An investigation of Iranian EFL teachers and learners' attitudes towards using language learning strategies

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Abstract

Language learning strategies (LLS) refer to the processes and actions that are consciously deployed by language learners to help them to learn or use a language more effectively. Considering the importance of LLS, insufficient studies have been carried out on understanding both teachers and learners' opinions towards using LLS in Iranian educational context. Therefore, in this project, Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and learners' opinions towards using LLS have been investigated. To fulfill this objective, 20 teachers and 20 learners filled out a questionnaire. After gathering the data and analyzing them, the findings revealed that the Iranian EFL Teachers and learners' opinions towards using LLS was significantly positive. Eventually, the researchers concluded with some suggestions for educators to adopt the flipped classroom technology to create better learning environments for their students and to reach better learning consequences. The results of this paper provide strong support learning strategies are very useful and helpful in learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Iranian EFL teachers and learners, teachers and learners' opinions, language learning strategies (LLS).

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1. **Introduction**

The language learning Strategies (LLS) related research has prevalently included language students (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), and language instructors have been dismissed right now (Griffiths, 2007; Griffiths & Parr, 2001). It is important that language teachers' 'proficient practices and related perspectives are pivotal in that they can impact the adequacy of instructing just as learning forms' (Griffiths, 2007). Along these lines, both teachers' and learners' viewpoints are key for comprehension of the multifaceted nature of the language classroom and merit genuine thought.

In late decades, various examinations have concentrated on foreign language learning, with the emphasis regularly having been set on language learning procedures (Namaziandost, Rezvani & Polemikou, 2020; Oxford, 2016; Wong & Nunan, 2011). A few investigations have affirmed that these systems help understudies in turning out to be more effective students inside the study hall and cultivate increasingly effective improvement of understudies' dominance of the objective language in the wake of leaving school (Wong & Nunan, 2011). In any case, less is known about the structure and connection between LLS, unknown dialect disposition, the foreign language mark and general school accomplishment. Ongoing examinations have fundamentally managed LLS among college understudies and upper auxiliary understudies, with just a couple of examinations having been led among lower optional understudies (Namaziandost, Hosseini & Utomo, 2020)

Concentrates on LLS in late decades have recognised a huge number of techniques which are utilised by English as a remote/second language (EFL/ESL) students and a few technique categorisations designs have additionally been built up. The most regularly utilised scientific categorisation was created by Oxford (1990). She recognised three immediate and three roundabout procedure types. Direct systems are explicit methods for language use: memory, intellectual and compensatory (or remuneration) techniques. Circuitous procedures, for example, metacognitive, emotional and social procedures, support LLS by implication. As of late, Oxford returned to her technique classes also, built up a model with four distinctive procedure classes: psychological, emotional and sociocultural-intelligent just as ace class of 'metastrategies'. Metastrategies contain metacognitive, meta-full of feeling and meta-sociocultural-intelligent procedures (Griffith & Oxford, 2014; Namaziandost, Neisi, Kheryadi & Nasri, 2019; Oxford, 2016).

Foreign language/L2 learners and native speakers are totally different. Their mother tongue and tradition that decide the ability to speak is distinct. Therefore, serious efforts must be taken to be able to speak English fluently to L2 learners. They will study hard, train more regularly and intensively, and use and respond to appropriate learning techniques. Learning strategy is some way students use to understand other resources and improve their learning (Namaziandost, Neisi, Mahdavirad & Nasri, 2019; Oxford, 1990). More precisely, Oxford (1990, p. 8) states that learning techniques are any potential actions selected by the learners to understand something and create a more fun and simpler way of learning. Lee (2010, pp. 134–135) continues, 'Once learners begin to learn something, they have the ability to respond to the specific learning situation and handle their learning in an appropriate manner. To master something more effectively, the learners use thinking techniques'.

Language learning techniques have been the subject of multiple studies. Griffiths and Oxford's latest research (2014) presented the global reach and trajectory of 21st century language learning approaches a panoramic view of the international geopolitical environment. There are eight key areas of debate and discussion: concepts of policy, techniques and capabilities, theoretical underpinnings, categorisation, meaning, teachability, methods in research and analysis. The new issues to be addressed in work focused on language learning approaches will be those fields, later on. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) explained learning strategies as unique thoughts or actions which are used by people to help them understand, acquire or remember new information. Training techniques are intentional actions and feelings that are used by learners while training to help them better understand, know or remember new knowledge (Nasri & Namaziandost, 2019; Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992; Zare, 2012). Wenden and Rubin (1987) define learning strategies as any collection of procedures, actions, schedules,

routines that the learner uses to facilitate knowledge gathering, processing, extracting and using. Also included as the element is the technique students use for their learning to assess how well students learn language (Oxford, 2003, p. 1). Lee (2010, p. 132) notes that learners' use of instructional techniques is about learning something more effectively. Students who usually have their correct learning strategies will get a better understanding. In addition, Oxford (1990, p. 8) notes that learning techniques contribute to making learning simpler, quicker, more fun, more self-directed, more efficient and more transferable to new situations. Their better understanding will result good marks in their learning. Self-report is the best way to uncover understudies' learning methodologies (Abedi, Namaziandost & Akbari, 2019; Chamot, 2004). Be that as it may, self-report can be less precise source if the students don't report honestly. Hence, when an analyst needs to uncover students' learning systems, he/she have to be cautious when gathering the related data to the students. By doing as such, it is trusted that the specialist will get progressively precise information. From the speculations above, learning procedures can be built as learning apparatuses which chose by students to help them fruitful in the learning procedure. Also, the learning procedures need to make the learning simpler, quicker, and increasingly agreeable.

The main purpose of this study was to check Iranian EFL learners and teachers' attitude towards using LLS. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

To achieve this aim, the following research questions are addressed:

1. Do Iranian EFL learners have positive attitude towards using LLS?
2. Do Iranian EFL teachers have positive attitude towards using LLS?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 40 language learners (*n* = 20) and teachers (*n* = 20) who were located in Ahvaz, Iran. The language learners age range was from 17 to 21 and the teachers' age was from 24 to 33. The language learners as the first group have been studying English as a foreign language for at least 6 years. The language learners' level of English language proficiency was determined on the basis of their scores on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and they were intermediate. Moreover, the second group of the participants involved 20 Iranian language teachers employed at different language institutes in Ahvaz, Iran. In this study only male learners and teachers were included.

2.2. Instruments

The first instrument of this study was the OPT. The validity of the test is self-evident. This test enabled the researcher to select those learners who were compatible with the conditions of the study. The OPT was used to assess students' language level. It also enabled the researcher to have a greater understanding of their level of proficiency (i.e., elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate). According to the OPT, the learners whose scores were 20 and above (out of 70) were considered as the intermediate learners.

The second instrument was English language learning strategy inventory (ELLSI) designed by Griffiths (2007), in two versions, for language teachers and learners. Griffiths and Parr (2001) have recently reported that the English language instructor respondents faced difficulties with strategic grouping based on Oxford's (1990) technique inventory for language learning in their study. In this respect, Griffiths (2007, p. 93) claimed that 'a technique such as finding opportunities for communication in English, for example, could be called metacognitive as it requires self-management, but could also be considered social as it includes contact with others by its very definition'. These problems may confuse language teachers in assessing the strategy of their learners, therefore, the current study employed Griffiths' novel survey tool (Griffiths, 2007). Importantly, as Griffiths noted, 'strategy elements for the

new questionnaire were not clustered, but merged to provide an aggregate strategy level ranking and also analysed on an individual point basis' (Griffiths, 2007, p. 93). On a 5-point Likert scale, the ELLSI contains 32 strategic related items. The Students ' Version was designed to generate feedback from language learners on the extent of their use of their technique, while the Teachers ' Version was created to elicit reports from language teachers on the value of LLS for their learners.

2.3. Data analysis procedure

The collected data through the aforesaid instrument were analysed and interpreted according to the objectives of the study. Quantitative data were statistically analysed using version 26 of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) program, and descriptive analyses (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were run.

3. Result

The first research question of this study aimed to check if Iranian EFL learners have positive attitudes towards using VLS. To find a reasonable answer to this question, one sample t-test conducted:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the learners' attitude scores

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Attitude	20	12.556	4.362	2.798

Table 2. One-sample *t*-test results for the learners' attitude scores

	Test value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Attitude	226.56	18	0.000	6.09	6.59	14.68

It is clear that the learners' attitude was significantly positive since the *p*-value was less than the significance level ($p < 0.05$). The learners, thus, did welcome using LLS.

The second research question of this study tried to investigate if Iranian EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards using VLS. To find a reasonable response to this question, one sample *t*-test conducted:

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the teachers' attitude scores

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Attitude	20	10.89	3.219	1.989

Table 4. One-sample *t*-test results for the teachers' attitude scores

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Attitude	13.948	18	0.000	5.890	7.561	13.298

According Table 4, since the Sig. is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that Iranian EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards using LLS.

4. **Discussion and conclusion**

Based on the results of the present study, it was revealed that both Iranian EFL teachers and learners have positive attitudes toward**s** using LLS. Education techniques and strategies are thought to be responsible for the successful acquisition of languages and to be an important determinant of the ultimate success of language learning. Therefore, good language learning techniques are also important in learning English as a foreign language. Learning strategies are intentional actions that language learners take to make learning more effective. Such reports reflect Griffiths ' strong knowledge of the teachers ' related performance in the ESL sense (Griffiths, 2007) as well as Agazade and Vefali (2011) in the EFL context. The strategies a student uses to learn a second language depend greatly on their individual learning style. Some students are outgoing and will experiment freely and frequently while learning a new language. Other students are more introverted, preferring a more individual, private approach to the way they learn and practice the language. The strategies used by an outgoing student may vary significantly when compared with the strategies of a more reserved student.

Traditionally, instructors have been considered to play two essential capacities: instructional and administrative. From one perspective, educators convey, give, supply and transmit information to students. To put it plainly, they are educators. Then again, educators are additionally responsible for the association of the class, settle on significant choices, devise exercises, produce materials, design and evaluate understudies' work. They play out the job of supervisors also. These two capacities supplement one another and by and by it is hard to isolate one from the other. In a more forward-thinking and humanistic point of view (Moskowitz, 1973; Nunan, 1988), instructing and learning forms are the aftereffect of a mutual cooperation and collaboration among educators and students. Students have become the genuine administrators of learning and as a result, an adjustment in center from the teachers to the students is by all accounts fundamental. Nunan alludes to this as the learner-focused curriculum. The instructor is currently a facilitator of learning and should similarly manage the qualities and shortcomings of their students. However, as Allwright (1981) claims, we ought not anticipate that students should be uniquely gifted and show specific aptitudes at the sorts of dynamic engaged with the management of language learning. Here untruths the avocation of learner training, as a way to include students in choosing their own learning.

The results of the study are compatible with the Majd's findings (2014), she investigated the effects of teaching LLS on anxiety level and motivation of Iranian students. In her study, a Cambridge Proficiency Test was used and 40 Iranian homogeneous participants among learners who were 12–14 years of age were selected. According to the results of the proficiency test, they were at intermediate level. The learners were taught how to use LLS during communication in the foreign language. At the end of 3-month teaching and applying these strategies to the class activities, oral and written Cambridge Proficiency Test were held again to determine whether there was an improvement in their communication skills. A five-point Likert Scale questionnaire was also used to measure their anxiety level and motivation during communication in English after learning and using LLS. The findings of the study confirmed that teaching LLS to EFL learners and applying them to the class activities is a practical way to improve student's communication skills, increase their motivation and decrease their anxiety level.

The results of this study support the findings which were discovered by Yarmohammadi and Seif (1992). They undertook research into the application of different LLS for solving students' oral and written communication problems. The researchers identified that strategies of literal translation, approximation and topic avoidance developed students' writing, while code switching, appealing for the help and approximation strategies improved oral tasks. The findings of the present study revealed that LLS can help Iranian EFL learners to lean speak English language more easily. So, applying the LLS is suggested in Iranian English classes.

Moreover, the findings of the present study are in line with Maleki (2007) who investigated the teachability of LLS for university students. He used a textbook which dealt with specific LLS such as

approximation, circumlocution, foreign zing, word coinage, appeals for assistance, and time stalling devices for the experimental group. The control group used a textbook without LLS use. It was suggested that teaching LLS could be effective and conducive to English language learning.

Overall it can be shown from this data that LLS is an effective tool for helping students bridge communication gaps. By learning different techniques and a set of core expressions, students became more confident in their ability to communicate, even in situations where they did not fully understand all the language, or when the person they were communicating with did not understand them.

This study has some limitations which are dealt with in this section.

1. This study investigated included only male learners and teachers.
2. Only intermediate EFL learners participated in this study.
3. The number of the participants was restricted only to 40 students.

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