Language Learning Strategy Use and Concept Development among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language Majors

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Abstract

This study investigated, for two continuous years, the level of use of foreign language learning strategies (FLLSs). It also investigated their development in terms of the study-semester and gender variables by 45 Jordanian undergraduate English Language Majors. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was used as an instrument for collecting the data necessary to answer the questions of the study. Appropriate statistical devices were employed to analyze the data.

The findings revealed that Jordanian undergraduates majoring in English Language were High strategy users for most of the strategies. The Metacognitive strategies were ranked first followed by the Social, Compensation, Affective, Cognitive, and Memory strategies respectively. Differences between males' and females' responses were not significant in terms of the gender variable while the study-semester variable showed significant differences in favor of third and fourth semesters' responses. The findings were ascribed to a variety of factors such as: age, courses students study, determination to get high marks, and wide use of modern technology.

The conclusions support the idea of unconscious learning of FLLSs through long exposure to English Language courses and students' preference of Metacognitive strategies.

Keywords: Learning strategies, Jordanian, Concept development, Strategy Inventory

Introduction

Effective foreign language learning has been one of the hottest issues in the field of foreign language learning which researchers and applied linguists have given much attention to. They, furthermore, carried out lots of investigations to arrive at appropriate ways to overcome this issue during the past era. Riazi (2007) indicates that the field of applied linguistics during the past few decades witnessed a shift from instructor-centered to learner-centered approaches of language learning and teaching. Therefore, lots of trials have been made since the beginning of the twentieth century up to the present to help learners learn the foreign language easily and efficiently.

The real success in the field was could have been initiated with the introduction of the concept of leaner strategies. Rubin (1987) refers the proposition of this concept to Carton in 1966 whereas Root (1999) points out that, "The search for learning strategies began with Rubin and Stern in 1975, when attention was drawn to what makes a person a good learner" (p. 6).

Since the appearance of language learning strategies in 1970s, as most scholars (Abu Shmais 2004, Riazi 2007, and Shawer 2009) agreed on, various classifications have been proposed for language learning strategies which I am mentioning, here, historically. Rubin (1975) talked about systems related to successful language learners; Bialystok (1981) described linguistically based systems dealing with guessing, language monitoring, formal and functional practice; Tarone (1983) mentioned the communication strategies like paraphrasing or borrowing; Sutter (1989) described language learning strategies as systems based on different styles or types of learners; Cohen (1990) mentioned the systems related to separate language skills; O'Malley and Chamot (1990) talked about systems based on psychological functions; Oxford (1990) talked about systems related to social and affective systems in addition to the intellectual ones. Ellis (1993) identified two main types of learning strategies: behavioral that can be observed and mental that work quietly inside the individual's mind. Brown and Douglas (1994) classified language learning strategies under two types: Learning strategies which deal with receiving the message; and communication strategies which deal with delivering the message to others. These classifications reveal that language learning strategies stem from different sources: linguistic, psychological, behavioral, functional, communicative, affective and social.

Wenden (1987), (cited in Wenden and Rubin 1987: pp. 6-7) refers learner strategies to language learning behaviors which learners actually engage in to learn and regulate their learning of the second or foreign language. They also refer to what learners know about the strategies they use. Oxford (1990) described language learning strategies as specific steps, or techniques students use –often consciously- to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2. Kaylani (1996) adds that, "Assumptions found throughout the literature that the difference between successful and unsuccessful language learners is either a factor of the quantity, quality or a combination of strategies that learners of each group use" (p. 77).

Various definitions have been provided for *learning strategies*. Tarone (1983) defines language learning strategies as, "attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language - to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p. 67). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) define learning strategies as "behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning which are intended to influence the learner's encoding process" (p. 315). Rubin (1987) defines language learning strategies as, "strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly" (p. 27). Then, Mayer (1988) modifies the definition provided by Weinstein and Mayer (1986) to become "behaviors of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information" (p. 11). Oxford (1990) defines *learning strategies* as " Operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" and "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). Cohen (1998) provides a somehow psychological definition for language learning strategies as "Those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or the use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about the language" (p. 4). Mariani (2002) defines language learning strategies as "any actions which you have to take to solve a problem in learning to help you make the most of your learning process, to speed up and optimize your cognitive, affective, and social behavior" (p. 2). Chamot (2004) describes learning strategies as thoughts and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal (p. 14).

Learning a foreign language has become a necessity for most people in general and students at all levels in particular. Some students cannot always find what they need to fulfill their satisfaction of what they study in their native language. As a result, they have to resort to others' knowledge and experience. This need may create an unlimited aptitude to learn a foreign language. Rubin and Thompson (1994) state that:

The best time for you to learn a foreign language is when your need is clearest and when you have sufficient time. If you are strongly motivated to study a foreign language and if you have the time to do it, the best time to begin is now (p. 5).

Oxford (1990) distinguishes between language learning and language acquisition. She describes *learning* as a conscious focus on language rules which do not lead to conversational fluency, whereas she describes *acquisition* as an unconscious and spontaneous occurrence in a naturalistic language setting that leads to conversational fluency. Thus, as the instrument of this study is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) devised by Oxford (version 7), I think it is worth clarifying something about it. Zhang (2003) praises the SILL a lot and describes it as more comprehensive and detailed than any other classification. Zhang adds it is systematic in linking individual strategies that suit all language skills. Also, Nisbet, Tindall, and Arroyo (2005) describe the SILL as the most comprehensive model to date (p. 100).

The SILL is divided into two major groups of strategies: direct and indirect. Within each group are three categories of strategies. The direct group includes the Memory, Cognitive, and Compensation categories. The indirect group includes the Metacognitive, Affective, and Social categories.

Each of the six categories seeks to draw the learner's attention to plausible ways on how learning a foreign/second language can be handled or approached. Memory strategies involve the storage and retrieval of the target language. Cognitive strategies involve mental analysis, transformation, or synthesis of the target language. Compensation strategies enable the learner to make up for the inadequate knowledge needed for comprehending or producing the target language. Metacognitive strategies are aspects linked to planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning of the target language. Affective strategies help the learner gain control over their emotions and attitudes related to language learning. Social strategies are actions that involve engagement with other people using the target language (El-Dib, 2004).

Statement of the problem

Despite the efforts made by the Jordanian Ministry of Education and universities, English Language learners still find it difficult to learn this language efficiently. Although school students spend four hours a week on average learning English, most of them join language centers or pay for private tutors of English after school to help improve their learning. Some families send their children to private kindergartens where they start learning English Language at an early age. These indicators mean that all people concerned with the teaching-learning process (the government, parents, corporations, teachers, and learners) save no effort to improve the outputs. Yet, most learners can not grasp the language well. This fact can be seen clearly from the secondary courses' script containing the final results where most failure is in English Language as a first indicator; and from the results of freshmen failure of the university placement test as a second indicator; and English Language majors' complaints of the difficulty of studying English and resorting to illegal tricks to do their assignments or projects such as taking whole text from the Internet or books or complete help from others as a third indicator.

Thus I believe that there is a certain problem within this chain. The problem could be in the way learners use to learn the foreign language. Particularly, they might not have any idea about foreign language learning strategies. Therefore, lack of knowledge of foreign language learning strategies might be a reason behind students' weakness, and knowledge of them could be a good solution.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study stems from its being an attempt to investigate what foreign language learning strategies Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors employ and which category/categories of strategies might develop during the time of carrying out the study. It is hoped that it will help to explore if the gender of the student and the study semester variables influence the development of the foreign language learning strategies.

Moreover, the findings of the study will enrich the literature around the use of these strategies and shed new lights on the current learning situation in Jordan.

The study is also indirectly intended to show the Jordanian foreign language learners in general and those majoring in English Language in particular that there are certain strategies that can be utilized to improve their foreign language learning. It is also intended to show Jordanian foreign language school teachers and university lecturers that there are strategies that foreign language learners can benefit from and be advised to use to facilitate their language learning.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

1) Find out what categories gained more progress among the six categories of the SILL through repeating it four times in two years time.

2) Investigate the development of the concept of foreign language learning strategy among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors.

3) Find out if gender and study semester variables affect the development of the foreign language leaning strategies among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors.

Questions of the study

1) How is the development of the concept of foreign language learning strategy among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors during the semesters of implementing the SILL?

2) Are there any significant differences between the responses of Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors on the SILL between the first, second, third, and fourth times due to gender of the respondent, and the semester of implementing the SILL?

Review of literature

The literature, included in this part, mostly focused on students' level of use in terms of gender, academic year, levels of proficiency and achievement, and academic major. Generally, most of the studies revealed somehow consistent results because most of them were carried out on university students in 1991 and after. They used the SILL as an instrument of data collection. Most of these studies investigated one or two of the variables mentioned earlier except Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul's (2010) which looked into three.

Ehrman & Oxford (1995), O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner_Manzanares, Russo, & Kǔpper. (1985), and Green & Oxford (1995) investigated the achievement level. Ehrman & Oxford (1995) indicated that successful or high achieving students preferred using the cognitive strategies more frequently in their study whereas O'Malley et al. (1985) discovered that high-achieving students preferred using the metacognitive strategies more frequently. Green and Oxford (1995) found that high-achieving students used all kinds of language learning strategies more frequently than low- achieving students did. For the level of proficiency, Abu

Shmais (2003) and Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul (2010) revealed no significant differences due to proficiency level. Fewell (2010) showed that less proficient students were high strategy users while high proficient students were medium strategy users. However; Shawer (2010) showed significant differences in favor of proficient students.

Concerning the gender variable, Abu Shmais (2004) showed no significant differences. In Tercanlioglu (2004), male students showed significant differences in five categories while female students showed significant differences only in the Affective category. Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul (2010) revealed no significant differences for all categories except the Affective category in favor of female students. Liu (2004), Kato (2005), McMullen (2009), and Zare (2010) revealed significant differences for female students in all categories.

Riazi (2007) and Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul (2010) investigated the academic year as a variable affecting the use of foreign language learning strategies. Whereas Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul (2010) revealed no significant differences, Riazi (2007) revealed that freshmen reported a high rate of use of FLLSs than sophomore, junior, and senior students did.

Concerning the level of strategy use and preference, Abu Shmais (2004), Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, and Al-shboul (2010), Liu (2004), Nisbet, Tindall, & Arroyo (2005), Oh (1992), Park (1997), Riazi (2007), Shawer (2010), Tercanlioglu (2004), and Zare (2010) revealed that university students were Medium strategy users with the Metacognitive category of strategies occupying the first rank. Kato (2005) revealed that Japanese university students were Medium strategy users. Female students preferred the Compensation category of strategies while male students preferred the Social category of strategies. McMullen (2009) revealed that Saudi university students were medium strategy users with preference of the Cognitive category of strategies.

Therefore, as some researchers recommended carrying out more comprehensive research on a wide variety of variables affecting language learning strategies employed by Arab learners such as: cultural background, beliefs, learning style, motivation, and attitude, I have been stimulated to investigate the relationship of learner's gender, and the study semester on developing the concept of "language learning strategies" as few Jordanian studies have inspected what strategies English Language majors at Jordanian universities use. In addition, no studies have probed which strategies resulted in better development.

Methodology of the study

This study was a longitudinal one as the collection of data lasted for two years. Each year was divided into two semesters. Therefore, the test for collecting the data necessary for the study was applied four times with a period of six months each. The test applied was an Arabic translated form of the original SILL developed by Oxford in 1990. It was refereed, piloted, and tested for validity and reliability in 2007 (Al-Jabali, 2007, pp. 43-46).

Sample of the study

The sample of the study consisted of 47 undergraduate students; 32 male students with the percentage of 68.1% and 15 female ones with the percentage of 31.9%. All subjects were English Language majors, Jordanians with Arabic Language as their mother tongue. They were between 19 and 23 years old. Furthermore, they all enrolled during the second semester of the study year 2007/2008 when the university started undergraduate programs.

Instrument and data collection procedures

I used the translated form of Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) as a test to collect data from student-subjects. The students were asked to write down what language learning strategies they use to develop their learning of English Language as students studying English Language as their major.

Statistics used in this study

As this study was a quantitative one, several statistic devices had been used to answer its questions. To answer the first question, means and standard deviations were used. To answer the second question, means and standard deviations of foreign language learning strategies were used followed with Analysis of Variance for Repeated Measures (Split Plot Design) for the study semester and gender variables. After that, Bonferroni Test for Post Comparisons was carried out to explore the effect of the Study Semester variable on the use of foreign language learning strategies.

Scoring the test

As the test follows the Likert Scale, and the judgments of strategy use have three levels: HIGH, MEDIUM, and LOW. Unlike all previous studies, the scoring scale for this study was counted according to the relativity of the total 4 divided on 3 as the highest score will be "5" for "Always" and the lowest score will be "1" for "Never". The distance between the highest score and the lowest score is (5 − 1 = 4). So, when we divide the result on 3 levels, we get (4 / 3 = 1.333%. Thus; the relativity scoring scale will be as shown in Table (1) below.

Table 1: Relativity Scoring Scale

No	Mark	Level
1	3.67- 5.0	HIGH
2	2.34-3.66	MEDIUM
3	1.0-2.33	LOW

Findings of the study

Question one

How is the development of the concept of foreign language learning strategy among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors during the semesters of implementing the SILL?

Mean scores and standard deviations have been calculated to discover the development of English Language majors' use of foreign language learning strategies as shown in table (2) below.

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations of Foreign Language Learning Strategies and Their Categories

Category	Learning Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
4	Metacognitive Strategies	1	4.092	0.40	1	4.173	0.58	1	4.109	0.41	1	4.206	0.43
3	Compensation Strategies	2	3.649	0.42	2	3.791	0.57	2	3.911	0.39	2	4.074	0.44
6	Social Strategies	3	3.543	0.72	3	3.773	0.58	3	3.770	0.43	3	3.833	0.56
5	Affective Strategies	5	3.266	0.58	5	3.415	0.63	6	3.379	0.50	4	3.702	0.45
2	Cognitive Strategies	4	3.383	0.48	4	3.529	0.67	5	3.518	0.42	5	3.695	0.43
1	Memory Strategies	6	3.220	0.47	6	3.329	0.66	4	3.579	0.43	6	3.504	0.56
	Over Whole		3.518	0.34		3.656	0.50		3.696	0.30		3.815	0.37

Table 2 shows that there was a development in the use of foreign language learning strategies during the study semesters. The level of use developed from a MEDIUM level during the first two semesters with the mean scores of 3.52 and 3.66 respectively to a HIGH level during the third and fourth semesters with the mean scores of 3.7 and 3.82 respectively. It also shows that the indirect strategies: Metacognitive and Social ones occupied the first and third ranks all through the time of the study. Also, the upper direct category, the Compensation strategies occupied the second rank all through the semesters of the study. The Memory strategies occupied the sixth rank during the first, second, and fourth semesters.

Question two

Are there any significant differences between the responses of Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors on the SILL between the first, second, third and fourth times due to gender of the respondent, and the semester of implementing the SILL?

To answer this question, mean scores of English Language majors' use of foreign language learning strategies have been calculated through the semesters of implementing the SILL as shown in table (3) below.

Table 3: Mean Scores of the Use of FLLSs according to the Study Semester

Learning Strategies	First Semester		Second Semester		Third Semester		Fourth Semester		Develop-ment
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
Metacognitive Strategies	1	4.092	1	4.173	1	4.109	1	4.206	0.114
Compensation Strategies	2	3.649	2	3.791	2	3.911	2	4.074	0.425
Social Strategies	3	3.543	3	3.773	3	3.770	3	3.833	0.290
Affective Strategies	5	3.266	5	3.415	6	3.379	4	3.702	0.436
Cognitive Strategies	4	3.383	4	3.529	5	3.518	5	3.695	0.312
Memory Strategies	6	3.220	6	3.329	4	3.579	6	3.504	0.284
Over Whole		3.518		3.656		3.696		3.815	0.310

Table 3 shows that by subtracting the mean scores of the first semester of implementing the study from the mean scores of the fourth semester of implementing it, one can realize that there were observed differences among the mean scores of foreign language learning strategies resulting from the differences of the semesters of studying English Language and the differences between the two groups of the gender variable. To verify the significance of these observed differences, Analysis of Variance for Repeated Measures (Split Plot Design), according to the gender variable was carried out as in Table (4) below.

Table 4: Results of Analysis of Variance for Repeated Measures (Split Plot Design) according to the Gender Variable

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
semesters	1.904	2.395	0.795	***6.440**	0.001
Gender	0.300	1	0.300	1.025	0.317
semesters * Gender	0.437	2.395	0.182	1.477	0.230
Error(semesters)	13.303	107.796	0.123		
Error(Gender)	13.192	45	0.293		
Total	29.136				

Table 4 shows that the gender variable was not statistically significant whereas there were statistically significant differences at the level of $\alpha = 0.05$ among the mean scores of the

foreign language learning strategies ascribed for the study semester variable. As this variable had four levels, Bonferroni Test for Post Hoc Comparisons was carried out to explore between which study semesters were the differences significant as shown in Table (5) below.

Table 5: Results of Bonferroni Test for Post Hoc Comparisons of the Use of FLLS according to the Levels of Study Semester Variable

Semesters		First	Second	Third	Fourth
Bonferroni	Mean	3.518	3.656	3.696	3.815
First	3.518				
Second	3.656	0.137			
Third	3.696	**0.178**	0.040		
Fourth	3.815	**0.297**	**0.160**	0.119	

Table 5 shows that the results were as follows:

1) There was a significant difference of foreign language learning strategies used by fourth semester students when compared with first semester students on behalf of fourth semester students.

2) There was a significant difference of foreign language learning strategies used by third semester students when compared with first semester students on behalf of third semester students.

3) There was a significant difference of foreign language learning strategies used by fourth semester students when compared with second semester students on behalf of fourth semester students.

Discussion of the findings

Discussion of the first question

Table 2 showed the use of foreign language learning strategies among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors. It as well showed that the Metacoginitive strategies, the Compensation strategies, and the Social strategies occupied the first three ranks respectively and all through the four semesters of carrying out the study while the other three categories- the Affective, the Cognitive, and the Memory- exchanged the last three ranks among themselves. It also showed that the average of use of foreign language learning strategies developed from a MEDIUM level during the first two semesters to a HIGH level during the last two semesters.

The development of the concept of foreign language learning strategy could have resulted from the various courses which the subjects have studied during the implementation of the study instrument. However, the exchange of ranks of the last three categories could have been a result of the buffer state between the first and fourth times of implementing the study instrument. The subjects might have been looking for appropriate language learning strategies to help them to learn the foreign language more easily.

When studying the items of each of the six domains carefully, one can realize that some items gained a high development than others. This development will be dealt with in the discussion of the second question.

Discussion of the second question

The results to question one (Table 2) indicated that all categories of strategies gained development. So, when we subtract the mean scores of the first semester from the mean scores of the fourth semester, we arrive at the following development of each category as ordered in the table: "0,114", "0, 425", "0,290", "0,436", "0,312", and "0,284". These numbers show that although the Metacognitive category occupied the first rank all through the study semesters, it gained the least development. It developed during the second semester, but retreated during the third semester, then developed again during the fourth semester. I think that retreat during the second and third semesters, even for all categories, was normal as students were still trying various attempts to settle down on something acceptable that could fulfill their ambitions and interests in developing their language skills.

Table 6: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Metacognitive Category Items

item	Metacognitive Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
32	*I pay attention when someone is speaking English*	1	4.872	0.40	2	4.745	0.57	1	4.809	0.58	1	4.851	0.36
38	*I think about my progress in learning English*	3	4.745	0.61	3	4.723	0.68	3	4.723	0.68	2	4.809	0.50
37	*I have clear goals for improving my English skills*	6	3.745	1.07	4	4.128	0.85	6	3.787	0.98	3	4.447	0.97
33	*of English*	2	4.787	0.69	1	4.830	0.64	2	4.766	0.56	4	4.298	0.69
31	*I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better*	4	4.404	0.74	6	3.979	0.90	4	4.085	0.62	5	4.085	0.65
30	*I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English*	5	3.936	0.76	5	4.085	0.86	5	4.021	0.64	6	4.043	0.72
35	*I look for people I can talk to in English*	7	3.745	1.11	8	3.723	0.90	7	3.660	1.05	7	3.979	0.87
36	*I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English*	9	3.170	0.89	7	3.766	0.94	8	3.638	0.92	8	3.723	0.90
34	*I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English*	8	3.426	1.08	9	3.574	0.93	9	3.489	0.91	9	3.617	0.80

Table 6 shows that items 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38 gained development whereas items 31, 32, and 33 retreated. This means that Jordanian undergraduates have clear goals for improving their English Language skills, and they think of this progress. They, furthermore, try to find as many ways as they can to use English such as looking for people whom they can talk to in English. They also look for opportunities to read as much as they can in English and they plan their schedule to have enough time to study English as well. Despite the fact that there was some retreat in the use of some of the Metacognitive items between the first and fourth semesters, the number of items used at a High level by Jordanian undergraduate English Language majors increased from seven to eight. That is, only item 34 remained within the Medium level.

Table 7: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Compensation Category Items

item	Compensation Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
26	I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English	3	3.957	0.91	1	4.404	0.77	2	4.213	0.62	1	4.383	0.74
24	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses	2	3.979	0.74	3	4.085	0.65	1	4.340	0.56	2	4.340	0.56
29	If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing	1	4.149	0.88	2	4.234	0.79	3	4.149	0.66	3	4.255	0.64
25	When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures	4	3.702	1.14	5	3.745	1.09	4	3.979	0.82	4	4.128	0.71
28	I try to guess what the other person will say next in English	5	3.638	1.05	4	3.915	0.97	5	3.809	0.85	5	4.085	0.62
27	I read English without Looking up every new word	6	2.468	1.28	6	2.362	1.03	6	2.979	1.05	6	3.255	0.87

The Compensation category occupied the second rank in the level of use, and it occupied the second rank of development with 0,425, too. Though items 26, 27, 28, and 29 sometimes developed and sometimes retreated during the second and third semesters, all compensation items finally developed. Item 27 gained the highest development; it developed from 2.468 to 3.255. This implies that Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors do not use a dictionary to look up the meaning of every new word. This supports the idea of students' ability in dividing words into parts to help them understand what they mean.

Table 8: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Social Category Items

item	Social Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
46	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk	3	3.638	1.07	2	4.128	0.90	1	4.106	0.81	1	4.064	0.70
50	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers	5	3.383	1.21	5	3.426	1.23	4	3.936	0.79	2	4.021	0.64
45	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again	1	4.043	1.06	1	4.191	0.80	2	4.021	0.74	3	4.000	0.81
48	I ask for help from English speakers	2	4.000	0.86	3	4.064	0.94	3	4.021	0.74	4	3.957	0.86
49	I ask questions in English	4	3.383	1.23	4	3.872	0.90	5	3.617	1.03	5	3.915	0.69
47	I practice English with other students	6	2.809	1.24	6	2.957	1.16	6	2.915	0.86	6	3.043	1.02

As seen in Table 8, item 50 was the only one that kept developing while the other items sometimes rose and sometimes retreated during the second, third and fourth semesters of study. Item 45 (If I do not understand something in English, I ask

the other person to slow down or say it again), and item 48 (I ask for help from English speakers) obtained a lower mean score during the fourth semester than that mean score during the first semester. This could have resulted from their belief that it is shameful to ask others for help or show that they have some kind of weakness. They try to conceal such weakness if there is any.

Table 9: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Affective Category Items

item	Affective Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
39	afraid of using English I encourage myself to speak English	1	3.979	1.01	1	4.128	0.90	2	4.021	0.77	1	4.638	0.76
40	even when I am afraid of making mistakes	3	3.596	1.21	2	4.021	0.97	1	4.106	0.63	2	4.106	0.76
42	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English	4	3.426	1.30	5	3.213	1.37	5	3.085	0.88	3	3.915	0.80
41	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English	2	3.702	1.23	4	3.319	1.14	4	3.191	1.12	4	3.702	0.95
44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English	5	3.362	1.41	3	3.702	1.23	3	3.723	1.04	5	3.426	1.10
43	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary	6	1.532	0.78	6	2.106	0.98	6	2.149	1.04	6	2.426	1.08

The Affective strategies occupied the fourth rank of use. However; they gained the highest development. They developed by 0,436. Table 9 shows that item 43 (I write down my feelings in a language learning diary) was the only item that continued development all through the four semesters of carrying out this study.

Item 39 (I try to relax when I feel afraid of using English), and item 41 (I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English) were the only two of High use during the first semester. This number increased to four strategies during the fourth semester to include items 39, 40, 41, and 42. Item 39 (I try to relax when I feel afraid of using English), and item 43 (I write down my feelings in a language learning diary) obtained the highest development: 0,659 and 0,894 respectively. Item 42 (I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English) retreated during the second and third semesters, but it rose sharply from 3.085 to 3.915 during the four semesters.

The development in these three items might mean that Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors could have overcome their fear of speaking to others in English. It might

also mean that they can have control over themselves. This can be reflected by increasing their tendency to write down their feelings in a language diary.

Table 10: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Cognitive Category Items

item	Cognitive Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
18	I first skim an English passage(read over the passage quickly)then go back and read carefully	1	4.106	0.70	1	4.064	0.89	1	4.128	0.54	1	4.255	0.57
10	I say or write new English words several times	2	4.085	0.90	3	3.809	1.04	5	3.830	0.94	2	3.957	0.66
15	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English	4	3.660	1.40	4	3.787	1.12	4	3.872	1.13	3	3.936	0.92
21	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand	9	3.191	1.23	7	3.660	1.13	11	3.128	0.85	4	3.915	0.75
23	I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English	11	3.000	1.10	10	3.404	1.10	9	3.213	1.02	5	3.915	0.90
11	I try to talk like native English speakers	3	4.021	0.92	2	3.957	0.86	3	3.915	0.75	6	3.894	0.76
22	I try not to translate word-for-word	8	3.255	1.07	11	3.277	1.19	2	3.979	0.82	7	3.851	0.96
12	I practice the sounds of English	7	3.468	1.08	5	3.766	1.00	6	3.702	0.93	8	3.851	0.91
13	I know in different ways	5	3.660	1.11	8	3.532	1.08	7	3.638	0.92	9	3.787	0.75
19	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English	10	3.170	1.11	9	3.426	1.08	10	3.170	0.96	10	3.681	0.91
16	I read for pleasure in English	12	2.787	1.20	12	3.064	1.13	13	3.064	0.96	11	3.277	0.74
20	to find patterns in English	13	2.766	0.84	13	3.000	1.04	12	3.085	0.88	12	3.213	0.75
14	I start conversations in English	6	3.532	1.04	6	3.660	1.03	8	3.532	0.93	13	3.106	0.91
17	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English	14	2.660	1.05	14	3.000	1.06	14	3.000	0.88	14	3.085	0.97

The Cognitive strategies gained the third rank in development although they occupied the fifth rank of use. Items 12, 13, 15, 19, 21, 22, and 23 developed from a Low level of use to High level. Item 21 (I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand), item 22 (I try not to translate word-for-word), and item 23 (I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English) gained the highest development. Item 21 developed from 3.191 to 3.915; item 22 developed from 3.225 to 3.851; and item 23 developed from 3.00 to 3.915. The high development of these three items could have resulted from studying advanced courses that that help students to realize new ways of appropriate learning. Some courses, especially literature ones, oblige students to write summaries in their own words, as well as they are directed by their courses' instructors to divide words into their

parts to guess their meanings. Students are also asked in "writing" and "translation" courses not to translate word-for-word. They are, furthermore, asked to divide difficult words into parts to help them understand what they mean. Moreover, the age of the learner could be an important factor that helps to develop some own language learning strategies.

Table 11: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Memory Category Items

item	Memory Strategies	First Semester			Second Semester			Third Semester			Fourth Semester		
		Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Mean	Std. Dev.
9	I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, On the board, or on a street sign	1	4.128	0.90	2	3.979	0.97	2	4.213	0.62	1	4.064	0.73
1	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English	2	3.872	0.82	1	4.085	0.83	1	4.255	0.61	2	4.064	0.67
4	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used	3	3.766	1.09	3	3.809	0.99	3	4.021	0.90	3	3.894	0.81
3	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word	6	2.936	1.03	6	2.915	1.12	5	3.894	0.73	4	3.872	0.92
2	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them	5	3.511	1.16	4	3.723	0.85	6	3.574	0.77	5	3.851	0.66
8	I review English lessons often	4	3.574	1.06	5	3.702	1.12	4	3.957	0.81	6	3.766	0.70
5	I use rhymes to remember new English words	9	2.255	1.03	8	2.702	0.95	7	2.894	0.96	7	3.043	1.00
7	I physically act out new English words	7	2.553	1.35	7	2.851	1.10	8	2.809	0.97	8	2.851	0.91
6	I use flashcards to remember new English words	8	2.383	1.01	9	2.191	1.01	9	2.596	1.01	9	2.128	0.80

Table 11 The Memory items were the only ones that gained development during the second and third semesters but retreated during the fourth semester. This retreat can be ascribed, although the mean scores were higher than they were during the first semester, to students' awareness of their linguistic growth which should be accompanied with a change in most life styles, especially in learning ones. Students also might have recognized that such strategies were no longer appropriate for this stage.

Table 11, besides, shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 developed while item 6 (I use flashcards to remember new English words) and item 9 (I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign) retreated. Item 6 retreated to a Low level of use because students might have thought that "flashcards"

are aids used only in the classroom. The retreat for item 9 could have resulted from students' recognition that this item may imply pure rote learning where they have, at this stage and age, surpassed this learning strategy or learning habit.

Item 3 (I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word) and item 5 (I use rhymes to remember new English words) gained the highest development among the Memory ones. The mean score for item 3 rose from 2.936 to 3.872, and the mean score for item 5 rose from 2.225 to 3.043. The development in these two items could be due to students' interest in listening to English music and songs via the television, CDs, or You-Tube and images through the computer which has spread widely.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of the study may be summarized this way:

1) Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors are Medium to High language learning strategy users. This result distinguishes them from other undergraduates who are, according to the findings of previous studies, mostly Medium strategy users.

2) Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors can develop their use of language learning strategies along time.

3) Like other university students around the world, Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors preferred using the Meacognitive strategies more than any other type of strategy. Preference of the metacognitive category and occupation of the first rank agree with Abu Shmais (2004), Al-Shabou, Asassfeh, and Al-shboul (2010), Liu (2004), Nisbet, Tindall, & Arroyo (2005), Oh (1992), Park (1997), Riazi (2007), Shawer (2010), Tercanlioglu (2004), and Zare (2010). However; the Memory strategies were their least preferred ones. This proves that Jordanian students have shifted from the stage of receiving the message to the stage of delivering it or from the stage of rote-learning to the stages of analyzing, synthesizing, and managing their learning of the foreign language.

4) The gender variable showed no significant difference among Jordanian undergraduate majoring in English Language in their use of language learning strategies agrees with Abu Shmais (2004).

5) There should be universal factors that make the Metacognitive strategies occupy the first rank in the present study as well as in most previous studies. Similarly, there should be universal factors that make the Memory strategies occupy the last rank in the present study as well as in a number of previous studies.

6) Long exposure to English Language courses at university and students' eagerness to succeed with high marks may cause the development of language learning strategies among Jordanian Undergraduate English Language majors.

7) All strategies developed along time at different rates without student or teacher training. This development supports the idea of unconscious learning of foreign language learning strategies. Thus, if foreign language learning strategies are taught or incorporated in teaching courses or tasks, they may develop easily by learners and they will hopefully facilitate learning of the foreign language.

Recommendations

Depending on the findings of the current study, I recommend the following:

1) Curriculum designers should incorporate clearly the language learning strategies within the curricula to learners so that they can benefit from them.

2) Instructors, at all levels of teaching, should have good knowledge of FLLSs, and they should assign a few minutes each lesson or lecture to make them clear and attractive to foreign language learners.

3) Students, at all levels whether at school or university, should be provided with instructional programs that help them to use and employ these strategies correctly and appropriately.

4) There should be training or instructional programs that help university lecturers and teachers to guide their students to the best use of these strategies.

5) Investigating the categories that obtained the fifth and sixth ranks of use using the SILL with other instruments that measure the factors that might affect the use of FLLSs such as: learning styles, personality traits, attitudes, modern technology, cultural background, parents' level of education, communication with others, and any other relevant factors.

6) At the level of the Arab World, I recommend agreement on a standard translation of the SILL so that the findings of future studies will help trainers, teachers, university instructors, and curricula designers to have a clear view of Arab students' favorite strategies that result from research.

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