare in comparison to the abundance of available ESL research on the topic. This study will also offer a perspective uncharacteristic of the typical ESL environment in examining a homogenous sample group that will allow for less variable interference from differing ethnicities, language, and cultural backgrounds. Instead, this sample group will offer more uniformity with a number of shared characteristics, including similarities in educational backgrounds.

In addition, the location of the sample group is of particular importance. In comparison to the Japanese mainland, the language community of Okinawa is unique in many aspects. Remnants of its native languages barely survive in remote isolated areas of the islands with some lexical and phonological characteristics present elsewhere in a local blend with the dominant national language of Japanese. The Okinawan islands of Japan can also be described as a quasi-ESL/EFL language environment with a varying degree of language influence, depending on individual contact with the local English-speaking population. Foreign and second language learning situations are undoubtedly dependent on an individual learner's willingness to interact with the TL speakers, despite the composition of the language community (Cohen 1998), but the availability of this option alone is a distinguishing feature from that of mainland Japan. Diverse language communities exist on the island, with the proportion of English-speakers related to the proximity of the enclosed U.S. military bases. The overall English-speaker population on the islands fluctuates around 6% to 8% of the total island population. Former control of the islands by the United States military for a twenty-seven year period, ending in 1972, has certainly impacted all of the language communities in Okinawa to some extent. Mainland Japan SILL-based research revealing little or no social LLS use by its subjects (Noguchi 1991 cited in Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995, 13), a result of its nearly nonexistent foreign English-speaking population, exemplifies the extreme differences between these two distinct language environments. The abovementioned conditions allow for an interesting perspective in investigating a unique sample of learners.

Method and Sample Group

This study will evaluate a variety of data to determine patterns of LLS use among two groups of learners with the administration of a Japanese translated version of the SILL questionnaire (Oxford 1990), a computerized English proficiency test (Ohyagi and Kiggell 2003), and a brief background questionnaire. In addition, a comparison of LLS use on the basis of English proficiency scores and SILL results between the top 25% and bottom 25% learners was analyzed to establish a clearer distinction in identifying any emerging patterns. Furthermore, a selection of learners scoring at the top 25% and those scoring at the bottom 25% on an English proficiency test from two separate academic disciplines were individually interviewed twice, in-depth. The sample group was composed of first-year Japanese college students enrolled in an English course at a university in Okinawa, Japan. All of the participants completed six years of mandatory English education, as dictated by the national curriculum. The group consisted of 29 English majors (52%) and 27 Business majors (48%). The subjects in this study consisted of 56 participants in total with the proportion of gender at 62% (35) female and 38% (21) male.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

The SILL was developed by Oxford (1990) to assess language learner selection and frequency of LLS and to fulfill a need for a standardized questionnaire that could be used in a variety of second and foreign language learning contexts. The questionnaire consists of a total of 50 items that participants rate on a five-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a number of strategy descriptions. SILL scores averaging 3.5 - 5.0 are designated as high; 2.5 - 3.4 are considered medium strategy utilization; and scores ranging from 1.0 - 2.4 are often labeled as low strategy use (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995). A total of six sections, each measuring a specific type of LLS, correspond to the six strategy types as designated by Oxford's LLS categorization:

Section A: Memory (Remembering Effectively)

Section B: Cognitive (Using Mental Processes)

Section C: Compensation (Compensating for Missing Knowledge)

Section D: Metacognitive (Organizing and Evaluating)

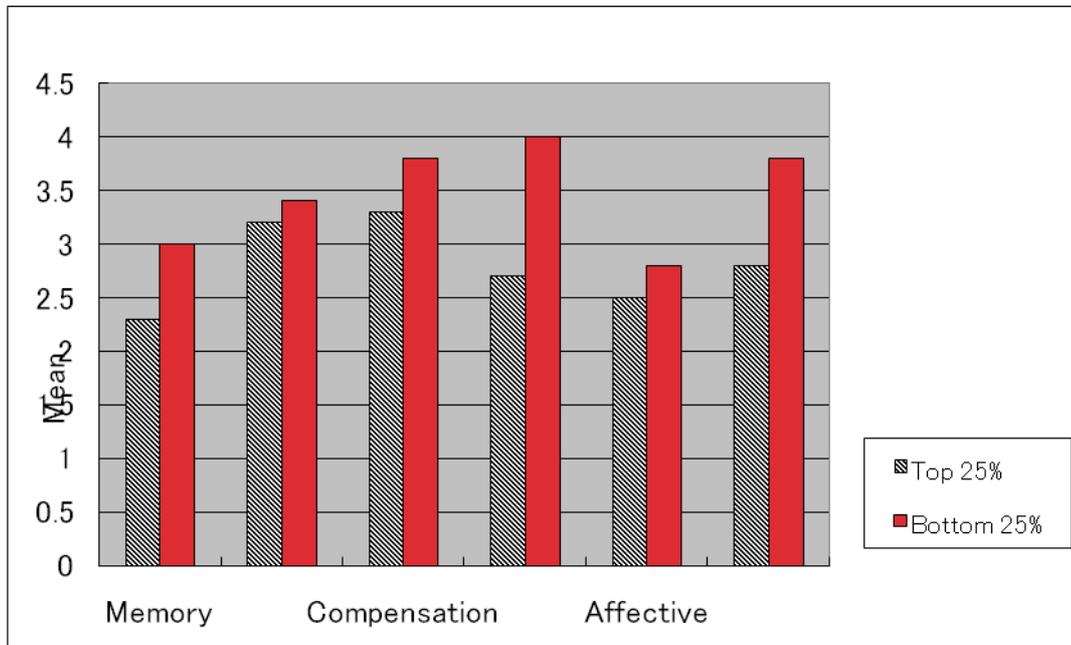
Section E: Affective (Managing Emotions)

Section F: Social (Learning with Others)

The results of the SILL questionnaire were compared between two academic groups, English and Business majors, and subsets of learners within each of these groups were further sorted according to scores on an English proficiency test. In most studies comparing English proficiency and the SILL, a correlation has been found between increased English proficiency and increased LLS utilization. In this study, the English major group indicated just the opposite. As English proficiency level increased, LLS utilization decreased. The SILL results of the top 25% of English proficient learners had an average

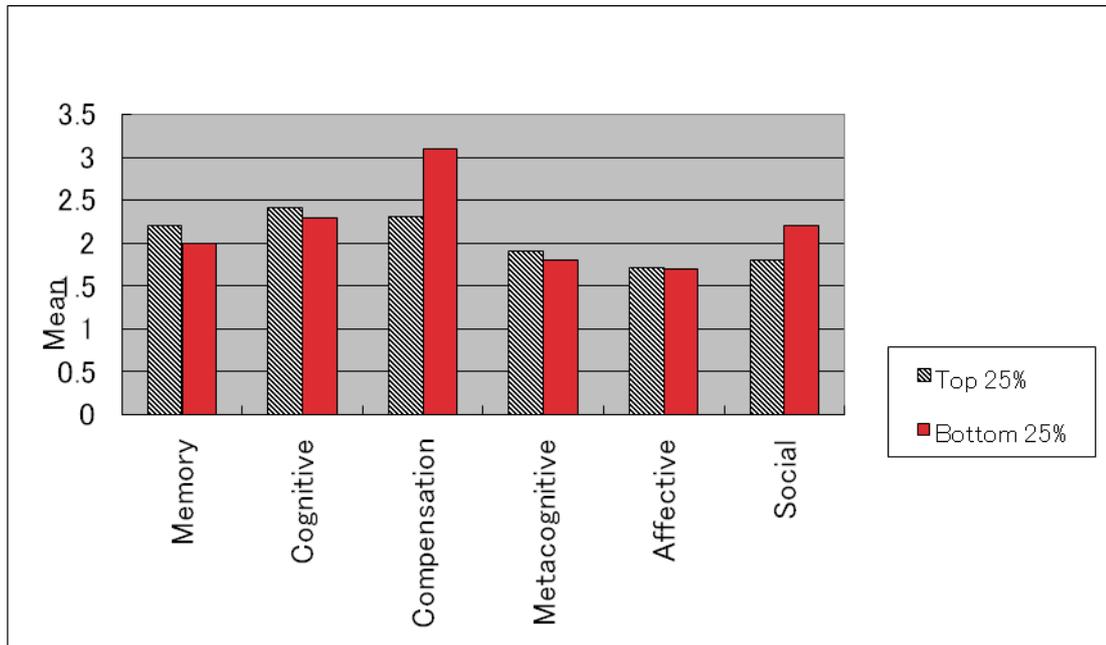
score of 2.9 while the bottom 25% had an average score of 3.5. In each separate category, the SILL score of the bottom group was higher than the top group (see figure 1).

Figure 1
English Major SILL Scores



A comparison of SILL results of Business majors in the top and bottom 25%, as sorted according to an English proficiency test, indicated nearly identical results on the SILL. The top group had an average score of 2.1 while the bottom group had an average score of 2.0. Although the overall average of the SILL scores were nearly even, an examination of individual categories revealed that compensational and social LLS were utilized at a higher degree by learners in the bottom proficiency group (see figure 2).

Figure 2
Business Major SILL Scores



Interviews

Interviews of a selected group of participants consisting of the top and bottom 25% proficient language learners from two academic disciplines, English and Business, were initially intended to inquire on language learning beliefs and other possible sources of influence for LLS preferences. As the questionnaire results alone remained puzzling with no explanation, these interviews soon took on an added critical role of extracting further information from the participants to assist in determining the rationale for the selection of items on the SILL and to verify and retest the credibility of the questionnaire results.

Interviews were conducted in either Japanese or English, an option dictated by the interviewee. Each participant was interviewed twice for approximately 20 minutes or more, depending on the course of conversation. The initial interview was based primarily on an open-ended format to allow the interviewee leeway in controlling the direction and the amount of content in response to questioning. Once the results were examined, and participants were given time to reflect on the topic, follow-up interviews were conducted one week later to allow opportunities for additional information recall and clarification of data.

The follow-up interviews were conducted primarily with the use of open-ended questioning, although specific inquiries into several key issues were undertaken. The first of these factors being investigated was the reasons or possible sources that may have influenced LLS selection. General questioning concerning motivation and attitude towards learning English was also undertaken. In addition, inquiries were made into individual language learning routines, beliefs, and advice one could offer to others studying English. Finally, areas concerning the source and beginning of interest in English, the amount of English exposure, and expectations concerning individual need of English in the future were investigated.

Sources of Rote Learning Dependency

All of the participants in the study, despite group categorization, received their initial exposure to LLS training, and in many cases their only exposure, in the form of rote learning vocabulary items. The interviews were able to reveal that each of these students were separately introduced to LLS by different junior high school (JHS) teachers and they were encouraged to utilize rote learning by repetitively writing vocabulary until memorized. The reasoning for its widespread application is unknown. Speculation can certainly point towards dependence on the use of standardized testing and entrance examinations and the resultant pressures for teachers to have their students succeed with high scores. Reliance on standardized testing tools to measure success or failure within the educational system has been a source of scrutiny for numerous years for a variety of reasons and the possibility of it exerting indirect influence on LLS could certainly be another of its undesirable side effects.

Another possible cause for the unusual amount of emphasis and dependence on rote learning may also be a direct result of learning strategy transfer from one academic discipline to another. The Japanese writing system, a mixture of four separate orthographical forms, *hiragana*, *katakana*, *romaji*, and most importantly *kanji* (Chinese characters), may offer a suitable explanation for the over-reliance on rote learning. In addition to the complexities involved among a number of possible phonological variations and interpretive meanings that may exist with each *kanji* character, the learner must memorize the correct method of direction in writing each line, or more commonly referred to as stroke order. As many of the *kanji* require at least a dozen or more strokes to complete each character, one can understand that to obtain efficiency in memorizing writing patterns within this complex orthographical system, utilization of rote learning is crucial. Throughout the duration of education, a high school graduate in Japan would have studied nearly two thousand basic *kanji* (Habein and Mathias 2000). Further education and specialization could easily double that number. Considerably more characters are used in the Chinese language on a daily basis, approximately ten to twelve thousand (Campbell 1991). Researchers have noted similarities in Asian learners adopting rote learning as a primary LLS (Politzer 1983; Politzer and McGroarty 1985; O'Malley 1987; O'Malley and Chamot 1990). Many studies (Cortazzi and Jin 1996; Huang and van Naerssen 1987; Oxford and Ehrman 1995; Song 1995) have accredited Confucius values as a source of influence in determining Asian learning behavior. Instead, learning strategy transfer from another academic discipline, orthographical mastery of *kanji*, may offer a more suitable explanation for rote learning tendencies in language study among Asian learners.

Learning strategy transfer across academic disciplines and institutional emphasis on test preparation are possible sources of influence for rote learning dependency, but teacher unawareness of LLS may also be a decisive factor for the continued promotion for this specific LLS. It is puzzling that most of the participants have indicated being taught only one LLS, repetitive writing of vocabulary. Any educator would certainly not purposefully ignore the advantages of informing their students of the numerous beneficial LLS. Further inquiry into this problem was conducted with an up-to-date source, recent graduates of a four-year university English teacher certification program.

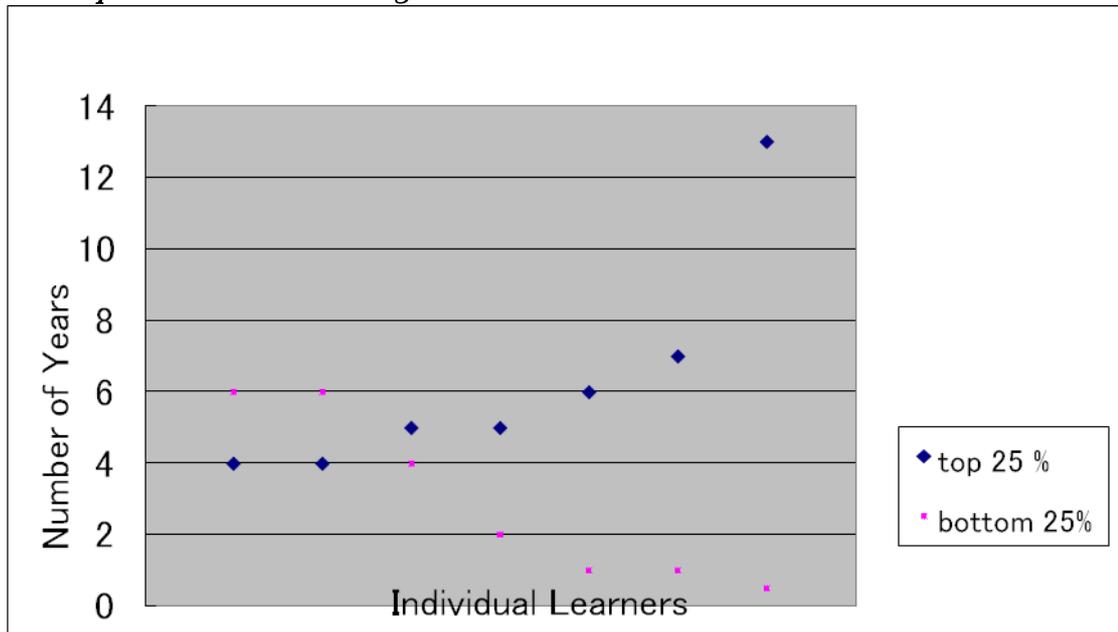
Offering advantages of insight into current teaching methodology and eliminating difficulties of recollection, three graduates were interviewed and specific inquiries were made concerning their awareness and understanding of LLS. Two of the interviewees indicated that they were not aware of its meaning while the third interviewee only recalled studying the technique of shadowing, quietly mimicking ongoing speech. She was unable to recall any other instruction of LLS throughout her teacher education program. Although this was a simple and brief inquiry with only a few participants, it is still surprising, nonetheless, that these recent graduates seemed oblivious to the concept of LLS.

Acceptance and Rejection of Rote Learning

As mentioned earlier, an analysis of English major SILL scores between the top 25% group (2.9) and the bottom 25% group (3.5) revealed somewhat less utilization of LLS with the more proficient learners. As a result, a compelling need for inquiry took precedence. The interviews revealed that although all of the participants were introduced to rote learning, the key difference that distinguishes the top group from all others in the study is the fact that all of these learners, with the exception of two, rejected the rote learning method advocated by their JHS teachers and began to search for alternative LLS on their own initiative. The reason for rejection of rote learning LLS by the participants was simple and direct, it was described as boring. Those few students, who took the initiative and disregarded their teacher's advice at an early stage of learning, eventually became highly successful learners.

There was a noticeable increase in the use of rote learning with the bottom 25% English major group, as 4 of 7 participants indicated a continued reliance on this particular LLS. Although indicating dependency on rote learning to some degree, it was only one of many LLS utilized by each of these participants. Another distinguishing feature between the top and bottom proficiency group was the fact that the top group of learners indicated a strong interest in English at an earlier stage of learning and, as a result, these learners began to seek out and adopt different LLS. The learners in the bottom group became interested in English at a later stage of learning, overall. While 5 of the 7 learners in the bottom group indicated being interested in English less than 4 years ago, all of the learners in the top group indicated being interested in English for a period exceeding 4 years or more (see figure 3).

Figure 3
Development of Interest in English



The advantages of additional time, allowing a longer period of refinement of LLS skills, may offer a feasible explanation as to the observed differences in LLS utilization and English proficiency levels between the top and bottom groups. As many of the top proficient English learners have dismissed rote learning as an ineffective LLS, and began searching for other more productive LLS at an earlier stage of language learning, in time these learners were more likely to find, adopt, and refine suitable LLS alternatives. As many of the less proficient learners have indicated a more recent interest in English, a possible explanation for their high LLS utilization levels, as measured by the SILL, may simply be the result of entry into the initial stages of adopting and developing a LLS approach. These learners are just beginning to take the initiative to seek out other LLS in a process involving trial and error. The later stages of refinement may not have been reached, and therefore a higher frequency and utilization of LLS, as indicated on the SILL, could be the result, thereby offering a possible explanation for the unconventional SILL scores by the lower proficiency group.

In contrast to the noted differences of English major learners, the overwhelming majority of Business majors in both high and low proficiency groups revealed not only a commonality of continued rote learning utilization but also a pattern of primary dependency on this one LLS. The similarity of responses led to an inquiry on frequency of its utilization and a majority of these respondents indicated only studying shortly before language tests. Certainly, some of the respondents did indicate using other LLS, such as viewing or listening to English multimedia outlets, emailing English native-speaker friends, etc., but the frequency of these LLS were inconsistent and unusually rare. Since both top and bottom proficiency learners within the Business major group indicated similar LLS utilization and frequency, an inquiry was made into other possible distinguishing factors contributing to English proficiency differences. The interviews were able to reveal one similarity among the majority of the top

proficiency learners, additional education. Nearly, all of the learners in the top proficiency group, 5 of 7, attended a specialized intensive test-taking preparatory school for an extended period of time, ranging from 1 to 2 ½ years. These schools prepare high school graduates for specific college entrance exams, often competitive and requiring exceptionally high scores acceptance. In contrast, none of the learners in the bottom group attended test-taking preparatory schooling. Differences in English proficiency test scores between these two groups seem to be based, to a substantial degree, on this single factor.

Instrumental and Integrative Orientation

Instrumental orientation is a concept initially defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972) to describe learners with purely goal driven reasons to pursue L2 study, such as, enhancing career advancement, fulfilling an educational requirement, or simply increasing one's prestige in the community. Another descriptive concept created by Gardner and Lambert, *integrative orientation*, refers to learners who are motivated to study a language with the purpose of meeting and communicating with members of the TL community. As motivation and attitude are certainly underlying variables relevant to language learning in general, its applicability in influencing LLS tendencies is an important element to consider as it directly affects the degree of effort a language learner undertakes in pursuing the TL. Research investigating the impact of language learning motivation towards LLS use has found it to be one of the most significant influential factors (Oxford and Nyikos 1989; Oxford et al. 1993). Although this study did not specifically engage in investigating motivation and attitudes, the interviews revealed some distinguishing patterns between the different groups of learners in both instrumental and integrative inclinations that need further clarification. Classification of learner motivation as strictly instrumental or integrative was not clear in some cases, as these learners indicated attributes of both categories. Clement and Kruidenier (1983) described the definition of instrumental and integrative orientation as being too vague and therefore a source of problems encountered in discrepancies in a number of research results.

Nearly all participants in the study indicated some degree of instrumental orientation. A clear distinction existed between English and Business majors in this regard as to the type of instrumental orientation specified. The majority of English majors, 13 of 14, indicated a specific need for language study to fulfill English-related career goals. In contrast, participants in the Business major group, 13 of 14, were mainly interested in only successfully completing the course to fulfill academic requirements for graduation. Reflective of frequency of LLS utilization by the majority of Business majors, this type of instrumental orientation was parallel in form, in many respects, to these learners indicating utilizing LLS solely for test preparation.

Although the majority of learners in both groups of English and Business majors are technically classified in the same category of instrumental orientation, variability between these two forms of instrumental orientation can best be described as differences between short-term and long-term goals. The objective of successfully completing a four-month semester course is certainly different from that of entering a lifelong English related career. These differences have influenced, to some degree, LLS utilization and frequency, as

seen from distinctive patterns emerging in the two groups of English and Business majors. The short-term frequency and confinement to rote learning by the majority of Business majors seems to exemplify this fact.

A comparison of integrative orientation differences between the two groups was less difficult to assess because of its total absence from the Business major group. None of the Business majors have any current contact with native-speaker communities or native-speakers, outside of class. In sum, only 3 participants from a total of 14 have had any contact with native-speakers whatsoever. Two students attended an English language conversation school, one participant did so for a two-year period during JHS and another student attended a three-month session during elementary school. The third student was the only one in the Business major group to visit an English speaking country, a one-week trip to Australia. In contrast, the English major group indicated substantially more native-speaker and community contact with 6 of 14 participants indicating friendship with English native-speakers, 4 of 14 attending an English conversation school, and 9 of 14 residing in an English speaking country at some point of their life. Although, the degree of integrative orientation was not measured in detail, simply establishing the fact that increased outlets of native-speaker contact were available for a number of participants in the English major group suggests the likelihood that integrative influence has played some role in language learner motivation and subsequently LLS utilization.

Language Learner Beliefs

A brief inquiry was made into the influence and importance of individual beliefs in language learning. Although this study did not specifically attempt to measure this variable, its importance was too common to ignore. These learners have adopted their own set of beliefs and it is noticeable in the LLS they have chosen to utilize. Several of the students in the English major group believe it is best to practice English in as many ways as possible and, as a result, these learners utilize multimedia outlets and various opportunities to produce the language. One student, in particular, embraced very helpful advice from a former High School teacher who told her, 'teaching is learning' and following this advice she began working in a preparatory school tutoring children. Another student believes that learners should read a lot and look up the meaning of unknown words and similarly she utilizes a lexically based approach to learning. Finally, one learner described repetitive writing of vocabulary as an effective and enjoyable way of learning. Language learner's beliefs certainly have implications towards the selection of LLS (Horwitz 1987, 1999; Wenden 1987, 1999; Yang 1999), as demonstrated above, but other variables may interfere with this simple equation. For instance, one student stated that she believes talking to native-English speakers was one of the best means to improve language skills. Instead of following her belief, she did not utilize any social LLS and instead, depended on rote learning of vocabulary as her primary means of study. The variables that have prevented utilization of social LLS could involve any number of factors including the native-speaker composition of her local language community, or possible anxiety in speaking to TL speakers.

Additional variables to consider when examining language learner

beliefs should also include those of attitude and motivation. Although a clear correlation was seen with the sample of English majors in describing language learning beliefs and LLS utilization, these learners are atypical in the sense that attitudes and motivation are generally positive towards the TL for those majoring in English. In contrast, the Business majors are not highly motivated and some have even displayed a negative attitude towards English. The strength of these variables is seen in the dissimilarities in the Business majors stated beliefs and LLS utilization. Although these learners described beliefs for other LLS as being more beneficial for language learning, they were not motivated enough to take on the responsibility and effort needed for these additional tasks. It seems that minimal effort and familiarity with a workable LLS were all that these learners would exert to acquire short-term instrumental goals.

The differences between the Business and English major groups in motivation, attitude, and subsequently effort to utilize additional LLS can further be demonstrated in examining individual use of multimedia outlets. Although multimedia outlets are readily available for all learners, substantial differences were evident between the two groups. These outlets were utilized by only 3 of 14 learners in the Business major group while an overwhelming majority of participants in the English major group, 12 of 14, utilized these outlets for language learning. Although language learner beliefs may exert influence in dictating LLS selection and frequency within certain conditions, this variable has a secondary role of dependency to that of attitudes and motivation in many situations. As demonstrated with the widely available multimedia outlets and its benefits accorded by language learner beliefs, the discrepancies between beliefs and willingness to initiate action exemplifies the importance of attitude and motivation overall.

Conclusion

Noticeable similarities of patterns in the utilization of language learner strategies shared by high proficiency learners and the noted distinctions shared by low proficiency learners demonstrate the importance of LLS as an influential variable related in some degree to eventual success or failure in language learning. Guesswork and randomization of adopting suitable LLS should not continue to be a decisive factor in ultimately determining success or failure of the language learner. As numerous researchers focus their attention to language learner tendencies in adopting LLS, and continue to examine and debate the extent of influence from a number of internal and external variables, a direct and crucial factor may continue to be overlooked, the responsibility of those in providing the language learner with the knowledge to make informed choices. Despite the widespread availability of LLS literature and over a quarter century of research devoted to its understanding, deficiencies still remain in some EFL environments due to the lack of information made available to the language learner. The urgency of raising awareness of LLS for both learners and educators should be recognized. Dependency on rote learning may continue to persist due to institutional constraints in emphasizing standardized testing. Educators should avoid encouraging dependency on rote learning for its short-term effectiveness in test preparation. Instead, consideration for long-term goals of the language learner should be the primary objective and providing language learners with the information about the variety of helpful LLS is vital for fulfilling the ultimate

objective of improved TL proficiency.

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