

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University Mohamed Khider of BISKRA

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of Foreign Languages

Field of English



Probing gender differences in English language learning strategies. The case study of first year English students at Mohamed Khider university of Biskra.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to the person who always supported me with no words just actions. The person who had taken me under his wing with all love and protection to my beloved father no one else

I thank all my friends for comfort and support specially my best Samira
To my sister Djahida and my baby boy nephew Omran the apple of my eye.

To all family members on top of them my dear mother for her encouragement and patient

I dedicate it to my English language teachers RaghdiGarmia, Hani Mohammed and DjilahBouzid GOD may have mercy on his soul.

To every person who cared and helped

Sincere thanks

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I Praise and thank God ever and forever for his guidance and care

This thesis could not be possible without the help of my supervisor Mr. BECHAR MAAMAR . I would like to thank him for his support, guidance, patient and great interest.

I am deeply thankful to all my teachers and to the board of examiners Mr. SEGUENI LAMRI and Mr. AMRAOUI KHALED who accepted to read and examine this research work.

In the end I address my thanks and gratitude to our administration.

ABSTRACT

This research work aims at investigating Gender Differences in English language learning strategies. It takes place in Biskra university and conducts a study of first year students. Students apply different strategies consciously and non-consciously due to multiple factors in order to achieve success choosing the appropriate strategies that suits them. Gender roles and The exposure to the English language has changed. Consequently the students learning styles and techniques has changed to. The study explores students differences in strategy choice and preference. Therefore, our hypothesis is that there are differences in language learning strategies between male and female which demonstrate that females are better than males in language learning. The study is based on questionnaire to investigate strategy preference of university first year students at the department of languages. In addition to interview administered to the English department teachers.

key-words: *Gender Differences, Learning Strategies, First Year English, M K U of Biskra.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AS : Affective Strategies

COS : Compensation Strategies

CS: Cognitive Strategies

FL : Foreign Language

GA : Gender Analysis

GD: Gender Differences

GG : Gender Gap

GI : Gender Identity

LLS : Language learning strategies

LL : Language learning

LS : learning strategies

MCS : Metacognitive Strategies

MS : Memory Strategies

SS : Social Strategies

SL : Second Language

TL: Target Language

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INTRODUCTION**

GENERAL OVERVIEW

For English language learners who are non-English speakers, they try to master the target language using all possible ways that may help them. Students are different from each other in their personalities, experiences and that lead them to adopt different learning styles and techniques. Gender is a differentiating aspect that affects language learners. Females and males tend to be different in all life aspect and learning is one of them. LL is a part of the general learning process that is built on certain techniques and strategies. finally genders tend to be different in LLS.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

Rebecca Oxford (1990) identifies language learning strategies as the steps taken by students to enhance their learning. More and more studies conducted the importance to identify how learners learn and employ strategies to enhance their levels. Language learning strategies do not focus only on the teacher and the process of teaching but also on the learners and the process of learning. This led to highlight some of the variables that have relations to language learning as gender.

This study investigates gender differences in language learning strategies of first year English students at MKU of Biskra. It aims to determine whether there are differences in students' choice and use based on gender. Its purpose is to identify these strategies and classify them. In addition, it attempts at showing the differences of which strategies are being more used and how much.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to researchers as Wenden (1987) (Hardan, 2013, p. 1713.1714) learning strategies facilitate learning foreign languages. Language learning strategies are correlated to language proficiency and performance. Nowadays, learning the English language is a crucial educational matter that leads language learning strategies to be a topic of investigation. Furthermore, in the language learning process, gender differences are catching attention and researched widely. Here, this question is asked: Are there differences between male and female in language learning strategies in learning English and what are they ?

HYPOTHESIS

There are various types of language learning strategies that differ in use from student to another. Learners are different in the matter of strategies choice and the amount of the used ones. In addition to that learners differences are results of special reasons. A study of language learning strategies in relation to gender differences states that there are differences.

Thus, our hypothesis is that there are differences in language learning strategies between male and female which demonstrate that females are better than males in language learning.

TOOLS OF THE STUDY

We will use two research tools to collect the required data to answer our research questions. The most appropriate one is a semi structured questionnaire addressed to students in order to study their gender differences in English language learning strategies based on questions about their familiarity with LLS and use. Moreover, the research tools will provide quantitative and qualitative data that will be analyzed differently.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The current research work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation. It provides definitions of sex, gender and gender differences. It deals with the concept of gender and its differences. It introduces the interaction of gender with language. While the second chapter gives a general review about the language learning strategies. It deals with LLS Characteristics and Classification focusing on strategy choice, Students awareness and Importance of LLS for FLL. Finally, the third chapter represents the field work of the dissertation. It provides a description to the research process, analyzes and discusses the results of the teachers interviews and the students questionnaire.

Research Questions

The study at hand seeks to answer the following questions:

- a) Are there differences between male and female in English language learning strategies?
- b) What are differences between male and female in English language learning strategies?
- c) Are females better than males in language learning?

Significance of the Study

This work is concerned as a theoretical contribution to the knowledge related to the sociolinguistic situation of Algerian universities. This research attempts to probe first year students gender differences in language learning strategies of the English department. To conclude, the research work can also serve as a paper of reference for researchers who are interested in the Algerian sociolinguistic situation and Further studies.

Research approach

In this study we attempt to use mixed method approach in order to explore the gender differences of Algerian university students towards English language learning strategies, and foreign language use in higher education. We will use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approach in order to collect the data required to answer our research questions.

Data collection and data analysis

We will use two research tools to collect the required data to answer our research questions. The first one is a semi structured questionnaire addressed to students in order to study their gender differences in English language learning strategies based on questions about their familiarity with LLS and use. The second tool is semi-structured interview addressed to the university teachers aims at exploring students awareness of LLS and use. Moreover, the research tools will provide quantitative and qualitative data that will be analyzed differently.

Population and sample

The population of this study is first year students of the English language faculty at Biskra university. Since we cannot work on the whole population we will select random a sample of the population, to answer the questionnaire combined of males and females. This population was selected because it is the students first exposure to English at high education.

Chapter One:

GENDER

DIFFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

The current dissertation aims at investigating university students' gender differences in language learning strategies (English language). This chapter will deal with defining the concept of gender from the concept of sex. It presents the roles and interaction of gender with the English language learning. It explores the gap between genders and the process and importance of gender analysis in learning. It sheds light on the differences toward learning between male and female.

The overview of gender

1. Sex and gender

The definition of sex and gender are used interchangeably in some studies and synonyms in other. It depends on the content of study itself.

a gender

1- A person's gender is the fact that they are male or female. 2- You can refer to all male and female people as a particular gender. 3- In grammar, the gender of a noun, pronoun or adjective is whether it is masculine, feminine or neuter (Collins, 1995).

b Sex (excluding other meanings)

1- The two sexes are the two groups, male and female, into which people and animals are divided according to the function of they have in producing young. 2- The sex of a person or animal is their characteristics of being either a male or female (Collins, 1995).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization identifies sex as the biological differences between men and women ; meanwhile, gender is a social and constructed differences between a male and female, which appears in their roles and responsibilities that vary from culture to culture and changes over time (Takudzwa Kanyangarara, 2012, p. 3).

Unger and Crawford noted that gendered structure changes biological function and structure. The biological function and structure affect gender. Van Anders defines sex as people labeled as male and female for whom sex is related to bodily biological features. The word sex may be used to describe the internal sense of the self (Anne, 2019, p. 530).

The term sex is easier to define than gender. According to Ellis sex constitutes a biological distinction, while gender constitutes a social one. It emphasizes the social construction of male and female (R, 1994).

The term gender is derived from the social sciences. It is used to describe the social aspects of our lives. It includes our roles, responsibilities, expectations, behaviours and activities. Different societies held strong views about what is appropriate for male and female (Feach, 2003, p. 16).

2. Gender roles

Gender role is a set of behaviours that assign specific responsibilities and obligations attributed to male/female. It is determined by social, economic and educational factors of each society and by the norms, values and families. They are dynamic and subject to change over time according to region and culture (Feach, 2003, pp. 17-18).

Societies and individuals' expectations determine the gender roles based on each society's values and beliefs about gender. Gender roles are produced by the interaction between the individuals and their environment. Beliefs of each society about the differences between male and female defines the appropriate gender roles. These roles

are the expectation of what a men and women occupy based on their sex (Blackstone, 2003, pp. 335-338).

3. The interaction of gender and language

The recent years have witnessed a growing number of publication of gender and language; consequently, the number of conferences on the concept of language and gender has been increasing. Among these studies researchers were interested in the relationship between gender and discourse in addition to women's need and voice in English foreign language situations (Tung, 2019).

The change in the philosophies and perspectives that underlines the concept of gender and language reveals a historical development of it. The political movements and the real world changes brought the start of research on language and gender and the theoretical shifts in the field (Aslan, 2009, p. 9).

Gender and language learning

Educational attainment

Attainment is the measurement of an individual's highest level of education that has successfully completed. It is defined also as the measurement of educational achievements and skills. Educational qualification is Another term used to identify educational attainment. it refers to an important direct outcome of education as cognitive ability and efforts, so it distinguishes the individuals on q vertical scale (Schneider, 2011, p. 2).

Education attainment is the study of students' expectations that may illuminate issues around them, as it explores the realistic expectations of their ideas. Educational expectations are shaped by different factors and variables as family social capital and school resources (Wilson, Downey, & Beck, 2018, p. 2).

Amount of talk in classroom by female and male

Studies showed difference between male and female in their amount of participation in conversations. Despite the fact that females are more linguistically more formal than males. Males like to hold the center stage in foreign language learning results in getting better grades in the other hand females are more likely to express lack of understanding. Although males are better in language use yet females language accuracy and production are better (Klee, 1994, pp. 71-72).

Learner identity

Learner identity is a functional identity type of the educational contexts. It is functional, relevant and deserve particular attention. Students need to know and understand how they become the learners they are because identity construction is embedded in activity and as part of social practice and the process of becoming and changing as learner is neglected. Although it is crucial to have insight and understand the effects of the various types of identities on learning and its outcome, the educational system should foster the learner's identity development as their recognition as learners themselves. Learning forms identities and identities shapes learning (Coll & Falsafi, 2009, pp. 211-218).

Gender Identity According to Cameron (2004) that one's GI concluded from life experiences accompanied with his/her individual experiences. There is distinctive GI in each society (Tung, 2019, p. 49). School experiences consider to be crucial in forming GI in addition to other educational organizations (Feach, 2003, p. 16).

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Gender Differences

Gender differences

Both gender differs in learning in each subject and country. It is believed that male and female develop different learning system towards their studies. The studies found that male is often interested in courses that match their qualifications. Females, on the other hand are interested in the learning itself (Severiens & Geert, 1994, pp. 491-498).

A study in Pennsylvania State University showed gender as a primary factor that influences each interlocutor language structure and content. A study of the psychological factors contributed to the individual differences showed that gender is a variable with the most predictive power (Meunier, 1994, pp. 68-69).

Gender plays the role of a ghost in the background while other activities and identities perform in front ground of people's attention in context. Eventually; the social relational contexts uncovers the cultural meaning of gender and encourage to define it as identity. GD are inherited within people as it helps in understanding the self and others in social contexts. People can never be independent of their cultural meanings they are attached to (Correll & Shelley, 2004, p. 522).

Studies affirm biological, neurological and environmental causes of GD. The latest neuroscience findings support the idea that boys and girls do learn differently. Brain researches and modern neuroscience confirmed that male and female brains are different also the rate of development is different, which effects cognitive processes. These differences in brain results in learning differences. GI is affected by genetics, hormones and environment. These differences Impact the way students learn (Nasse, 2016, pp. 2, 24).

1. The human brain : how female and males mind

Human brain is a highly complex organ. Studies on brain showed clear GD explained by the various genetics, in addition to the effect of the environmental factors without reflecting any superiority to either sex. Male and female are equal in intelligence but operate differently. They use different parts of the brain in the matter of cognition, sensation and making decisions (Zaidi, 2010, p. 37).

Male's brain is 10% larger than female's and weighs 12% more and the ratios of grey and white matter differs significantly in addition to its structure. When thinking male use their grey matter while female use the white matter (Zaidi, 2010, p. 37).

The responsible area of visual processing and storing language differs among sexes. This leads to different learning processes, language development and cognitive functions. They use different sides of their brains to store and process memories. Male and female brains show biochemical and functional differences in all life stages (Zaidi, 2010, pp. 40,41).

2. Educational gender gap

The difference in any area between men and women in terms of their level of participation is called GG. It focuses on the difference between male and female at the national level. GG in education developed over time and across countries. It is measured by several alternative measures of attainment and achievements. The gaps are determined by factors related to family and psychological, social and cultural norms (Graziella & Borrano, 2019, p. 1).

GG in education is due to various factors as average years of schooling; though, it is not sufficient to explain GD in education. Despite that, the gap between male and female average years of schooling is a major indicator of educational GD. Different achievements and opportunities are other GD that explains GG educationally. Education and literacy are dimensions of development that reflects differences in results (Suddhasil & Suddhasil, 2017).

Gender equality and equity

Educational disparities between male and female are important problems resulted from development. Low literacy rate limits the productivity and progress of society and learners as individuals. Gender inequality is one of development results in education at specific manner.

Gender equity is the process and mean to achieve gender equality. When there is no discrimination in the educational system and treatment it leads to equal level of male and female in the quality and outcome in education (Takudzwa , Mayberry, Pai, & Shanahan, 2012, p. 3).

Gender equityIt is the process that seek to ensure justice and fairness between males and females. Measures are taken as equity means to achieve the ultimate goal which is equality. The terms equityand equalityare frequently used interchangeably (Takudzwa , Mayberry, Pai, & Shanahan, 2012, p. 3).

Gender equalityGender equality is the statues which male and female enjoy equal rights .It is believed to be achieved by giving them same opportunities and chances. Equality is to seek to the same outcome starting from the same point (Takudzwa , Mayberry, Pai, & Shanahan, 2012, p. 3).

3. Gender analysis

GA is an attempt to identify the problems related to gender inequalities so it can be addressed and dealt with properly. It is a study of needs, participation rate and development between men and women. Analyzing gender issues recognize other issues that influence the member of the adopted study as age. Conducting GA is for

finding alternatives that is appropriate to address a development problems and formulate programs and solutions (International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, 2009, p. 5).

Importance of GA Gender inequalities need to be identified before addressing it through procedures and measurements directed to men and women. GA focus on how the institutions' services affects men and women. It provides information about men and women needs, priorities and responsibilities at different levels. It is an important step to identify the appropriate strategies for promoting gender equality. It will be possible to understand gender inequalities through GA (International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, 2009, p. 6)

GA in education:GA is considered to be a critical step in achieving gender equality. It is necessary to determine how programs impact men and women. It reveals the differences between men and women activities and needs. It helps to understand the existing gender inequalities and the possible ways to reduce and remove them (Takudzwa , Mayberry, Pai, & Shanahan, 2012, p. 5).

Conclusion

As highlighted previously, this chapter aims to provide an overview concerning the literature related to this study. We tried to provide an extensive and exhaustive overview about gender but that was difficult due to the broad of this field. Therefore, in this chapter we presented only the information related to our dissertation's objective. This chapter provides overview about gender and how it is a differentiating element of learners. It views that there are differences among learners and genders.

Chapter two:

LANGUAGE LEARNING

STRATEGIES.

INTRODUCTION

The current dissertation aims at investigating university students' gender differences in language learning strategies (English language). For a better understanding of the differences, this chapter is devoted to LLS definition, its classification, and on what basis it is divided. It focuses on the student strategy preference and awareness. In addition, it explains how LLS are incorporated in learning and teaching processes, which presents its importance.

I Language learning strategies

1. Language learning strategies

The learning processes adopt the "strategy" to accomplish the purpose of learning. Among what it is most important in learning is what to use and how to use it. Researchers have defined learning strategies (LS) in many ways. Chamot (1987), cited in Himanoglu, (2000) defined it as the techniques and actions that students go through in order to make learning easier and to be more capable of recalling information. LLS plays a crucial role in the learning process. Rubin (1987) defines it as the behaviours, steps or techniques that learners apply in order to facilitate language learning (Hardan, 2013, p. 1713).

Wenden (1987) identifies LLS as the operations used by learners in order to understand and make sense. Oxford identifies them as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p.8). In other words, in the process of learning the learner obtains the ability to respond to the various learning situations and the ability to manage his or her learning in an appropriate manner (Hardan, 2013, pp. 1719-1714).

According to Schumacher and Deshler (2006) strategy is "an individual's approach to a task. It includes how a person thinks and acts when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task and its outcomes". As well as the different characteristics of people there is also a various number of LS which helps remembering and organizing in the learning process (Clarke, 2008, p. 34).

2. Characteristics of LLS

Rebecca Oxford (1990) had listed LLS characteristics as following:

- Contribute to the main goal of communicative competence.
- Expand the role of teachers.
- Are problem oriented.
- Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
- Support learning, both directly and indirectly
- Are not always observable.
- Are often conscious.
- Can be taught.
- Are flexible.
- Are influenced by a variety of factors.
- Allow learners to become more self-directed.
- Are specific actions taken by the learner.

3. There is no good strategy

Rod Ellis (1994: 558) said "much of the research on LLS has been based on the assumption that there are "good" LS. But this is questionable. " there is no "good" strategy because each individual need to discover his or her own "good" strategy (Mariani, 2002, pp. 45-56).

4. Good language learner

According to Sewell (2003) learning a second language(SL) is the most important and demanding task people need to accomplish. In some countries for a student career success, his or her abilities is more important than his or her university marks. These points explain why it is very important student's awareness of how to learn a language. Students can increase their efficiency level by knowing the good LLS characteristics. In the attempt to understand those characteristics, an interest in LLS was derived. The good language learner try to use the proper LLS to make his/her learning more successful process which lead to accurate acquisition of the target language(TL) (Hardan, 2013, pp. 1722-1723).

Classification of LLS

Evolvement the concept of LLS

In 1975 Rubin and Naiman attempted to recognize the used strategies by a good language learner in learning a SL. Then Rubin defined that learner use certain specific strategies to enhance his/her learning. A list of strategies that the successful learner use was made by Naiman and Frohlich in 1975. LLS after that divided and categorized by many researchers (Hardan, 2013, pp. 1715-1716).

1. LLS categorization

O'malley (1985) categorized LLS into three types: metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective. According to Rubin (1987) LLS is divided into LS, communication strategies and social strategies(SS). He divided LS to two main types: cognitive LS and metacognitive LS. In 1990 Rebecca Oxford made another type categorization.

She divided the LLS to two main types: direct and indirect. Each type is subdivided to three categories (Figure 1.). Finally according to Stern (1992), there are five main types of the LLS. They are: management and planning strategies, cognitive, communicative – experiential, interpersonal and affective strategies (Hardan, 2013, pp. 1718-1721).

Type	Definition	Example
Metacognitive (MCS)	Strategies that require planning for learning, thinking about learning process, monitoring of one's production or comprehension and evaluating learning activities after it is completed.	
Cognitive (CS)	It is limited to specific learning tasks. It involves manipulation of the learning materials.	Repetition, resourcing, translation, note taking, deduction, auditory representation, elaboration, transfer,
Socioaffective	It is related to social–mediating activity and transacting with others	Cooperation, questions for clarifications,

Table 1: O'Malley (1985).

Type	Definition	Subtypes	Definition	Example
LS	It contributes directly to the development of the language system constructed by the learner	CS	Steps or operation used in learning or problem solving that requires direct analysis, transformation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clarification/Verification. -Guessing. -Deductive reasoning. -Practice. -Memorization. -Monitoring.
		MCS	It is us to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planning. -Prioritizing. -Setting goals. -Self – management.
Communication	Focuses on the process of participating in conversation and getting meaning. It is used when confronted with misunderstanding by a co speaker.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clarifying what the speaker intended.
SS	It is the activities learners engage in which give them opportunities to expose and practice their knowledge.			

Table 2 : Rubin (1987)

- DIRECT STRATEGIES
 - I. Memory
 - A. Creating mental linkages
 - B. Applying images and sounds
 - C. Reviewing well
 - D. Employing action
 - II. Cognitive
 - A. Practicing
 - B. Receiving and sending messages strategies
 - C. Analyzing and reasoning
 - D. Creating structure for input and output
 - III. Compensation strategies
 - A. Guessing intelligently
 - B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
- INDIRECT STRATEGIES
 - I. Metacognitive Strategies
 - A. Centering your learning
 - B. Arranging and planning your learning
 - C. Evaluating your learning
 - II. Affective Strategies
 - A. Lowering your anxiety
 - B. Encouraging yourself
 - C. Taking your emotional temperature
 - III. Social Strategies
 - A. Asking questions
 - B. Cooperating with others
 - C. Empathizing with others

Figure 1: Rebecca Oxford.

Type	Definition	Subtype	Example
Direct	Activities that have direct influence on the learning process.	Memory(MS): it is techniques used to remember more effectively and retrieve and transfer needed information for future use. It help the students get back the information.	Semantic map of a group of nouns that shows the relationship the words.
		CS: mental strategies learner use to make sense of their learning.	Use of dictionary to find difficult words or drills to practice the language.
		Compensation(COS): it helps the learner to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication due to lack of vocabulary. It allows the student to speak and write despite the limited vocabulary.	Using linguistic clues to guess the meaning.
Indirect	The activities that have indirect influence on the learning process.	MCS: help students to regulate their learning. It helps in controlling the learning. It helps the student to be able in planning what their learning strategies should be and in changing them if they are not suitable.	Overviewing the already known material and deciding on what to pay attention to.
		Affective(AS): it helps the students control their emotions and motivation.	Using laughter to relax
		SS: lead to increase interaction with the target language because language learning involves other people. It is for; of behaviours.	Questioning for understanding Working with peers of the target language.

Table 3 Rebecca Oxford 1990.

Researcher	Classification					
Stern (1975)	Planning Strategy	Active Strategy	Empathic Strategy	Formal Strategy	Experimental Strategy	
	Semantic Strategy	Practice Strategy	Communication Strategy	Internalization Strategy		
Naiman et al (1978)	Active task approach	Realization of language as a system	Realization of language as a means of communication	Management of affective demands	Self-monitoring	
Rubin (1987)	Direct Strategies			Indirect Strategies		
	Learning Strategies		Communication Strategies		Social Strategies	
	Cognitive Strategies	Metacognitive Strategies				
O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	Cognitive Strategies		Metacognitive Strategies		Social/Affective Strategies	
Oxford (1990)	Direct Strategies			Indirect Strategies		
	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Wenden (1991)	Cognitive Strategies		Self-Management Strategies			

Figure 2 : over general LLS taxonomy

2. Factors influencing strategy choice

There are many factors affecting language learner strategy choice. Among them are the learner personality, age, awareness and gender. Motivation and purpose for learning the language affects the learner choice. These factors present strategy preferences (Aslan, 2009, p. 29).

Nyikos and Oxford (1989:295) in their study suggest that gender is a significant factor in strategy use variation. A later study by Green and Oxford (1995) argued that women report more use of multiple LLS more than men. Griffiths (2013: 75) stated that women are more motivated in concerns of learning a language (Nurmela, 2017, p. 19).

According to Nyikos and Oxford (1989:295) motivation influence learners to use more strategies. Later Oxford (1990:13) found that when a learner is motivated gain the ability to select the most appropriate strategy for his/her task. Motivation here do not only affect strategy usage frequency but choice too. Macaro (2006:330) asserts that teacher motivating learners is very important in LL and strategy use. Learners need to be aware of what they are learning importance (Nurmela, 2017, p. 18).

II Students awareness of LLS

Students awareness

LLS is a term which had been defined differently based on student way of dealing with the information. It was defined as steps, behaviours, techniques and actions. Regoney (1978) LLS as often conscious steps or behaviours of the language learner (Hardan, 2013, pp. 1714-1715).

Richard and Platt (1992) identified LLS as intentional behaviours. According to them it is used consciously which mean that learners aware of what suits them. Cohen (1998) established That learners select these strategies consciously. Therefore LLS was

defined as conscious selected behaviours to memorize and synthesize information and use them in learning skills (Pineda, 2010, p. 96).

The status of LLS for FLL

According to (Brown, 1994; Chamot, 1999; Cohen, 1990; Faerch & Kasper, 1984; Gregersent, 2001) LLS is important in learning SL or foreign language (FL) because it develops learning autonomy and language competence. It helps the learner to discover reason why he/she is being unsuccessful. It assists learners in planning their learning to. Murat (2000) states that improving LL in SL or FL classrooms can be useful through empirical work in the area of the Importance of LLS researches (Pineda, 2010, p. 97).

LLS importance

Any action taken in solving problems in learning is concerned as LS. It helps learners to optimize his/her cognitive, affective and social behavior. It speeds the learning process and help the learner to make the most of it. It facilitates learning especially when learner cannot rely on the routine. Learner here will start to think more positively observing the success resulted of their strategies use. They will try little harder as their self-confidence increases. They will make more effort using the strategies and employing the right one (Mariani, 2002).

LLS in the process of learning and teaching.

LLS status in the teaching process for learners.

Learners consider learning outside classrooms is more difficult than inside despite their free access to different sources of information. They see that face to face learning is much easier because of the direct help of the teacher. The teacher here is with fundamental importance that he offers instant solution for the learners' problems and the correction of errors. This is why learners feel they learn better with their tutor. Studies shows that even their great number of students who are familiar with the LLS though a small percentage of them who do use it in practice. Students said that there is no enough time devoted for strategies explanation (Juste & Lopéz , 2010, p. 268).

LLS as a key to students' success

According to Green and Oxford (1995:289) and Griffiths (2003:273) studies; a successful learner use more strategies than less successful. Oxford (1990) argued that greater proficiency and higher self-confidence are resulted from the appropriate use of strategies. Referring to her; different strategies affects different aspects of the target language. She argued the appropriate use of strategies leads to a successful learning. When observing learning success it is important to take in consideration what happens in the mind of the learner to (Nurmela, 2017, pp. 21-23).

Studies showed that students who reported higher use of the overall strategies were better in their TL learning. In addition, successful learners reported various strategies use together. Green and Oxford (1995) found in their studies that students

with high achieving uses all kinds of strategies more than students with low achieving (Aslan, 2009, pp. 52-53).

1. Incorporation of strategies into classroom activities

A starting point in teaching strategies and strategies development should be LL tasks that promote both learning and use of strategies. Choosing tasks of problems to solve and calls for strategy use. Not all tasks are suitable for kinds of student so it should be taken in consideration each student ability and task difficulty. Once it is obvious on which strategies it should be focuses on the suitable strategies that students could apply is identified. Choice of strategy depends on many factors as gender, student' level, purpose and learner's characteristics (Mariani, 2002).

Conclusion

The second chapter provided a general view of language learning strategies. It defines the concept of LLS and its Importance. Moreover, it views the various and different strategies used by language learners. This chapter showed that there is no only one good strategy but numerous and various strategies which achieve different points. Learners use these language learning strategies to develop their competences and cultural knowledge of the target language.

Chapter three:

The field work

Introduction

This dissertation is designed to investigate gender differences in English language learning. The used tool is a questionnaire sent to 17 first year English students (12 female and 5 males) of Biskra's university. The questionnaire collects the necessary data about gender differences and students' awareness about language learning strategies. This chapter outlines the collected data in addition to its analysis.

Students questionnaire

The students' questionnaire was handed to 17 student were chosen randomly from population of first year English students at Biskra's university. The sample was combined of 12 female and 5 males. The questionnaire collects data about students gender differences and their awareness of LLS. The data of genders will be analyzed separately in order to compare and investigate.

Questionnaire description

The questionnaire is addressed to first year students of Biskra university. It is a collection of twenty seven question divided into four sections. The purpose of study is explained in the introduction: to investigate gender difference in LLS. The students were asked to answer by ticking and making statements when it is required. The questionnaire were mix of open ended , closed ended and multiple choice questions.

Section one:

the first section is to define simply the gender of the student by which is the first step in the study.

Section two:

The second section investigates the differences between the genders. General differences include attendance and other attitudes in class room.

Section three :

The third section investigates students awareness and familiarity with LLS.

Section four :

Section four probe in details the students choice and use of the various LLS as techniques to learn better the TL.

Analysis of the results

Section two

Questions 1:How often do you attend your regular sessions:

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Always	10	83.33	1	20
Often	2	16.66	3	60
Only when it is necessary	0	0	1	20

Table 4 : How often students attend their sessions

This table shows how often first year students attend their regular sessions.

83.33% of the females always attend while only 20% of the males do. The rest of the female 16.66% said they often attend and percentage of 60% of the males stated that. The rest 20% of the males attend only when it is necessary.

Questions2: In your opinion; learning English focuses on learning:

Gender	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Vocabulary	5	41.66	3	60
Grammar	3	25	1	20
Writing	4	33.33	1	20

Table 5 Students opinion about English LL focus

The table above shows English LL focus based on first year students opinion. 41.66% of females think that vocabulary is the focus and 60% of the males think the same. 25% of the females and 20% of the males chosen grammar as the focus. 33.33% of the females with 20% of the males chosen writing as English LL's focus.

Questions3: In which area do your difficulties as language learner belong:

Gender	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Oral presentations	6	50	5	100
Written expression	3	25	0	0
Listening activities	3	25	0	0
Reading tasks	0	0	0	0
Grammar tasks	0	0	0	0

Table 6 Student' difficulties areas

The table presents first year students difficulties' areas as English language learners. For females: 50% stated that they have difficulties in oral presentations, 25% in written expression and 25% in listening tasks. Whereas 100% of the males all stated to have difficulties only in oral presentation.

Questions 4: In your opinion, what are your weaknesses and strengths as a language learner?

Females answers were many and various. Their weaknesses were in written expressions, oral presentations and public speaking due to the uncomfortable aura. In the other hand, grammar, reading, vocabulary and listening tasks were a common strengths for them. As far for males, their weaknesses were concluded into two points: listening tasks and oral presentations in all possible ways whether it was in fluency,

lack of vocabulary and speaking in general. Their strengths were in writing and hard work regarding to the circumstances.

Questions 5: Do you interact with your classmates?

Gender	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes, every time I can.	5	41.66	2	40
Sometimes only	5	41.66	3	60
I prefer not.	2	16.66	0	0

Table 7 : Students interaction with their classmates

From the results above, 41.66% of the females and 40% of the males stated that they interact every time they can with their classmates. On the other hand, 41.66% of the females responded that they interact sometimes only while greater percentage of the males 60% do. A percentage of 16.66% of the females stated they prefer not to interact with their classmates.

Questions 6: Do you think that participation and classroom' interaction are important in the process of learning English?

Gender	Female		Male	
Responses	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	83.33	4	80
No	2	16.66	1	20

Table 8: Students opinion in participation importance

Both 83.33% of the females and 80% of the males think that participation and interaction inside classroom is Important. While only 16.66% of the females and 20% the males think the opposite.

Questions 7: Do you ask for correction when errors are made?

Gender	Female		Males	
Responses	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes I do	6	50	1	20
No I do not	2	16.66	1	20
I wait till the teacher give us the correction	4	33.33	3	60

Table 9: Students perception of errors correction

The results shows that half of the females 50% do ask for correction when errors are made and only 20% of males do. 16.66% of females and 20% of males do not ask for correction. When 33.33% of the females wait till the teacher give the correction, the majority of males 60% wait to.

Section three

Questions 1: Do you think that you use specific techniques in learning

English

Gender	Female		Males	
	Reponses	Number	Percentage	Number
Yes	10	83.33	4	80
No	2	16.66	1	20

Table 10: Stunts who think that they use specific techniques in learning

English

83.33% of the females and 80% think that they use specific techniques in English LL. Still, 16.66% of females and 20% of males do not think they do.

Questions 2: Are you familiar with the concept of language learning strategies?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	58.33	4	80
No	5	41.66	1	20

Table 11: Students familiarity with the concept of language learning strategies

A percentage of 58.33% of the females stated that they are familiar with the concept LLS, in contrast 80% of males stated they are. Therefore, 41.66% of the females stated they are not and only 20% of the males.

Questions 3: Have you learnt about language learning strategies?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	58.33	4	80
No	5	41.66	1	20

Table 12: Students learning about LLS

From the results above, 75% of the females claim that they learnt about LLS while the other 25% claim that they did not. 100% of the males claims they did.

Questions 4: Do you think that LLS is helpful in your language learning?

Gender	Female		Males	
Responses	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	100	4	80
No	0	0	1	20

Table 13: Students opinion if LLS is helpful

100% of the females and a close percentage of males 80% think that LLS are helpful in their LL. Whereas the other 20% of males do not think that they are helpful.

Section four

Questions 1: Do you use images, sounds and actions as a way to remember and recall information?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	58.33	5	100
No	5	41.66	0	0

Table 14: Students usage perception of images, sounds and actions to recall information

While 58.33% of the females use images, sounds and actions as way to recall information and 41.66% do not, 100% of the males use it.

Questions 2: Do you place new words in your productive skills?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	100	4	80
No	0	0	1	20

Table 15: Students new words replacement in their productive skills.

100% of the females and 80% of the males stated that they do place new words in their productive skills. While that, 20% of the males stated that they do not do that.

Questions3:Do you usually use a dictionary to find difficult words?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	100	5	100
No	0	0	0	0

Table 16 : Students using dictionary

All females and males stated that they use the dictionary to find difficult words.

Questions 4:Do you repeat reading the information for more understanding?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	100	5	100
No	0	0	0	0

Table 17: Students who repeat reading the information for more understanding

The table shows that all females and males in 100% percentage repeat reading the information for more understanding.

Questions 5:When you face limitation in vocabulary do you try to ask for help?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	58.33	4	80
No	5	41.66	1	20

Table 18 :Students who ask for help when facing limitation in vocabulary.

The reveals that 58.33% of females ask for help when they face limitation in vocabulary. On the other hand, 80% of males do that. When 41.66% of the females do not ask for help, 20% of the males do not to.

Questions 6:When you face limitation in vocabulary do you use synonyms?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	83.33	5	100
No	2	16.66	0	0

Table 19 : Students who use synonyms when facing limitation in vocabulary.

The results shows that 83.33% of the females as well 100% of the males use synonyms when facing limitation in vocabulary. Still, 16.66% of females do not tend to use them.

Questions 7:In case your teacher is explaining; are you capable of speaking

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	0	0	1	20
No	12	100	4	80

Table 20 : Capable students of speaking when the teacher is explaining.

When 0% of the females said they are not capable of speaking while the teacher is explaining, 20% of the males said they speak during the teacher's explaining.

or you delay speaking till he finishes?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	58.33	4	80
No	5	41.66	1	20

Table 21 : Students who delay speaking till the teacher finishes

58.33% of the females and 80% of the males said they delay speaking till their teacher finishes. 41.66% of the females and 20% of the males answered no.

Questions 8: Do you take opportunities to practice by your own and evaluate yourself ?

Gender	Female		Males	
Responses	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	58.33	4	80
No	5	41.66	1	20

Table 22 : Students who practice by themselves and evaluate themselves.

The table shows that 58.33% of the females stated they do practice by themselves and evaluate themselves while the rest 41.66% answered with no. approximately all the males stated that they do practice by themselves and evaluate themselves while the less percentage of 20% stated that they do not.

Questions 9: Are deep breath and meditation ways of relaxing?

Gender	Female		Males	
Responses	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	11	91.66	3	60
No	1	8.33	2	40

Table 23 : deep breath and meditation

Approximately all the females 91.66% stated that they take deep breaths and meditate as ways to relax while only 60% of the males do that.

Questions 10:To lower your anxiety, do you listen to music?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	66.66	3	60
No	4	33.33	2	40

Table 24 : Music as way to lower anxiety.

66.66% of females and approximately equal percentage of males 60% listen to music to lower anxiety. While 33.33% of the females and 40% of the males do not.

Questions 11:Do you participate even if you are not completely sure of your answer?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	33.33	2	40
No	8	66.66	3	60

Table 25 : perception of students who participate even they are not sure of their answers.

The results above shows almost similar percentages of the females 33.33% and 40% of the males who participate even when they are not sure of their answers.

Questions 12: Do you reward yourself when you achieve certain success in your learning? And how ?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	66.66	2	40
No	4	33.33	3	60

Table 26 : Students who reward themselves at success.

66.66% of the females answered that they reward themselves when achieving certain success, when only 40% of the males do that.

The 66.66% of the females who stated that they reward themselves at success stated also of a various and different ways of rewarding themselves. There who choose to only be happy and take the success as an encouragement to try harder and do better. Others stated that they do what they love, have great lunch or watching a movie. As far for the males, they stated that they do only what make them relax as nice meal, new products and comfortable way to home.

Questions 13: Do you ask for clarifications and correction?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	50	4	80
No	6	50	1	20

Table 27 : Request for clarifications and corrections.

Only 50% of the females ask for clarifications and corrections while the rest do not. In contrary, the majority of the males with 80% ask and only 20% who do not.

Questions 14: Do you seek for developing your cultural understanding?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	11	91.66	5	100
No	1	8.33	0	0

Table 28 : developing cultural understanding.

A high percentages of 91.66% of the females and 100% of the males seek to develop their cultural understanding and only 8.33% of the females who do not.

Questions 15: Do take the chance to cooperate with peer in tasks?

Gender	Female		Males	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	66.66	4	80
No	4	33.33	1	20

Table 29 : Cooperation with peers in tasks.

The results displayed in the table 29 shows that 66.66% of the females and 80% of the males cooperate with their peers in tasks. The rest tend to not.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This dissertation is built to confirm and explore the gender differences in English language learning. According to the obtained results from the students' questionnaire, we found that males and females adopt different LLS in learning English language. Females tend to use the various strategies while males appears to neglect some.

Females English language students use and apply approximately all LLS in their LL process. The results show that females use both direct and indirect strategies. they combine between different strategies in the same time whether direct or indirect. There is no extensive use of a specific strategy nor extreme focus on particular category. We notice that females use all the direct (memory, cognitive and compensation) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective and social).

In contract, males tend to extensive use of certain strategies while neglecting others or minimum use. They focus on only few strategies under specific categories. Males use the direct strategies extensively. furthermore , they seem to use less the indirect strategies specifically the affective strategy.

Females are more confident than males. They participate more and ask for corrections and clarifications when they need it whereas majority of males wait till the teacher to provide them with it. In addition, females focus on different points in their learning process and attend their sessions regularly while males seem to focus on the speaking skill and learning vocabulary only.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we collected, summarized, discussed and analyzed the data that uncover the genders differences as language learners in language learning strategies. This chapter uncover whether females different from males in the language learning process. The findings of this study helps in exploring those differences .

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study is devoted to investigate gender differences in English language learning for first year students at University Mohammed Khider BISKRA. We tried to give sights into gender effects on language learners in LLS. In addition to exploring those differences, we tried to view the students awareness of LLS and preference.

To answer the asked questions:

- a) Are there differences between male and female in English LLS?
- b) What are differences between male and female in English LLS?
- c) Are females better than males in language learning ?

We worked on the results of the students questionnaire for first year English students. The questions of this instrument approximately covered all types of LLS to give general view. The results gave clear view on gender differences in LLS choice and preference.

The findings confirmed our hypothesis and showed that there is differences between genders in LLS. Furthermore, the research questions were answered based on data provided by the students' semi structured questionnaire that aimed at exploring the students differences.

The sample was randomly chosen out of first year English students at Biskra's university. It included 17 student (12 female and 5 males) who responded to the questionnaire.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present work tried to study language learning strategies from aspect of gender. still it was conducted on a small scale level. Therefore the issue is still somehow vague. Therefore, based on the findings of this study the following we recommend the following:

- It should be investigated scientifically, on larger scale and using different research methods to gain a deeper and more holistic understanding for the matter .
- Other aspects of LLS studies need to be studied within the Algerian case.
- As for gender more efforts is need in order to develop better understanding.
- More sociolinguistics studies need to be conducted so the Algerian linguistics problems can be solved based upon their results.

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APPENDIX

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University Mohammed Khider of BISKRA

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of Letters and English

Students' Questionnaire

Title of Dissertation

Probing Gender Differences in English Language Learning Strategies. The Case Study of First Year English Students at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra.

Dear students,

This questionnaire is an important component of an investigation about gender differences in English language learning strategies, I will appreciate if you give a little time of yours to fulfill the answers. Your answers will remain anonymous.

Please answer specifically based on your own experiences because all the answers will be taken in consideration.

Last not least I would like to thank you for your collaboration and help and your time.

Section one : general information

Please choose the appropriate answer.

1-You are:

❖ Female

❖ Male

Section two: gender differences

2- How often do you attend your regular sessions:

❖ Always

❖ Often

❖ Only when it is necessary

3-In your opinion; learning English focuses on learning:

❖ Vocabulary

❖ Grammar

❖ Writing

4-In which area do your difficulties as language learner belong:

❖ Oral presentations

❖ Written expression

❖ Listening activities

❖ Reading tasks

❖ Grammar tasks

5-In your opinion, what are your weaknesses and strengths as a language learner?

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6-Do you interact with your classmates?

- ❖ Yes, every time I can.
- ❖ Sometimes only
- ❖ I prefer not.

7-Do you think that participation and classroom; interaction are important in the process of learning English?

- ❖ Yes
- ❖ No

8- Do you ask for correction when errors are made?

- ❖ Yes I do
- ❖ No I do not
- ❖ I wait till the teacher give us the correction

Section three: language learning strategies awareness

9-Do you think that you use specific techniques in learning English

- ❖ Yes
- ❖ No

10-Are you familiar with the concept of language learning strategies?

❖ Yes

❖ No

11-Have you learnt about language learning strategies?

❖ Yes, I had

❖ No, I ha

12-Do you think that LLS is helpful in your language learning?

❖ Yes

❖ No

Section four: Language learning strategies practice.

Answer yes or no:

A. Do you use images, sounds and action as a way to remember and recall

information? yes No

B. Do you place new words in your productive skills?

Yes No

C. Do you usually use a dictionary to find difficult words?

Yes No

D. Do you repeat reading the information for more understanding?

Yes No

E. When you face limitation in vocabulary do you try to ask for help?

Yes No

F. When you face limitation in vocabulary do you use synonyms?

Yes No

G. In case your teacher is explaining; are you capable of speaking or you delay speaking till he finishes? Yes No

H. Do you take opportunities to practice by your own and evaluate yourself? Yes No

I. Are deep breath and meditation ways of relaxing? Yes No

J. To lower your anxiety, do you listen to music? Yes No

K. Do you participate even if you are not completely sure of your answer? Yes No

L. Do you reward yourself when you achieve certain success in your learning?

And how ?

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M. Do you ask for clarifications and correction?

Yes No

N. Do you seek for developing your cultural understanding?

Yes No

O. Do take the chance to cooperate with peer in tasks?

Yes

No

P. Any other additional suggestions?

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RESUME

الهدف من هذه المذكرة هو توضيح الاختلافات بين الذكر و الأنثى في استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة الانجليزية. يعتبر الجنس عاملا مفارقا في الكثير من المجالات منها المجال الدراسي و الأكاديمي و هنا درسنا فروقات الجنس في هاته الاستراتيجيات. لإتمام ذلك تم استخدام المنهج الاستكشافي في المذكرة. تمثلت عينة الدراسة في طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية السنى الاولى في جامعة بسكرة محمد خيضر. استخدمنا الاستبيان في جمع المعلومات و البيانات من الطلبة و الطالبات. اظهرت الدراسة اختلافات كثيرة بين الذكر و الأنثى في استراتيجيات تعلمهم العديدة. حيث كان استخدام الأنثى لمختلف الاستراتيجيات متنوعا و شاملا لها بينما الذكر ركز على استراتيجيات محددة.

