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Systematic Review on The Role of Gender and Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

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Abstract

Learners of a second language often face numerous obstacles and find it an uphill struggle to master the language. These struggles generally encompass internal as well as external challenges. Some examples of internal factors comprise low motivation, interest, and focus besides a poor attitude towards the target language in question. Meanwhile, some external factors normally include ineffective and inappropriate teaching and learning (T & L) methods, an unsupportive classroom environment, and a lack of support and encouragement from family and friends. This study aims to determine the role of gender in English as a second language (ESL) learners' use of language learning strategies (LLS). Online databases such as Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Scopus, and ProQuest were used to identify the relevant literature. Online searches conducted from 2010 and 2022 revealed 197 studies on the topic. The systematic literature review method was employed for this study. However, only 23 kinds of literature out of 197 were selected for inclusion according to specific criteria outlined by the research purpose mentioned above. Based on the results it was found that gender

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does play a significant role in the ESL learners' use of LLS due to several factors such as aptitude, emotional and communicative motivation, and positive attitude. Moreover, individual personality, social differences, physiological functioning, and home environment can influence the LLS used by ESL learners. It was found that the preferred LLS includes cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, gender, cognitive, motivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years, it is evident that both genders have greatly progressed economically and socially. Much of the development experienced by society can be attributed to the education level and work experience gained. As such, it is imperative to develop a mindset on lifelong learning particularly language learning as it has been proven that employers require employees not only to possess hard skills but also soft skills. Hence, educators and administration start to take a concerted approach to ensure that all learners regardless of gender acquire the necessary skills particularly language skills to guarantee that they will become employable in the future. It is a fact that both genders approach language learning differently. Moreover, most English curriculums and teaching methods do not cater to the varying needs and learning styles of their students and are usually conducted in typical classrooms. This study aims to determine the role of gender in English as a second language (ESL) learners' use of language learning strategies (LLS).

Thus, to gain a clearer picture of whether gender plays a significant role in the use of Language Learning Strategies in learning the English language, a systematic literature review will be conducted on the 23 research articles published by previous researchers. Based on the research question below, this study aims to determine the role of gender in English as a second language (ESL) learners' use of language learning strategies (LLS). It is interesting to investigate whether gender plays a pivotal role in language acquisition and whether the use of LLS has a significant influence on the language acquisition process.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Does gender play a significant role in language learning strategies in learning the English language?

According to Brown (1980), learning strategies are defined as processes that may directly contribute to learning while Chamot (1987, as cited by Hismanoglu, 2000) defined learning strategies as actions that facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content areas of information. Language learning strategies (LLS) are defined as steps to aid language acquisition and to enhance the language acquisition process (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). O'Malley & Chamot (1990) have categorized LLS into three main components namely cognitive strategy (application of a technique to a task such as analyzing, repeating, and reasoning), metacognitive strategy (linked to the process of learning which includes monitoring, planning, and organizing), and socio-affective or social strategy (being involved with others which comprise seeking clarification and co-operating). On the other hand, Oxford (1990) has expanded these strategies into six categories with an additional 3 strategies besides the existing ones which include the following: affective strategy (for handling emotions and attitudes), memory strategy (storing and retrieving new information), and compensation strategy (to overcome weaknesses or gaps in current knowledge by guessing or using gestures). LLS

is necessary to overcome the challenges in language acquisition while enhancing the acquisition process. The available literature has shown that the most preferred LLS among primary school students is affective strategy while cognitive strategy is the least preferred (Dawi & Hashim, 2022). On the other hand, secondary school students mostly prefer to use the metacognitive strategy followed by compensation, cognitive, memory, social, and effective strategies (Sukarni, 2019). Meanwhile, students at the tertiary level have a preference for affective strategies which were followed by metacognitive, compensation, cognitive, social, and memory strategies, respectively (Sukyng, 2021).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The systematic literature review method was employed for this study. Numerous online journal databases were used and 23 types of literature were selected for inclusion according to specific criteria outlined by the research purpose mentioned above. Moreover, it was already determined that all the studies in question should be open-access peer-reviewed published texts or scholarly journals. Besides that, the published studies must be in English. In addition, the studies were published between 2010 and 2022 and limited to the past 12 years. The initial stage of this systematic literature review process involved identifying the appropriate keywords that relate to the research. Certain keywords which include "gender", "language learning strategies", and "language acquisition" were used to generate a search using online databases such as Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Scopus, and ProQuest to identify the relevant literature. Online searches conducted from 2010 and 2022 revealed 197 studies on the topic. The systematic literature review method was employed for this study. However, only 23 types of literature out of 197 were selected for inclusion according to specific criteria outlined by the research purpose mentioned above. The screening procedure on the aspects that were already determined was conducted after the identification of the corresponding studies was completed. The systematic review was conducted in an impartial and unbiased manner to avoid any bias in the review process.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Table 1 below is a summary of the findings of this study.

Table 1

Findings of the Systematic Review

Author & Year	Country	Title	Sample	Outcome	Relevant Findings
1)Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014	Thailand	Gender differences in language learning style and language learning strategies	150 students in their first year in university	Negative	Gender does have effects on language learning style but there is no effect on language learning strategies
2)Mahmud & Nur, 2018	Indonesia	Exploring students' learning strategies and gender differences in English language teaching	71 senior high school students	Positive	Female students use cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies more often than male students. Meanwhile, the latter uses

Author & Year	Country	Title	Sample	Outcome	Relevant Findings
					memory, metacognitive, and affective strategies. Both genders use different learning strategies.
3)Nurlindawati, Yasin & Hadi, 2022	Indonesia	Gender-based differences in mastering English language skills	330 high school students	Positive	Female students outperform males. Females apply the cognitive strategy while males use the compensation strategy.
4)Liyanage, Indika and Bartlett, Brendan J., 2011	Sri Lanka	Gender and language learning strategies: looking beyond the categories	886 secondary students	Mixed	Female students were found to employ self-evaluation and planning strategies more frequently than their male peers, while no significant differences were found in self-monitoring strategies
5)Aydogan, Hakan & Akbarov, Azamat, 2014.	Turkey	The role of gender, age, academic achievement, LLS, and learning styles at tertiary level in EFL classes in Turkey	149 students at the tertiary level	Negative	The results showed that females used the same language learning strategies as frequently as males while learning English.
6)Ng, 2018	Thailand	Gender differences in preference for second language vocabulary learning strategies: a pilot study	15 students at the Tertiary level	Negative	Male students use form-focused strategies, metacognitive monitoring, and evaluation strategies more frequently while female students adopt meaning-focused

Author & Year	Country	Title	Sample	Outcome	Relevant Findings
					cognitive, and metacognitive planning strategies.
7) Ahsanah, 2020	Indonesia	Gender and age differences in the use of language learning strategies by junior and high school students	118 High school students	Mixed	Both genders showed no difference in language learning strategies preferences but the younger learners tend to use LLS more frequently than the older learners.
8) Mantero-Saiz Aja, 2021	Spain	Gender-based differences in EFL learners' LLS and productive vocabulary	51 High school students	Positive	Female students use LLS significantly more than male students.
9) Andini & Prasetyowati, 2021	Indonesia	Gender differences learning strategies at English language department students University of Muhammadiyah Malang.	37 University students	Negative	Female students use metacognitive and social learning strategies more frequently while male students use compensation and cognitive LLS.
10) Adel Abu Radwan, 2011	Oman	Effects of L2 proficiency and gender on the choice of language learning strategies by university students majoring in English.	128 university students	Positive	Male students use more social strategies than female students.
11) Xiyang, Fan, 2010	China	A study of gender differences in English learning strategies of middle school students.	422 Middle school students	Positive	Female students use more LLS than male students who use the memory strategy

Author & Year	Country	Title	Sample	Outcome	Relevant Findings
12) Yilmaz, 2010	Turkey	The relationship between LLS, gender, proficiency, and self-efficacy beliefs: a study of ELT learners in Turkey	140 University students	Positive	Female students use more LLS than male students who mainly use the compensation strategy
13) Ahmed Yahya Abdullah Otayf, 2019.	Saudi Arabia	The Role of Gender in Language Learning Strategies Among Male and Female Students At Jazan Secondary Schools	50 secondary students	Negative	In general, the results showed that gender had no significant differences in the use of strategies among female and male students.
14) Kayaoglu, 2012	Turkey	Gender-based differences in LLS of Science students	115 University students	Positive	Female students use more LLS than male students particularly memory, compensation, cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategy.
15) Ajeng, 2017	Indonesia	LLS by Indonesian EFL learners: a case study of gender roles	10 University students	Negative	LLS is used by both genders but males use more metacognitive strategies while females use more cognitive ones.
16) Sumarni & Rachmawaty, 2019	Indonesia	Gender differences in LLS	24 University students	Negative	LLS is used by both male and female students while the most preferred strategy is social strategy.
17) Kines, Mesut, 2021	Turkey	LLS used in EFL classes and role of gender in high school context	156 High school students	Positive	LLS is most often preferred by female than male students. However, the most preferred strategy is social, and the least

Author & Year	Country	Title	Sample	Outcome	Relevant Findings
18) Ma, Ruxian & Norhanim Abdul Samat (September 2022)	China	Chinese Undergraduate Students' Language Learning Strategy Use in Flipped English Learning and its Relationships to Gender and Proficiency.	109 University students	Negative	preferred is affective. The male and female participants were not significantly different in their strategy use.
19) Ranjan & Philominraj, 2020	India	LLS, motivation & gender in foreign language context	65 University students	Negative	There was no significant difference in the use of strategy concerning the gender of an individual. Males and females use social & metacognitive strategies the most and memory strategies the least.
20) Ho & Ng, 2016	Malaysia	Gender-based differences in LLS among undergraduates in a Malaysian public university	1708 University students	Positive	LLS is used more by female students and the most preferred strategy by both genders was metacognitive strategies while the least preferred was the effective strategy
21) Ansyari & Rahmi, 2016	Indonesia	A comparison between male & female students' LLS preference.	180 High school students	Negative	There was no significant difference with the LLS used by both genders but the metacognitive strategy was the most preferred strategy used by both genders.

Author & Year	Country	Title	Sample	Outcome	Relevant Findings
22) Bozinovic & Sindik, 2011.	Croatia	Gender differences in the use of LLS in adult foreign language learners.	181 College students	Positive	Females used more LLS and the most preferred strategies was memory strategies while the least preferred was socio-affective strategies.
23) Kaur, Manprit, & Mohamed Amin Embi, 2011	Malaysia	The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies and Gender among Primary School Students.	60 primary school students	Positive	The findings revealed a significant difference in the overall use of strategies between male and female students.

4.2. Study Characteristics

The list of literature featuring the outcome and findings of the articles reviewed is shown in the table above. Based on Figure 1, the 23 articles were from 11 countries of origin and sample. As depicted in Figure 2, a total of 13 studies reviewed were from the tertiary level; 8 studies from high school; and 2 studies from primary school. In Figure 3, the outcomes of the various studies consist of the following: positive outcome (48%), negative outcome (39%), and mixed outcome (13%).

Figure 1.

Study Distribution by Country

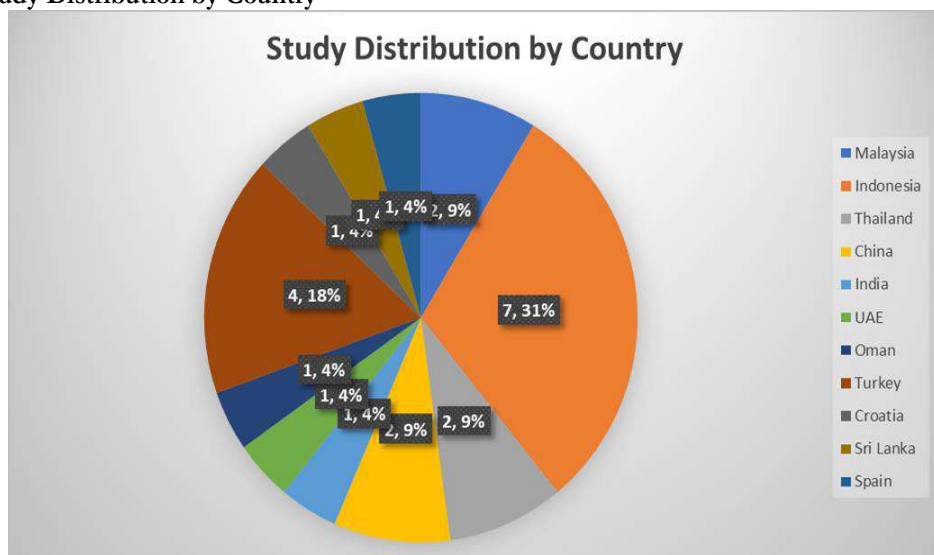


Figure 2.

Study Distribution by Sample

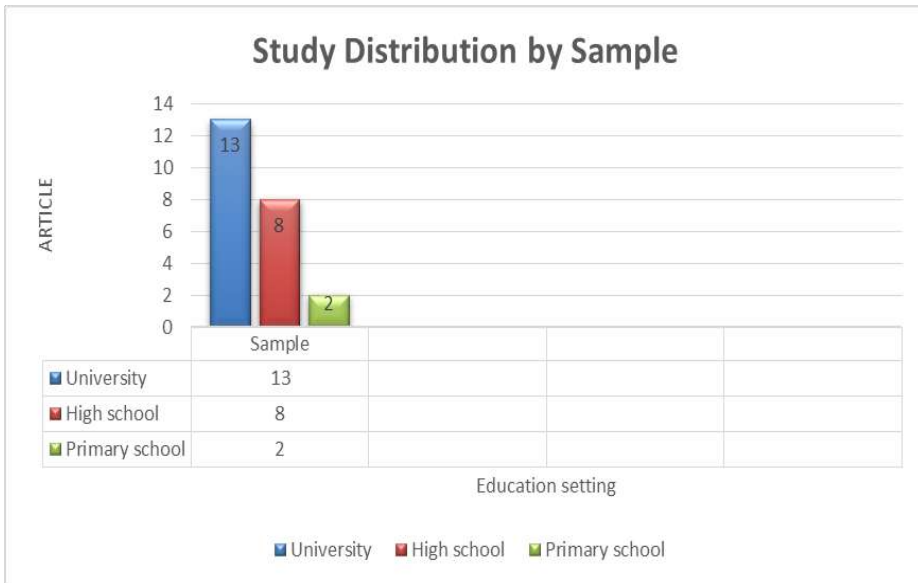
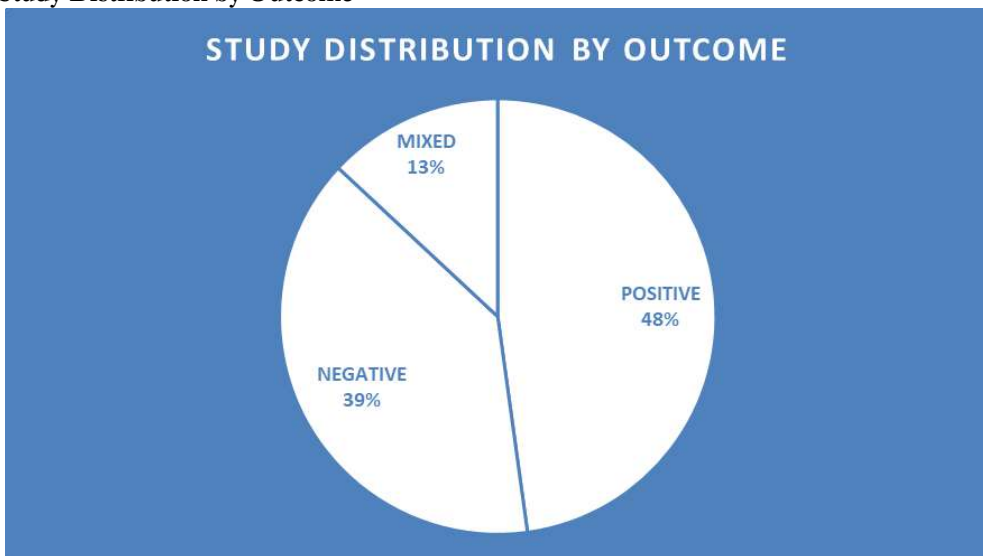


Figure 3.
Study Distribution by Outcome



4.3. Research Findings

In Figure 3, the outcomes of the various studies consist of the following: positive outcome (48%), negative outcome (39%), and mixed outcome (13%). This shows that the role of gender does play a significant role in the use of language learning strategies with the highest percentage of 48% whereby only 39% illustrated that there are no significant differences in the use of strategy among female and male students. On the other hand, only 13% depicted a mixed outcome whereby both genders showed no difference in language learning strategy preferences. However, the younger learners use LLS more frequently than the older learners (Ahsanah, 2020). In some cases, the learners who have a higher proficiency will use LLS more constantly than the less proficient ones regardless of gender (Ma & Norhanim, 2022).

Turkey has the highest positive outcome with 3 studies that show gender plays a significant role in the use of language learning strategies. On the other hand, Indonesia has the highest negative outcome with 4 studies showing that gender does not play a significant role in the use of language learning studies. In Figure 3, the chart illustrates that the positive outcome is 48% and it can be deduced that gender does play a significant role in the use of language learning strategies which greatly impact the learner's level of proficiency.

Nonetheless, according to Aydogan and Akbarov (2014), there are certainly other contributing factors affecting students' choice of language learning strategies and language performance while language learning strategies may have some effect on language learning performance. Sukying (2021) concurs and states that individual differences and contextual factors are some factors that influence the choice of language learning strategies. Moreover, a study by Oxford and Nyikos (1989) revealed that the number of years of language study and elective vs required course status have influenced the choice of language learning strategy among university students. Besides that, career orientation also had a strong influence on the selection of LLS. According to Ahsanah (2020), another contributing factor besides gender is age where older learners tend to use LLS less frequently than younger learners who are considered less inhibited and unafraid of making mistakes or asking questions.

The findings of this systematic literature review also found that female students show a higher preference for language learning strategies more frequently than male students in learning the English language (Kaur & Mohamed Amin, 2011). It was found that conversational input elicitation strategies are the preferred choice of LLS for female students (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). However, certain studies show no significant difference in the use of language learning strategies. Nevertheless, based on the study by Ma and Norhanim (2022) there was a significant difference in strategy use in English language proficiency in that low proficiency students used lesser language learning strategies than high proficiency students. According to Ahmed Yahya (2019), female students were found to employ more often cognitive and affective strategies than male students.

4.4. Implication for Future Research

It is imperative to implement certain measures such as developing effective strategies to promote and maintain gender equality. It is hoped that educators and administrations acknowledge the gender differences of learners and devise a suitable course of action such as utilizing various teaching methods and improving the present curriculum. In addition, it is also pertinent to ensure that the present policies, and practices are designed in gender-responsive ways, and to foster gender equality by encouraging both girls and boys to co-operate on school projects. Hence, this will ensure that all learners irrespective of gender will increase their language proficiency and experience a positive learning experience.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the gender of ESL learners plays a monumental role in the use of language learning strategies. It was found that the preferred LLS are cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies. The present literature has shown that the most preferred LLS among primary school students is affective strategy while cognitive strategy is the least preferred (Dawi & Hashim, 2022). On the other hand, secondary school students are prone to use the metacognitive strategy followed by compensation, cognitive, memory, social, and effective strategies (Sukarni, 2019).

Meanwhile, students at the tertiary level have a preference for affective strategies which were followed by metacognitive, compensation, cognitive, social, and memory strategies, respectively (Sukying, 2021). A large majority of the studies indicate that both genders do employ language learning strategies but, each gender has a tendency to show a preference for certain strategies over the other. Thus, educators and the administration must strive to create the appropriate conditions that will lead the path to a better learning experience which will result in learners who are confident and possess a high level of language proficiency.

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