Learning Strategies Preference of Iraqi EFL Learners

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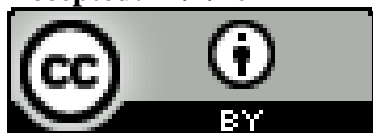**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**
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Abstract:

The current study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL learners' knowledge and preference of language learning strategies. Data are collected using two self-reported questionnaires; a background questionnaire and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, Oxford, 1990) with some modifications to meet the needs of this study. The following questions are asked: 1-Are students aware of the concept of LLS? 2- If yes, how much they know about it? 3- What are the kinds of LLS they employed in their learning? 4- What are their preferred strategies? The questionnaires are submitted to a total sample that consists of 77 students. The results show that 80.5% of the students have no knowledge whatsoever about LLS. The rest of them (19.5%) shows confused and mixed information. Moreover, the metacognitive strategies are the most often used strategies with the highest "often" percentage of 53.1%. Next are the cognitive and memory strategies of 43.2% & 40.2 percentages respectively. These highest rates show the most preferred strategies used by the students in our department. As for the frequency of use, the metacognitive strategies are still the preferred and most frequently used with a total percentage of 92.6%. Memory strategies hold the second position with a total percentage of 90%. The rest shows the same range of frequency except the effective strategies that fall behind by approximately 10% to 15% less than the rest.

Keywords: language learning strategies, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

استراتيجيات التعلم المفضلة للطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية

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المستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة الى تقصي الستراتيجيات المفضلة للطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. تم جمع البيانات عن طريق استبيانين إثنين: الأول، وهو "تقصي الخلفية" ويهدف الى استبيان خلفية الطلبة المشاركين والثاني، وهو "جرد الستراتيجيات في تعلم اللغات" المعد من قبل Oxford (1990) والذي يهدف الى تقصي ستراتيجيات التعلم المفضلة لدى الطلبة ومدى معرفتهم بها. اشتملت العينة على 77 طالبا وطالبة. أظهرت النتائج أن 80.5% من الطلبة لا يمتلكون أدنى المعلومات عن هذه الستراتيجيات. بينما كانت إجابات النسبة 19.5% المتبقية متضاربة وغير محددة. كذلك أظهرت النتائج أن الستراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفية هي الأكثر استخداما عند الطلبة بنسبة 53.1% تليها ستراتيجيات المعرفة والذاكرة على التوالي بنسب 43.2, 40.2 %. وعلى صعيد الستراتيجيات الأكثر تكرارا، احتفظت ستراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفة بالمركز الأول بنسبة كلية 92.6 % تتبعها ستراتيجيات التذكر بنسبة 90 %.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة، استراتيجية الجرد لتعلم اللغة.

Introduction:

From form to function, from structure to communication, a dramatic shift was originated by Dell Hymes and the emergence of communicative competence. The shift reshaped how language learning is perceived and instigated waves of scientific research. The impact resonated in all fields of linguistics, applied linguistic, teaching methodology, and curriculum design. The product of language learning and teaching is now "a communicatively competent language learner". Endeavors to accomplish this goal made it clear that more attention should be given to the learner himself rather than any other variable. In other words, learning is now student-centered rather than teacher-centered. The chain reaction goes on and scholars find themselves in a quest to understand the mechanism by which students process new information and ultimately lead to learning. That's to say, the "*strategies*" employed by students in their language learning. Researching this *capacity* has become a priority in language teaching scientific studies.

Earlier expeditions set out to explore and monitor *how good* learners learn the language and what they do in the process. These quests embodied

some attempts to generalize what *"good"* learners do as models to be followed by other learners. In my opinion, this perspective, the least to be said, is naïve as it is, obviously ignores one crucial fact in the field of language learning and teaching; which is *"individual differences"*. Variables such as emotions, attitudes, motivation, learning capacity, and many other variables should be taken into consideration. The only constructive outcome, <u>to me</u>, is to realize how *successful* learners have control over their learning strategies while *less successful* learners have not *yet*. Learners, even successful ones, are not necessarily aware of which strategies they are employing or how they are employing them. Furthermore, they even might be using strategies ineffectively as the strategy used is not suitable for the task at hand. Exploring learning strategies would provide teachers with insight "to support students with the necessary skills to identify and use LLS known to be effective in a given situation" Bessai (2018:167)

Questions:

- Are students aware of the concept of LLS?
- If yes, how much they know about it?
- What are the kinds of LLS they employed in their learning?
- What are their preferred strategies?

Definitions of Strategies Preference:

The research is an attempt to understand and theorize LSs resulted in so many attempts to define them. The concept of LSs is really shady and although it is originated in cognitive sciences, it has undergone many theoretical and comprehensive definitions to encompass its diversity, complexity, and dynamic aspects. The need for "consensus" is of crucial significance. Nevertheless, going through some definitions is definitely of great use to shed light on what LSs are about. As defined by Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) "any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information." Cognitively, Richards and Platt (1992:209) refer to the consciousness underlying LS implementation; "learning strategies are intentional behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information." Some, as French Claus and Casper (1983:67), provide socio-cultural attempts to define LSs stating that they are "attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language." According to Stern (1992:261), assumes

that it is how learners are engaged in learning activities stating that "the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques."

-----Lessard-Clouston (1997:2) states that "LSs share an essential assumption, that is human beings process information and clearly, LSs are involved in all learning, regardless of the content and context." In other words, language learning strategies (LLS) are no exception. Yet, for the sake of specifications of this study, a definition of LLS is provided. Again, LLS are defined differently and by different scholars. Going through the huge body of definitions, I chose to go with Oxford, (1992); as it appealed to me as more comprehensive and capturing for different aspects of LLS. She states that:

"LLS are specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability".

LLS Taxonomy and Classification:

As argued beforehand, there is no total accord to what LLS are; there is no total accord to how they can or should be categorized. Some even argue that such an accord is highly improbable. (Oxford, 1990: 17) states that "classification conflicts are inevitable" and she wonders "whether it is – or ever will be – possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies." Nevertheless, it is invaluable to know how scholars classified and categorized these strategies to really grasp the concept as long as you keep in mind that these attempts are not fixed. LLS are more dynamic and changing than we think. However, I am not going into details of these categorizations. It is enough to be familiar with the general framework. For more details, it is recommended to consult the original literature.

Rubin's (1987) Taxonomy:

-----Rubin's was one of the foremost efforts to categories LLS. His idea for this classification is based on distinguishing two sets of strategies; those which have a direct contribution to language learning vs. indirect contribution. He specifies three major strategies as follows: learning strategies, communication

strategies, and social strategies. Each one has a body of sub-strategies. According to Rubin, learning strategies are directly related to language learning, whereas communication and social strategies are less directed.

O'Malley's (1985) Taxonomy:

------O'Malley et al argued that LLS fall into three major sub-categories; metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. This classification is concerned with the processes that take place while learning. Processes within metacognitive strategies are those that involve planning, organizing, and thinking about the process of learning itself. While the cognitive. While cognitive strategies are more directly related to the tasks and learning materials. Finally, processes such as cooperation and social mediation are involved in socio-affective strategies.

Stern's (1992) Taxonomy:

-----Stern came up with five LLS as follows; management and planning strategies, cognitive strategies, communicative - experiential Strategies, interpersonal strategies, and affective strategies. He states some sub-strategies within each category as well. As noticed, there are no significant additions to other classifications except for some ideas. For instance, the management category involves that learners take charge of developing their learning while the teacher plays the role of the facilitator. In communicative strategies, Stern gives prominence to those strategies that learners manipulate to evade communication flow interruptions. Finally, he provides an account of strategies used by learners to reinforce positive attitudes towards the target language and target communities as well as overcoming emotional barriers and difficulties.

Oxford's (1990) Classification:

-----Analyzing many works on the classification of LLS, I feel inclined to go into more details of Oxford's (1990). The organization of this taxonomy is simple and uncomplicated as it is satisfactory. So, let me state the general categories first, then discuss the sub-sets. Oxford distinguishes between what she calls direct and indirect strategies. Both direct and indirect strategies are sub-indexed into six classes as follows:

DIRECT STRATEGIES

- *Memory*
- *Cognitive*

● *Compensation strategies*

INDIRECT STRATEGIES

● *Metacognitive Strategies*

● *Affective Strategies*

● *Social Strategies*

Oxford classifies the general categories on basis of direct involvement with the subject matter (the language whether foreign or second). Accordingly, we can see how the subsets are directly or indirectly manipulate learning materials.

Memory:

Memory related strategies are concerned with the process of storing information. Good memory strategies should result in transferring acquired information from short-term to long-term memory and, more importantly, should also result in an effective filing system for the sake of fast accessing and retirement when needed. As far as language learning is concerned, the filing system involves creating semantic maps and collections to embody the sounds and imageries. According to Oxford, these memory-related strategies are as follows:

● A. *Creating mental linkages*

● *B. Applying images and sounds*

● *C. Reviewing well*

● *D. Employing action*

Cognitive:

In short, cognitive strategies are mental procedures or techniques used by language learners to facilitate and make sense of their own learning process. Such strategies help learners to select appropriate and directly relevant data and dismissal of irrelevant ones. They are as follows:

● A. *Practicing*

● *B. Receiving and sending messages strategies*

● *C. Analyzing and reasoning*

● *D. Creating structure for input and output*

According to Oxford, LLS "are used for forming and revising internal mental models and receiving and producing messages in the target language". Cognitive strategies involve manipulation of cognitive skills such as

summarizing and organizing language learning materials, comprehension, translation, applying problem-solving procedures, and so on.

Compensation:

Compensation strategies are of special interest to me. Learners employ them as evasive maneuvers. Just like a jet fighter being chased by a heat-seeking missile, learners deploy whatever strategies they have up their sleeves to overcome any gap of knowledge they face such as modifying the received message, combining words, or even escape to switching to the native language. They are mostly used in communication to lengthen communication and keep a conversation going. Oxford states two sub-sets under compensation as follows:

- A. *Guessing intelligently*
- B. *Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing*

Metacognitive:

When learners try to exhort some sort of management on their learning process, these management procedures fall under the title of metacognitive strategies. Learners tend to control, plan, focus arrange, and evaluate their learning. Taking control over learning is very important to achieve learning efficiency and lowering anxiety levels through positive thinking and reinforcing learners' self-esteem. It has three sub-strategies as follows:

- A. *Centering your learning*
- B. *Arranging and planning your learning*
- C. *Evaluating your learning*

Affective:

-----Just like metacognitive, affective strategies equip learners with control. But this time control over their motivations, emotions, feelings, and attitudes towards language learning.

- A. *Lowering your anxiety*
- B. *Encouraging yourself*
- C. *Taking your emotional temperature*

Social:

The last one is social strategies. Learners employ such strategies in social interactions to maintain social relationships and participate in discourse verbal activities.

- A. *Asking questions*
- B. *Cooperating with others*
- C. *Empathizing with others*

Obviously, these strategies are of a great importance to language learning. Languages are socially rooted and affected. Their major function is to communicate with others. Social strategies involve activation of interaction with speakers of the target language, cooperation with peers in form of pair- or group-work which is essential to develop cultural competencies as well.

It is worth mentioning that these sets are really interconnected providing a network of support to each other. This kind of web-relation would ultimately instigate effective learning. Moreover, I stated at the beginning that these attempts to classify and categories LLS are not some God-given scripts. The nature of strategies is dynamic and always variable. The next section provides insight into their characteristics.

Features of LLS:

One of the outcomes of research frenzy on LLS is the analysis of their features. Many came up with different, yet interrelated, sets of these features. Shedding some light on them would provide an opportunity for teachers to make sense of these strategies. In this study, I provide two of these characterizations as examples; Lessard-Clouston (1997) and (Oxford, 1990). Four basic features of LLS are stated by Lessard-Clouston as follows:

1. "LLS are learner-generated; they are steps taken by language learners
2. LLS enhance language learning and help to develop language competence, as reflected in the learner's skills in listening, speaking, reading, or writing the L2 or FL
3. Third, LLS may be visible (behaviours, steps, techniques, etc.) or unseen (thoughts, mental processes).
4. Fourth, LLS involve information and memory (vocabulary knowledge, grammar rules, etc.)" (p:2).

These basic features are general in a sense. In other words, they provide an over-all or universal account of LLS nature. Yet, they are of a great help. Teachers should understand that these strategies are learners generated. Learners do what they have to do to accomplish learning. Teachers' job is to figure them out; help learners to realize the strategies they are using sub-consciously and eventually develop them. Teachers need to know that LLS should develop language competency as reflected in their learners' language skills. Otherwise, "Huston, we have a problem". And finally, it is important for

teachers to understand the procedures of applying these strategies whether they can or cannot see how they are applied.

Oxford (1990) adds some extra features to those stated above which asserts the idea of diversity in analyzing LLS. She states that LLS;

1. allow learners to become more self-directed
2. expand the role of language teachers
3. are problem-oriented
4. involve many aspects, not just the cognitive
5. can be taught
6. are flexible
7. are influenced by a variety of factors. (p:9).

Oxford here refers first to the product of employing LLS, which is a self-directed learner. This is the logical outcome since LLS are learner's generated and it is related to the problem he/she faces while learning. As seen in taxonomies, Oxford emphasizes that LLS are not restricted to the cognitive and mental domain. More importantly, pedagogically wise, she states that LLS are teachable. Teachers need to train students on how to employ strategies in their learning to enhance and develop the desired competencies. Finally, she accentuates the dynamic and flexible nature of LLS and how they are affected by many variables. Each learning setting is unique and each has its own identity and intervening variables starting with context and the learners themselves.

Significance of LLS:

The impact of LLS on language learning is undeniable. All dimensions of the process of acquiring a second or a foreign language are directly or indirectly affected by the learning strategy which the learner applies; whether consciously or unconsciously. Hence, it is of a crucial significance to linguists, applied linguists, and all involved in language learning and teaching to understand the nature of LLS. Teachers should realize the individual differences of their students when they come to learning. Each and every student learns at his own pace. Each student applies his own learning strategy even though it might seem similar. Each and every student has his strengths and weaknesses. Neglecting these facts is not acceptable in modern teaching community. Figuring out students' learning strategies is a *must* on behalf of both teachers and learners alike. Scholars claim that incongruity between teaching methodology and learning strategies which are applied by learners would

instigate learning failure, frustration, and would reflect badly on learner's motivation towards language learning as well as their self-esteem. Sprenger, (2003) claims that "teachers should assess the learning styles of their students and adapt their classroom methods to best fit each student's learning style". Oxford et al (1992) argues that

> *"EFL teachers should consider the students' learning styles and their own teaching styles which often reflect their favored learning styles. Without this knowledge, clashes would affect students' learning potential and their attitudes toward learning. Both the teachers and students should be aware of their styles and try to harmonize them"*

-----Moreover, LLS serve the ultimate goal of language learning; that is the outcome of a communicative competent learner. Oxford (1990) claims that they are "tools for active, self-directed involvement, which are essential for developing communicative competence" (p. 1). Wong and Nunan (2011) refer to the fact many studies established that the use of LLS help learners becoming effective in mastering the target language inside and outside the classrooms.

Methodology:

To answer the questions of the current study, an exploratory method is applied. The main aim of this study is to get deeper insights into LLS use by Iraqi EFL learners at college level. Data are collected using two self-reported questionnaires; background questionnaire and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, Oxford, 1990). Both questionnaires are modified to meet the needs of this study. A few options are added to the background questionnaire to check students' awareness and level of knowledge of LLS; while the Likert scale of the SIL is shrunken to a three-points scale (often, sometimes, never).

LLS are unobservable as they are mental. They can't be assumed or inferred simply by observing learners' behaviors. Therefore, asking learners to reveal their own *secrets* has been the only way to get insights about their learning strategies. Self-reported tools such as reflective questionnaires, interviews, and surveys have been used to explore this area as well as personal blogs, diaries, and journals. My choice of assessment tool in this research, i.e. (SILL, Oxford, 1990), is not random. Through my readings, I have found that it has been applied in various languages as a standardized tool of strategy

assessment. The questionnaire has reported a value of 0.91 & 9.4 in internal consistency reliabilities using Cronbach's alpha formula. Moreover, Bessai (2018) reports that it is the most widely used all over the world as a strategy investigation tool. Green & Oxford asserts that by the year 1995,

>"*SILL was utilized as a primary, key instrument in more than forty studies, including twelve dissertations and theses. These comprised almost 8,000 students around the world*"

However, both the SILL and the background questionnaires have been modified to suit the uniquity and students' level in this context. As for the background, first, two questions were added to check for تحذف students' awareness of LLS. Second, the question of what other languages have you studied? Some choices were added. The City of Mosul is considered as a city of multi ethnicities. The majority of the residents are Arab, yet there are a lot of ethnic minorities such as Kurds, Chaldo-Assyrians, Turkmen, Shabak as well as Ezidies. Arabic and English are taught in schools as standard languages in Iraq. Certain schools have French or Kurdish within their curricula. Some other languages are taught within more restricted contexts. Syriac or Aramean is sometimes taught in Churches in Chaldo-Assyrians communities. The same can be said about Turkmanli communities as the study of Turkish is a trend nowadays. Therefore, this section is modified to include such languages.

There have been no modifications as far as the questions within the SILL. Yet, the five-points Likert scale are modified and contracted to 3 points; Often, sometimes, and never. The original scale consists of five points as follows:

1. Never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always true of me.

-----I found this scale both confusing to my students and time-consuming. The idea is to get the students to reply as spontaneously as possible. Overthinking might make the students bored and select random and haphazard choices which would jeopardize the authenticity of their answers.

Both questionnaires are conducted online using Google forms. The link is published in a common Facebook group created by the Department for the

students. All students are urged to participate. The idea is to investigate LLS on a wide scale and get a broad idea about the LLS used by our students; 77 students participated.

Results and discussion:

------As stated earlier, data are collected using two self-reported questionnaires; a background questionnaire and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, Oxford, 1990). Hence, I am going to discuss the results respectively to answer the questions of the study. See appendix 1 for percentages of students' responses.

Background Check:

-----The first 5 questions are used to elicit general information about the participants as follows. Out of 77 respondents, 53.2% are females while 56.8 % are males. In response to the inquiry about the period each participant has been studying English, 57.1 % stated that they have been studying English for less than 10 years, while 42.9 % more than 10 years. Next are the responses of language proficiency as reported by the students themselves as a (self-evaluation). The majority of 62.3 % of the respondents reported having a good level of proficiency; only 16.9 % think they have an excellent level; 13% reported to be fair and finally, 7.8% think they have a poor proficiency level. As for the percentages of students' responses to the inquiry of what other languages they have studied. The responses to *other* refer to Arabic which is a mandatory subject in Iraqi schools. Some schools have French and Kurdish as optional subjects. As the percentages show, the sample students have studied different languages; mainly Arabic and Kurdish.

------Concerning the reasons why do students want to study English? Understanding students' motives behind choosing to study English out of 5 other majors in the College of Education for Humanities would provide insights into how motivated the students are. The biggest ratio of the responses is to *be interested in English* and the *need for future career*; 60% & 63% respectively. Other reasons varied in percentage like 39% for interest in culture; 46% for travelling abroad and finally; 13% for communication with native speaker friends.

------To sum up, the sample of the study seems to be balanced as far as sex and the amount of time spent studying English as a foreign language. The majority of the sample shows a good level of proficiency in the language. So, the sample

is described to have a good proficiency level in average. Moreover, responses show that the sample has studied languages other than English which indicates that students have been employing some language learning strategies whether consciously or unconsciously. Finally, the results of the background questionnaire show that the sample is motivated to learn English due to several reasons.

Questions Number One & Two (awareness):

- Are students aware of the concept of LLS?
- If yes, how much they know about it?

-----The next three questions are added to the original background questionnaire made by Oxford to provide insight into students' awareness of LLS. The questions are not mandatory. The students are urged not to respond to these questions if they have no knowledge of them. However, 22 students chose to answer. The questions investigate students' knowledge of the concept of LLS, their classifications, and application. Out of 77, 55 students chose not to respond to these questions as an indication of unawareness of LLS concept, classification, and application. The rest 22 provided answers as follows: 15 students state that they have knowledge about LLS; 10 of them claim to know how LLS are classified; while only 8 of them claim that they know how LLS are applied. Obviously, this provides an answer to the first and second questions of this study and it shows that 80.5% of the students have no knowledge whatsoever about LLS. The rest of them (19.5%) shows confused and mixed information.

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning:

-----The SILL consists of a total of fifty questions which are not equally distributed to six main categories as follows: A memory strategies; B cognitive strategies; C compensation strategies; D metacognitive strategies; E affective strategies; and F social strategies. Statistical descriptive analysis in a form of frequency percentages is used to analyze the collected data. First, the percentage of each item is accounted for <u>then</u> a whole percentage of the responses in each category is calculated to provide answers to the third and fourth questions asked in this study:

- What are the kinds of LLS that the students employed in their learning?
- What are the students preferred strategies?

A: Memory Strategies:

This category includes nine items. Students' responses percentages are as follows:

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Often	53.2	49.4	41.6	50.6	28.6	20.8	24.7	62.	31.2	40.2%
Sometimes	44.2	42.9	46.8	41.6	46.8	40.3	58.4	64.9	62.3	49.8%
Never	2.6	7.7	11.6	7.8	24.6	38.9	16.9	9.1	6.5	13.7%

B: Cognitive Strategies:

This category includes fourteen items. Students' responses percentages are as follows:

Item	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
Often	35.1	55.8	50.6	48.1	39	51.9	36.4	36.4	51.9	48.1	32.5	35.1	44.2	40.3	43.2%
Sometimes	57.1	40.8	41.6	40.3	37.7	37.7	51.9	51.9	39	42.9	46.8	51.9	39	42.9	44.3%
Never	7.8	4.4	7.8	11.6	10.4	10.4	11.7	11.7	9.14	9	20.7	13	16.9	16.8	11.5%

C: Compensation Strategies:

This category includes six items. Students' responses percentages are as follows:

Item	24	25	26	27	28	29	Total
Often	37.7	39	31.2	26	31.2	63.6	38.1%
Sometimes	55.8	48.1	49.4	51.9	62.3	31.2	49.7%
Never	6.5	12.9	19.4	22.1	6.5	5.2	12.1%

D: Metacognitive Strategies:

This category includes nine items. Students' responses percentages are as follows:

Item	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	Total
Often	62.3	63.6	77.9	58.4	29.9	40.3	46.8	50.6	48.1	53.1%
Sometimes	36.4	35.1	20.8	36.4	51.9	45.5	44.2	41.6	44.2	39.5%
Never	4.3	1.3	1.3	5.2	18.2	14.2	9	7.8	7.7	7.6%

E: Effective Strategies:

This category includes six items. Students' responses percentages are as follows:

Item	39	40	41	42	43	44	Total
Often	53.2	36.6	27.3	32.5	22.1	39	35.1%
Sometimes	39	33.8	54.5	46.8	35.1	42.9	42.0%
Never	7.8	2.6	18.2	20.7	22.8	18.1	15.0%

Social Strategies:

This category includes six items. Students' responses percentages are as follows:

| Item	45	46	47	48	49	50	Total
Often	49.4	39	23.4	32.5	32.5	45.5	37%
Sometimes	46.8	45.5	67.5	50.6	54.5	39	50.6%
Never	3.8	15.5	9.1	16.9	13	15.5	12.3%

Questions number three & four:

- What are the kinds of LLS they employed in their learning?
- What are their preferred strategies?

The results of the SILL offer insights and a well-organized body of data that provide answers to the third and the fourth-and-final question raised by this study. In the previous tables, it is obvious that our students employ all kinds of

the six categories of LLS; with different rates and frequency of use within these types of course. The answer to what is the preferred strategies employed by the students is dependent on the highest percentage of frequency of use as shown in the following chart. As stated earlier, the original five-points scale of the SILL are reduced to a three-points scale in this study; namely, Often, sometimes, and never to save time and clear any confusion on the students' part. To decide the highest percentage of preference, it is logical to depend on the total highest percentages that represent the option *"Often"* which reveals the preferred LLS used mostly by the students.

As shown above, the metacognitive strategies are the most often used strategies with the highest "often" percentage of 53.1. Next are the cognitive and memory strategies of 43.2% & 40.2 percentages respectively. These highest rates show the most preferred strategies used by the students in our department. In my opinion, it would be of great value to merge the percentages of the answers to "often" and "sometimes" to get an overall perspective of frequency of use.

The metacognitive strategies are still the preferred and most frequently used with a total percentage of 92.6%. Memory strategies hold the second position with a total percentage of 90%. The rest shows the same range of frequency except the effective strategies that fall behind by approximately 10% to 15% less than the rest.
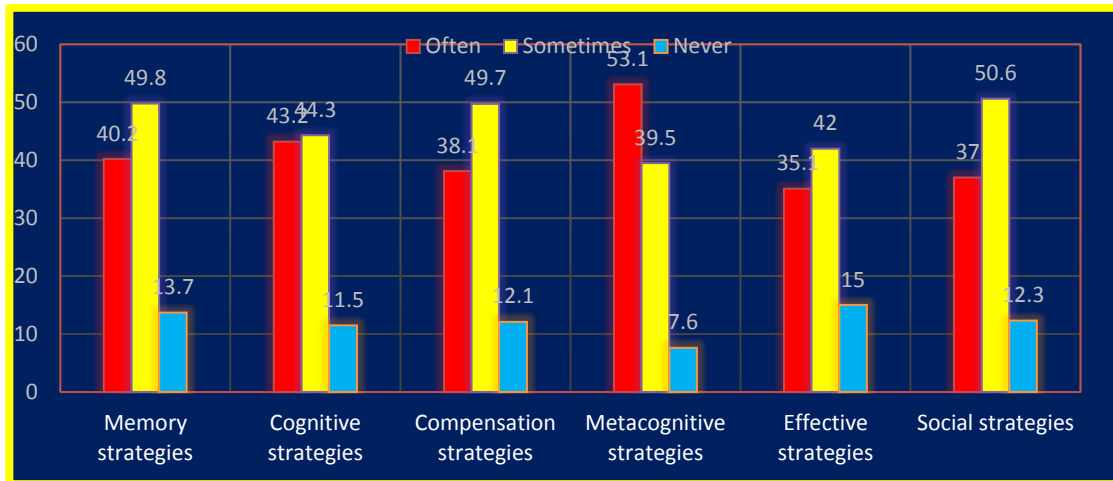
General Remarks

The results show that the students use a vast number of strategies while learning, yet, they are not really aware of the concept of LLS, how they are classified and applied. I urge my colleagues to dedicate time to explain what LLS are and the terminology used in this area. The results and questionnaires used in this study are of a great significance and would provide insights for both teachers and students alike. Raising students' awareness of the LLS they are applying in their learning would definitely affect their proficiency level. Moreover, I urge my colleagues to allocate a schedule for LLS training to equip the students with knowledge and abilities to apply LLS more properly and most efficiently.
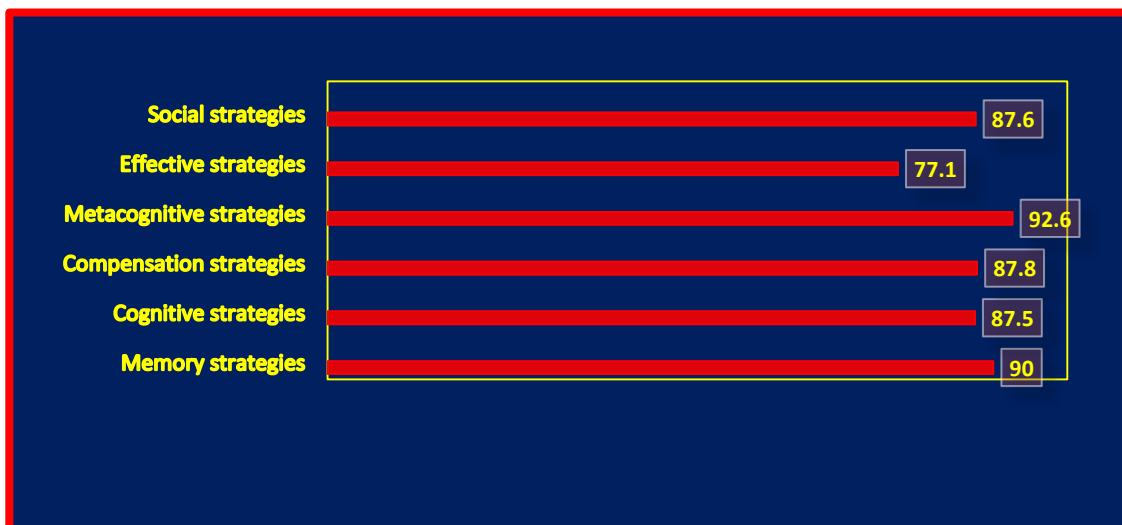
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