



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

T YOGESWARY A/P THIRUNELAKANDAR



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

**THIS PROJECT PAPER IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE
MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION**

**LANGUAGE FACULTY
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS**

2010



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

Date 14.10.2010

T. Yogeswary a/p Thirunelakandar

M20061000113





05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi ⁱⁱⁱ

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my

beloved mother, father, sister and husband.



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project paper would certainly be incomplete without the acknowledgement of the valuable assistance which I had received from various sources. Here, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the following people.

A very special “thank you” to my supervisor, Cik Hajah Mariyatunnitha Bt. Shari for her patience, advice, assistance, encouragement and guidance throughout this project paper.

This research would not be completed without the permission of the Principal, Senior Assistants, teachers and the students of the school in which the research was undertaken. I would like to thank all of them for their permission, encouragement and support to carry out this research. A special “thank you” to all the five participants of the study who were the Form Two students of the school where the research was undertaken and also for their cooperation during the study and to all my helpful friends.

And a very special “thank you” to my family especially to my mother, father, sister and husband for their special care and support throughout my study.





ABSTRAK

Strategi pembelajaran bahasa pada masa kini telah menjadi tumpuan beberapa kajian dalam bahasa kedua. Secara umumnya, pelajar-pelajar bahasa kedua yang berjaya telah menggunakan pelbagai jenis strategi pembelajaran bahasa untuk belajar menguasai bahasa kedua. Kajian ini direka untuk mengenalpasti 1) pelbagai jenis strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang digunakan oleh pelajar-pelajar yang berjaya di sebuah sekolah bandar, 2) bagaimana strategi pembelajaran bahasa ini membantu pelajar-pelajar menguasai sesuatu bahasa kedua dan 3) apakah faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa di kalangan subjek kajian. Data kualitatif ke atas penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa daripada lima pelajar ESL (Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua) yang cemerlang dari sebuah sekolah bandar telah dikumpul.

Instumen yang telah digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah wawancara dan kumpulan berfokus. Dapatan daripada kajian ke atas subjek kajian telah menunjukkan penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang agak meluas antaranya metakognitif, kognitif dan afektif. Strategi pembelajaran bahasa kognitif dan afektif menjadi pilihan subjek kajian ini. Subjek kajian juga bersetuju bahawa strategi pembelajaran bahasa ini telah membantu mereka menguasai bahasa kedua. Dapatan daripada kajian juga menunjukkan subjek kajian memberi beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang membolehkan mereka berjaya menguasai bahasa kedua. Dapatan daripada kajian ini juga boleh membantu guru-guru mengenalpasti strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang sesuai untuk membantu pembelajaran bahasa di kalangan pelajar yang kurang cemerlang.





ABSTRACT

Language learning strategies (LLSs) seem to be the attention of quite a number of second language or foreign language studies. Generally, successful language learners use various language learning strategies to learn a second language. This study was designed to identify 1) the various types of language learning strategies used or employed by successful students in an urban school. 2) how these language learning strategies help learners to master a second language and 3) what are the factors that influence the use of language learning strategies among the participants. Qualitative data on the use of language learning strategies from five successful ESL learners studying at an urban school were gathered. The instruments used in this study consist of interview and focus group. Results revealed that these research participants used a wide variety of meta-cognitive, cognitive and social/affective LLSs. The results also showed that cognitive and social/affective LLSs were the most used strategies among the participants. The participants also agree that these strategies have helped them in learning a second language. Finally, these participants stated that there were several factors that influenced the use of LLSs in order to master a second language. Findings from this study could help teachers identify appropriate strategies to facilitate the learning of a second language for less successful learners.





LIST OF TABLES

TABLES	PAGES
1. TABLE 2.1 Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Strategies Taxonomy compared to O'Malley et al., (1985) and Stern's (1992)	28
2. TABLE 2.2 What are LLSs for by Gu (2005)	32
3. TABLE 4.1 Meta-cognitive LLSs used by participants	58
4. TABLE 4.2 Cognitive LLSs used by participants	62
5. TABLE 4.3 Social/affective LLSs used by participants	67
6. TABLE 4.4 How the use of language learning strategies help to master a second language as reported by participants	71
7. TABLE 4.5 Factors influencing the use of language learning strategies among participants	76
8. TABLE 5.1 Suggested Frameworks for Teaching L2/FL Learning Strategies	98





LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. L2 - Second Language
2. F2 - Foreign Language
3. LLSs - Language Learning Strategies
4. GLLs - Good Language Learners
5. EFL - English as a Foreign Language
6. ESL - English as a Second Language
7. UPSR - Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah
8. PMR - Penilaian Menengah Rendah



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	PAGE
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRAK	v
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Significance of the Study	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem	4
1.4 Purpose of the Study	8
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Definition of Key Concepts	9
1.7 Summary	11
CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Definitions of a Language Learning Strategy	13
2.3 Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies	15
2.3.1 Rubin's (1987) Classification of LLSs	16
2.3.1.1 Learning Strategies	16





2.3.1.2	Communication Strategies	17
2.3.1.3	Social Strategies	17
2.3.2	O'Malley's (1985) Classification of LLSs	17
2.3.2.1	Meta-cognitive Strategies	18
2.3.2.2	Cognitive Strategies	18
2.3.2.3	Socio-affective Strategies	19
2.3.3	Stern's (1992) Classification of LLSs	19
2.3.3.1	Management and Planning Strategies	19
2.3.3.2	Cognitive Strategies	20
2.3.3.3	Communicative and Experiential Strategies	20
2.3.3.4	Interpersonal Strategies	20
2.3.3.5	Affective Strategies	21
2.3.4	Cohen's (1998) Classification of LLSs	21
2.3.4.1	Retrieval Strategies	22
2.3.4.2	Rehearsal Strategies	22
2.3.4.3	Cover Strategies	22
2.3.4.4	Communication Strategies	23
2.3.5	Oxford's (1990) Classification of LLSs	23
2.3.5.1	Memory Strategies	23
2.3.5.2	Cognitive Strategies	24
2.3.5.3	Compensation Strategies	25
2.3.5.4	Meta-cognitive Strategies	25
2.3.5.5	Affective Strategies	26



2.3.5.6 Social Strategies	27
2.4 Types of LLSs Employed by Successful Students	28
2.4.1 Meta-cognitive Strategies	29
2.4.2 Cognitive Strategies	30
2.4.3 Social Mediation Strategies	31
2.5 How LLSs Help Learners Master L2	31
2.5.1 Enhancing Learning	33
2.5.2 Performing Specified Tasks	33
2.5.3 Solving Specific Problems	34
2.5.4 Compensating for a Deficit Learning	34
2.5.5 Making Learning Easier, Faster and Enjoyable	35
2.6 Factors that Influence the Use of LLSs	35
2.6.1 Motivation	36
2.6.2 Gender	36
2.6.3 Cultural Background	37
2.6.4 Attitudes and Beliefs	38
2.6.5 Type of Task	39
2.6.6 Age and L2 Stage	39
2.6.7 Learning Style	40
2.6.8 Tolerance of Ambiguity	41
2.7 Summary	41



CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.1	Design	43
3.2	Site	44
3.3	Samples and Sampling Procedures	44
3.4	Instrumentation	46
3.5	Role of the Researcher	46
3.6	Data Collection Procedures	47
3.7	Data Analysis Procedures	48
3.8	Strategies for Validity and Reliability Checks	50
3.9	Pilot Study	51
3.10	Summary	51

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS OF THE DATA



4.1	Introduction	53
4.2	Profiles of Key Informants	54
4.2.1	Participant 1	54
4.2.2	Participant 2	55
4.2.3	Participant 3	55
4.2.4	Participant 4	56
4.2.5	Participant 5	56
4.3	Results	56
4.3.1	Types of LLSs Used by Successful Urban Students	57
4.3.1.1	Meta –cognitive LLS	58
4.3.1.2	Cognitive LLS	62



4.3.1.3 Social/Affective LLS 67

4.3.2 How LLSs Help Learners to Master

a Second Language ? 70

4.3.2.1 Enhancing Learning 71

4.3.2.2 Performing Specified Tasks 72

4.3.2.3 Solving Specific Problems 73

4.3.2.4 Compensating for a Deficit Learning 73

4.3.2.5 Making Learning Easier, Faster and Enjoyable 74

4.3.3 Factors that Influence the Use of LLSs

among Students ? 75

4.3.3.1 Motivation 76

4.3.3.2 Gender 78

4.3.3.3 Cultural Background 78

4.3.3.4 Attitudes and Beliefs 79

4.3.3.5 Type of Task 80

4.3.3.6 Age and L2 Style 81

4.3.3.7 Learning Style 81

4.3.3.8 Tolerance of Ambiguity 82

4.4 Discussion 83

4.4.1 Findings on the Various Types of LLSs

Used by Successful Students 84

4.4.2 Findings on How LLSs Help Learners to Master

	a Second Language	86
	4.4.3 Findings on the Factors that Influence the	
	Use of LLSs	87
	4.5 Summary	89
CHAPTER FIVE	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	
	5.1 Introduction	91
	5.2 Implications for Language Teaching and Learning	92
	5.3 Conclusion	96
	5.4 Summary	97
REFERENCES		100
APPENDICES		
	1. Letter of Informed Consent	Appendix 1
	2. Member Checks	Appendix 2
	3. Verbatim Transcript	Appendix 3
	4. Tree Diagram Codes :LLSs	Appendix 4
	5. Tree Diagram	Appendix 5
	6. Reliability Check : Kohen Kappa Degree of Agreement Procedures	Appendix 6



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Language learning strategies (LLSs) have been the focus of an increasing number of second language or foreign language (L2/FL) studies. Basically, these studies are pedagogically-oriented because it is believed that language learning would be more effective if it is based on what learners actually do while learning the language and help less successful learners acquire the strategies employed by their successful peers.

There is a growing trend in education today to shift the focus from teacher centred to learner centred. In other words, language learning strategies will make learners as active participants in learning. Language learning strategies will help learners to be independent or autonomous learners.

In the last decades, there have been some major developments in language education that led to viewing the language learner as an active participant rather than a passive recipient. In response to these developments, increasing research has focused on language learner's characteristics since the 1970s. Research into language learning





strategies began in the 1960s. The attention of education research changed from the theory of behaviourism to the theory of cognitive in the 1950s-1960s where learning became knowledge acquisition. In cognitive theory, the learner becomes a processor of information. As cognitive theory matured during the 1970s and 1980s, the important focus became learning as knowledge construction.

This research intends to see why some learners are successful and how the use of language learning strategies help these successful learners master a second language. To know further the researcher looks at the strategies that were used or employed by successful language learners. Despite the numerous techniques and methods of learning a second language these successful or “good” language learners seem to excel in mastering a second language. Research carried out on language learning strategies has indicated that successful learners use a wide range of strategies and they use them frequently. It also revealed that appropriate use of strategies can result in the improvement of second language learning. Bialystok (1981) agrees that students know the benefits of learning strategies and use them as tools for learning. Bialystok asserts that the application of these strategies have contributed to the achievement of the learners.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study intends to look at the various language learning strategies which learners use to learn the English language. Through this study it is hoped that the researcher will be





able to gain some insights into the language learning strategies of learners in an urban secondary school particularly in learning English language.

The researcher finds that it is not possible for teachers to monitor and cater to all the needs of each and every individual student in the class. Therefore, it is crucial that learners be taught to help themselves (Rubin, 1987). This is possible through self-directed learning. In self-directed learning, learners will be able to take initiative with or without the help of others to formulate learning goals and implement appropriate leaning strategies.

According to Oxford (1990) language learning strategies “...are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence”. Within ‘communicative’ approaches to language teaching a key goal for the learner is to develop communicative competence in the target language. Communication strategies are used by speakers intentionally and consciously in order to cope with difficulties in communicating in a L2/FL (Bialystok, 1990).

Research supports this idea that training students to use LLSs can help them to be better language learners. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978, 1996), Rubin(1975), and Stern (1975) commenting on ‘good language learners’ suggested a number of strategies that such students employ, ranging from using an active task approach in and watching one’s L2 performance to listening to the radio in the L2 and communicating with native speakers. A study by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) also supported this fact that successful L2 learners are aware of the strategies they employ and why they use them.





Learners can also become more autonomous in their learning. Learning can be expanded not only within the classroom but also outside the classroom. Through language learning strategies learners will be independent and make association in learning a second language.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The English language is the second language taught in schools in the country. Learners have quite a large amount of contact hours with English in his or her life. However there are some students who come out of the school system with low proficiency in the language.



There are several problems that exist in schools and have been the concern of all those who are involved in the teaching and learning of English as a second language. The low proficiency of the English language has been a great concern by educationists and the reason is due to the lack of exposure in the daily lives of learners, lack of motivation to learn English and in fact the shortage of qualified and trained English language teachers.

Teachers have to deal with very large classrooms with about 35 to 50 learners per class. Learners are not streamed according to their abilities and come from various different backgrounds. It cannot be denied that the teacher focuses the attention and teaching to cater for the majority group in the class. This leaves the minority group on their own.





The researcher who has been teaching in an urban school feels that language learners are not aware of how they learn the language. Learners are not aware of the strategies and learning styles and thus they are not able to make full use of the language ability that they have. There is a sense of no direction as to what to learn and how to learn the second language. Many of the learners feel that learning English is a burden. Because of their passiveness and attitudes towards English as a second language many of them do not perform well in the examination. It would be a great help if learners are taught the learning strategies in the classroom to enable them to master a second language.

Language learning strategies help learners to use the opportunities available inside and outside the classroom to enhance the learning processes and enrich the learning experiences. Past studies conducted by researchers on learning strategies description and categorisation have found the implications in language classrooms in helping teachers



accelerate foreign language teaching and learning.



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

Strategies can be taught effectively in different language learning areas. Strategy instruction needs to be looked as learner empowerment; by raising learners' awareness of the more effective strategies for learning the language and enabling them to employ the strategies.

Researches have shown that second language learning strategies are important to learners. Learners are able to achieve success in language performance due to appropriate language learning strategies. As learners use these appropriate language learning strategies they are able to take charge of their own learning and be responsible towards their own learning.





On the other hand, teachers can teach these strategies to their learners and this explains why language learning strategies are teachable. Teachers can teach learning strategies in the classroom to enable learners to master a second language (Oxford, 1990). In general, successful language learners use appropriate strategies and these strategies explain their outstanding performance in learning. Good language learners will tend to use strategies that are suitable to their own level of language learning, personality, age, the purpose of learning the language and type of language (Politzer & McGroarty, 1983). Teachers and students should know how language learning strategies are most appropriately used.

Learners will have the autonomy and are self-directed if they use appropriate language learning strategies. Language learners will be independent learners if they employ suitable language learning strategies and this is important and is related to cognitive psychology. Active and independent language learners create their own understandings or models of the second language and its surrounding culture. After some time these active language learners will eventually improve their own understanding of linguistics and with constant practice to increase the proficiency in the second language.

Suitable and appropriate language learning strategies that encourage independent learning should be developed during classroom teaching. This is to help learners to keep on learning independently. Learning strategies are teachable and teachers can train their learners to use better learning strategies. Thus, learners can also train themselves to improve their own strategies through a variety of self-help materials.

Research in language learning strategies has sought to understand what successful language learners do to contribute to their progress. Given below are the types of



behaviours of some language learners. Language learning strategies can be the focus of a language objective in a content lesson, and teachers can directly teach learners a variety of strategies for becoming more efficient language learners. According to Brown (2001) successful language learners employ several autonomous learning strategies for example:

- Taking charge of their learning.
- Organising information about language.
- Are creative and experiment with grammar and words.
- Find opportunities to use language.
- Are tolerant of uncertainty and continue to listen even if they do not understand every word.

Good language learners depict full concentration in language learning. Cook (1996) discovered six types of strategies which were common in among Good Language

Learners (GLLs):

- GLL Strategy 1: find a language learning style that suits you.
- GLL Strategy 2: involve yourself in the language learning process.
- GLL Strategy 3: develop an awareness of language both as a system and as a communication.
- GLL Strategy 4: pay constant attention to expanding your knowledge.
- GLL Strategy 5: develop the L2 as a separate system.
- GLL Strategy 6: take into account the demands that L2 learning imposes.

This study will also help teachers of second language to know more about their students' learning strategies by identifying students' learning styles and current strategies through interviews and focus groups. These strategies will proceed by helping learners

discern the most relevant language learning strategies for their learning style, tasks, and goals. Lastly, language learning strategies help learners learn the second language systematically.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is first, to identify the various types of language learning strategies used or employed by successful learners in an urban school. The second purpose of this research is to look at how the language learning strategies employed or used by successful learners help them to master a second language and the last purpose is to look at the factors that influence the use of language learning strategies among the participants.

The results of this study will help the researcher in understanding the process of language learning strategies from the perspective of the learners. It should therefore be possible to improve learners' performance or learning tasks by knowing what are the successful approaches to learning and by directing learners towards these kinds of strategies in becoming successful second language learners.



1.5 Research questions

- 1.5.1 What are the various types of language learning strategies used or employed by successful students in an urban school?
- 1.5.2 How do these language learning strategies help learners to master a second language?
- 1.5.3 What are the factors that influence the use of language learning strategies among the participants?

1.6 Definition of Key Concepts



According to Cohen (1998) the term *strategies*, in the second-language-learning sense, has come to be applied to the conscious moves made by second-language speakers intended to be useful in either learning or using the second language. Strategies can be very different in nature, ranging from planning the organisation of one's learning (a meta-cognitive learning strategy) through using mnemonic devices to learn vocabulary (cognitive learning strategies) and rehearsing what one expects to say (a performance strategy) to enriching one's self-confidence for a language task by means of "self-talk" (an affective strategy).



Cohen (1998:5) defines language learning strategies as “...the steps or actions selected consciously by learners either to improve the learning of a second language learning or the use of it or both”.

Chamot and Kupper, (1989:13) define language learning strategies as ‘...techniques which students use to comprehend, store, and remember new information and skill.’

Richard and Schmidt, (2002:301) define language learning strategies as ‘... the ways in which learners attempt to work out the meaning and uses, grammatical rules, and the aspects of the language they are learning.’

O’Malley and Chamot, (1990:1) define language learning strategies as ‘...special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to comprehend learning or retain new information.’

 05-4506832  Oxford (2001:166) defines language learning strategies as ‘...operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information; specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more efficient, and more transferable to new situations.

In brief, language learning strategies can be said as ways learners use to help them learn a second language. These ways are specific actions which they take to enable them to learn better, on their own and are helpful actions to master a second language. These strategies help learners to be fully responsible for the actions they take in learning a second language.

The definitions above also tell us that the teaching and learning of a second language is changing from teacher centred to learner centred instruction. This has made language learning strategies the focus of attention to many educators of late.

1.7 Summary

From the review, the researcher hopes to look at the language learning strategies employed by successful learners and the capability of these learners to be independent, self-directed and autonomous learners. This research will also look at the preferred language learning strategies employed by successful language learners.

Language learning to a large extent is habit formation and therefore it warrants a lot of practice in using the language. A limited amount of exposure to learning a second language can lead to low achievement in the language. The limited time of learning a second language in our classrooms would certainly cause problems to learners who intend to master a second language. Therefore, ample consideration should be given by learners of second language on this matter in order to master a second language.

However, if learners are taught the ways of using language learning strategies, there would very little problems encountered by teachers. Hence, this research hopes to shed some lights into the language learning strategies employed by “good” learners, how these strategies help them to master a second language and finally the factors that possibly contribute to the use of language learning strategies among the participants.