The Teaching and Learning of EFL Learning Strategies at a Saudi College

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Abstract

Shaqra University in Saudi Arabia is now seeking national institutional accreditation. The English program at Thadiq College of Sciences and Humanities, one of Shaqra University's colleges, is participating in the project as a representative of all English programs in the university. The quality of teaching and learning is an important performance indicator that the accrediting committee (The Saudi National Committee of Academic Accreditation) considers in its evaluation process. For two years, teachers in the program have taught LLSs to students, especially in the first four levels that include skill-based courses. The present study therefore aimed to explore the frequency of teaching (reported by teachers) and using (reported by students) LLSs in the program. The relationship between LLSs on one hand and gender and achievement on the other was also explored. A 54-item questionnaire of strategies relating to vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and speaking was developed. After validated, the questionnaire was completed by 88 students and 18 teachers in the two sections of the program (for there is a section for each gender of students and teachers). Data analysis revealed high frequencies of both teaching and using LLSs. The agreement percentage between frequencies reported by teachers and students was 76%. No statistical differences were found between male and female students in LLSs. Finally, a strong positive correlation was found between LLLSs and each individual strategy category and total strategies. Implications based on the results are offered.

Keywords: Language learning strategies (LLSs), Teaching LLSs, Using LLSs, Gender, Achievement

1. Introduction

There has been a shift of focus in language classrooms from teaching-based to learning-based methodologies. With this shift, several theories and approaches have developed with the premise that the learner is not a passive recipient but rather an active processor of information. Learners have become to be seen as responsible for their learning and teachers have become more of learning facilitators than information providers. A significant outcome of this shift is the emphasis placed on language learning strategies (LLSs) which can have the effect of making learners responsible for their learning. Definitely, interest in LLSs originated with attempts, which date back to 1970s, to find out differences between successful and less successful language learners. These attempts rested upon the assumption that successful language learners employ strategies that less successful learners do not employ, and that these strategies, if identified and taught, can change less successful learners into successful ones (Chamot, 2001: 25).

LLSs, if acquired and employed properly, make students responsible, in part at least, for their learning. This is of paramount importance for language learners who, using Oxford's words (1990: 201) "…cannot be spoon-fed if they desire and expect to reach an acceptable level of communicative competence". Wenden (1985: 7) emphasizes that students should do for themselves what teachers do for them in the classroom, and that the means to this end is equipping students with learning strategies. Strategies are of more importance in FL than they are in L1 and L2 since they increase the avenues through which students can learn language, which are really very few in many FL settings. With learning strategies, learners can construct knowledge by gathering and synthesizing information and integrating this information with skills such as inquiry, communication, and critical and creative thinking (Huba & Freed, 2000; Brown, 2008).

Once introduced to the field, LLSs have captured the interest of teachers, learners, researchers and course designers. Generally, accreditation granting entities require programs applying for accreditation to allow for learner-centered rather than teacher-entered language learning. The Saudi National Committee for Academic Accreditation is no exception. Recently, it has issued several guides and formats for course specification, program specification, course report, annual report, and self-study report, all focusing on learner-centered methodologies. A program under consideration for accreditation is in a good position if it secures active learning for its learners.

2. Statement of the Problem

The present study was conducted in Thadiq College of Sciences and Humanities, Shaqra University, KSA. For the past two years, the college's English program has participated in the university's pursuit of national institutional accreditation. Quality of teaching and learning is one of the elements that have received considerable attention in this respect. The project began with course descriptions that included student-centered teaching methods in order to foster active language learning. There has been a call therefore to teach students LLSs to promote their autonomous language learning. For this reason, teachers in the English program have participated in numerous workshops dealing with LLSs. Because many

teachers in the program have purely academic backgrounds (with little or no background in teaching English as a foreign language), these workshops aimed to make teachers cognizant of research-based LLSs and the best methods to teach them. For better language learning as a main requirement of the accreditation committee, teaching of the program courses, especially skill-based ones has focused on LLSs.

The author of this study has been the coordinator of the project with supervisory roles to make sure teachers put LLSs into practice. This study was conducted two years after the initiation of the program to explore reported frequencies of teaching and using LLSs in the program. Gender differences in strategy use was also assessed because male and female students at the college study in separate sections by same sex teachers for there is segregation in Saudi educational institutes. The reason for assessing gender differences was to explore if there were any differences between male and female teachers in teaching LLSs. Finally, the relationship between strategy use and achievement (measured by students' GPAs) was assessed for research results about this relationship are inconsistent. More specifically, the study addressed the following question:

1. What is the frequency of teachers' reported teaching and students' reported use of LLSs?

2. Are there significant differences between teachers' reported teaching and students' reported use of LLSs?

3. Are there significant gender differences in students' reported use of LLSs?

4. What is the relationship between LLS use and achievement?

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Definition and Classification of LLSs

There has been no universally acknowledged definition of LLSs owing to discrepancies in views of LLSs. This is why there are numerous definitions in literature. Perhaps the most cited definition is the one offered by Oxford (1993: 18). She defined them as "Specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques that students (most often intentionally) use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language". More recently, Oxford (2011) wrote LLSs are learner's consciously chosen tools for active, self-regulated improvement of language learning. Wenden (1991) and Rubin (1994) suggested that LLS are plans, routines and operations used by the learner to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information. Another widespread definition was offered by Chamot (1987: 71) who suggests that LLSs are "Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content information".

As there are many definitions and views of LLSs, there are also many classifications of them. Perhaps the most inclusive and, in fact, the most widely used typology of LLSs is the one proposed by Oxford (1990). This typology is inclusive in the sense that it satisfies the linguistic, psycholinguistic and social perspectives of LLSs. In this classification, a distinction is made between direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are those which deal with the language itself (p. 14). Such strategies are used to retrieve new information,

understand and produce the language, and use the language despite knowledge gaps. Indirect strategies are not language-based. Rather, they are strategies for managing learning (p. 15). These strategies help manage the process of learning, regulate emotions and encourage learning with others. O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 196) presented a strategy classification that has been used extensively in strategy training research. They categorized LLSs under three main types: metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective: Metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring and evaluating learning), cognitive strategies (making mental and physical images, grouping and taking notes) and social/affective strategies (interacting with others, cooperating and asking questions).

Cohen (2003) grouped LLSs into language learning and language use strategies. Language learning strategies are conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language. These include cognitive strategies for memorizing and manipulating target language structures, metacognitive strategies for managing and supervising strategy use, affective strategies for gauging emotional reactions to learning and for lowering anxieties, and social strategies for enhancing learning, such as cooperating with other learners and seeking to interact with native speakers. Language use strategies help students utilize the language they have already learned. Such strategies include strategies for retrieving information about the language already stored in memory, rehearsing target language structures, and communicating in the language despite gaps in target language knowledge.

3.2 Significance of LLSs

There seems to be a consensus that LLSs have the effect of facilitating and improving learning and making it self-directed. That LLSs foster independence and self-direction in language learners is widely acknowledged (Green & Oxford, 1995; Raya, 1998, Cotterall, 2000). Self-direction and autonomy are crucial in language learning. Reflecting upon this, Littlewood (1999: 73) maintains that autonomy as the capacity to learn independently of teachers "would appear to be an uncontroversial goal for learners everywhere, since it is obvious that no students, anywhere, will have their teachers to accompany them throughout life". What makes LLSs of greater value to FL learners is what Kouroago (1993: 169) calls "input-poor environment". Arguing the importance of LLSs in EFL environments, Kouroago (1993) writes:

> "Contexts where unconscious acquisition caused by exposure to an abundant second language input outside the classroom is likely to be less critical than conscious strategies in influencing gains in linguistic and communicative competence. In many such contexts succeeding is not a matter of catching what is taught, but rather a question of how to overcome the perverse effects of poor teaching, contagious peer interlanguage and all the adverse conditions by using the right strategies" (p. 169).

Specialists assert the significance of LLSs for successful language learning. LLSs enhance language learning and performance of language tasks (Phakiti, 2003). Oxford (1990: 8), one of the researchers who paid special attention to the potential causal relationship between LLSs and communicative competence, suggests that LLSs "… help learners participate

actively in such authentic communication. Such strategies operate in both general and specific ways to encourage the development of communicative competence". What makes LLSs of even greater value is that they make possible autonomous language learning (Littlewood, 1999; Cotterall, 2000).

3.3 Research Into LLSs, Proficiency and Gender

Research findings about the relationship between LLSs, and achievement (and other similar terms like proficiency and performance) and gender are inconsistent. However, most studies reported a positive relationship between LLSs on one hand and proficiency (Griffiths, 2003; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Chamot, 2004; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Ellis, 2008; Yang, 2010) and affect (Mermelstein, 2015; Amiri & Saberi, 2017; Kassem, 2019) on the other. However, the direction of the relationship is not known (MacIntyre, 2000), i.e. it is not known whether LLSs lead to better proficiency or better proficiency leads to more frequent and better use of strategies, and it is in fact difficult to identify the direction of this relationship. In this respect, Wharton (2000: 232) suggests that the relationship is "two way, however, with proficiency affecting strategy use and vice versa". What is known for sure is that proficient learners use strategies more frequently and appropriately to enhance their language learning. What makes learners more successful in language learning than others is their "… active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of individualized learning techniques" (Dörnyei, 2005: 167). Oxford (1990) describes successful language learners as learners having the ability to orchestrate and combine particular types of language learning strategies in effective ways based on their own learning needs.

Numerous studies were conducted in all countries to document the relationship between LLSs and FL learning. To mention just a few of these studies, Altan (2003) explored the relationship between LLSs and FL achievement. Participants' strategy use was assessed using the SILL, 7.0 Version, and achievement was assessed using course grade averages of 21 ELT students attending the English Preparatory class of the ELT Department. A linear relationship between LLSs and FL achievement was found. Compensation strategies and total LLSs significantly correlated with achievement. Ghavamnia, Kassaian and Dabaghi (2011) examined the relationship between strategy use on one hand and motivation, proficiency, and learners' beliefs on the other. A sample of Iranian EFL learners took a TFEL test and completed the SILL and the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory. Findings revealed a positive relationship between strategy use and motivation, proficiency, and language learning beliefs. In Tam's (2013) study on a cohort of 50 first year university students from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the SILL 7.0 was used to collect data about strategy use and the Use of English Examination Results (HKALE) was used as a proficiency indicator. Female learners used all strategy categories more frequently than male learners. A positive correlation was found between compensation, cognitive, and social Strategies and the participants' proficiency.

The effect of strategy use on writing achievement was explored by Nasihah and Cahyono (2017) using a cohort of 100 Indonesian FL high school students. A significant correlation between LLSs and writing achievement was found. Mutar (2018) investigated the LLSs used

by Iraqi sixth graders (N=120) and the relationship between strategy use, and gender and proficiency. No statistically significant differences were found between male and female students in strategy use. Students with high proficiency used all six categories of learning strategies more than medium and low-proficiency students. In a study conducted by Tabeti and Grazib (2019), proficient learners in 176 Iraqi EFL students showed significantly more strategy use, as well as more use of cognitive, meta-cognitive and social strategies. Female students used memory, cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective learning strategies more frequently than male students.

In another line of studies, researchers from all over the world trained language learners on general LLSs or strategies associated with specific language skills in order to promote their language learning. Here are just a few examples of such studies. In a study by Macaro (2001), six classes of secondary students of French were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. Students in the experimental groups received about five months of instruction on a variety of writing strategies that included the metacognitive strategies of advance preparation, monitoring, and evaluating. Experimental groups had made significant gains in the grammatical accuracy of their writing. They also changed their approach to writing, as they became less reliant on the teacher, more selective in their use of the dictionary, and more careful about their written work. Carrier (2003) taught bottom-up and top-down listening comprehension strategies to a small group of high school ESL students. Students significantly improved listening comprehension. Kassem (1999) trained freshmen EFL students at a faulty of education in Egypt selected reading strategies. The experimental group outperformed the control group that did not receive strategy training in all levels of reading comprehension. Similarly, Takallou (2011) taught a group of EFL learners the strategies of planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Experimental group students outperformed the control group on the reading comprehension test.

3.4 Assessment of LLSs

Several techniques have been used to identify strategies used when learning a language. These include questionnaires, oral interviews, observing learners, getting learners to give a retrospective commentary, and getting them to give a synchronic commentary on how they perform tasks (Macaro, 2001: 36). Oxford (1990: 193-199) surveyed common strategy assessment techniques, namely observation, think-aloud protocols, diaries and journals, and surveys. *Surveys* or *questionnaires* are the most frequently used of all the strategy assessment techniques. They are used to gather systematic, written data on language learning strategy use. Some surveys use open-ended questions, so students can describe the strategies freely and openly. Other surveys use multiple-choice questions. Oxford's Inventory of Language Learning Strategies (SILL) is, perhaps, one of the commonest surveys in LLSs research. It is a self-report, paper-and-pencil survey. It consists of statements (50 items in one version and 80 items in a more recent version) of the general format 'I do such-and-such'. Students respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never or almost never true of me") to 5 ("Always or almost always true of me"). The SILL has high reliability and validity with no significant effect of responding according to social desirability, the reason why it is used worldwide.

Observation is used only with observable strategies (some strategies cannot be observed directly). It can be based on checklists prepared to meet the specific aims of those conducting strategy training. Such checklists help to make observation more systematic. Observation can be done by one person or more. In case another person is available to take part in observation, detailed information about the contexts in which strategies are used can be recorded. The focus of observation can be the whole class, a small group of students or just one student. Videotaping can be used in order to make available permanent record(s) of the observed session(s). The *think-aloud protocol* is a technique in which students let their thoughts flow verbally in a conscious way without trying to control, direct, or observe them. Think-aloud can be done as the student performs the task (synchronic commentary) or after the performance of the task (retrospective commentary). The former is more preferred as students might face difficulties trying to remember how they have performed the task and what strategies they have employed in performing it. *Diaries and journals* are forms of self-report that allow students to record in writing their thoughts, feelings, achievements, problems and strategies. Diaries can be free-form or the teacher can get students to focus on specific items like learning strategies. From time to time, the teacher collects diaries to analyze students' writings to investigate the extent to which they use strategies.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

A total of 88 fourth level students (68 males and 20 females) studying English as a FL at Thadiq Sciences and Humanities College, Shaqra University, KSA participated in the study. The first four levels of study in the English program at this college include inclusively skill-based courses, namely Basic Language Skills (Eng 111), English Vocabulary (Eng 120), Listening and Speaking 1 (Eng 112), Listening and Speaking 2 (Eng 122), Reading Comprehension 1(Eng 113), Reading Comprehension 2 (Eng 115), English Grammar (Eng 116), Writing 1 (Eng 114), Writing 2 (Eng 213), and Essay Writing (Eng 312). Participants completed the strategy questionnaire at the end of the fourth level because at this point students finish studying all the previously mentioned skill-based courses. Students had the same language experience in terms of years of study and rate of exposure to the language.

In addition to students, a total of 18 lecturers (10 males and 8 females) participated in the study. They have taught skill-based courses at the college for at least five years. Some of them are specialized in teaching academic areas (e.g., linguistics and literature) as they are graduates of colleges of arts that did not include educational courses, while others have had a TEFL component in their career as they are graduates of colleges of education that included TEFL courses. All teachers have had several TEFL courses (including courses about strategies of active learning and how to teach them) in the college and the main campus ever since they joined the college. Because of the program's participation in the institutional accreditation mentioned in the statement of the problem, they have received intensive training in teaching LLSs for the past two years.

4.2 The Strategy Questionnaire

After surveying related literature on LLS questionnaires (Oxford. 1990; Cheng, 2002; Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari, 2006; Harris, 2007; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010; Mohite, 2014), the researcher developed a strategy questionnaire that initially included 60 items. The strategies included were not of the type of strategies that relate to general language learning. Also they were not organized under the famous strategy types of cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, etc. Rather it included strategies that relate to language skills. Thus, it had five categories of strategies relating to learning vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and speaking. The reason for this is that the study was mainly concerned with strategies the students used to improve their language skills in specific.

The initial 60-item version of the questionnaire was content validated by five EFL professors to decide on its validity for probing EFL students' strategies for learning English vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and speaking. Some items were either deleted or reworded. This left the questionnaire with 54 items organized under five categories: vocabulary strategies (10 items), reading strategies (8 items), listening strategies (15 items), writing strategies (12 items) and speaking strategies (9 items). Participants were asked to respond to items by indicating how far they agreed to the statements on a five-point rating scale. Each response was associated with a point value where "Seldom use it" was assigned a point value of 1 and the response "Very often use it" a point value of 5. The questionnaire was then completed by the students participating in the study and was checked for internal consistency and reliability. The reason for using the main sample for establishing internal consistency and reliability was the limited number of students.

Alpha estimates of reliability were all high (See Table 1), indicating that the questionnaire was quite reliable. For internal consistency, correlations among items and total scores of strategy categories they belonged to were computed (See Table 2). All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that the questionnaire was internally consistent.

Table 1. Reliability of students' LLS questionnaire

Strategy category	Alpha coefficient
Vocabulary	.90
Reading	.86
Listening	.93
Writing	.91
Speaking	.85
Total	.97

Table 2. Internal consistency of students' LLS questionnaire

Item	Cronbach' Alpha	Item	Cronbach' Alpha	Item	Cronbach' Alpha
1	.70**	19	.78**	37	.73**
2	.81**	20	.90**	38	.60**
3	.72**	21	.82**	39	.83**
4	.69**	22	.81**	40	.75**
5	.63**	23	.88**	41	.72**
6	.71**	24	.69**	42	.84**
7	.77**	25	.73**	43	.48**
8	.82**	26	.57**	44	.84**
9	.68**	27	.52*	45	.75**
10	.69**	28	.71**	46	.74**
11	.73**	29	.73**	47	.73**
12	.82**	30	.71**	48	.50**
13	.77**	31	.75**	49	.63**
14	.39**	32	.52**	50	.75**
15	.83**	33	.53**	51	.77**
16	.81**	34	.72**	52	.72**
17	.75**	35	.72**	53	.49**
18	.67**	36	.72**	54	.81**

The same questionnaire was completed by teachers but with slightly different wording in items and the rating scale. The teachers' questionnaire began with the statement "I teach my students to…". The five-point rating scale ranged between "Seldom teach it" and "Very often teach it". Alpha estimates of reliability of the teachers' questionnaire were all high (See Table 3), indicating that it was quite reliable. Correlations among items and total scores of strategy categories they belonged to (See Table 4) were significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the teachers' questionnaire was internally consistent.

Table 3. Reliability of teachers' LLS questionnaire

Strategy category	Alpha coefficient
Vocabulary	.75
Reading	.91
Listening	.87
Writing	.74
Speaking	.62
Total	.95

Table 4. Internal consistency of teachers' LLS questionnaire

Item	Cronbach' Alpha	Item	Cronbach' Alpha	Item	Cronbach' Alpha
1	.70**	19	.95**	37	.53*
2	.61**	20	.96**	38	.62**
3	.56*	21	.82*	39	.49*
4	.66**	22	.96**	40	.88**
5	.74**	23	.92**	41	.53*
6	.56*	24	.55*	42	.58*
7	.53*	25	.55*	43	.88**
8	.49*	26	.50*	44	.56*
9	.96**	27	.49*	45	.97**
10	.43*	28	.50*	46	.50*
11	.92**	29	.97**	47	.75**
12	.95**	30	.51*	48	.56*
13	.83*	31	.95**	49	.54*
14	.98**	32	.97**	50	.51*
15	.92**	33	.95**	51	.53*
16	.92**	34	.51*	52	.49*
17	.50*	35	.55*	53	.83**
18	.98**	36	.53*	54	.51*

4.3 Data Analysis

Data obtained from completed questionnaires was statistically analyzed using the SPSS program. Statistical devices used included means, standard deviations, percentages, t-test for independent samples and Pearson correlations.

5. Results

To answer the first and the second research questions, means were used to identify the frequency of strategies reported by teachers and students. The t-test for independent means was also used to explore if there were significant differences between teachers' and students' frequencies.

5.1 Vocabulary Strategies

Table 5. Reported frequency of vocabulary strategy teaching and use

Test	group	Level	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
Visualize the spelling of the new word in mind	Teachers	High	4.6	.786	2.5	**.015**
	Students	High	3.6	.998		
Say or write the word several times	Teachers	High	4.0	1.15	1.2	.244
	Students	Medium	3.4	1.19		
Put the new word in sentence to remember it	Teachers	High	4.3	1.50	1.3	.213
	Students	High	3.6	1.28		
Place the new word in a group with other similar words, e.g., words related to clothing	Teachers	High	4.4	.787	2.1	**.041**
	Students	Medium	3.4	1.29		
Associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word	Teachers	High	4.8	.378	2.7	**.008**
	Students	High	3.5	1.27		
Look up derivatives of the new word	Teachers	High	4.3	.756	2.0	**.048**
	Students	Medium	3.3	1.28		
Remember the word by making a clear mental image of it	Teachers	High	4.4	.534	1.5	.145
	Students	High	3.7	1.23		
Find the meaning of a word by dividing the word into known parts	Teachers	High	4.1	1.07	.805	.425
	Students	High	3.8	1.14		
Keep a vocabulary notebook to write down new words	Teachers	High	3.7	1.38	.883	.381
	Students	Medium	3.2	1.42		
Use computer software to know about the meaning and pronunciation of words	Teachers	High	4.3	.488	.903	.371
	Students	High	3.9	1.14		
Total	Teachers	High	4.3	.529	2.2	**.036**
	Students	High	3.5	.883		

* Wording of the statements was slightly adapted to be neutral, i.e., to refer to both teachers and students.

* Level of reported frequency of strategy teaching/learning is based on Oxford's scoring system (2001): high = 3.5 or above, medium = 2.5 - 3.4 = medium and low = 2.4 or lower.

As listed in Table 5, total means of reported frequency of vocabulary strategy teaching (M = 4.3) and that of reported vocabulary strategy use (M = 3.5) were both high. That is, teachers taught and students used vocabulary strategies with high frequency. Of the ten vocabulary strategies, six strategies were rated high by both teachers and students, i.e., the agreement percentage was 60%. The other four strategies were given high ratings by teachers and medium ratings by students ('put the new word in sentence to remember it', 'place the new word in a group with other similar words', 'look up derivatives of the new word' and 'keep a vocabulary notebook to write down new words').

There were no statistically significant differences between teachers' and students' reported frequencies in six out of the ten vocabulary strategies. However, there were statistically

significant differences in the other four strategies ('visualize the spelling of the new word in mind', 'place the new word in a group with other similar words', 'associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word' and 'look up derivatives of the new word') in favor of teachers. Although students' reported frequencies of two of these four strategies are high and of the other two are medium, they are significantly lower than teachers'.

5.2 Reading Strategies

Table 6. Reported frequency of reading strategy teaching and use

Test	group	Level	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
11. Make predictions about the reading material from the title	Teachers	High	4.1	1.46	.932	.356
	Students	High	3.7	1.18		
12. Use background knowledge to aid comprehension of the reading material	Teachers	High	4.3	1.50	1.06	.296
	Students	High	3.8	1.02		
13. Skim the passage first to get the main idea, then go back and read it more carefully	Teachers	High	4.3	.951	.903	.371
	Students	High	3.9	1.17		
14. Read without looking up every unfamiliar word	Teachers	High	3.6	1.27	1.6	.115
	Students	Medium	2.8	1.21		
15. Use known words to guess the meaning of unknown words when reading English material	Teachers	High	4.4	.787	1.81	.077
	Students	High	3.6	1.14		
16. Use the main idea of the text to help with guessing the meaning of unknown words	Teachers	High	4.4	.787	1.7	.090
	Students	High	3.6	1.16		
17. Read English material for pleasure	Teachers	High	4.3	.756	1.5	.140
	Students	High	3.5	1.30		
18. Identify comprehension breakdowns and fix them up	Teachers	High	3.6	1.27	.087	.931
	Students	High	3.6	1.18		
Total	Teachers	High	4.1	.921	1.6	.124
	Students	High	3.6	.840		

It can be seen from Table 6 that total means of reported frequency of reading strategy teaching (M = 4.1) and reading strategy use (M = 3.6) were both high. This indicates that teachers and students taught and used reading strategies with high frequency. Of the eight reading strategies, seven strategies were rated high by both teachers and students, i.e., the agreement percentage was 87.5%. Only strategy in item14 ('read without looking up every unfamiliar word') was given a high rating by teachers and a medium rating by students.

No significant differences were found between teachers and students in reported frequencies of all reading strategies. This indicates a match between teachers and students in reading strategy teaching/use. Both teachers and students reported comparable high frequencies of reading strategies.

5.3 Listening Strategies

Table 7. Reported frequency of listening strategy teaching and use

Test	group	Level	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
19. Use background knowledge to understand the listening material	Teachers	High	4.4	1.13	.951	.346
	Students	High	4.0	1.17		
20. Predict incoming content using the information being delivered	Teachers	High	4.0	1.41	.362	.719
	Students	High	3.8	1.21		
21. Use known words to guess the meaning of unknown words when listening to English	Teachers	High	4.7	.488	2.0	**.046**
	Students	High	3.7	1.22		
22. Use the main idea to help with the guessing of unknown words when listening to English	Teachers	High	4.0	1.41	.436	.665
	Students	High	3.8	1.11		
23. Guess the general meaning by using any clue, e.g., clues from the context or situation	Teachers	High	4.4	.787	1.3	.188
	Students	High	3.8	1.25		
24. Listen to English material for pleasure	Teachers	High	4.1	.690	1.08	.286
	Students	High	3.5	1.49		
25. Skip over unknown words not to miss what is said next	Teachers	Medium	3.4	.999	-1.7-	.102
	Students	Medium	2.7	1.60		
26. Try to understand without translating word-for-word into own language	Teachers	High	4.4	.534	1.7	.095
	Students	High	3.6	1.20		
27. Listen to what is said without paying much attention to every new word	Teachers	Medium	2.8	1.34	.535	.598
	Students	Medium	2.6	1.08		
28. Try to think in English without having to translate into own language	Teachers	High	4.0	.577	1.1	.290
	Students	Medium	3.4	1.32		
29. Identify problems in listening and work on solving them	Teachers	High	4.0	1.41	.676	.502
	Students	High	3.7	1.11		
30. Try to relax when feeling tense during the listening task	Teachers	High	4.4	.787	2.2	**.030**
	Students	Medium	3.3	1.27		
31. Think back to how one listened and about what one might do differently next time	Teachers	High	3.6	1.40	.006	.996
	Students	High	3.6	1.28		
32. Reflect on problems or difficulties and how to overcome them after listening	Teachers	High	4.0	1.41	.826	.413
	Students	High	3.6	1.19		
33. Reflect on the listening task with classmates after listening	Teachers	High	4.1	1.07	2.1	**.041**
	Students	Medium	3.0	1.31		
Total	Teachers	High	4.0	.685	1.3	.200
	Students	High	3.5	.855		

As listed in Table 7, total means of reported frequency of listening strategy teaching (M = 4.0) and listening strategy use (M = 3.5) were both high. This indicates that teachers and students taught and used listening strategies with high frequency. Of the 15 listening strategies, 10 strategies were given high ratings and two were given medium ratings by both teachers and students, i.e., the agreement percentage was 80%. Three strategies were rated high by teachers and medium by students ('try to think in English without having to translate into

own language', 'try to relax when feeling tense during the listening task' and 'reflect on the listening task with classmates after listening'). Only one listening strategy was rated high by students and medium by teachers ('skip over unknown words not to miss what is said next').

There were no statistically significant differences between teachers' and students' reported frequencies in 12 out of the 15 listening strategies. However, statistically significant differences were found in the other three strategies ('use known words to guess the meaning of unknown words when listening to English', 'try to relax when feeling tense during the listening task' and 'reflect on the listening task with classmates after listening') in favor of teachers. Two of these three strategies were given medium ratings and one was given a high rating by students.

5.4 Writing Strategies

Table 8. Reported frequency of writing strategy teaching and use

Test	group	Level	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
34. Brainstorm ideas before writing	Teachers	High	5.0	.000	2.9	**.005**
	Students	High	3.5	1.32		
35. Check connections among ideas before writing	Teachers	High	4.7	.488	2.4	**.020**
	Students	High	3.6	1.16		
36. Plan out text organization before writing	Teachers	High	5.0	.000	2.7	**.009**
	Students	High	3.7	1.23		
37. Read about the topic and collect information from different sources before writing	Teachers	High	4.8	.378	3.0	**.005**
	Students	High	3.5	1.15		
38. Discuss the topic with others (e.g. teacher, classmate) before writing	Teachers	High	4.6	.787	2.4	**.019**
	Students	Medium	3.2	1.43		
39. Use supporting details when writing	Teachers	High	4.6	.534	2.3	**.026**
	Students	High	3.6	1.13		
40. When cannot think of the correct expression to write, find a different way to express the idea, e.g., describing the idea.	Teachers	High	4.7	.488	2.0	**.049**
	Students	High	3.7	1.24		
41. Revise to rearrange sentences and paragraphs to make ideas clear	Teachers	High	4.8	.378	2.8	**.008**
	Students	High	3.5	1.25		
42. Revise to add new words, sentences or paragraphs if the meaning needs that	Teachers	High	4.4	.787	1.9	.058
	Students	High	3.5	1.19		
43. Get compositions read by classmates for feedback	Teachers	High	4.0	.816	2.0	**.046**
	Students	Medium	2.9	1.42		
44. Read the teacher's corrections and take them into consideration in coming writing	Teachers	High	4.6	.534	2.0	**.048**
	Students	High	3.6	1.28		
45. Compare own writing with previous compositions to detect improvement	Teachers	High	4.3	.951	2.1	**.040**
	Students	Medium	3.3	1.21		
Total	Teachers	High	4.6	.329	3.27	**.000**
	Students	High	3.5	.908		

Data in Table 8 shows that total means of reported frequency of writing strategy teaching (4.6) and listening strategy use (3.5) were both high. This indicates that teachers and students taught and used writing strategies with high frequency. Of the 12 writing strategies, nine strategies were rated high by both teachers and students, i.e., the agreement percentage was 75%. Three strategies were rated high by teachers and medium by students ('discuss the topic with others, e.g. teacher and classmate before writing', 'get compositions read by classmates for feedback' and 'compare own writing with previous compositions to detect improvement'.

It can be observed that there were statistically significant differences between teachers' and students' reported frequencies in 11 out of the 12 writing strategies in favor of teachers. Except for one strategy that was given a medium rating, nine of the 11 strategies were given high ratings by students. However, teachers' ratings were significantly higher.

5.5 Speaking Strategies

Table 9. Reported frequency of speaking strategy teaching and use

Test	group	Level	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
46. Initiate conversations in the English language	Teachers	High	4.6	.534	2.4	**.019**
	Students	Medium	3.3	1.39		
47. Anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far	Teachers	High	4.0	1.41	1.4	.161
	Students	Medium	3.2	1.28		
48. Use gestures when cannot think of the right word or expression to say	Teachers	High	4.8	.378	3.6	**.001**
	Students	Medium	2.9	1.36		
49. Ask the interlocutor to tell the right word if one cannot think of it in a conversation	Teachers	High	4.1	1.07	1.2	.250
	Students	High	3.5	1.33		
50. Find a different way to say the idea, e.g., using a synonym or describing the idea	Teachers	High	5.0	.000	2.4	**.021**
	Students	High	3.9	1.22		
51. Concentrate on what the person is saying and put unrelated topics out of mind	Teachers	High	4.0	.816	.337	.737
	Students	High	3.8	1.20		
52. Seek opportunities to practice speaking the English language	Teachers	High	4.7	.488	1.7	.093
	Students	High	4.0	1.08		
53. Plan what to say in mind before speaking	Teachers	High	3.8	1.46	-.013-	.991
	Students	High	3.9	1.23		
54. Encourage oneself to take wise risks and try to speak even though one might make mistakes	Teachers	High	4.8	.378	2.1	**.038**
	Students	High	3.9	1.18		
Total	Teachers	High	4.4	.449	2.5	**.017**
	Students	High	3.6	.851		

As listed in Table 9, total means of reported frequency of speaking strategy teaching (4.4) and speaking strategy use (3.6) were both high. That is, teachers and students taught and used speaking strategies with high frequency. Of the nine speaking strategies, six strategies were

rated high by both teachers and students. This indicates an agreement percentage of 67%. Three strategies were rated high by teachers and medium by students ('initiate conversations in the English language', 'anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far' and 'use gestures when cannot think of the right word or expression to say').

There were statistically significant differences between teachers' and students' reported frequencies in four out of the nine speaking strategies in favor of teachers. Two of these four strategies were given high ratings and the other two were given medium ratings by students. As the observed pattern with most of the previous strategies, students' ratings were high and significant differences were due to higher teachers' ratings.

What follows is a summary of reported teachers' and students' frequencies of teaching and using LLSs.

Table 10. A summary of reported frequencies of teaching and using LLSs

Strategy category	St. rated high		St. rated medium		St. with sig. differences *
	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	
Vocabulary (N=10)	10	6	0	4	4
Reading (N=8)	8	7	0	1	0
Listening (N=15)	13	11	2	4	3
Writing (N=12)	12	9	0	3	11
Speaking (N=9)	9	6	0	3	4
Total (N=54)	**52**	**39**	**2**	**15**	**22**

* All significant differences were in favor of teachers

From Table 10, it can be observed that (1) teachers and students gave high ratings to 39 out of 54 strategies. This makes an agreement percentage of 72%. (2) There were no significant differences in 32 out of 54 strategies. That is, teachers and students had similar pattern in 59% of the 54 strategies included in the survey. (3) No strategies were given low ratings by teachers or students. (4) Only two strategies were given medium ratings by teachers ('listen to what is said without paying much attention to every new word' and 'skip over unknown words not to miss what is said next').

The following Table includes the strategies with medium student ratings. These are the strategies that teachers need to place more emphasis on in their future teaching.

Table 11. Strategies given medium ratings by students

No.	Strategy	M	SD
1	As I listen to English, I try to think in English without having to translate into my own language.	3.4544	1.31988
2	When learning a new word, I say or write it several times.	3.4318	1.18905
3	When learning a new word, I place the new word in a group with other similar words, e.g., words related to clothing.	3.3636	1.29563
4	I try to relax whenever I feel tense as I listen.	3.3182	1.27175
5	I compare my writing with previous composition to see if I have improved my writing level.	3.2727	1.20780
6	I initiate conversations in the English language.	3.2726	1.38704
7	When learning a new word, I look up derivatives of the new word (e.g. noun, adjective).	3.2725	1.28251
8	I anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.	3.2500	1.27817
9	I discuss the topic with others (e.g. teacher, classmate) before writing.	3.2273	1.42834
10	I keep a vocabulary notebook to write down new words.	3.2045	1.42371
11	I reflect on the listening task with classmates after listening.	3.0455	1.31104
12	I use gestures when I cannot think of the right word or expression to say.	2.9545	1.36321
13	I get my compositions read by classmates for feedback.	2.8636	1.42390
14	I read without looking up every unfamiliar word.	2.7727	1.21739
15	I skip over words I do not understand so that I don't miss what is said next.	2.712	.99894
16	I listen to what is said without paying much attention to every new word.	2.6136	1.08297

It can be observed from data in Table 11 that half of the least rated strategies (eight out of 16) relate to listening and speaking, four strategies relate to vocabulary, three strategies relate to writing and one strategy relate to reading.

5.6 Gender Differences

To answer the third research question about differences between male and female students in LLS use, the t-test for independent means was used. These results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Gender differences in LLS use

Test	Group	N	M	SD	t-value	Sig.
Vocabulary Strategies	Boys	68	3.5	.796		
	Girls	20	3.7	.831	-1.50-	.140
Reading Strategies	Boys	68	3.4	.878		
	Girls	20	3.9	.839	-.359-	.722
Listening Strategies	Boys	68	3.5	.786		
	Girls	20	3.6	1.05	-.250-	.804
Writing Strategies	Boys	68	3.5	.827		
	Girls	20	3.6	.992	-1.16-	.253
Speaking Strategies	Boys	68	3.4	.904		
	Girls	20	3.8	.872	-1.09-	.280
Total	Boys	68	3.5	.846		
	Girls	20	3.9	.859	-.913-	.367

As listed in Table 12, no significant differences were found between male and female students in any of the individual LLS categories or the total score. This indicates that male and female students are similar in their LLS use pattern. It can also indicate that male and female teachers are similar in their teaching of LLSs.

5.7 The Relationship Between LLS Use and Achievement

To answer the fourth research question about the relationship between LLS use and achievement, Pearson correlations were computed as shown in Table 13 below.

Table 13. Correlations between LLS use and achievement

		Achievement
Vocabulary Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.53**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	88
Reading Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.61**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	88
Listening Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.64**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	88
Writing Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.63**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	88
Speaking Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.69**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	88
Total	Pearson Correlation	.67**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	88

It is clear from Table 13 that there were statistically significant correlations between individual LLS categories and total strategies on one hand and achievement as measured by students' GPAs on the other. All correlations are significant at the .01 level.

6. Discussion

Means of teachers' total scores of reported teaching of vocabulary strategies (M=4.3), reading strategies (M=4.1), listening strategies (M=3.5), writing strategies (M=4.0) and speaking strategies (M=4.6) were all high. So were total means of students' reported use of vocabulary strategies (M=3.5), reading strategies (M=3.6), listening strategies (M=3.5), writing strategies (M=3.5) and speaking strategies (M=3.6). This reveals a match between overall teachers' reported frequencies of teaching and students' reported use of LLSs. That is, teachers were highly committed to the teaching of LLSs and students used them with high frequency. Talking of individual strategies, percentages of agreement between teachers and students in frequencies of vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and listening strategies were 60%, 87.5%, 80%, 75% and 67% respectively. Out of the 54 strategies, teachers' gave high ratings to 52 strategies and medium ratings to the other two strategies. Students gave high ratings to 39 strategies and medium ratings to 15 strategies. No strategy was given a low rating by either of them. This makes an agreement of 76% in individual strategies. A similar finding was reported by Sen (2009) where frequencies of teachers and students were quite similar, even though teachers reported frequencies were higher. Similarly, in the study conducted by Griffiths (2007), a high level of accord (71%) was found between strategies which students reported using highly frequently and those which teachers reported regarding as highly important. That reading and writing strategies achieved the highest percentage of similarity between teachers and students is reasonable given that reading and writing are the two most practiced skills in the Saudi context and perhaps in all EFL contexts.

As to differences between reported frequencies of teaching and using strategies, t-test for independent samples revealed that there were significant differences between teachers and students in four vocabulary strategies, three listening strategies, eleven writing strategies and four speaking strategies. That is, there were significant differences in 22 out of 54 strategies, i.e., 41% of all strategies. It is worth mentioning here that 13 of students' frequencies of those 22 strategies were high and nine were medium, but teachers' frequencies were higher. So the existence of significant differences in those 22 strategies does not mean that students did not use them with high frequency. This seems logical, as students can use strategies more frequently than others. Table 11 includes strategies given medium ratings by students. These are the strategies where there is a room for improvement. Teachers can place more emphasis on these strategies in future teaching.

Of the strategies that need to receive more attention from teachers in future teaching are strategies in items 15 ('reading without looking up every unfamiliar word') and 16 ('listening to what is said without paying much attention to every new word') that received the lowest means (2.8 and 2.6 respectively). The two strategies belong to the same theme of not attending to every word read or heard. This indicates that students have a preference to attend to all words in reading and listening materials. There is no problem with this, but they also

need to learn how to skip words and in the same time attain a good level of reading and listening comprehension. Two other strategies with a common theme are strategies in items 12 ('reflecting on the listening task with classmates after listening') and 14 ('getting compositions read by classmates for feedback') whose means were 3.0 and 2.7 respectively. These two strategies that relate to reflection about own performance and seeking feedback from classmates can have a positive impact on performance. They therefore may need more attention from teachers in future teaching. Teachers are also advised to reflect on the other strategies in Table 11. They can be targets for future training.

An observation that needs consideration is that half of the strategies that were given medium ratings by students relate to speaking. This can be explained in the light of Kouroago's (1993: 169) description of EFL settings as input-poor. Saudi Arabia is a country where EFL is learned and spoken only in classrooms. Opportunities of practicing the language outside the classroom, particularly speaking are quite limited. Teachers can handle this by using more oral communication activities in classrooms. They need to provide students with wider opportunities to speak the language in the classroom. They can also encourage students to communicate orally with English speaking people via mass media.

No gender differences in LLS use were found in the present study. Male and female students reported similar frequency of strategy use. This finding is consistent with other studies (e.g., Deanna, Evie, and Alan, 2005; Mutar, 2018). This finding indicates also that both male and female teachers who teach in separate sections of the same program (students are taught by same sex teachers) were equally concerned and committed to the teaching of LLSs. An explanation for this similarity is that all teachers have attended the same workshops on LLSs and have used the same quality-related documents (e.g., course specifications and course reports) focusing on strategies of active learning. Finally, strong positive correlations were found between achievement as measured by students' GPAs and both individual strategy categories and total LLSs. This finding concurs with the mainstream of research into the relationship between LLSs and successful language learning as measured by proficiency, achievement or performance (Griffiths, 2003; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Chamot, 2004; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Ellis, 2008; Yang, 2010). This finding is logical given that all courses in the first four levels of study in students' English program are skill-based. Students' frequent use of LLSs may have improved their performance in learning vocabulary and the four language skills. LLSs enhance students' self-direction and independent learning that can have a differential effect on their achievement. Successful language learners need to learn independently because they cannot have teachers at their disposal all the time. As stated by Oxford (1990: 201), learners "…cannot be spoon-fed if they desire and expect to reach an acceptable level of communicative competence".

7. Conclusion and Implications

Teachers and students in the present study reported similar patterns of LLS teaching (teachers) and use (students). It is encouraging to teachers to discover that the strategies they teach with high frequency are used by students with high frequency. Furthermore, the study identified a number of strategies that teachers need to focus on in their future teaching. The results of the

study can therefore be considered a blueprint of strategies acquired well by students and strategies that need further emphasis. The finding that strategies correlated positively with achievement (the common finding in most studies that tackled the relationship between LLSs and successful language learning) is also encouraging to teachers. LLSs deserve time and effort exerted in teaching them. There is another implication that is specific to the setting where the study was conducted. The insignificant gender differences in strategy use indicate that male and female teachers (who teach to same sex students in separate sections) were equally committed to the teaching of LLSs. This indicates good coordination between the two sections of the program, which is an important standard that the accreditation committee takes into account when deciding to grant institutional accreditation to programs of study.

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