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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze and research language acquisition strategies on high-achieving secondary level students, focusing on the types of strategies that are frequently used in learning, in order to incorporate them into the language learning process and achieve successful learning. In this study, 50 high-achieving secondary level students at the Secondary School level in Uttar Pradesh, India were chosen. A qualitative technique with descriptive analysis was used. The Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used to choose the sample for this study, which took into account students' test scores and language teacher recommendations. Interviews, questionnaires, and documentation were used to gather data for this study. In high-achieving students, indirect tactics such as metacognitive strategy (48.1%) and Cognitive strategy (42.6%) dominated language acquisition strategies, according to the findings of this study. It directs that high-achieving students can master language acquisition strategies by managing their time well, giving attention to activities for language learning, enrolling in appropriate course, and managing appropriate leaning environment with friends and family. Social strategy (41.4%), emotive (28.5%), and memory (27.4%) are the next most popular tactics.

Keywords: Cognitive strategy, language acquisition, language teaching, learning strategies, secondary school students

1. INTRODUCTION

The current educational system places considerable emphasis on students' autonomy, resulting in a gradual shift away from the traditional classroom setting. Due to the fact that it is their primary source of knowledge, students must be able to actively participate in developing their comprehension of learning. The teacher's job, on the other hand, is confined to that of a facilitator of learning. It may be possible for language learners to improve their language skills more quickly, if they are capable of stimulating a wide range of language learning strategies (Paulmony et al., 2022; Vinu et al., 2022; Yunus et al., 2022). Students' ability to successfully improve their language abilities in line with the criteria set in place by students is contingent on the consistency of the learning technique chosen (Jahara et al., 2022; Fedderholdt, 1997).

The educational system in Uttar Pradesh continues to be affected by a lack of linguistic skills among students. Learning a language is a difficult process, but it can be separated into phases that everyone must complete, especially those who wish to master a second language. And all the while, language teachers merely teach the language while emphasizing aspects of knowledge during the teaching and learning process. Even when assessing student progress in language learning, a knowledge test is always used (Kumar et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2021; Franscy et al., 2019).

Experts of language training in India are extremely concerned about the condition outlined above. Language mastery is defined as a person's ability to communicate in a foreign language and use that knowledge in everyday situations (Li, et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2020). The development of wider language skills is required not only as school-based outputs but also as community-based outputs by individuals and society.

Purpose of the research

For the purposes of this research, the following aspects of high-achieving students' language acquisition processes will be examined:

- (i) The strategies used by high-achieving students to learn a language.
- (ii) How many high achievers use these language learning strategies?

According to O'Malley et al. (2006), Khan et al. (2021), and Çakmak et al. (2021), learners' accounts and questionnaire results can contribute to the identification of effective language learning strategies. It implies that a variety of tasks, all supported by relevant research findings, can be used to determine and demonstrate the selection tendency of students' language learning processes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Learning Strategies

A strategy in language learning is a collection of techniques that students can use to learn the language. Ellis (1996), Ajmal & Kumar (2020), Ghahderijani et al. (2021), and Aslam et al. (2022) were apt in asserting that when developing and implementing language learning strategies, factors such as age, aptitude, intelligence, attitude, and motivation should all be taken into consideration. Internal factors impact students' development, especially when choosing a language learning strategy.

These factors can communicate directly, and it is hoped that by taking this into account, students will be able to select learning strategies that are designed for specific language acquisition needs. According to Devlin (1996) and Kumar (2021), grown up students have a more mature outlook on learning and problem solving because of their older age, which has an indirect effect on everyone's mindset, including students' mindset. This does not, however, exclude the potentiality of comprehending language-learning strategies. They also mentioned that mature students use a wide range of learning methods. There are many factors at play here, including students' ability to comprehend and learn about different types of learning strategies.

Language acquisition necessitates the use of learning strategies, but these strategies can also be used by students to gain knowledge in other academic fields. It has been suggested that learning strategies have a positive impact on language acquisition by Politzer and McGroarty (1985) and Abdelrady et al. (2022). When students choose and implement their own learning strategies, their language proficiency improves and they learn more easily.

According to Oxford (1990), learner-centered learning strategies are activities that students participate in to improve their own learning. Students benefit from using them because they promote self-directed participation, which is essential for effective communication. When it comes to developing communication competence, this demonstrates the importance of learning strategy. Choosing the most appropriate learning strategy for students' needs becomes the most important factor in ensuring that the language learning process is successful.

Learning strategies, in the words of Richards and Platt (1992), are deliberate behaviours and thoughts that learners use to aid in their comprehension, acquisition, and retention of new information. They play an important role in the evaluation of learning strategies, especially language learning strategies, because they are based on the assumption that consistent behaviour and thought in accordance with the desired outcome are required for success in the language learning process, such as comprehending and remembering new vocabulary, language uses, and proper grammatical usage.

Individual approaches to problems or tasks, operating modes for reaching specific goals, as well as a deliberate design for controlling and manipulating specific data, are all part of language learning strategy (Brown, 2000). An effective strategy is the first step toward accomplishing a person's goal; achieving it requires careful planning and design, as well as precision, to ensure that the desired results are realized. Our ability to execute and manage the plan is inextricably linked to this.

In order for students to learn a new language effectively, they must participate actively both in and outside of the classroom. When students are given a role in a lesson or activity, they are more likely to use the language they are learning and mastering to communicate with others. Teachers hope that as a result of their efforts, students will become more enthusiastic about language learning, which will help to make their efforts more meaningful. This is in line with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) and Khan's et al. (2020) assertion that having a better understanding of how to learn can help students have a more purposeful and effective learning experience.

Types of Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies can be influenced by an individual's understanding of himself or herself and the learning process (Wenden, 1986; Parveen et al, 2022). Individuals need to learn more about the different types of learning methods in order to determine how they learn best based on their own unique personalities and then choose the most appropriate method.

The first step in developing students' language learning is for them to become familiar with the various types of learning strategies available to them. Nyikos (1987) and Jiang et al., (2022) discovered that students used a limited number of strategies and were generally unaware of them. Students who lack a basic understanding of how to learn can become trapped, which can have a detrimental effect on their ability to communicate and write in another language. Because students don't understand the purpose of the learning strategies or why they are being used, this is a common occurrence.

Learning strategies can be classified into three categories, according to O'Malley et al. (1987). This umbrella term encompasses metacognition, cognition, social, and affective strategies. Students' abilities to transform

and manipulate the material they learn are the focus of cognitive and social affective approaches, while metacognitive focuses on students' awareness and understanding of their own learning processes.

Oxford (1990) views learning strategies differently. He divides them into two categories: direct and indirect. Direct strategies have a direct effect on the target language, whereas indirect strategies support and manage it indirectly. Memory, cognitive, and compensatory strategies all contribute to the mental acquisition of language by the direct strategy. The three categories of strategy are concerned with the overall functioning of the learner or student.

- Students can benefit from using the memory strategy to help them remember, comprehend, store, and learn new information. A key component of this learning strategy is focusing on students' retention of language learning materials and newly acquired knowledge. Students can overcome challenges by devising strategies for memorizing new vocabulary and using it in written or oral communication.
- Students are given a cognitive strategy to help them better control and process the target language. This strategy consists of three key elements: (a) repetition, which aims to aid in the short-term retention of newly acquired information; (b) elaboration, which aims to add details to newly acquired information to make it more meaningful; and (c) organization, which seeks to add value to newly acquired information through effective communication.
- Compensation strategy enables students to engage in extensive and productive use of the target language, whether it is a second or foreign language, allowing them to overcome a variety of difficulties in mastering language skills. Learning a new language can be a rewarding but also frustrating experience.

Moreover, there is an indirect strategy, which is described in greater detail below, which focuses on the external aspects of the language acquisition process. Indirect strategy groups include strategies such as metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and social strategy, to name a few.

Metacognitive strategy employs the functions of planning, monitoring, and regulation to control cognitive learners and regulate the learning process. According to Rubin (1990), metacognitive strategies are leadership skills that enable students to plan, monitor, evaluate, and modify their own learning strategies in order to meet their educational objectives. Planned classroom activities include the development of learning goals, the selection of learning resources, and the evaluation of learning outcomes. The primary goal of the monitoring process is to keep track of completed learning activities. When students compare their learning activities to benchmarks or criteria that have been established in advance, they are more likely to keep track of their progress.

Students' emotions and behavior during the language learning process are inextricably linked to their affective strategy, as demonstrated by their ability to regulate their emotions, motivation, and attitudes.

Additionally, students' interactions with others are critical to the process of language acquisition. When completing learning tasks, students use social strategy-based learning, which focuses on processes like collaboration, help, and delegation of responsibility. Due to the fact those students' interactions with other individuals are inextricably linked to their own feelings and attitudes.

In many cases, affective strategy is used in tandem with this strategy. It is possible to collaborate on two learning strategies in three different ways. Cooperative learning: interactions between students and others in order to achieve learning objectives; responsive learning: responses provided by students in response to a specific action; and emotional control: the ability to control one's emotions as one learns a new language.

3. METHODS

The research employed a qualitative approach and a descriptive analysis to examine a sample of 50 high-achieving students at the Secondary level in Uttar Pradesh, India in 2021. A stratified random sampling technique is used to select the research sample, which takes into account a variety of factors, including grades, report grades, certificates of language achievement, and recommendations from teachers. The data for this study was gathered through interviews, observation, questionnaires, and documentation.

All participants were given a questionnaire to fill out as part of this study's data collection process. This study adapted the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning's language strategy questionnaire (SILL). There are a total of 50 statements about language learning strategies, which are classified into five categories: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, social, and affective. The participants rated themselves on a five-point scale as follows: 1: Never or nearly never true of me; 2: Usually not true of me; 3: Somewhat true of me; 4: Usually true of me; and 5: Always or nearly always true of me. High-achieving students of secondary schools are surveyed to find out which of their peers are using the most common methods of learning to succeed.

To determine which learning methods are the most and least popular, a statistical analysis approach known as mean calculation can be used to calculate the means. The data from this study was analyzed with the help of Microsoft Excel. With the assistance of descriptive statistics, data can be presented in a clear and concise manner. In addition to data gathered through interviews, observations, and other forms of documentation, research findings are supported by other sources of information.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion sections are highlighted in this section. The following table 1 summarizes the findings. They contain demographic information, descriptive statistics for all of the questionnaire's items, and the frequency of each item.

Table 1: Mean and subsequent total Frequency

Strategy	N	Mean	Total Frequency (%)
Cognitive	50	2.55	42.6
Metacognitive	50	3.12	48.1
Memory	50	1.77	27.4
Social	50	2.45	41.4
Affective	50	1.85	28.5

The table above demonstrates that indirect strategies are predominating in the language acquisition of high achievers when it comes to language acquisition strategies. According to this study's findings, metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used in class by students (mean: 3.12 and total frequency 48.1 percent). Students were able to identify their preferred method of learning, according to the results. Metacognitive strategies help students better understand their own learning process and identify which strategies are most effective for them. According to Anderson (2003), students who use metacognitive strategies are more likely to succeed as language learners. According to Rubin (1987), learners require metacognitive knowledge because it aids them in selecting and activating appropriate learning strategies during their learning process. Learners can use this strategy to gain greater control over a variety of learning strategy options and applications, as well as the manner in which they are applied by instructors.

After that, the cognitive strategy is the most popular choice among participants (mean: 2.55 and total frequency 42.6 percent). Learners use cognitive strategies to help them acquire knowledge or a skill. These strategies include behaviours, techniques, and actions (Rubin, 1987). Repetition, elaboration, and organization are all important components of this strategy when learning a new language. Repetition aids in short-term retention of previously acquired information, while elaboration provides additional context and organization increases the perceived importance of previously acquired information.

The social strategy is the third most frequently employed strategy by students (mean: 2.45 and total frequency 41.4 percent). Those who were successful in learning a new language sought out opportunities for practice and sought out interaction with English speakers. Students' communication skills improve when the target language is used frequently outside of the classroom, according to the findings. Teachers and peers regularly engage with students in the target language, as well. It is consistent with the findings of Oxford's (1990) study, in which he claimed that asking questions helps students better understand the meaning of words and thus improves their comprehension in the target language, a claim supported by research. Memory strategy (mean: 1.77 and total frequency 27.4 percent) is the least popular among the participants, followed by affective strategy (mean: 1.85 and total frequency 28.5 percent).

4. CONCLUSION

Among high-achieving students, the findings of this study revealed that indirect strategies such as metacognitive strategy (48.1 percent) and cognitive strategy (49.1 percent) dominated language acquisition strategies (42.6 percent). High achievers can learn language acquisition strategies by managing their time efficiently, prioritizing their learning activities, making effective use of learning and infrastructure, enrolling in a course, and working together with family and friends to learn the language. The following three strategies are: social strategy (41.4 percent), affective strategy (28.5 percent), and memory strategy (the remaining 27.4 percent).

In general, indirect strategies assist students in learning a new language without having to directly communicate in the target language. Additionally, this study's findings indicate that students who use a variety of language learning strategies are more likely to succeed in their language learning endeavours. According to Ellis (1996), using effective language learning strategies simplifies the process of learning a second or foreign language.

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