

EFFECTS OF LEARNERS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON THEIR LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Language proficiency is one prominent factor that could affect the use of language learning strategies (LLSs) in learning English as a second language among the learners. The influence of language proficiency on the use of LLSs might differ as language learning has extended to the contexts of learning other than the learners' differences. With that in view, this study seeks to examine various types of LLSs based on the language proficiency of 1699 learners in a Malaysia tertiary context. This study utilised the adapted version of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, 1990) Findings revealed that high proficiency learners employed LLSs from high to medium level whereas average and low learners showed medium strategy use of all LLSs. One-way ANOVA tests further indicated that there were significant differences in the use of direct strategies based on their language proficiency. It was also found that language proficiency had a significant influence on the use of cognitive, compensation, social, metacognitive and affective strategies. Positive to mix variation of the high strategy use for individual items of SILL with significant differences were reported. Implications of this study were also discussed.

KEYWORDS: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, LEARNERS' DIFFERENCES, METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES, AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Introduction

In Malaysia, English is considered as a second language after the national language, *Bahasa Melayu*. Even though English is widely used in Malaysian education, average Malaysian students are still unable to master this language adequately in the aspects of verbal fluency, writing compositions and using proper grammar, which resulted in unsatisfactory examination results (Kiram, Sulaiman, Swanto, & Din, 2015). This has created problems for "academically able students" to enrol in universities because good command of English is regarded as an advantage for students to access information and all kinds of knowledge, which are mostly written in English (Kiram et al., p. 2). Such issue on poor language proficiency should be of concern to especially the educators, scholars and policy makers. This is due to the reason that having good communication skills in English will ensure high employability rate among these undergraduates because they will be only able to perform effectively to meet the challenging nature of current workplace communication if they possess high proficiency in the English language (Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012). Similarly, Navaratnam (2014) also asserted that good proficiency in English enhanced graduates' worth for employment especially in the corporate world. Phang (2006) further stated that poor command of English language had caused the college graduates to remain unemployed (as cited in Kassim & Ali, 2010, p. 168) despite the numerous efforts by many relevant parties to increase the standard and language proficiency of the learners and to produce graduates who possess the ability to communicate and work effectively at the workplace. With these concerns, this paper aims to discuss the use of LLSs based on their language proficiency as exposure