

RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AND LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF CHINESE AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA

Leong Chew Moi^{1,*}, Chew Fong Peng², Umi Kalsum Binti Mohd Salleh³

¹ Faculty of Communication and Creative Industries, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Jalan Genting Kelang, 53300 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

^{2,3} Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author. Email: cmleong@tarc.edu.my

ABSTRACT: *Teaching Chinese as Foreign Language in Malaysia began in 1963 and became increasingly popular in Malaysia. Language Learning Strategies, the steps students take to improve their learning, are essential to ultimate Chinese as Foreign Language's achievement. The use of Language Learning Strategies determines student achievement. This study will examine the relationship between Language Learning Strategies and learners' achievement in Chinese as foreign language learning in Malaysia. This research uses quantitative research, a correlational study that applies the theory of Language Learning Strategies. The study sample involved 379 undergraduate students of the University in Selangor. The results showed that the Language Learning Strategies is correlated with student achievement.*

Keywords: Chinese as Foreign Language Language Learning Strategies Language Learning Achievement

1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a country with a multilingual learning environment. Malaysians include Malays, also known as Bumiputeras (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indians (7.3%) and others (0.7%). Malays make up the majority of the population of 28.3 million [1]. The Malay Language is defined as the official language of the country.

Mandarin refers to the Chinese standard or Mandarin standard based on the specific dialect used in Beijing. It is the most commonly used

Chinese in the world. Many synonyms are used in Mandarin in different countries/regions. It is called "Mandarin" and "Chinese" in China, "Guoyu" in Taiwan, and "Chinese" in Southeast Asian countries (such as Malaysia and Singapore). Mandarin is the People's Republic of China's official language, the Republic of China (Taiwan), and Singapore's national language. Mandarin is also the common language among Malaysian Chinese, who speak multiple dialects [2].

In Malaysia, the official language is Malay. In addition to Malay, other languages studied and used are also regarded as foreign languages. Foreign languages such as English are also considered the second language in Malaysia. Foreign languages other than Malay and English are usually called third languages. Some foreign languages are generally introduced and offered as a compulsory elective or free elective foreign language course in Malaysia's public higher education institutions, including English, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, German, Spanish and Thai. In fact, as part of the 1996 Education Act, foreign languages such as Arabic, Japanese, French, and German were introduced in national high schools; this proves the government's efforts to teach foreign languages because they have advantages in economics, politics, and social culture [3].

Due to its economic prosperity, China has become one of the largest economies in the world. To do business or provide services in China, foreigners must learn Chinese. Therefore, Chinese learning has become very popular nowadays. In Malaysia, the number of students studying Chinese in institution higher learning in Malaysia is also increasing year by year; this resulted in institution higher education in Malaysia teaching Chinese as Foreign Language (CFL) began in 1963. In addition, the Department of Chinese Studies at the

University of Malaya offers Chinese courses for non-Chinese students. Therefore, leading CFL has existed in Malaysia for nearly half a century. As of September 2011, all 20 public universities in Malaysia have opened their own Mandarin courses. However, Malaysian universities have failed to develop a standardized system acceptable to everyone [2]

Language learning strategies (LSS) are "behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable [3]. He believes that language learning strategies are essential for many reasons. First, appropriate LSS are highly correlated with successful language achievement. If learners know how to use LSS appropriately, they will benefit greatly. Secondly, learners who use appropriate LSS take their learning responsibilities by "enhancing learners' autonomy, independence and self-direction". Third, unlike most other learning characteristics (ability, attitude, and personality), LSS can be taught [4].

Although there is a consensus on the importance of LSS, there is no consensus on the classification of LSS. Oxford established the most famous type of language, LSS, which is "the most comprehensive classification of LSS to date [5]. LSS are divided into two categories: direct strategies, directly related to the target language; indirect strategy, "not directly related to the subject itself, but are essential for language learning [6]. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, and indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategy.

This research will be focus on relationship between LSS and language learning achievement (LLA) among students of Chinese as foreign language in Malaysia.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There was a significant level on LSS and LLA; most studies pointed out that using more LSS will impact the achievement [7]. The results reveal a positive relationship between the widespread use of LLS and LLA at the $p < .05$ level [8]. The study's findings are similar to Cohen and Macaro who found a positive relationship between LLS and LLA [11]. On the contrary, Abu Shmais found no relationship between LLS and LLA among EFL Palestinian learners [12]. Is there any significant relationship between LLS and LLA in CFL studies? Most of the studies research the status of LLS and LLA; however, it lacks studies focusing on CFL; therefore,

this research intends to investigate the level of LLA and LLS among CFL students.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What are the Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement level among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

RQ2: What is the relationship between Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

4. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is non-experimental designs; this design does not involve manipulating a situation, circumstances, or experience. The researcher collects data without making any changes or introducing any treatment. Therefore, there is no comparison between control and treatment groups. Non-experimental design selects a sample from the population, conducts the study on the sample, and finally generalizes the research findings to its population, such as survey research [9]. This research was conducted as survey research, a questionnaire distributed to the respondents.

This research focuses on one of the largest government universities in Malaysia, with approximately 9000 students enrolled in CFL's class. This research focuses on this university in Selangor, a leading centre, and accumulated the most significant CFL learners in Malaysia. Krejcie and Morgan have developed a table that helps the researcher determine (with 95 per cent certainty) the sample size [10]; a sample size of 368 is sufficient for a population size of 9000. Therefore, the study sample involves 379 undergraduate students in Selangor. This research will focus on students who completed level 3 Mandarin as they are the groups who completed the circle of Mandarin in university.

This study adopted the SILL questionnaire, version 5.1, developed by Oxford with the 5 point likert-scale instrument (1: Never or almost never true of me; 2: Generally not true of me; 3: Somewhat true of me; 4: Generally true of me; 5: Always or almost always true of me) which consisted

memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies [6].

SILL is highlighted here because it is the most widely used language learning strategy evaluation tool globally. However, many other strategy evaluation tools can also be used for multiple purposes. SILL also has fully documented reliability and validity. When managed in English (80 SILL) in many reliability studies, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency index is 0.94-0.98. When English-speaking non-native English speakers (including many different native languages) are grouped and managed, the Alpha value of 50 items is .89-.90. This research uses the final exam grade as the dependent variable for language learning achievement.

Table 1: Items of SILL

Part	Strategies	No. items
A	Memory	14
B	Cognitive	19
C	Compensation	8
D	Metacognitive	16
E	Affective	7
F	Social	9

Table 1 show the total items of questionnaire SILL; it has six strategies with included memory strategy (14 items), cognitive strategy (19 items), compensation strategy (8 items), metacognitive strategies (8 items), affective strategy (16 things) and social strategy (9 items).

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

RQ1: What are the Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement level among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

	ACH	MEM	COG	COM	MET	AFF	SOC
N Valid	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
Mean	3.60	3.61	3.53	3.61	3.68	3.51	3.69
Std. Deviation	.627	.615	.617	.654	.651	.736	.666
Skewness	.548	.171	.171	.059	.172	.126	.298
Std. Error of Skewness	.125	.125	.125	.125	.125	.125	.125
Kurtosis	-.618	-.142	.332	.317	-.347	-.203	-.627
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.250	.250	.250	.250	.250	.250	.250

Table 2 showed the mean score of Memory Strategy (3.61, SD.615), Cognitive Strategy(3.53, SD..617), Compensation Strategy (3.61, SD.654), Metacognitive Strategy (3.68, SD.651), Affective Strategy (3.51, SD.736), Social Strategy

(3.69, SD.666) and CFL achievement (3.6, SD.627). In addition, the data is normal distribution, skewness within -2 to 2 and Kurtosis within -7 to 7.

RQ2: What is the relationship between Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

Table 3: Correlations

	ACH	MEM	COG	COM	MET	AFF	SOC
ACH P	1	.720**	.751**	.696**	.768**	.676**	.691**

	Sig		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
MEM	P	.720**	1	.780**	.648**	.720**	.682**	.630**
	Sig	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
COG	P	.751**	.780**	1	.706**	.800**	.683**	.664**
	Sig	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
COM	P	.696**	.648**	.706**	1	.709**	.590**	.642**
	Sig	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
MET	P	.768**	.720**	.800**	.709**	1	.700**	.734**
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
AFF	P	.676**	.682**	.683**	.590**	.700**	1	.684**
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
SOC	P	.691**	.630**	.664**	.642**	.734**	.684**	1
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 showed the inter-correlation analysis results show a strong correlation between LLA and Memory Strategy ($r=.72$), Cognitive Strategy ($r=.751$) and Metacognitive Strategy ($r=.768$). However, the results show a moderate correlation between LLA and Compensation Strategy ($r=.696$), Affective Strategy ($r=.676$) and Social Strategy ($r=.691$). All the correlations are significant at $p<.0$. The test results show that LLA is significant to LLA in CFL learning; it also correlates between LLS and LLA.

DISCUSSION

LLS are steps taken by students to enhance their learning. Strategies are essential for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, vital in developing communicative competence. She proposed a more specific definition of LLS, That is, "the specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more interesting, more self-directed, more effective, and more adaptable to new situations." (Oxford, 1990, p.291)[13].

According to Oxford (1990) [13], appropriate LSS are highly correlated with successful language achievement. Based on the results, Memory Strategy ($r=.72$), Cognitive Strategy ($r=.751$) and Metacognitive Strategy ($r=.768$). However, the results show a moderate correlation between LLA and Compensation Strategy ($r=.696$), Affective Strategy ($r=.676$) and Social Strategy ($r=.691$), it is shown that it has a correction between LLS and LLA and $p<.05$ shows that it has a significant relationship between LLS and LLA.

CONCLUSION

The increasing interest in Chinese and the increase in international students learning Chinese have called for more Chinese teachers to respond to this demand. With the significant relationship of the LLS and LLA, it can be contributed to the Mandarin language teacher to identify the LLS of students in their teaching.

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