

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF FERHAT ABBAS-SETIF  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English

**The Effect of Self-questioning (Reflective metacognitive  
learning) on Learning  
The Case of Third Year Oral Expression Students  
at Farhat Abbas University- Sétif.**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the Magister degree in applied linguistics and language teaching

Submitted by: **BOUIRANE Ahlem**

**BOARD OF EXAMINERS**

President: **Prof. SAADI Hacene**- Professeur- Université de Constantine

Supervisor: **Dr. HAMADA Hacene**- Maitre de Conférences (ENS) Constantine

Examiner : **Prof. KESKES Said**- Professeur- Université de Sétif

**DEDICATION*****To my mother and my father***

To the two greatest teachers from whom I learned everything. I am,  
I am because of you. For your belief in me, and my deep pride of  
being your daughter, I would like to dedicate this work to you with  
greatest recognition and love.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

If I think of research as a journey, conducting this dissertation research has been a wonderful and challenging experience. There are many people to whom I am immensely indebted for their help and guidance.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Doctor Hamada Hacene for his extraordinarily positive attitude, valuable experience, and guidance, as well as his permanent availability and encouragement. I am glad that I have had the opportunity to be one of those privileged to work with him.

I am equally appreciative of the gorgeous efforts of Professor Saadi Hacene as a teacher and evaluator. I am impressed by his wisdom, guidance and professionalism, and the everlasting, enthusiastic attitude that he has for research.

A very special and heartfelt thank you to Doctor Keskes Said to whom I am deeply indebted for the possibility to work with this innovative and creative research group. His wealth of expertise and enthusiasm, and for devoting his time to read this work.

I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Andrew Cohen for his constructive criticism and prompt feedback; Mr. Yaala Farouk from the Social Sciences Institute for his precious help with the statistics; the colleagues at the English department; and the university students who participated in the study by filling questionnaires, or attending interviews.

A word of thanks to my dearest friends *Sonia, Chadia, Souad, Hanane, Linda, Oumsaad, Wafia, , Nacira, Jamila, Soumia, Sara, Selma, Asma, Chahira, Khadidja* and *Somia*, for their perennial love, and faith in me. I owe a great deal to my parents, my sister *Naima*, my brother's wife *Lamia*, my brothers *Chemseddine, Abdelhamid, Khaled*, and *Hacene*, whose love, thoughtfulness, encouragement, understanding, patience, sacrifices, and unshakable support from start to finish made this work possible.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the use of metacognitive language learning strategies for learning English as a foreign language. It starts with the premise that metacognitive language learning strategies are crucial for students of English as a foreign language, to learn effectively, and that there are differences in terms of gender in the use of these strategies. The theoretical issues with relation to the area of metacognitive language learning strategies in particular, and language learning strategies in general, and review of the research about the area are discussed. The practical research is carried in the English language department at Farhat Abbas University, Sétif, Algeria, with third year students learning English as a foreign language. It is hypothesized that the more the learners use metacognitive language learning strategies, the more successful they will be in language learning. The study is divided into two main parts following a qualitative design. The first part uses the Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire to account for differences in the reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use across all the students, and across gender differences. The second part uses interviews to account for the use of these strategies at the individual level, in their relation to the students' gender and achievement in language learning. The results of the first part revealed significant use of metacognitive strategies across all the students, and significant differences between male students and female students in the frequency of use of these strategies. Moreover, the results of the second part reflected more significant differences in the use of metacognitive strategies at the level of gender and learning achievement. The dissertation concludes by bringing together key findings and some suggestions for further research.

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table.1</u> The percentage of male and female participants, and all the students	57
<u>Table.2</u> Average reported frequency of metacognitive language learning strategies (MLSU) with standard deviation (SD)	62
<u>Table.3</u> Patterns of metacognitive strategies used highly frequently across all the students	64
<u>Table.4</u> Average reported frequency of strategy use according to gender	67
<u>Table.5</u> Average reported frequency of metacognitive language learning strategies use for males and females	68
<u>Table.6</u> Reported frequency of metacognitive strategies by females and males, according to levels of metacognitive processing	70
<u>Table.7</u> Patterns of metacognitive strategies use by female students	73
<u>Table.8</u> Patterns of metacognitive strategies use by male students	74
<u>Table.9</u> Reported frequency ratings of metacognitive language learning strategies use (MLLSQ) by interviewees 1-12 with achievement	104
<u>Table.10</u> Key strategies of successful and less successful males and females	120
<u>Table.11</u> Correlation (r) of metacognitive strategies use with students' average of success in British literature (Brit.lit), Oral expression (Oral.exp) and general average (GA)	122

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED**

CS	Communication Strategies
GLL	Good Language Learner
GMLS	General Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies
IL	Interlanguage
LLS	Language Learning Strategies
LUS	Language Use Strategies
MLLS	Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies
MLLSQ	Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire
MLUS	Metacognitive Language Use Strategies
MM	Multidimensional Model
MSPLS	Metacognitive Strategies for Productive Learning Skills
MSRLS	Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Learning Skills
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	Statistical Processing for the Social Sciences



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

*DEDICATION*..... I

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*..... II

*ABSTRACT*..... III

*LIST OF TABLES* ..... IV

*LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED* ..... V

*TABLE OF CONTENTS* ..... VI

**INTRODUCTION**

**I. Statement of the Problem and Scope of the Study** ..... 1

**II. Aims of the Study** ..... 2

**III. Research Questions** ..... 3

**IV. Assumptions and Hypothesis** ..... 4

**V. Research Methods and Tools** ..... 4

**VI. Operational Definitions of Concepts and Terms** ..... 5

    a) Strategies ..... 5

    b) Metacognition ..... 6

    c) Learning .....7

**VII. The Structure of the Study** ..... 7

**CHAPTER.1    LANGUAGE    LEARNING    STRATEGIES,    GENDER,    AND  
LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT**



<b>Introduction</b> .....	9
<b>1.1. Definition of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	9
<b>1.2. Classification of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	13
<b>1.3. Definition of Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	17
<b>1.4. Metacognition in Language Learning</b> .....	22
<b>1.5. Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	25
<b>1.6. Theory of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	30
<b>1.7. Research into Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	38
<b>1.8. Research about Gender as a Factor Influencing Strategy Use</b> .....	41
<b>1.9. Studies about Achievement and Strategy Use</b> .....	43
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	46

**CHAPTER.2 METACOGNTIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USE  
ACROSS GENDER DIFFERENCES**

<b>Introduction</b> .....	48
<b>2.1. Rationale</b> .....	48
<b>2.2. Method</b> .....	53
2.2.1. Research Settings .....	53
2.2.2. The Participants .....	55
2.2.3. Materials .....	57
2.2.4. Data Collection Procedures .....	59
2.2.5. Data Analysis procedures .....	60



**2.3. Results** .....60

    2.3.1. Frequency of language learning strategy use overview (MLLSQ)..... 63

    2.3.2. Patterns of Metacognitive Strategies Use Overview ..... 61

    2.3.3. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies Use across Gender Differences ..... 66

    2.3.4. Patterns of Metacognitive Strategies Use across Gender ..... 72

    2.3.5. Frequency of General Metacognitive Strategies Use and Gender ..... 75

    2.3.3. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Learning Skills Use  
and Gender ..... 76

    2.3.4. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies for Productive Learning Skills Use  
and Gender..... 76

**2.4. Summary of Results and Findings** ..... 77

**Conclusion** ..... 78

**CHAPTER.3 METACOGNTIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USE  
AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**

**Introduction** .....80

**3.1. Rationale** ..... 80

**3.2. Method** ..... 86

    3.2.1. The Participants ..... 86

    3.2.2. Materials .....86

        3.2.2.1.The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire  
..... 86

        3.2.2.2. Interview Instructions ..... 87

        3.2.2.3. Scores ..... 87



3.2.3. Data Collection Procedures .....	87
3.3.4. Data Analysis Procedures .....	88
<b>3.3. Profiles of the Students and Résumé of the Results .....</b>	<b>91</b>
Student profile 1: Soumia .....	91
Student profile 2: Raouf .....	92
Student profile 3: Salim .....	93
Student profile 4: Houda .....	94
Student profile 5: Elwalid .....	95
Student profile 6: Lamia .....	96
Student profile 7: Omar .....	97
Student profile 8: Mounia .....	98
Student profile 9: Karima .....	99
Student profile 10: Linda .....	100
Student profile 11: Kadour .....	101
Student profile 12: Massoud .....	102
<b>3.4. Discussion of the Results .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>3.5. The Difference in the Key Strategies in terms of Gender .....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>3.6. Relationship between metacognitive Strategies Use and Success in Language</b>	
<b>Learning .....</b>	<b>122</b>



**3.7. Summary of Results and Findings** ..... 124

**Conclusion** ..... 125

**CHAPTER.4      DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND PEDAGOGICAL**

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Introduction** ..... 126

**4.1. Discussion of Key Findings** ..... 126

**4.2. Pedagogical Implications** ..... 130

    4.2.1. Language Use Strategies ..... 131

    4.2.2. Language Learning Strategy Instruction ..... 133

    4.2.3. Language Learning Strategy Workshops ..... 137

    4.2.4. Strategy Integration into the Language Classroom ..... 138

**4.3. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research** ..... 139

**Conclusion** ..... 141

**GENERAL CONCLUSION** ..... 142

**REFERENCES** ..... 145

**APPENDICES**

1. The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire
2. Interview Instructions
3. Reliability Analysis Scale
4. Correlation Coefficient



# INTRODUCTION

---

## **I. Statement of the Problem and Scope of the Study**

In its broadest meaning, learning is a social process that enables people and organizations to expand their capabilities. It organizes, shapes, and strengthens the brain, because humans are learning machines, in which the brain is ready to capture the experiences met and encode them into a system of nerve connections. For many people, learning is the effort to create a memory that lasts, hence mastering new dance steps, learning foreign languages, or remembering acquaintances' phone numbers, is learning that requires the inclusion of the brain to encode and store the new information until a situation calls upon it (Smith, 1999: 112).

Following the general trend of learner focused approaches in the area of language learning, the arrival of language learning strategies research into the realm of language learning constituted a “fundamental shift of perspective in thinking about the processes of language learning” (Cohen & Macaro, 2007: 9). The efforts invested through the years to develop methods and approaches about effective ways of language teaching, seemed to neglect the role of the learner as an affective part in the teaching/learning process (Griffiths, 2003a). Research in language learning had always looked for understanding the way languages are learnt, and the factors interfering in this process. The belief that in the teaching/learning process, the role of the individual learner is essential to guarantee the success of the whole language continuum was evident. Yet, surprisingly, the role of the learner as a contributor to this process was not valuably considered, as pointed out by Larsen-Freeman (2001: 12), research in language learning have “underestimated the significance of the learner’s role.”

The learner as Larsen-Freeman (2001:13) views him, is not “merely a passive recipient”. This incorporates the involvement of various factors in the learning process,

among which learning strategies can be fundamental. Theories of learning, studies of aptitude and intelligence, and research about learning styles and strategies are all attempts to identify what learners share as human traits when learning. The central goal of such inquiries in L2 acquisition is to discover how learners perceive, recognize, store, and remember information. That is why; these studies do not look at individual differences in learning, or the differences in one individual, but how these differences form universal traits found in all learners. (Dornyei, 2005)

In this direction, the problem treated in this study is concerned with this idea of the interference of individual differences in the use of metacognitive language learning strategies. Focus is basically turned to two main differences, being gender and learning achievement as two factors that may be linked to metacognitive strategy use. Gender may be viewed as an element that may create differences in the use of metacognitive strategies, while learning achievement may be influenced by differences in metacognitive strategy use among the learners.

## **II. Aims of the study**

The aim of using language learning strategies depends on the learners' purpose from performing the task, but it is generally resumed in becoming a good language learner. When the learners begin to comprehend their learning processes, and can have control over these processes, they tend to be more responsible for their own learning. This self-knowledge and self-regulation of one's learning is a key characteristic of successful language learners (Chamot, Keatley, Meloni, Gonglewski, Bartoszesky, 2004). Hence, successful language learners are mainly responsible for the better functioning of their strategies when completing a task; in other words, they are autonomous learners (Benson, 2006). The desire to understand the way language learners approach their learning, through

the use of language learning strategies, basically their metacognitive category has been the motive for this study.

The aim of this study is firstly to determine the learners' use of metacognitive language learning strategies; i.e. whether the learners make use of these strategies in language learning, by examining the frequency of use. Secondly, the study aims at exploring the rate of correlation existing between the learners' gender and their use of metacognitive language learning strategies. Finally, the research aims at finding out whether the learners' use of metacognitive language learning strategies has an impact on their learning achievement, regarding their academic scores. It is further aimed that the insights emerging from this study may well be useful for further research

### **III. Research Questions**

Research in the area of language learning strategies raised a considerable amount of questions, in its continuous attempt to understand and cover the distance of their contribution to language learning. Surprisingly, the term 'strategy' which is the corner stone in the field of language learning strategies is questioned itself, with no consensus reached yet about its real identity (Griffiths, 2004).

For the sake of this study, the following questions were raised:

1. How frequently are metacognitive learning strategies (MLS) (as listed in the questionnaire) reportedly used by students of English as a foreign language?
2. How frequently are metacognitive learning strategies reportedly used by learners grouped according to gender?
3. Are there patterns for strategy use across all the students and across gender differences?

4. To what extent are the results achieved so far from the questionnaire concerning reported frequency of metacognitive language learning strategies use relevant to the individual learner?
5. Is there a relationship between metacognitive strategies use and the students' learning achievement?

#### **IV. Assumptions and Hypothesis**

Research in the area of language learning strategies assumed that the learners use these strategies 'consciously' in order to make their learning 'easier, faster, and more enjoyable' (Oxford, 1990: 12). Following this assumption, it may be further assumed that:

1. All learners use language learning strategies in general, and some classes of strategies in particular to make their learning more successful.
2. The use of these strategies influences to various extents the rate of success achieved by individual learners, as well as groups of learners.
3. Language learning strategies use is determined by individual differences among the learners.

Hence, as stated earlier, the aim of this study is to examine the correlation between third year university students' use of metacognitive language learning strategies, gender, and learning achievement. For this aim, we hypothesize that the more the students use metacognitive language learning strategies, the more better achievement in language learning would result. In other words:

If the students use metacognitive language learning strategies, they would learn better.

#### **V. Research Methods and Tools**

To investigate the use of metacognitive strategies by students of English as a foreign language in its relation to gender and learning achievement, the current study is divided into two parts, using a qualitative design to approach the research problem. In the first part,

quantitative data were sought through the use of the Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire (MLLSQ) which was designed to cover the needs of the study, through focusing on the basic category of metacognitive strategies in those possible contributions to language learning, instead of using already available questionnaires in this field of research (the SILL, for example).

The MLLSQ was used in the first part of the study with the aim of exploring the overall frequency of metacognitive strategies use across the learners, and the relationship between metacognitive language learning strategies use and gender differences, through examining the students' reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use in its relation to their gender. The second part of the study is qualitative and focused on the use of interviews with the subjects, as well as employing their scores in predefined modules and their overall achievement in English learning, with the aim of examining the correlation between metacognitive strategies use, gender, and achievement in language learning from the perspective of the individual student.

## **VI. Operational Definitions of Terms and Concepts**

### **a) Strategies**

Precise as it appears, the word 'strategy' is most of time confused with other terms by many people, and this is the cause for the difficulties faced to set a general definition for the concept as it entered the scope of language learning. This term is derived, historically speaking, from an ancient Greek word 'strategia', which was used to indicate generalship or the art of war, including the organization of troops, ships, or aircraft in a set campaign (Oxford, 1990). The problem of distinguishing 'strategy' from other pervasive terms in the area of education constitutes one of the first issues discussed when strategies were involved in language learning. For Cohen (1996), strategy, sub-strategy, technique, and

tactic are not clearly distinct from each other, and this is the reason of the lack of clarity generated in the research literature.

The problem according to Cohen (1996) is one of how to refer to the different actions, that is why many terms are found in the literature including **strategy**, **technique** (Stern 1983, as cited in Cohen, 1996: 3), **tactic** (Seliger 1984, as cited in Cohen, 1996: 3), and **move** (Sarig 1987, as cited in Cohen, 1996: 4), among other terms, as well as the distinction between **macro-** and **micro-**strategies and tactics (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991). A solution for these opposing views may be in referring to all of these actions as ‘strategies’, and admitting the continuum existing between the specific and broadest categories, at the same time. (Cohen, 1996)

As for language use strategies, Cohen (1999) states that they are operating once the language material is already accessible. Hence, if the main purpose behind the use of language learning strategies is to improve the learners’ knowledge about the target language, the main focus of language strategies use is to help the learners use the language they have already learned to whatever extent. For the sake of this study, the term ‘strategy’ will be used as defined by Oxford (1999b: 518): “Specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language”.

### **b) Metacognition**

Metacognition can be loosely defined as “thinking about one’s own thinking.” The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2009: 1253) defines it as an “awareness or analysis of one’s own learning or thinking processes” “metacognition”. Hence, metacognition is built

around all what people know, have experienced, and plan to incorporate into their future thinking (Veenman, Bernadette, Houtolers, and Afflerbach 2006).

In its widely used definition, metacognition is viewed as the people's thinking about their thinking. It involves all what people know, have experienced, and plan to incorporate into their future thinking. Flavell (1976: 232, as cited in Kuhn, 2000: 112) defined it as "knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them". These higher order processes are constructed of processes, such as defining problems, organizing and selecting representational components and subcomponents of concepts and information, self monitoring of progress, allocation of time resources, sensitivity to external feedback, and emotional sensitivities.

### **c) Learning**

Learning has been defined differently from one field to another among researchers. It was almost always linked to memory, through the involvement of absorbing, understanding, and responding to the environment. This interruption of memory within learning does not state that they are the same thing, for the simple cause that not all learning is transformed into lasting memories. (Smith, 1999)

As a matter of fact, learning is viewed as the way people acquire new information about the world, while memory is the way they store that information over time (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). It is an active, constructive process that permits the learners to learn new information, ideas or skills through intellectual processing of meaning or new information construction. Thus, learning implies a process of self-directed exploration and discovery, in search of something not yet known, something yet to be found (Smith, 1999).

## **VII. The Structure of the Study**

The focus of this research is to investigate the correlation between the use of metacognitive language learning strategies, gender, and learning achievement. To achieve

this end, the study was divided into three main chapters. The first chapter entitled ‘Language Learning Strategies, Gender, and Learning Achievement’ presents a definition of language learning strategies, of metacognitive language learning strategies, and identifies the placement of metacognition in language learning. It also Comprises a review of theory and research into language learning strategies, as well as examining the involvement of gender differences, and learning achievement in the area of language learning strategies.

The second chapter is devoted to metacognitive language learning strategy use across gender differences. It includes a rationale for the study with specification of the questions raised. Comprises methodological issues that define the settings and participants, as well as the materials. Then, it examines the methods for data collection and analysis. Besides, the chapter discusses the results of reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use across all the students, and across gender differences in respect to the MLLSQ.

The third chapter ‘Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Use and Individual Differences’ describes the rationale for this part of the study, and specifies its methodological background (questions, participants, materials, and data collection procedures and analysis). It presents an extensive report of the obtained results with discussions implemented to examine the relationship between the use of metacognitive language learning strategies, gender and achievement.

The last chapter discusses the findings of the study, in respect to the variables of gender and achievement in the light of the results of the practical chapters. It further presents recommendations regarding the findings achieved, as well as stating the limitations found within the study. It resumes by introducing some suggestions for future research.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

---

# **LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, GENDER AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT**

---

## LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, GENDER, AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

<b>Introduction</b> .....	9
<b>1.1. Definition of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	9
<b>1.2. Classification of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	13
<b>1.3. Definition of Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	17
<b>1.4. Metacognition in Language Learning</b> .....	22
<b>1.5. Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	25
<b>1.6. Theory of Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	30
<b>1.7. Research into Language Learning Strategies</b> .....	38
<b>1.8. Research about Gender as a Factor Influencing Strategy Use</b> .....	41
<b>1.9. Studies about Achievement and Strategy Use</b> .....	43
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	46

## **Introduction**

In the context of learning strategies, the term ‘strategy’ is basic in understanding the core idea behind the construction of a new concept in the field of language learning in the late 1970’s. The aim of this chapter is to present the basic issues discussed in the area of language learning strategies. Issues of defining and classifying, as well as reviewing the development of research in the area are included. Moreover, the contribution of gender and achievement as individual differences into research on the use of learning strategies is further outlined.

### **1.1. Definition of Language Learning Strategies**

In spite of the boom of activity in the area of language learning strategies in the last 30 years, there still exists a considerable debate among the researchers as to true ways of defining them, and no achieved consensus as yet (Ellis, 1994; and Gu, 2005). It becomes evident through the years that defining LLS is no easy mission, even with the advances achieved so far in the field. Wenden and Rubin (1987: 7, as cited in O’Malley and Chamot, 1990) states “the elusive nature of the term”, Ellis (1994: 529) identifies the notion as “fuzzy”, while O’Malley. et al (1985: 22) describes it as follows:

There is no consensus on what constitutes a learning strategy in second language learning or how these differ from other types of learner activities. [...] further, even within the group of activities most often referred to as learning strategies, there is considerable confusion about definitions of specific strategies and about the hierarchic relationship among strategies.

Through this long statement by one constructive figure in the field of LLS, it is suggested that much work is still needed and required to come to the precise and definite nature of LLS. The problem according to O’Malley (1987) does not only lie in the nature of the term ‘learning strategies’ in general, but also when coming closer into the

classification and categorization of these strategies, because most of the time they are mixed with other learning activities, or they are not precisely defined as they should be.

In fact, the terms found within the definitions available in the research literature differ from one researcher to another, including for example, technique, behavior, operation, action, etc despite the shared points at the level of terminology and use of LLS. The lack of consensus in deciding about one precise definition as far as LLS are concerned was firstly announced by Wenden (1991), and reinforced later by many other researchers (Dornyei, 2005; & Ellis, 1994). Rubin (1987: 43, as cited in Griffiths, 2004: 2) as a pioneering figure in the area defined LLS as: “The techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge”. Short as it appears however, this definition is a vast one stating both the nature and the purpose for using LLS. Yet, there is a doubt concerning what strategies exactly are, since both technique and device are employed.

Dornyei (2005) talks about this lack of consensus in a puzzled tone, stressing the absence of an unambiguous theoretical definition of the concept. However, Grenfell and Harris (1999) believe in some kind of a general definition of LLS, being the means to achieve the goal of linguistic competence. A comparison between two definitions provided by Oxford (1990), will reveal how much effort is invested through the years to settle the debate about the clear identity of LLS. In her (1993: 175) definition of the expression, Oxford claimed that LLS are: “Specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students employ –often consciously- to improve their progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving, and using the L2” (as cited in Grenfell & Harris, 1999: 38). But in her (1999: 518) definition, Oxford refers to LLS as: “Specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language”.

It is evident from such definitions that the importance assigned to LLS has increased through the years, to result in more precision in their state of being, and the purpose for use. Yet, Dornyei (2005) suggests that any definition of LLS could not be a better success than Oxford's (1999b), especially because a recent definition provided in the area of educational psychology by one important American strategy expert, Claire Weinstein (Weinstein, Husman, & Dierking, 2000: 727) includes the same traits: "Learning strategies include any thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, or emotions that facilitate the acquisition, understanding, or later transfer of new knowledge and skills" (as cited in Dornyei, 2005: 164). But as much as they seem to be complete and reasonable, these definitions do not include everything, leaving some basic issues often to further questioning.

One essential left issue is the distinction between being involved in an ordinary learning activity, and a strategic learning activity. Hence, if the difference exists between the two, where does it lie exactly? An example stated by Dornyei (2005) concerning the memorization of vocabulary, distinguishes between ordinary learning as simply looking at a bilingual vocabulary list, and strategic learning including the learner's use of highlighting the unknown words for him/her in the list. Does this mean that the additional step of highlighting makes the first strategic, and the second not?

Though many suggestions were proposed to differentiate strategic learning from ordinary learning based on the features of LLS, the best distinguishing tool has been suggested by Riding and Rayner (1998). They claimed that: "an activity becomes strategic when it is particularly appropriate for the individual learner, in contrast to general learning activities which a student may find less helpful" (as cited in Dornyei, 2005: 165).

Following this orientation, Riding and Rayner (1998) defined a language learning strategy as: "a set of one or more procedures that an individual acquires to facilitate the performance on a learning task. Strategies will vary depending on the nature of the task"

(as cited in Hewitt, 2008: 18). As it may be understood from this definition, the existing differences among the learners reflected in their learning styles, the appropriateness of the task at hand with the learner's level, and the learning environment involved in the improve of strategies, are governing factors in the identification of LLS.

According to Cohen (1998), strategies can appear in various types. These learning strategies include a repertoire of strategies which focuses on the classification of strategies into: cognitive strategies for memorization tasks and manipulation of the target language structures; metacognitive strategies for the management and supervision of strategies use; affective strategies for emotional control while learning and lowering anxiety; and social strategies to enhance learning through co-operative activities among the learners. If the learners make good use of this repertoire, these LLS will provide the necessary help to make language learning an easier process, by bringing effectiveness and success into the learning task.

As for his (2003: 280) definition, Cohen defines LLS as follows: "Strategies can be of a number of types. Language *learning* strategies are the conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language."

To conclude, the differences among the definitions of LLS provided in the body of research are just superficial ones, related mainly to terminological factors, because many, if not all, of the elements that shape the identity of LLS, such as their importance of use, relatedness to tasks, having purposes for use, etc, are respected in these definitions. Whatever these LLS are (actions, steps, behaviors, techniques, tactics, procedures, etc), they are certainly used by the learners on purpose, as needed aids to solve tasks and learn efficiently.

## 1.2. Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Since their spread in the 1970's, LLS got momentum in the studies of L2 acquisition to reach mainstream recognition in the 1990's. The publications of three books at the early beginnings of the 1990's by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), and Wenden (1991) revealed the development achieved in the field of LLS over almost two decades. Hence, depending on their own views about the nature of LLS, some researchers attempted more than just identifying and defining them, by moving to their classification. Dornyei (2005) explains that the initial research effort gave birth to two well known taxonomies of LLS, Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of foreign language learning, and O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) taxonomy of second language learning.

Considerable research has been done to understand the nature of communication strategies such as Bialystok's (1990) analytic study of communication strategies for second language use, and Dornyei's (1995) classification of CS. The first main taxonomy of LLS presented was Tarone's (1981, as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) Classification of CS. O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 43) assert that communication strategies are particularly important "in negotiating meaning where either linguistic structures or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language".

It follows that variance exists when coming to close terms with the classification of CS, but as Bialystok (1990: 61, as cited in Dornyei, 2005: 75.) states that:

The variety of taxonomies proposed in the literature differs primarily in terminology and overall categorizing principle rather than in the substance of the specific strategies. If we ignore, then, differences in the structure of the taxonomies by abolishing the various overall categories, then a core group of specific strategies that appear consistently across the taxonomies clearly emerges.

Most of the researches carried to investigate CS tackled the issue of their various types when communicating, with the central idea of what alternative strategies may be used to communicate the same meaning.

The classification system presented by O'Malley and Chamot in 1990 to describe LLS is based on Anderson's (1983, cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) cognitive theory. They describe LLS as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 1). Hence, O'Malley and Chamot divided LLS into three main classes in respect to the level of processing involved, which are: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are higher order executive skills that involve planning for, monitoring, or evaluating performance of a task.

By reference to Anderson's theory, control over cognition is attained through procedural knowledge, which is the software program that serves the functions of examining, testing, and modifying the procedural system and its control, contrary to declarative knowledge that presents the stored data (Lachman et.al, 1979, as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990: 47). Cognitive strategies are built on Anderson's (1983, as cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) theoretical views about cognition that involves descriptions of a number of "strategy like cognitive processes, including imagery, organization, inferencing, elaboration, deduction, and transfer" (Cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990: 49). The last category within O'Malley and Chamot's taxonomy is the one of social/affective strategies, described to "represent a broad grouping that involves either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect." (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990: 45) these strategies are useful in various tasks.

As one of the major figures in the study of LLS, Oxford (1990) provides one of the well known taxonomies all over the world to classify learning strategies, described to be

different in many ways from earlier attempts to classify strategies. Oxford (1990: 14) points out that her strategies system: “is more comprehensive and detailed; it is more systematic in linking individual strategies, as well as strategy groups, with each of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing); and it uses less technical terminology”. In her taxonomy, LLS are divided into two main categories, direct strategies including memory, cognitive, and compensation LLS, and indirect strategies composed of metacognitive, affective, and social. These six classes are not isolated, but are interacting with each other, and every class is capable of supporting the other.

Those LLS that include directly the target language are known as direct strategies. Cognitive strategies are the most well known strategies with language learners, and are essential to learn a new language, because they provide the learners with the necessary help to manipulate the language material in direct ways, “through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stranger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally”. (Oxford, 2003: 12)

Memory strategies are sometimes known as mnemonics that existed for thousands of years with storytellers, but had been abandoned with the spread of literacy. Yet, Oxford (1990) emphasizes that they are restoring their rank, because the learners use them to make use of the stored information in their minds, as well as relating items of the target language with another without deep comprehension. Finally, compensation strategies are used to help the learners use the new language for comprehension or for production even if limitations in knowledge are existent.

The second group within the taxonomy of Oxford (1990) is indirect strategies that permit the learners to have control of their own cognition and manage the learning process.

They involve all of the three main classes of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies; metacognitive strategies are actions that go beyond cognitive boundaries to make the learners coordinate their own learning process, and are important for successful language learning because learners are often unfamiliar with the novelties of the target language (Oxford, 1990).

Affective strategies refer to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values, governed by the learner throughout the learning process, in addition to some factors such as self-esteem, anxiety, culture shock, inhibitions, risk-taking, etc. all these are affected by the teacher's involvement, through making learners more responsible, creating more natural scenes for communication, and by teaching them to use affective strategies (Oxford, 1990: 140). Finally, social strategies are significantly related to L2 proficiency, and help the learners to work with others and understand the new language and its culture. Oxford (2003) explains that the nature of language itself includes people interacting together, thus the use of social strategies to fulfill this end.

Other classifications of LLS have been proposed in response to research development in the area. In Wenden's (1991) view, LLS are divided into two main kinds, cognitive strategies and self-management strategies that are clarified according to their functions in learning. The first are used by learners to process linguistic and sociolinguistic content, whereas the second are used for overseeing and managing in learning. Cohen (2002) made a rather more comprehensive classification of LLS and LUS, even if Hsiao and Oxford (2002: 378-379) insist that "in daily reality the strategies for L2 learning and L2 use overlap considerably". LUS that are strategies for using partially-learned or fully-learned material are classified into four categories: retrieval strategies as used for calling up words, phrases, structures, and for the right selection of forms; rehearsal strategies clarified as strategies for going over target language structures; cover strategies that the learners

employ to show that they control the learning situation, while they do not; and communication strategies used mainly to convey new, meaningful meanings (pp.2-3).

Post-1990 LLS research also carried in the trend of approaching second and foreign language learning problems from the point of view of the individual learner. Cohen (1998: 21) claimed that 'language learning and language use strategies can have a major role in helping shift the responsibility for learning off the shoulders of the teachers and on to those of the learners'. Hence, this focus on the learner and the process of learning to learn is the main trend under which LLS were studied.

Besides, the importance of the idea of the GLL was further emphasized, as well as acknowledging the effect of the learning environment on the strategies that learners use. Moreover, Grenfell and Macaro (2007) point out that the shift in beliefs about strategies, far from the primary ideas of good or bad learners, happened in the area of L2 comprehension focusing mainly on the top-down and bottom-up processes in both reading and listening comprehension.

### **1.3. Definition of Metacognitive Learning Strategies**

In its widely used definition, metacognition is viewed as people's thinking about their thinking. It involves all what people know, have experienced, and plan to incorporate into their future thinking. Metacognition involves the higher order executive thinking processes that control and monitor wide ranges of cognition (Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach 2006). These higher order processes are constructed of processes, such as defining problems, organizing and selecting representational components and subcomponents of concepts and information, self monitoring of progress, allocation of time resources, sensitivity to external feedback, and emotional sensitivities.

All these processes are in essence forming part of metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive beliefs, metacognitive awareness, metacognitive experiences, metacognitive knowledge, feeling of knowing, judgment of learning, theory of mind, metamemory, metacognitive skills, executive skills, higher-order skills, metacomponents, comprehension monitoring, learning strategies, heuristic strategies, and self-regulation are several of the terms commonly associated with metacognition (Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006).

From all this list, metacognitive learning strategies form a basic element in the field of LLS. They constitute a specific set of general cognitive strategies, of particular relevance with comprehension. According to Dole, Nokes, and Drits (2005: 6): “Metacognitive strategies are routines and procedures that allow individuals to monitor and assess their ongoing performance in accomplishing a cognitive task.”

To exemplify, learners while learning ask themselves questions about their performance, what they did so far, and what is left to be done in order to perform the task successfully; this use of MLS reflect the learner’s awareness of cognitive resources required to accomplish a goal, checking the outcomes of their attempts to solve problems, monitoring the effectiveness of these attempts, testing, revising, and evaluating their strategies for learning, and compensate for breakdowns in knowledge. (Dole, Nokes & Drits, 2005)

Moreover, MLLS have been conceptualized by Weinstein and Meyer (1986, as cited in Dornyei, 2005) as comprehension monitoring. These understanding of MLLS stems from linking it to the skill of reading, in which research tried to understand the way good readers process texts, through directing cognitive processes to make sense of incoming information. Through the construction of hypotheses, good readers interpret texts and check their interpretation within incoming information in the text, as well as compensating with the appropriate strategies in case of comprehension breakdowns. Yet, in the area of

LLS, focus was not only poured on one language skill, but on metacognitive processing in language learning in general.

According to Anderson (2002), the metacognitive learning process can be divided into five main processes: (1) preparing and planning for learning, (2) selecting and using learning strategies, (3) monitoring strategy use, (4) orchestrating various strategies, and (5) evaluating strategy use and learning. The first step, preparing and planning for learning means that an individual composes a mindset about a given activity, through setting objectives that go with his/her needs, and which are achievable. This involves also a search in prior knowledge about similar performed tasks to save time and effort throughout performance. This includes also self-questioning through asking what background knowledge will assist with in the task at hand.

The second step means how to perform an activity, through selecting and using LLS. For example, using mnemonic devices and contextual clues are strategies for better comprehension. This is very important because it expresses the conscious choice of the learners, as Anderson (2002: 2) put it: “the metacognitive ability to select and use particular strategies in a given context for a specific purpose means that the learner can think and make conscious decisions about the learning process.”

Then, as strategies are used, they must be monitored through questioning whether the strategies used are serving the purposes intentionally set by the learner. Monitoring is "the regulatory skill that oversees the learning process that follows the initial planning" (Wenden, 1998: 525, as cited in Hewitt, 2006: 35). This helps to find out whether the designed objectives are met. Then, the step of orchestrating strategies, which is the “The ability to coordinate, organize, and make associations among the various strategies available is a major distinction between strong and weak learners” (Anderson, 2002: i).

Finally, learners reflect and question the effectiveness of their action, through evaluating

strategy use and this is the final step in the cycle.

This classification of MLLS is an elaborated one that includes many processes of strategy learning and use. Previous taxonomies of LLS have also devoted MLLS a special rank within their classification scheme. In O'Malley and Chamot's (1990: 44) taxonomy, MLLS were defined as 'higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity'.

These strategies are applicable to various learning situations and tasks. Examples of these strategies include selective attention, planning and organizing written or spoken discourse, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating or checking understanding after the completion of task performance. O'Malley, et al (1994: 123) state that "students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direct ability to review their progress, accomplishments and future learning directions". This explains why MLLS were set in the first stand as a major class in the (1990) classification.

As for Oxford's (1990) classification, MLLS were set under the category of indirect strategies. She explained that metacognitive means 'beyond, beside, or with the cognitive'. As a result, metacognitive strategies are actions that learners use in addition to their cognitive processing. Oxford (1990) stated three strategy sets: centering learning, arranging and planning learning, and evaluating learning, and viewed MLLS as essential for successful language learning. Learners learning a new language often face the problem with the new vocabulary and grammar rules as well, which are overcome through the use of MLLS.

These three sets of strategies include other sub-strategies as, organizing, setting goals, considering the purpose, and planning for a language task, which help the learner plan their learning effectively; and self-monitoring and self-evaluating strategies that provide the learner with the opportunity to judge his/her final performance. However, Oxford (1990)

pointed out that despite their recognized importance in the research literature, learners are often using MLLS with no real knowledge of their importance. This implies that metacognition does not function as such, but in collaboration with other levels of processing, being internal with direct relation to the learner, and external which have to do with the learning environment.

Similarly, Wenden (1991) points out that metacognitive strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning by planning, monitoring and evaluating. In terms of planning, Wenden (1991) distinguished between different activities, such as assessing the needs, and choosing what to learn, and how to learn it; setting personal goals; and changing strategies upon task according to usefulness and success. Besides, self-evaluation as a MLLS enables the learner to assess his/her performance in his/her own terms, since he/she used strategies intentionally, so it will be easier to state a personal evaluation.

O'Malley et.al (1994: 119) clarified this, stating that: "Self-rating requires the student to exercise a variety of learning strategies and higher order thinking skills that not only provide feedback to the student but also provide direction for future learning". Not surprisingly, in one investigation of ranking the rate of language learning strategies usage, metacognitive strategies were ranked in the second place used by students in their learning (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

To sum up, it may be suggested that learners can become more active through taking the initiation for learning, and realize their main strengths and weaknesses in the target language, through the use of metacognitive strategies in their learning. Therefore, learning would be easier, because the learners are aware of the goals to be achieved, of the process to follow, and of the whole distribution and organization of the learning process.

### 1.3. Metacognition in Language Learning

Metacognition is a term coined in the 1970's by Flavell (1979, as cited in Kuhn, 2000) that received much debate about its definition. It is 'one of the buzz words in educational psychology' (Livingston, 2003: 1), but its meaning is not always easily known. Metacognition plays an important role in successful learning, and is thought to be one of the major factors to distinguish good learners. It refers to learners' automatic awareness of their own knowledge and their ability to understand, control and manipulate their own cognitive processes.

In other words, metacognition is "an appreciation of what one already knows, together with a correct apprehension of the learning task and what knowledge and skills it requires combined with the ability to make correct inferences about how to apply one's strategic knowledge to a particular situation and to do so efficiently and reliably" (Peirce, 2003: 2). It is more a higher order thinking responsible for the regulation of cognitive processes. Metacognition is often defined simply as 'thinking about thinking', but is confused with other terms that refer to the same phenomenon, such as self-regulation, and executive control, or an aspect of that phenomenon, like meta-memory; all of these words are used interchangeably in the research literature. (Livingston, 2003)

In this light, metacognition is linked to other factors, such as cognition and intelligence when defined. It is viewed as a complex of phenomena related knowledge about cognition and its related processes such as thinking, knowing, and remembering. Oz (2005) explained that psychologists and educators alike have recognized that metacognition has a great power in describing and explaining the learning process. It is more a helping tool in teaching learners how to learn. Research has indicated that metacognition is a complex structure, being composed of several components. Historically speaking, metacognitive

processes have been researched from two distinct lines. First, research focused on the determinants and results of the process of monitoring one's knowledge. And second, interest was poured on the critical role of metacognitive processes on memory functioning. (Oz, 2005)

Hence, metacognition has many components interacting at the same time to form the metacognitive umbrella. First, metacognitive knowledge indicates acquired knowledge about cognitive processes that will help in their control. Wenden (1999: 528) considers metacognitive knowledge as “a prerequisite for the self-regulation of language learning: it informs planning decisions taken at the outset of learning and the monitoring processes that regulate the completion of a learning task...”

According to Livingston (2003), this knowledge involves also knowledge about strategy variables including knowing both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, as well as conditional knowledge about where and when to use these strategies appropriately. This metacognitive knowledge includes three other subcategories of knowledge: person knowledge that relies on individual overall understanding of the way of learning and processing information; task knowledge concerned with how best to manage a task, and the best means to succeed in performing it, including knowledge about its purpose, demands, and nature; and strategic knowledge that means knowledge of strategy variables and the use of metacognitive strategies intentionally to solve tasks.

Second, metacognitive regulation and experiences involve the use of metacognitive strategies to regulate cognitive processing. These regulating processes consist of planning, monitoring, and evaluating the outcomes of the activities performed. The last component of metacognition is metacognitive processes that explain the metacognitive learning processes, which are divided into five main processes according to Anderson (2002). These are 1) preparing and planning for learning, 2) selecting and using learning strategies, 3)

monitoring strategy use, 4) orchestrating various strategies, and 5) evaluating strategy use and learning.

Therefore, metacognition is an umbrella term that includes other elements. It generally refers to people's thinking about their cognition, their attempts to regulate their learning processes, and their evaluating activities to check the proficiency upon the learning situation. Moreover, metacognition enables learners to benefit from instruction, mainly strategy learning and use instruction, which facilitates learning tasks performance and evaluation, through raising the learners' awareness about the learning situation in general. (Hope, 1998)

Modern research in metacognition took inspiration from two parallel roots, one in the growing cognitive psychology of the 1960's, such as the studies of Hart (1965, as cited in Schwartz & Bjork, 1997: 2), and the other in the post-Piagetian developmental psychology of the 1970's, like the work of Flavell (1979, as cited in Kuhn, 2000). These two trends have remained separate throughout time, forming two parallel fields, each named metacognition. (Kuhn, 2000; Schwartz, Benjamin, & Bjork, 1997)

The first trend of Hart (1965, 1967, as cited in Schwartz & Bjork, 1997: 2) focused on the degree of accuracy of judgments individuals make about memory. Built on an the traditional adult cognition, Hart believed in the existence of conscious experiences, and tried in this light to find out whether these individuals can predict behavior, by using a paradigm called RJR (Recall-Judgment-Recall), meant to test metacognition judgments. The second track of developmentalists was interested in metacognition for specific purposes.

Flavell (1979, as cited in Kuhn, 2000) did not study metacognition as such; rather his interest was in discovering if the development in children's memory capacities was encouraged by greater deliberate comprehension of the rules that master memory and

cognition. Consequently, his work reflects the evolution of metacognitive thinking, that is, the individual's ability to think about his/her mental activities. More than this, Kuhn (2000) distinguished between metacognitive knowledge as one's personal knowledge about his/her own strengths and weaknesses, and metacognitive awareness being the feelings and experiences one has when he/she engages in cognitive activities.

Various definitions were provided to identify the concept of metacognition. Metacognition can be loosely defined as "thinking about one's own thinking." The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2009: 1203) defines it as "awareness or analysis of one's own learning or thinking processes" "metacognition." Hence, metacognition is the thinking one carries about his/her own thinking; it is a kind of self-knowledge and awareness of one's cognition while doing a task. It leads to reflection, planning how to go on through the task, monitoring the resulting performance, and self-assessment upon task completion. More than this, metacognition is behind self-regulation in learning, because it allows the learner to make a link between the current learning task and the previous ones, select the suitable strategies for the task in hand, and anticipate success because of knowing how to learn.

### **1.5. Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies**

An agreed upon point in the research literature on LLS is that the best way to define them is through deciding about their main characteristics. By this is meant a precision at both identification and classification terms. Unfortunately, the problem of reaching a consensus in defining LLS is also encountered when it comes to set their characteristics. The latter are believed to be a source of complexity and difficulty when deciding about the nature of LLS. That is why; such features cannot be considered as decisive factors in differentiating strategic from non-strategic learning behaviors. Rather, they can participate in formulating a more precise definition of LLS. (Takac, 2008)

Hence, there exist some key characteristics which researchers use often to describe LLS (Oxford, 1990; Macaro, 2004, & Cohen, 2007). One essential feature of LLS is to develop communicative competence that cannot occur unless the learners create a realistic interaction through the use of meaningful and context-related language. LLS provide the necessary help to bring the learners to communicative situations in question, through functioning in general and specific ways to foster lively communicative scenes (Oxford, 1990).

Metacognitive strategies, for instance aid the learners to “regulate their own cognition and to focus, plan, and evaluate their progress as they move toward communicative competence.” (Oxford, 1990: 8); affective strategies help to raise the learner’s self-confidence in the communicative situation; social strategies are the tool to create interaction and mutual understanding; certain cognitive strategies like analyzing and some memory strategies such as the key word technique, are the needed means for comprehension and remembering new information; and compensation strategies fills knowledge gaps of continuous authentic communication.

In this context, Takac (2008: 55) stresses the importance of the learner’s desire to learn the language through self-direction, stating: “language learning strategies also enable learners to self-regulate their own learning and become autonomous and effective outside the classroom”. As a result, success in being self-directed is the key to develop self-confidence, proficiency, and the feeling of being involved. As much as they are useful for learners, LLS are also included in the work of teachers. Takac (2008: 56) claims that: “language learning strategies change and expand the role of teachers: they help, facilitate, advise, coordinate, diagnose, cooperate, offer ideas and directions, and participate in communication.”

Furthermore, LLS are tools used on purpose, whether to solve a problem, to accomplish a task, or achieve an objective. An example of this is using reasoning or guessing strategies to understand a foreign language passage while reading, or recall of something through using memory strategies. That is why; LLS are directed towards a specific problem, as Bialystok (1990: 69, as cited in Takac, 2008: 54) describes them: “they are efficient and productive in problem-solving”. Macaro (2004) viewed the necessity of strategies being clarified with a clear goal or goals or intentions, with focus on the importance of goal orientation to help the learners determine the action.

With linkage to their being problem oriented, LLS are action based. Actions like note taking, monitoring, etc, are not context-free; instead they are affected by some factors included in the learners themselves, such as motivation, aptitude, and most important of all are learning styles, which are: “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills” (Ried, 1995: viii, as cited in Dornyei, 2005: 121). In addition to the cognitive functions they perform, LLS also include metacognitive aspects like planning, assessing, and management of learning, in addition to social and affective strategies. Hence, LLS contribute to learning directly and indirectly, through the involvement of certain kinds of strategies.

Yet, this does not mean a separation between LLS, because they work in collaboration to support each other in various ways (Oxford, 1990; & Cohen, 2007). As Macaro (2004: 4) states: “For a strategy to be effective in promoting learning or improved performance it must be combined with other strategies either simultaneously or in sequence thus forming strategy clusters”. This collaboratory sense is known as ‘clustering’, which got a general agreement in the survey done with LLS experts by Cohen (2007). The use of strategies in clusters depends on the task; if the task is easy, generally one strategy can be satisfactory to perform it, but complex tasks require a cluster of strategies. This clustering includes and

is evaluated via metacognitive strategies, in order to regulate conscious cognitive activity. (Macaro, 2004)

When approaching the issue of consciousness in using LLS, a big controversy rises. Oxford (1990) stresses on the learners' consciousness when using LLS, because they are conscious actions with the aim of learning control. Many researchers (Cohen, 2003; Macaro, 2004) agree that LLS are employed deliberately and intentionally, even if some researchers (Oxford, 1996) had stated that after continuous use and practice, LLS can become automatic; that is to say, subconscious, just like any other skill or behavior. Cohen (1998) defines LLS as learning processes that the learner selects consciously. This element of choice is an important factor in the strategies voluntarily used by the learner, because it determines essential features in these strategies. More than this, strategies are "moves which the learner is at least partially aware of even if full attention is not given to them" (Cohen 1990: 5).

Emphasizing this idea, Cohen (2007) considers the element of consciousness as a distinctive factor between strategies and other processes that are not strategic. Yet, Dornyei (2005: 165) criticizes this element of choice claiming that:

Although this is clearly important in distinguishing learning strategies from creative teacher-owned tasks that the learner engages in, choice is still not enough to distinguish strategies from non-strategies because students tend to make several choices concerning their learning process...

This explains the difficulty encountered when trying to distinguish among strategies intentionally employed by the learner, and those used in response to teacher instructions.

While some aspects in the learner's personality are non-changeable or difficult to change, such as learning styles or attitudes, LLS are subject to modification and easy to be taught through strategy training. Not only less successful learners are subject to training,

because even successful ones are involved in this process, all with the aim of raising learners' consciousness when selecting and using LLS (Oxford, 1995). Besides, Strategy training is dependent on both teachers and learners to be more effective; teachers must help learners to become conscious of their way of learning, and to develop more learning experiences inside and outside language settings. As for learners, they have to know how, why, and when certain strategies are more interesting, and transferable to new situations. (Dornyei, 2005)

As stated by Oxford (1990), LLS are flexible; that is to say, they are not fixed in a given sequence or a definite pattern. Individual differences among learners are included in their selection, combination, and sequencing of strategies. Takac (2008: 54) explains this in terms of systematicity, citing Bialystok (1990: 56): "language learning strategies are systematic: learners do not incidentally discover a learning strategy; they use them systematically on the basis of their knowledge". As such, LLS depend on the learners' consciousness of the suitability of the strategy chosen for the task at hand. Yet, Macaro (2004: 123) explains that strategies function at different levels of 'automaticity' in different learners, which is behind the characteristic of 'transferability', too.

Finally, LLS are influenced by many elements interacting in various ways. These elements according to Oxford (1990: 13) are: "degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language". These elements are integrated in a way or another in the successful use of LLS just like all the previously stated factors that form special features of LLS, and are involved in their terminology and classification as many researchers indicate. (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; & Cohen, 1998)

### 1.7. Theory of Language Learning Strategies

In the area of second language acquisition, LLS are tackled within the studies and researches carried on individual differences in language learning. They were viewed as an important concept in L2 acquisition, and a key notion in the cognitive approach to SLA. The field of L2 acquisition has been awarded a tremendous research focus in the area of language study, reflected in the large number of publications on the subject. According to Ellis (1986), SLA is not restricted in a given uniform, because learners use multiple ways to learn a second language. Besides, it is the product of an accumulation of facts related to the learner from one hand, and the learning situation from another hand.

However, despite the fact that learners' individuality is of heavy presence when acquiring a L2, SLA receives its importance out of the possibility to generalize any achieved results on large groups of learners. As such, SLA as a concept is referring to the general aspects acquired so far from achieved results on if not all the learners, large numbers or groups of them. In his 1995 definition of SLA, Ellis viewed the concept as: "a mental process involving the use of strategies that explain how the L2 knowledge system is developed and used in communication" (as cited in Takac, 2008: 29). This direct involvement of strategies in the acquisition process is a significant factor in indicating their importance in shaping L2 knowledge.

Meanwhile, the contrast existing between L2 acquisition and L2 learning as two different processes is transformed to the scope of LLS. Acquisition according to Ellis (1986: 6) is: "used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure.", whereas learning entails the component of consciousness when dealing with a second language. This does not indicate a sharp distinction between the two terms, since they are often used interchangeably, with L2 acquisition being both a conscious and subconscious process.

By reference to his (1995) definition of SLA, Ellis included the use of strategies at the heart of the process, assuming that they are responsible for the development of knowledge and communication. Therefore, LLS were generalized to be related to various types of learning, and within have been interpreted differently in the various approaches and models of L2 acquisition. As a result of the various attempts in the field of L2 acquisition to set a unified and a full theory to explain SLA and Learning, different theoretical models were created. These models illustrate the factors that are included and interacting to interpret a L2 acquisition. LLS in these models were studied within the area of Individual Differences in language learning. (Takac, 2008)

In the cognitive approach to SLA, language learners are considered as active participants in the whole process of learning with conscious use of distinct mental or cognitive strategies in order to organize appropriately what they are trying to learn out of the language (Williams & Burden, 2001, as cited in Takac, 2008: 29). This view is also claimed by Kaplan (2002), as he stated that: “the L2 acquisition process is characterized by only a few general learning strategies, but that it is mostly governed by domain-specific, i.e. linguistically oriented strategies”. This implies that the task to be accomplished is governing the kind of strategies to be used.

Under the cognitive theory, LLS were assigned the role of clarifying what can be situated out of learners' consciousness, or may not occur perfectly efficient, resulting in an unfinished storage of information in the long-term memory. That is why; Weinstein and Mayer (1986: 315, as cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 43) pointed out that the use of LLS makes “the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge”. This is also how O'Malley and Chamot (1996) view LLS, as effective learning facilitators, if they activate mental processes. As for Anderson's cognitive theory (1983, as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990), there is no distinction between LLS and other cognitive processes,

because his theory focused on describing the ways of information storage and retrieval, instead of ways of enhancing learning. As such, strategies as a learned skill are represented as any other complex skill, starting as a set of productions by following a certain process to become procedural knowledge.

Because of these views about LLS, the cognitive theory was criticized as being more one sided, i.e. focusing on the mental aspect of L2 acquisition, and neglecting the impact of the other linguistic elements. Yet, Ellis (2004) states two acceptable explanations about the cognitive theory's proclamation about LLS: the first has to do with the way with which learners have their L2 knowledge control; in other words, the way to activate procedural knowledge; and the second is concerning the way learners restructure the obtained knowledge for the sake of making it available for use.

Such criticism does not lower the importance of language learning strategies, because researches like McLaughlin's (1987, as cited in Dornyei, 2005) proved that different learning strategies may produce various acquisition patterns in learners learning the same L2. More than this, the belief of many theoreticians in the importance of language learning strategies is closely related to the notion of success in language acquisition, while the ability to teach them emphasizes their role in developing language learning abilities. (Takac, 2008)

Assuming that there exists a critical period for language development, the cognitive theory states that language development after that period is an example of the human information-processing system (Takac, 2008). By this is meant that allocating the various functions done by language in the brain is not taking place before the closure of the critical period. This implies that the structure of the human brain is mainly sensitive to language input. Then, after the critical period, cognitive operations are invested to enable the

development of language, just as the human mind processes any other information while learning takes place.

Therefore, the cognitive modules included in processing language development make of language learning a modular task based on the three stages of information processing: input, central processing, and output. As Skehan (2002: 283) puts it: “The end of the critical period is the point at which the nature of language learning changes from being an automatically engaged process to one in which it becomes yet another cognitive activity” . That is why; various areas of L2 acquisition are aided by cognitive abilities that are more comprehensive, if they are related to the stages of information processing.

In his issuing the idea, McLaughlin (1987, as cited in Takac, 2008) points out that the learner’s ability to process information is governed by the nature of the task on one hand, and their own information-processing abilities, on the other hand. This ability, however, is not fixed and could be developed in two ways; first, through the use of ‘automatisation’, i.e. making skill practice automatic by being accessible without the need for controlled processing. This increases the number of information chunks, and modifies the learners’ interlanguage qualitatively. The second way is restructuring that results in changing the interlanguage qualitatively, being of relation with both the presentation of knowledge in learners’ minds, and the learning strategies they use. (Takac, 2008)

Moreover, McLaughlin (1987, as cited in Takac, 2008) divided the information processed into Declarative Knowledge set in the form of internalized rules and memorized chunks, and Procedural Knowledge consisting of knowledge of how to use LLS and procedures to process L2 information. Ellis (1994) categorized the previous procedures differently, claiming that the acquisition of PK is LLS, and language use is forming production and communication strategies. Therefore, LLS are those involved in the

restructuring stage, which is easily used because of their use.

Interlanguage theory claims that the errors learners are making when learning a L2 are evidence of the development of their linguistic competence. LLS were defined as “cognitive activities at the conscious or unconscious level that involve the processing of L2 data in the attempt to express meaning” (Selinker et al. 2000, as cited in Takac, 2008: 31). In this theory, the notion of LLS was explicitly referred to, by making a clear distinction between cognitive LLS and communication strategies.

Five central processes function in IL, which are: 1) language transfer; 2) overgeneralization of target language rules; 3) transfer of training (i.e. the learner governs the rules as a result of instruction); 4) strategies of L2 learning; and 5) strategies of L2 communication (Ellis, 1994: 48). As a matter of fact, LLS have a central presence in making IL develop within time, due to the different strategies employed by learners in order to organize the input, and manage the output. (Takac, 2008)

Furthermore, in Bialystok’s model, LLS were divided into two categories: formal strategies and functional strategies. The former indicates accurate linguistic form (i.e. formal practicing and monitoring), implying that either they contain awareness while learning a L2, or they just focus on making the acquired clear information automatic. The latter category refers to language use that includes functional practicing and inferencing. LLS according to Bialystok (1978: 76, as cited in Takac, 2008: 33) are: “Optimal methods for exploiting available information to increase the proficiency of L2 learning... They operate by bringing relevant knowledge to the language task that has the effect of improving performance”. A third component in the model that was not perfectly developed is a kind of a correction strategy, explained by the fact that it is possible to correct a certain response, and go back to the output line. (Takac, 2008)

Bialystok (1991) based her study on two aspects stated in the original version of 1981 as knowledge and control, and developed later into analysis and control. The first has to do with such things as structuring and differentiating levels of knowledge, as well as the extent of organization within the knowledge base, and the second is what guarantees access to knowledge (Skehan, 1998).

Furthermore, the model insisted that the choice of strategies is dependent on the language learner, through relating the three levels of input, knowledge, and output, besides the suitable knowledge required to perform a task added to an analysis of task difficulty, and proficiency level (Takac, 2008). This idea of knowledge levels is criticized by Vandergrift (1997), because explicit knowledge can become implicit, if a strategy of formal practicing is used, and it can be derived out of it by using a strategy of inferencing.

Advanced by Pienmann (1984, 1989, as cited in Takac, 2008: 32), and Pienmann, Johnson, and Brindley (1988, as cited in Takac, 2008: 33), the Multidimensional Model was based on two dimensions to study L2 acquisition with reference to SLA. The first dimension of the MM is interested in studying acquisitional instances of interlanguage development, and the second one is devoted to analyze the variation in other areas of language development that are often related to individual learner variation, or social relevance. Furthermore, the MM is built on the idea of processing operations. Hence, the relationship existing between the implicit knowledge and output is created by means of the LLS that learners use to produce certain linguistic structures. Through efficient and various uses of LLS, Takac (2008) explains that the integrative learner is supposed to be more successful in achieving higher proficiency levels in a L2.

The analysis of SLA presented by Stern (1986, as cited in Takac, 2008: 37), basically the development of theoretical foundations, emphasizes the utility of the proposed models

of L2 acquisition. The interaction of these models provides the needed overview of all the factors to be considered in the interpretation of L2 acquisition. What is evident certainly, is that none of the models is conclusive in the explanations provided so far about L2 learning. That is why; Stern (1986: 333, as cited in Takac, 2008: 38) proposed an “uncontroversial synthesis representing the consensus among different investigators on the main factors that play a role in language learning.”

Stern’s model is formed out of five sets of variables: (1) social context; (2) learner characteristics; (3) learning conditions; (4) learning process and (5) learning outcomes. The fourth variable, which is composed of LLS and techniques in addition to mental operations, have a direct influence on learning outcomes. As a matter of fact, learners are brought to the learning process in different ways, cognitively, socially, and affectively. Hence, good learners are likely to use strategies arranged by Stern (1986, as cited in Takac, 2008) as follows: (1) Active planning strategy, including goal choice, becoming aware of stages and developmental sequences, as well as active inclusion in the learning process; (2) Explicit learning strategies that show learners’ will to study and practice language rules, through analysis and improvement of the required techniques of practice and memorization; and (3) Social LLS based in the whole on creating communication opportunities and the development of communication strategies. (Takac, 2008)

In 1994, Ellis presented a model to study L2 acquisition in which LLS function as a mediating device between individual differences in language learning and social and situational variables on one hand, and what the learners can achieve as learning outcomes, on the other hand. This range of factors is behind the learners’ selection of LLS that influence learning results in terms of rate and level of attainment; this is true the other way around, because learning outcomes and the level of competence achieved so far may have an impact on the learner’s choice of LLS.

Ellis (1994) made a clear distinction between three groups of strategies, production strategies, communication strategies, and learning strategies. The first two sets of strategies are linked to language use. The second category, CS are what the learners seek to use upon limitations in communication. They are problem oriented; i.e. used by the learner because 'he lacks or cannot gain access to the linguistic resources required to express an intended meaning' (Ellis, 1986: 181). Learning strategies are also subject to be motivated by the learners' recognition that what they use as means is insufficient.

Therefore, Ellis (1994) focuses on the fact that if learner strategies provide the solution for problems in a long term, CS are short-term solutions. Finally, learning strategies reveal the extent of learners' efforts to improve and develop their linguistic and sociolinguistic abilities in the L2. Important as it is, the task of drawing distinctions between strategy types is not that easy to be maintained, because the real intent of the learners behind their use determines whether they are learning or CS.

The model of Skehan (2002) is a proposition to understand individual differences in L2 learning. These differences were divided into four classes: modality preference that means the preferred input channel- visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic; foreign language aptitude suggesting that the learner may have an analytic or a memory predisposition; learning style which refers to holistic versus analytic processing, and visual versus verbal representations, as well as the learners' personality as passive or active style; the last class is that of learning strategies, classified into metacognitive, cognitive, and socio/affective, adopted from O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) taxonomy. In this model, learning strategies are considered as the most amenable to change among the other feature, which means that when LLS are instructed, they can influence their development and use. (Takac, 2008: 41)

## 1.8. Research into Language Learning Strategies

Research in the area of LLS is not a new theme in the scope of education. Rather, it goes back to the Greek period, when trained scholars invested attempts to recognize how do their learners learn, mainly the best ones, in order to help the weak become good learners. These attempts remained personal, and little if any literature was inscribed about them. Moreover, many strategies have been employed for thousands of years, such as mnemonic or memory techniques used by storytellers in ancient times to keep their thread of ideas, and it is admitted that the best language students throughout history, were those who made good use of LLS. (Oxford, 1990)

It was actually only in the 1970's that learning strategies have appeared on the research scene, due to the important discoveries in the scope of L2 acquisition; knowledge about this area developed in a remarkable way during the 1970's, setting behind the old beliefs of teachers and researchers that learners share the learning approach, and that one teaching method is satisfactory to train good learners.

Interest was poured completely on the learner, and much care was given to individual differences in language learning. Hence, researchers started to question the capacities endowed in some learners that determine their success, while others simply lack such abilities and fail. Such remarks pushed some researchers to carry out tremendous research to find out what the characteristics of the 'Good' language learner are? These characteristics include many aspects, such as: learning styles as the general features that distinguish between individuals; personal features as part of the learner's personality and psychology; but most important of all are LLS as a useful means to describe the Good Language Learner.

The idea of the GLL and the investigations carried out to check its implications is over 30 years old. It was introduced firstly as an attempt to find out the existing differences

among the learners. The basic question raised at the heart of research was the following: what do successful language learners do, which is not done by unsuccessful ones? This question hides a deep realization that researchers wanted to prove as true; if we succeed to know what GLL do, we can to large extents apply it on less successful learners to help them improve their learning.

In fact, researchers' claims about the existing relationship between strategies and success are not explicit, but the early publications in the field of LLS in the late 1970's, such as "What the Good Language Learner Can Teach Us?" (Rubin, 1975, as cited in Chamot, 2004), and "What Can We Learn From the Good Language Learner?" (Stern, 1975, as cited in Chamot, 2004), announced a strong attachment between the two. The aim of such studies was to identify the way GLL approach language tasks, in order to transform them to weak learners. This is clearly stated in Horwitz's words (1987: 126, as cited in Griffiths, 2004: 11): "The ultimate purpose of studying learner strategies is, of course, an applied one; researchers and teachers hope to determine which strategies are most effective and help students adopt more productive learning procedures."

Hence, the roots of inquiry in LLS are built on the learner himself as Wenden (1985, as cited in Dornyei, 2005) explains through the proverb: "don't give me fish, but teach me how to fish" when applied to the context of language learning and teaching. This proverb can mean that as far as the learners are given the answers, immediate problems faced are solved, but if they are trained to use strategies to find the answers themselves, they have the power of managing their own learning (Griffiths, 2004).

This emphasis on the learner as supervisor of his/her own learning raised a growing awareness that LLS have the power to be an "extremely powerful learning tool" (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985: 43, as cited in Griffiths, 2004: 1).

However, some limitations were inescapable, such as the attempt to catalogue what successful language learners are doing, and then train less successful ones in using these strategies, which is not an easy task as it may appear. The problem lies in the difficulty to know what these GLL are doing, because they may not know it themselves, and therefore cannot inform the researcher about it (Grenfell & Harris, 1999). Moreover, the nature of the strategies themselves is a limitation, because most of them are related to cognition and memory, or to feeling and affect that are unobservable devices.

Thus, it is not an easy task “to get inside the ‘black box’ of the human brain and see what is going on” (Grenfell & Harris, 1999: 36). Yet, as most researches carried in applied linguistics and inquiries about the processes of L2 acquisition, researchers are obliged to deduce the deep process out of the surface product; and sometimes it is simply that they do not know. It is after all the learner who is able to do the learning, just like the proverbial horse led to drink, but who must do the drinking itself. (Griffiths, 2004)

Besides, these learners relied on to describe LLS are not similar to each other; every learner is typical in his/her way of learning, thinking, problem solving, etc. This is the area of individual differences in language learning, in which learners differ radically from each other in the way they approach tasks, and even what works with one learner does not necessarily work with another. This imposes the idea that there are different types of GLL, each type with its own features, approaches, and skills. And if so, there must be also various types of weak language learners at the level of both individual differences and language proficiency. As a matter of fact, the researcher is supposed to know the area of weakness in these learners and their individual characteristics firstly, before suggesting any training activities. (Chamot, 2004)

However, it is actually thanks to GLL research that the interest in LLS grew up through the years; a growth explained in Skehan’s terms (1989: 285, as cited in Griffiths,

2004: 2) as an “explosion of activity”. Until the mid 1970’s, classroom-based language teaching methodology with the partial inclusion of learning and learner contribution in the form of motivation, learning styles and in a larger sense LLS, were the major focus of applied linguistics. From 1975 onwards, a shift in interest occurred; instead of focusing on language teaching methods, the learner and his/her way of processing, storing, and retrieving information become the central issue of discussion. Consequently, one aspect of this learner-centered inquiry was to discover how language learners manage their own learning, and the strategies they employ to develop their competence. This is the cause for the establishment of LLS taxonomies in later years, including O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990) taxonomy, and Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). (Dornyei, 2005)

Furthermore, researchers draw attention to the fact that GLL are self-regulated learners, who use LLS effectively to manage their learning on one hand, and move straight forward and strategically in the direction of their academic achievement, on the other hand. Interestingly, this idea of the involvement of self-regulation in GLL is introduced to LLS by Chamot and Rubin (1994: 372, as cited in Dornyei, 2005: 163) who explain: “The good language learner cannot be described in terms of a single set of strategies but rather through the ability to understand and develop a personal set of effective strategies.”

In sum, there is a kind of agreement that certain learners are able to become effective LLS users because they have a sort of strategic potential. More than this, it is all about the ability of the learner himself/herself to create a personal list of strategies that are subject to development, to be used upon the situation.

### **1.9. Research about Gender as a Factor Influencing Strategy Use**

In researching learning strategies, there are many factors that may influence the learner’s choice of the strategies to be used. As Ellis (1994: 472) states, there is a

“veritable plethora of individual learner variables which researchers have identified as influencing learning outcomes”. The factor of gender is often considered to have an impact on the way learners approach their learning. Despite the existence of some studies that investigate the relationship existing between language learning and gender, such as Bacon (1992); Nyikos (1990); & Sunderland (1998), studies exploring the use of language learning strategies according to gender are less common. Studies interested in revealing the use of learning strategies according to gender have shown that women reported a great use of language learning strategies. (Griffiths, 2003a)

The first study exploring the relationship between language learning strategies use and gender was carried by Politzer (1983, as cited in Takeushi, Griffiths, and Coyle, 2007), who worked on a group of 90 American college students studying foreign languages, and found that female students made use of social strategies more frequently than male students. In a study carried by Oxford and Nyikos (1989: 296) to investigate the use of language learning strategies by more than 1,200 undergraduate university student, the results found indicated that gender differences had a “profound influence”. These differences assumed that female learners used three strategy categories (formal practice, general study, and input elicitation) more frequently than male learners. Another study by Ehrman and Oxford (1989) at the Foreign Service Institute succeeded to achieve the same results, concluding that females reported more use of strategies than males.

In fact, they found that females use four strategy categories (general learning, functional, searching for/ communicating meaning, and self-management). Again, in a study of 374 students at the university of Puerto Pico, Green and Oxford (1995) came to the same results emphasizing that females used strategies definitely more than males. In another study carried by Dreyer and Oxford (1996, as cited in Takeushi, Griffiths, and Coyle, 2007) with 179 female students and 126 males, the results revealed that females

reported using strategies more frequently than males, and that the main strategies used were social and metacognitive strategies.

Griffiths (2004: 14) insisted that studies exploring the relationship between gender and strategy use “have come to mixed conclusions”. Ehrman and Oxford (1990) carried another study on this topic, but failed to discover any proof of existing differences in using language learning strategies between the sexes. Many studies (Kaylani, 1996; Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito & Sumrall, 1993) have found that females use more strategies than males.

It is interesting to note in this respect that some studies reported different results from those stated above. For instance, Wharton (2000) found that men used a greater number of strategies compared to women, in a study exploring 678 university students learning Japanese and French in Singapore. Others did not find any differences in strategy use according to gender variation (Vandergrift, 1997a). This is also the same findings resulting from Griffiths’ (2003a) New Zealand research involving 234 females and 114 males, in which no statistically significant difference in strategy use was found in terms of gender. Additionally, no significant difference was found in terms of gender in the use of language learning strategies in the study carried by Nisbet, Tindall, and Arroyo (2005, as cited in Takeushi, Griffiths, and Coyle, 2007).

As a matter of fact, the findings of all these studies that considered gender as an affecting factor on the use of learning strategies do not show with certainty whether females or males are most in need of language learning strategies. (Chamot, 2004)

### **1.10. Studies about Achievement and Strategy Use**

Achievement might be reasonably viewed as the central aim behind any learning. In the area of language learning strategies, the pioneering study that investigated the interference of the element of achievement in its relation to strategy use was Rubin’s

(1975, as cited in Griffiths, 2003a: 41) the “Good Language Learner” study. Through observing the learners in the classrooms, making interviews with good language learners, and gathering the remarks of teachers, she identified some of the features of the good language learner (for example, having a strong desire to communicate, not being inhibited, practice, attend to meaning, etc). The aim of this study was to improve the rate of success of less successful learners by means of teaching them the strategies used by successful learners.

In this sense, the learners’ choice of strategies to accomplish a given task is in itself an expression of autonomy, because as Macaro (2004) argues, most of these strategies are happening in the mind of the learners, for which the teacher cannot get access in, and when they are used, they express the learners’ act and behavior towards the situation. Moreover, Cohen (1998) and many other researchers (Oxford, 1990; and O’Malley and Chamot, 1990) have emphasized the importance of the element of choice when defining LLS; this ability to choose is the evidence for the learners’ autonomy, and an affective factor in learning achievement.

At around the same time of Rubin’s study, Stern (1975, as cited in Grenfell & Harris, 1999: 37) put a list of ten strategies used by GLL in a seminal paper, organized as follows:

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Planning strategy     | 6. Semantic strategy         |
| 2. Active strategy       | 7. Practice strategy         |
| 3. Empathetic strategy   | 8. Communication strategy    |
| 4. Formal strategy       | 9. Monitoring strategy       |
| 5. Experimental strategy | 10. Internalization strategy |

The list is derived from the way Stern (1975, as cited in Dornyei, 2005) viewed the nature of linguistic competence, in addition to his response to three major problems in the area of L2 acquisition: the state of the first language and the allocation of the new language

system; the communicative tasks of understanding the messages sent; and finally the learner's ability to select among rational and intuitive learning.

Other studies in the area of language learning strategies that investigated their use in relation to success in language learning have come to mixed findings. O'Malley et al (1985) concluded that although all the students used various learning strategies, successful learners reported greater use of metacognitive learning strategies, which led them to decide that the difference between successful and less successful learners lies in the extent of metacognitive control exercised over language learning. Meanwhile, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) found out that another class of learning strategies which is cognitive strategies distinguished successful learners from less successful ones. Other studies such as Green and Oxford (1995), however did not focus on the impact of one class of strategies, and discovered that in general successful learners make use of all the classes of strategies highly frequently than less successful ones.

According to Chamot (2004:18), the relationship between the use of learning strategies and the learners' achievement is 'far clearer'. She stated that more successful learners report using a varied range of strategies and often a greater number in comparison to less successful ones. More differences between successful and less successful learners were recognized at the level of strategy application in respect of task, as well as strategy appropriateness for the task's requirements.

However, some limitations were inescapable, such as the attempt to catalogue what successful language learners are doing, and then train less successful ones in using these strategies, which is not an easy task as it may appear. The problem lies in the difficulty to know what these GLL are doing, because they may not know it themselves, and therefore cannot inform the researcher about it (Grenfell & Harris, 1999). Moreover, the nature of the strategies themselves is a limitation, because most of them are related to cognition and

memory, or to feeling and affect that are unobservable devices.

Thus, it is not an easy task “to get inside the ‘black box’ of the human brain and see what is going on” (Grenfell & Harris, 1999: 36). Yet, as most researches carried in applied linguistics and inquiries about the processes of L2 acquisition, researchers are obliged to deduce the deep process out of the surface product; and sometimes it is simply that they do not know. It is after all the learner who is able to do the learning, just like the proverbial horse led to drink, but who must do the drinking itself. (Griffiths, 2004)

Despite the fruitful insights produced about strategy use and success, there exist a considerable variance resulting from the various studies. Griffiths (2003) suggested that this may well be justified by means of the different settings in which researches were held, other elements “overshadowed strategy use, such as tolerance of ambiguity, self-esteem, risk-taking, field dependence/independence, and motivation” (Takeushi, Griffiths, Coyle, 2007: 75), the different research methods used, or the difference in the nature of the language learners themselves.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the plethora of research made in the area of language learning strategies all over more than three decades, much of the findings were inconclusive in the sense that no final conclusions were set concerning them, or contradictory in respect to different results achieved in studies investigating the same theme. This actually goes at the heart of research, since the main objective is to shed light on the importance of some themes, to clarify the misunderstandings and mysteries existing within some questions, or to reinforce the findings of previously carried researches or contradict them. research seems like a puzzle in which pieces require being joint and organized in a certain way to achieve the designed goal.

Hence, through defining and classifying in a certain order, following the previous research underpinnings and needs of the area of language learning strategies, new studies aim at presenting valuable data for the field of language learning strategies that may help in a way or another to clarify a point in an ocean, or may be raising new inquiries that would provide new understandings of the language learning strategies area. The next chapter is concerned with exploring the frequency of metacognitive learning strategy use across all the students, and in terms of gender differences, to investigate their approach of use, and to account for existing differences in strategy use.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

---

## **METACOGNTIVE**

## **LANGUAGE LEARNING**

## **STRATEGIES USE**

## **ACROSS GENDER**

## **DIFFERENCES**



## CHAPTER TWO

### METACOGNITIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USE ACROSS GENDER DIFFERENCES

<b>Introduction</b> .....	48
<b>2.1. Rationale</b> .....	48
<b>2.2. Method</b> .....	53
2.2.1. Research Settings .....	53
2.2.2. The Participants .....	55
2.2.3. Materials .....	57
2.2.4. Data Collection Procedures .....	59
2.2.5. Data Analysis procedures .....	60
<b>2.3. Results</b> .....	60
2.3.1. Frequency of language learning strategy use overview (MLLSQ).....	63
2.3.2. Patterns of Metacognitive Strategies Use Overview .....	61
2.3.3. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies Use across Gender Differences .....	66
2.3.4. Patterns of Metacognitive Strategies Use across Gender .....	72
2.3.5. Frequency of General Metacognitive Strategies Use and Gender .....	75
2.3.3. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Learning Skills Use and Gender .....	76



2.3.4. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies for Productive Learning Skills Use and Gender.....	76
<b>2.4. Summary of Results and Findings .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>78</b>

## **Introduction**

Language learners as Horwitz (1999) confirms must have their share in the learning process as active participants. Despite the differences in their classification, one point agreed upon among researchers is the vital role of LLS in enhancing learning (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Cohen, 1998; & Chamot, 2001). Hence, our task in this chapter is to give a detailed account of the difference existing quantitatively speaking between males and females in the use of MLLS, through analyzing the frequency of strategy use reported across all the students, and across gender differences. This chapter starts by introducing the methodological basis (the rationale, the research settings, the participants, the materials, data collection procedures , and data analysis procedures). Then, the chapter states the results found concerning metacognitive strategies use, across all the students, and in terms of gender, with discussions and interpretations.

### **2.1. Rationale**

The basic instrument for the first part of the study was a self-report questionnaire, because this instrument gave a wide possibility to survey a large number of participants, providing a holistic overview about the use of metacognitive language learning strategies, in a way that another method would not allow it, practically speaking. Moreover, the data provided by the questionnaire are little if any dependent on the researcher's interpretation if compared to other research methods, because as Nunan (1992: 143) claimed, these data are "amenable to quantification", which makes questionnaires an objective surface to cover further investigation. Being a research instrument, a questionnaire is labeled differently, ranging from 'inventory', 'checklist', 'test', and 'opinionnaires', to 'scales', 'surveys', and simply 'sheets' (Aiken, 1997, as cited in Dornyei, 2003: 5).

More than this, there are two main categories under which researchers have used questionnaires; the first is interview schedules used for live interviews with respondents, and the second is self-administered pencil-and-paper questionnaires which are research instruments often used for measurement purposes in order to collect valid and reliable data (Dornyei, 2003: 6). Questionnaires are generally viewed as interviews held on paper. Yet, it differs considerably from interviews, since at the time of administering for the subjects, there would be no interviewer to explain the misunderstandings or to clarify the ambiguities. For this reason, the questionnaire is believed to be impersonal and has to be as clear as possible in its wording and working. (Singh, 2006)

In his definition of the term, Brown (2001: 6) stated that “Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”. Hence, as Dornyei (2003) explained, many questionnaires do not include real questions ending in a question mark, but are rather statements and questions that ask for the respondent’s reaction. A questionnaire then may be viewed as a prepared form to be distributed on a given category of people for the purpose of securing certain responses from them. It is a group of questions arranged in a certain way seeking for the desired answers from a sample of respondents. (Dornyei, 2003: 5)

Used in researches related to education, a questionnaire is an arrangement of questions or statements related to opinions, facts, attitudes, or preferences, to which a group of people are asked to respond (Singh, 2006). Moreover, a questionnaire is a list of the statements or questions that you are seeking answers for. It has to allow the researcher to capture all the information he/she is looking for, that is why the questions must be clear and carefully thought about. Besides, it is required that the questionnaire should be tested

on a number of subjects before it is actually distributed to the sample of study. (Antonius, 2003)

Questionnaires are purposefully used because of their numerous advantages and the efficiency they create for the researcher in terms of time, effort, and financial resources. Furthermore, questionnaires are characterized by the possibility to be successfully used with various people in various situations. (Dornyei, 2003)

Oxford (1996: 33, as cited in Griffiths, 2003a: 57) summarized the advantages of questionnaires as a useful instrument for investigating LLS by stating:

Strategy questionnaires have certain advantages. They are quick and easy to administer, may be the most cost-effective mode of strategy assessment, and are almost completely nonthreatening when administered using paper and pencil (or computer) under conditions of confidentiality. Moreover, many students discover a great deal about themselves from taking a strategy questionnaire.

Questionnaires, are also effective in statistical terms if well-structured, as (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000: 247) explains: “Highly structured, closed questions are useful in that they can generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis”.

Additionally, they are flexible in the sense that they permit comparisons among groups of the studied sample, if well-set by piloting and refining its structure if necessary to guarantee the outlook of the final version, and its success to stimulate the desired responses. A questionnaire is also viewed as the most flexible among research tools, because it allows an easy gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data. (Singh, 2006)

As a matter of fact, questionnaires are said to be effective ways for teachers or researchers to find out more about the learning background, habits, or references of their subjects, to build specific programs to satisfy the obtained responses in the light of the research findings.

These advantages, however, do not hide the fact that questionnaires have important disadvantages too, basically related to validity and reliability matters. To exemplify, Ellis (1994) explains the problem of validity through the fact that learners may not be self-aware in a sufficient way to report what they are doing exactly, instead they may state what is expected from them against their real behavior, raising the problem of reliability. Cohen (1998) claims that some learning issues like cognitive processing may not be accurately reported by the learners via questionnaires, because they may be unconscious of them, too complex for them, or difficult to remember.

In addition to this, Dornyei (2003: 10) points out that despite their advantages that imply that they are “perfect research instruments”, questionnaires have some serious limitations; first, the need to simplify the questions for the respondents is an inhibition for a deep analysis of the issue; second, low respondent motivation to participate in the activity of filling a questionnaire; there is also the problem of low-respondent literacy level which causes problems in reading questionnaires and writing appropriate answers; another problem is that the researcher is not able to check and double-check the accuracy of the provided information, due to the absence of personal contact with the respondents; biased responses are also a major limitation within questionnaires because the respondents do not always tell the truth about themselves; other problems have to do with self-deception, having a tendency to overgeneralise, fatigue effects, and providing superficial responses.

A superficial response may be the result of inadequate questionnaire items which may not serve the context, and thus do not stimulate the required responses. More than this, learners may understand the terms that refer to certain behaviors differently under the impact of their language capacities and the background culture. (Gu, Wen, & Wu, 1995)

Other limitations of self-report questionnaires involve their being “invaluable” as an instrument to obtain in-depth responses about how speakers of other languages develop

their linguistic capacities, taking into consideration the fact that they are not observed, as Ellis (1994: 674) points out. Additionally, the respondents to questionnaires can provide unreliable data, such as the students reporting the use of certain language learning strategies because they know that the aim of the questionnaire is to elicit their use of these strategies.

This as well as the fact that respondents may provide superficial responses that may not allow for a deep analysis of the obtained results across all the respondents. (Mckay, 2006)

There is to consider among the limitations of the questionnaire as a research technique the fact that it is not an easy task to collect responses from large numbers of people, who may not all be willing to co-operate. And even when a sufficient number of questionnaires are filled and given back to the researcher, it may be found that all of them or some of them have not been well filled as it was expected, or filled with wrong information, which may bias the treatment and interpretations of the results. (Singh, 2006)

However, Dornyei (2003) confirms that although numerous are the disadvantages of self-report data, advantages such as versatility, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency in terms of researchers and students' time and effort make them more than useful tools. This is also maintained by Cohen (1998: 39) when confirming the great value of such data when "elicited with care and interpreted with full understanding of the circumstances under which they were obtained". That is why, questionnaires are among the most widely used techniques of research in the social sciences.

In fact, the idea that a questionnaire is composed of precise written questions asked to a group of people of interest to the researcher, seems to be a clear strategy that guides to the answers sought by the questioner. More than this, questionnaires are standardized tools of research since they seek consistent answers for consistent questions that are asked in

precisely the same way for a group of people characterized by being of interest to the researcher. (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight, 2006)

Hence, a questionnaire was chosen as the first instrument for the current study because it could be used efficiently as a means to gather required data. Furthermore, it was useful as a means to make the learners reflect upon their own learning and strategy use, and rise their motivation to take part in what might look (for them) like a time wasting research exercise. Finally, the questionnaire was highly inspiring as a guide to extract other insights in the form of interviews.

## **2.2. Method**

### **2.2.1. Research Setting**

Learners of English as a foreign language learn in different ways depending on many factors, which may be related to their individuality as learners, or to language learning settings. Learners, then differ from each other in various ways: motivation, gender and age, learning styles, personality traits, and previous learning experience. Since these differences may interfere in the way such students accomplish their learning tasks (i.e., the way and frequency of using Metacognitive Learning Strategies), the research setting has to be taken into consideration in the attempt to infer, as this study does, from research into the use of Metacognitive Learning Strategies.

Language learning strategies have been studied in various learning environments. O'Malley et.al (1985) for example, carried their research among speakers of other languages learning English in an American high school, whereas Ehrman and Oxford (1989) conducted their research in an American military institution to survey the use of language learning strategies, and Griffiths' (2003a) research took place in a private English language school for international students in New Zealand, to investigate the relation between the use of language learning strategies and proficiency. Therefore, students from

these various settings might reflect differences in many ways. One possible difference might be in terms of strategy use from one setting to another, that is why it is necessary to understand the setting of the current study and the participants involved in.

The English language department at Farhat Abbes university, Sétif, Algeria was the setting for the current study. Focus was on those students enrolling English classes, in which English is taught as a second foreign language for four years, after which the students get a degree in the English language.

According to Rubin and Babbie (1997: 238), a study population is that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually chosen. It is a target population and a specific pool of cases that become the target for the researcher to study, as Newman (2000: 201) explains. Hence, a study population is a group of units selected by the researcher to enable him/her to gather relevant data. As Singh (2006: 82) defines it: “[...] in research methodology population means the characteristics of a specific group”. In other words, the target population in a research or study involves all those people to whom the findings are to be generalized.

For the purpose of this study, the population was all third year English language students at the English department of Farhat Abbes University in Sétif, Algeria, in which English is taught as a foreign language.

Although English is also taught in other departments for specific purposes (ESP), the choice of a theme like LLS requires students with some experience in English learning. After three university years of study, the students have established a basis in English learning, being accustomed to the programs and teachers, and faced ordinarily almost daily to learning English. This implies that they have also established a basis and a certain level in learning through the previous two years, being in continuous contact with the target language. As a crucial year for them, third year is the final step towards their final year and

achieving their degree in the English language. Hence, we chose third year students on purpose because we wanted to see how do they approach English learning tasks in their third year of contact with the language, via using metacognitive language learning strategies.

Another reason behind the choice of third year students as a target population is the factor of age, which is believed to be an effective and affecting factor in the process of learning new languages. Although the proof on this is far from clear, it is commonly believed that children are better language learners in comparison to adults (Bellingham, 2000). In the field of language learning strategies, studies of age-related differences did not overtly focus on its impact on the use of language learning strategies (Griffiths, 2003a). Hence, the student population (n= 356) was formed of participants aged in their twenties, with 297 female students (83.42%), and 58 male students (16.2%) of the whole population.

### **2.2.2. The participants**

Since the study of the whole research population is not possible and is also impracticable, as Singh (2006: 81) asserts, it is a hard task to undertake a research without the use of sampling. It is for practical ends such as time, cost, and other limitations that a sample is studied operatively, more than a population. Hence, the concept of sampling was introduced as a solution to make the results of researches more accurate and economical (Singh, 2006). Selecting a sample is fundamental to statistical analysis, and its representativeness is crucial to the accuracy of the population. (Gibilisco, 2004: 203)

As Dornyei (2003: 70-71) puts it: “Broadly speaking, the *sample* is the group of people whom researchers actually examine and the *population* is the group of people whom the survey is about”. That being the case, it is indeed unnecessary in most cases to work on the whole population, which would be a waste of resources, but rather selecting a

good sample that would look very similar to the investigated population in its core characteristics, such as age, gender, educational background, etc. (Dornyei, 2003)

This good sample selection however is not an easy task, but one that requires adopting appropriate sampling techniques, which would guarantee saving time, effort, and cost from one hand, and can provide the expected accurate results from another hand (Dornyei, 2006). In research methodology, there exist various methods for sampling. In order to select a sample out of the target population, the researcher can choose among different techniques the one which suits his/her research purposes and questions. (Gibilisco, 2004)

Generally speaking, there are two methods for sampling, non-probability sampling, and probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is also referred to as non-parametric sampling and is used for certain purposes (Singh, 2006). This type of sampling is used when the researcher lacks a sampling frame for the target population, or where a probabilistic approach is viewed to be unnecessary. Examples of non-probabilistic sampling include: *Convenience sampling*, *Voluntary sampling*, *Quota sampling*, *Purposive sampling*, and *Snowball sampling*. (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006: 163)

Probability sampling is a method of sampling which gives the probability that the sample is representative of the target population. This method is characterized by the fact that every member in the population has an equal chance or probability to be taken in the sample. Moreover, this method consists of other numerous techniques, such as *Simple random sampling*, *Systematic sampling*, *Stratified sampling*, among others. (Dornyei, 2003)

For this study, the population was all third year students at Farhat Abbas University, Sétif, Algeria, out of which a sample of 88 students was selected using the technique of *Simple random sampling*. The choice of this technique originated from the purpose of the study, which is to examine the correlation between Gender, learning achievement, and the

use of metacognitive learning strategies. Hence, Simple random sampling gave the probability for every member of the target population to be selected. Since the aim is to analyze the use of metacognitive language learning strategies in a large population and to get an unbiased cross-section of that population, simple random sampling is used.

The participants in this study consisted of 88 undergraduate third year university students, which represents 25% of the whole population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000), both males and females, selected randomly from 8 classes of about 30 students each, at Farhat Abbas University, Algeria. Third year students were selected since they had received enough input to answer the learning strategy questionnaire, and in a better position compared to first and second year students who did not receive enough input and who are still building their learning experience in the target language. There were 74 females (N=74), representing 84,09%, and 14 males (N=14) constituting 15,9%. (See table.1 below)

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	14	15.9%
Female	74	84.09%
All the students	88	100%

**Table.1: The percentages of male and female participants, and all the students.**

### 2.2.3. Materials

The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire was used as the basic instrument for measuring the frequency of metacognitive language learning strategy use in the current study. The questionnaire was developed to elicit students' perceptions of their metacognitive language learning strategies use, and their sense of awareness. The format of the questionnaire was modeled on measures of identifying how frequent is the students' use of metacognitive learning strategies in respect to their gender, reflecting strategies use for each of the four modalities: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The questionnaire

was a 30-item survey, which was developed by the researcher, stated in the English language and administered by the researcher with a maximum time of 40 minutes for completion.

The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire was divided into three sections: 1) Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies; 2) MLLS for Receptive Language Skills; and 3) MLLS for Productive Language Skills. Metacognitive learning strategies were chosen to represent the process of planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating for each modality. Initial reservations that some of the Metacognitive Language Strategy Learning Questionnaire statements and questions might be difficult for lower level students proved to be unfounded in all but with very few cases. A pilot study was conducted with 10 students who were not included as respondents in the main study. It helped the researcher to construct the questions appropriately and to remove or change some of the questions that did not seem to serve a purpose at all. It also ensured that there was a kind of flow in the way questions were asked.

Hence, it was found that the participants generally approached the task in a positive way, taking it as a challenge to treat the more difficult words (such as “circumlocution”) until all the items were completed. Those few students who found the questionnaire too difficult were not pressured to finish it, since incomplete questionnaires were not involved in the current study. The questionnaire was designed in part based on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), in its section of metacognitive learning strategies, although it was altered in some respect in order to fit the interests of the present study. This inventory has appeared in several versions, and used by many studies. For this study, the 50-item version for speakers of other languages learning English (Oxford, 1990), more specifically, its section of metacognitive learning strategies is employed.

In the Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire (MLLSQ), Students responded by selecting among the provided possibilities in each question. We used a rating scale measurement with an even number of response options out of which the respondents select one response option.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	often	always
-------	--------	--------------	-------	--------

The implication from using this coding is that the higher the option chosen by the respondent, the greater the strength of frequency. As a result, the responses of the students can be treated as a whole, and across male and female students separately, as well. Students' responses were given numeric values and entered into the computer spreadsheet program and analyzed using SPSS 8.0 for Windows.

The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire, also included three open-ended questions that were qualitatively approached. The questionnaire then, was selected as the first instrument for this study, with the aim of eliciting the frequency of using MLLS in learning English across all the participants, and according to gender differences.

#### **2.2.4. Data collection procedures**

The Metacognitive Language Learning strategies Questionnaire (LSQ) was administered in English at 9:30 a.m, at the English department of Farhat Abbes university, on May, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Data to address the research questions were collected through asking the participants to complete the Metacognitive Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire, after explaining the research purpose to them. The questionnaire was completed out of class time, with the aim of getting the students reflect on their English learning, and to raise awareness of learning strategies.

After collection, students hold a discussion to exchange views on metacognition and learning strategies, inspired by some of the ideas in the questionnaire, so that they can

learn from the experiences of their classmates. Generally speaking, the students reflected a noticeable enjoyment while doing the task, and showed interest to know its aim and use.

Upon completion of the data collection, descriptive statistics were computed for all questionnaire items. All of the data was input into the Statistical Processing for the Social Sciences (SPSS 8.0 for Windows).

### **2.2.5. Data analysis procedures**

Once collected, the data from the Learning Strategies Questionnaire became input to be analyzed by means of SPSS 8.0 for Windows programs. There were no missing data in this study.

Several statistical procedures were followed:

1. The data were analyzed to verify reliability over the entire questionnaire.
2. Average reported frequency of each strategy use was calculated across all the students, as well as the overall reported frequency of strategy use across all the students, with standard deviations.
3. Data were gathered according to gender, and average reported frequency for each strategy item, and for all items was calculated.
4. Averages were examined for highly frequent use across all the students, and across gender differences.
5. In case of significant differences found, strategy averages were closely examined for patterns of high frequency of use, according to gender.

### **2.3. Results**

The results achieved were treated in the light of the sub-grouping of the questionnaire (MLLSQ). They were analyzed so as to check the frequency of metacognitive strategies use across all the students, aiming at discovering the extent of learners' reliance on using these strategies in their learning. Then, the results were studied at the level of gender to

account for the possible differences existing between males and females in the use of metacognitive strategies in their learning tasks.

### **2.3.1. Frequency of language learning strategy use overview (MLLSQ)**

The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire was divided into three main sections; each section representing a range of strategies. The first section comprises the sub-group of General Metacognitive Strategies, and includes the following items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. The second section presents those metacognitive strategies related to receptive language skills, and involves the following items: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. The final section is concerned with those metacognitive strategies related to productive language skills, including the items: 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 (See Appendix.1 for details).

The alpha co-efficient for reliability of the instrument across all students was .97. This reliability is believed to be very high (Cronbach alpha=.97). This is proved to be well a high reliability co-efficient in excess of .70 (Dornyei, 2003). The participants in this study (n=88) reported an average frequency of metacognitive language learning strategies use over all the statements of MLLSQ of 2.7, ranging from 1.2 to 4.3. (See table.2 below, p.59)

Sub-group	MLLSQ	Statement	average	SD
GMS	06	I think about ways to become a better English learner	4.3	0.9
MSRLS	17	I imagine scenes or draw pictures	4.1	1.1
MSRLS	18	I identify what I do not understand while reading	4.1	0.9
MSRLS	12	I reflect on what I heard to check my listening comprehension	4.0	0.9
MSPLS	25	I check whether i have accomplished my goal in communication	3.9	1.0
GMS	05	I organize course material	3.7	0.6
MSPLS	23	I brainstorm words and phrases I can use when talking	3.7	1.2
GMS	03	I regularly check my progress	3.6	1.1
GMS	01	I define goals for my learning tasks	3.6	1.3
GMS	02	I set plans for my learning tasks and work according to these plans	3.5	1.2
GMS	08	I ask myself questions about issues learned	3.4	1.1
MSPLS	30	I correct my mistakes and evaluate my performance	3.3	1.0
MSRLS	15	I check whether the information is making sense to me	3.2	0.9
MSPLS	19	I ask myself questions about the implicit information	3.1	0.9
MSRLS	10	Before I start listening, I try to predict what information I will hear.	3.1	0.9
GMS	04	I gather sources to understand a lecture	3.0	1.1
MSRLS	11	I decide about specific aspects of information to listen to in advance	2.9	0.9
MSRLS	13	I pay attention to meaning when I listen to conversations in English	2.7	0.9
MSPLL	29	I think of different writing forms to write about a topic	2.4	0.6
MSPLS	28	I gather multiple sources of information about the topic I am writing about	2.3	0.7
MSRLS	21	I decide about my goal for speaking by thinking about what to communicate	2.2	0.9
MSPLS	26	I set a plan before writing	2.1	0.9
MSPLS	27	I reflect upon what I wrote and revise accordingly	1.9	0.8
MSRLS	14	I periodically check whether the information is making sense to me	1.7	0.6
MSRLS	24	I pay attention when someone is speaking English	1.7	0.6
GMS	09	I think of new ways to solve a task	1.5	0.6
MSRLS	20	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	1.5	0.7
GMS	07	I notice my mistakes to do better	1.4	0.4
MSRLS	22	I think about important information for the listener	1.3	0.4
MSPLS	16	Before I read, I think about what I already know about the topic	1.3	0.3
Overall average reported frequency of strategy use			2.8	0.8

**Table.2: Average reported frequency of metacognitive strategy use (MLSU) with standard deviations (SD)**

Concerning the three sub-groups, there exists a difference in the average reported frequency of each sub-group. Hence, General Metacognitive Strategies (GMS) have an average reported frequency of 3.1, compared to 2.7 for Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Learning Skills (MSRLS), and 2.4 only for Metacognitive Strategies for Productive Learning Skills (MSPLS). The statements of the MLLSQ are arranged in terms of reported frequency of use across all the participants in [table.2](#) along with standard deviations.

The ten strategies which were the most frequently used strategies representing the high frequency group as set by Oxford (1990) (i.e. average=3.5 or above) belong to all three subgroups; five of them belong to General metacognitive strategies (GMS), three of them to MSRLS, and two of them to MSPLS sub-category. These are emphasized by shading them. Besides, the overall average reported frequency of strategy use is set at the bottom of [table.2](#) below.

Across all the students, the overall average reported frequency of strategy use was 2.8, with ten strategies reported used at a high rate of frequency (average=3.5 or above). These ten strategies that were reported to be used highly frequently belong to all three sub-sections of strategies: items (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) were general metacognitive strategies; items (12, 17, 18) were metacognitive strategies for receptive skills; and items (23, 25) were metacognitive strategies for productive skills.

### **2.3.2. Patterns of Metacognitive Strategies Use Overview**

As stated in [table 2](#) (above), the overall frequency of strategy use across all the students is not highly significant. According to Oxford (1990), a significant average=3.5 or above. Hence, regarding the average reported frequency of all the students which is 2.8, it may be stated that the students do not really reflect significant use of metacognitive strategies. This result may originate from the fact the learners do not use this class of

metacognitive strategies only for their learning, but other classes that are not the focus of this study.

As the general aim of metacognitive strategies use is to regulate learning under a certain design, those ten strategies reported to be used highly frequently across all the students include five strategies belonging to GMS which had to do with organizing learning in general, without focusing on one specific area. These five strategies involve the students in a continuous process of reflection about the best methods to organize and within elaborate the learning process. The following table (table.3, below) organizes these ten strategies reported at high frequency levels:

Type of Strategy		MLLSQ	Statement
Core strategies	GMS	01	I regularly check my progress
		02	I define goals for my learning tasks
		03	I set plans for my learning tasks
		05	I organize course material through the use of charts, tables, etc
		06	I think about ways to become a better English learner
Central strategies	MSRLS	12	I reflect on what I heard
		17	I imagine scenes or draw pictures
		18	I identify what I do not understand while reading
	MSPLS	23	I brainstorm words and phrases I can use when talking
		25	I check whether i have accomplished my goal in communication

**Table.3: patterns of metacognitive strategies used highly frequently across all the students**

As table.3 (above) shows, five strategies used highly frequently are general metacognitive strategies, three strategies are MSRLS, and two strategies are MSPLS. To exemplify, among the five GMS, item.1 makes the learners aware of the importance of

goal identification for successful language learning, since it may help in deciding about the suitable methods to follow in order to complete language tasks successfully. While item.2 entails a habitual tendency to plan learning tasks, through designing the various steps to follow so as to fulfill them successfully. Moreover, item.3 incorporates a general awareness from the learners about the necessity for regular checking of their progress and evolution in target language learning. This implies that the learners try to get where they are standing exactly, and how far they have evolved in learning the language, so as to know their strengths and weaknesses, with the aim of setting remedies for these weaknesses when known.

Additionally, item.5 shows that the students look for the best ways to understand their courses, mainly through re-explaining them to themselves in more elaborated forms through the use of charts, tables, schemes, etc. Finally, item.6 involves the students in an enrolling circle in the world of language learning, through their ever continuous search for better ways to achieve better positions in language learning. These five strategies as general metacognitive strategies may be termed “**Core Strategies**” since they are reported to be used highly frequently across all the students, and they may be involved in every language learning task.

From the group of MSRLS, learners reported three strategies only to be used highly frequently, being items (12, 17, 18). Item.12 is a metacognitive strategy for the receptive skill of listening, and involves the learners in a reflection process about what they heard, in order to judge its significance for them. This of paramount importance for learners because it helps them revise and order the information they have received to achieve comprehension, or to build further knowledge through using them. Item.17 besides, is a metacognitive strategy for reading, in which the students draw pictures and create scenes out of the read material, which forms a basic strategy in building reading comprehension.

The last strategy manifested in item.18 is also a metacognitive strategy for reading, and reflects a general awareness from the learners' part about obscure or difficult information while the act of reading is carried. This is important because it indulges the learners in a serious follow-up of their reading steps. These three strategies may be labeled "**Central Strategies**" because they are frequently used by the students, which reveals their importance, and because they belong to specific areas of knowledge (listening and reading).

As for the group of MLPLS, students reported using only two strategies at high frequency levels, being items (23, 25). Item.23 is a metacognitive strategy for speaking, built on the idea that the learners prepare the bulk of words and phrases to use before they start talking. This reflects a consciousness from the part of the learners about themselves as speakers, the topic of speech, and the audience, as well the language suitable for task in general. Hence, a planning and a revising process is carried before the learners start speaking.

In as much the same way, item.25 is also a metacognitive strategy for speaking, and is actually a follow up to the process of speaking since the students reflect about their spoken production, by checking whether they have reached the goal designed or not. This is a strategy meant for self-evaluation because the learners think about their own performance and try to judge it under some criteria they state for themselves. These two strategies also form "**Central Strategies**" because they were highly frequently used by the students, and because they belong to one specific area of knowledge (speaking).

### **2.3.3. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies Use Across Gender Differences**

The overall average reported frequency for female students (N=74) was 3.0, with eight strategies reported to be used at a high rate of frequency, and six of these strategies matching with those reported to be used by all the students. Male students (N=14) had an

average reported frequency of 2.7, and five strategy statements used at a high rate of The findings of table.5 (above) showed that female students reported using metacognitive learning strategies (average=3.0) more frequently than male students (average= 2.7). This difference in reported frequency of strategy use was also found within the three sub-groups of strategies, with females scoring higher than males; hence, for the first sub-group (General Metacognitive strategies), females reported average of 3.2, compared to an average of 3.0 for males; for the second sub-group (MSRLS) females had an average of 2.9 compared to 2.5 only for males; and for the last sub-group (MSPLS), females reported an average of 3.0, while males had an average of 2.8 only. (See table.4, below)

Gender	Average		
	GMS	MSRLS	MSPLS
Male (n=14)	3.0	2.5	2.8
Female (n=74)	3.2	2.9	3.0
All the students (n=88)	3.2	2.7	2.5

**Table.4: Average reported frequency of strategy use according to gender.**

As it is reported in the results of the questionnaire, when the strategies had to do with learning in general (the first sub-category), there was a significant reported frequency of use across all the students, and also a significant difference between males and females across the three sub-groups.

Sub-group	MLLSQ	Statement	Male	Female	AS
GMS	01	I define goals for my learning tasks	3.0	3.6	3.6
GMS	02	I set plans for my learning tasks	3.5	3.7	3.5
GMS	03	I regularly check my progress	2.4	3.5	3.6
GMS	04	I gather sources to understand a lecture	2.3	2.9	3.0
GMS	05	I organize course material	2.7	3.1	3.7
GMS	06	I think about ways to become a better English learner	4.0	4.0	4.3
GMS	07	I notice my English mistakes	3.7	3.2	1.4
GMS	08	I ask myself questions about issues learned	3.0	3.5	3.4
GMS	09	I think of new ways to solve a task	2.1	2.7	3.1
MSRLS	10	I try to predict what information I will hear	2.4	2.6	1.5
MSRLS	11	I decide about aspects of information to listen to	2.2	2.0	2.9
MSRLS	12	I reflect on what I heard	2.7	3.1	4.0
MSRLS	13	I pay attention to meaning when listening	2.4	2.6	2.7
MSRLS	14	I check whether the information is making sense to me	3.6	3.1	1.7
MSRLS	15	I decide in advance for my reading purpose	2.1	2.6	3.2
MSRLS	16	I think about what I already know about the topic	2.2	2.5	1.3
MSRLS	17	I imagine scenes or draw pictures	3.0	3.1	4.1
MSRLS	18	I identify what I do not understand	2.3	3.5	4.1
MSRLS	19	I ask questions when I do not understand while reading	3.0	3.2	3.1
MSRLS	20	I look for opportunities to read in English	2.6	3.5	1.3
MSPLS	21	I decide about my goal for speaking	3.9	3.2	2.2
MSPLS	22	I think about important information for the listener	2.0	2.1	1.5
MSPLS	23	I brainstorm words and phrases	2.5	2.4	3.7
MSPLS	24	I pay attention when someone is speaking English	3.1	3.4	1.7
MSPLS	25	I check whether i have accomplished my goal in communication	3.2	3.7	3.9
MSPLS	26	I set a plan before writing	2.4	3.1	2.1
MSPLS	27	I reflect and revise while writing	2.7	3.0	1.9
MSPLS	28	I gather multiple sources of information about the topic I am writing about	3.0	3.3	2.3
MSPLL	29	I think of different writing forms to write about a topic	2.6	3.0	2.4
MSPLS	30	I correct my mistakes and evaluate my performance	3.0	3.1	3.3
Overall average reported frequency of strategy use			2.7	3.0	2.8

**Table.5: Average reported frequency of strategy use for males and females.**

As seen in table.5 (above), females reported high frequent use of strategies compared to males, and reported using eight strategies at a high level of frequency, belonging to all three sub-groups; four to GMS (items.1,2,6,8), three to MSRLS (item.13,19, 20), and one strategy to MSPLS (item.24). Males, however reported using five strategies at a high level of frequency; three to GMS (items.2,6,7), one strategy to MSRLS (items.14), and one (item.21) to MSPLS. Besides, while three of the strategies reported by females to be used at a high level of frequency (items.1,2,6) matched with those reported to be used at a high frequency level by all the students, only two of those strategies reported by males to be used at a high level of frequency (items.2,6) matched with those used frequently higher by all the students.

The strategies that were reported to be used at a high level of frequency by females and that matched with those reported by all the students are basically related to all four stages of metacognitive processing, as shown it table.6 (below, p.66).

Hence, females and males reported using strategies from all three stages of metacognitive processing only; all except evaluating for males, with differences in the number of strategies reported for every level.

For instance, females reported using three strategies at high frequency levels for the reflecting and selecting stage, three for the planning stage, one for monitoring, and one for the evaluating level, while males reported one strategy for reflecting and selecting, two for planning, and two strategies for monitoring, accordingly. As a result, both males and females have reported strategies used at high frequency levels, but the major difference seems to be the fact that these strategies differ qualitatively, with each group tending towards a given group of strategies.

option	Reflecting & selecting	Planning	Monitoring	Evaluating
Male	I think about possible ways to become a better learner	I set plans for my learning tasks	I notice my English mistakes	
		I decide about my goal for speaking	I check whether the information is making sense to me	
Female	I think about possible ways to become a better learner	I set plans for my learning tasks	I ask questions when I do not understand while reading	I ask myself questions about issues learned
	I pay attention to meaning when listening	I define goals to every English language task		
	I pay attention when someone is speaking English	I look for opportunities to read in English		
AS	I reflect on what I heard	I set plans for my learning tasks	I identify what I do not understand	I check whether I have accomplished my goal in communication
	I think about ways to become a better English learner	I define goals to every English language task	I organize course material	
	I brainstorm words and phrases	I decide about my goal for speaking	I imagine scenes or draw pictures	I regularly check my progress

**Table.6: Reported frequency of metacognitive strategies by males and females, according to levels of metacognitive processing.**

Those ten strategies which were reported at a high frequency level of use across all the students (see table.2, p.59) seem to function as a unit that hold elements reported to be used at the same rates of frequency for all the students. Green and Oxford (1995: 289) explain that these strategies may “contribute significantly to the learning process of the more successful students although not being in themselves sufficient to move the less successful students to higher proficiency levels”.

These basic strategies were reported to different degrees in those strategies reportedly used at higher frequency levels by males and females. Males and females reported using three strategies that matched with these “basic” strategies, with two identical and one different among the two groups. Meanwhile, both males and females reported using other

strategies at higher levels of frequency in addition to these “basic” strategies, which may imply that these strategies may be important but not enough for both groups of students.

Male students reported using five strategies at high frequency levels, two of which belong to the list of ten strategies reported highly frequently across all the students, and three were different from those reported highly frequently by all the students and by females. These three strategies belong to all three sub-groups of metacognitive strategies, with one (item.7) to GMS, two of them (items.14) to MSRLS, and one of them (item.21) to MSPLS. These three strategies reported at high frequency levels by males differently from the ten reported across all the students, in addition to these ten strategies are characterizing male students.

Noticeably, two of these four strategies (items.7, 14) belong to the monitoring level of metacognitive processing (see table.6, above, p.66). This emphasis may reveal an awareness of the importance of monitoring in language learning through testing and checking the progress of the learning process, whether for a specific target in language learning ( item.14), or a general one (item.7) that builds on the whole learning operation. These strategies that are used highly frequently by male students only but not by all the students or female subjects shows that students in general underutilize them.

Female students reported using eight strategies highly frequently (see table.5, p.64), three of which (items.1,2,6) belong to the ten strategies reported highly frequently across all the students. These strategies are divided among the three sub-categories; three of them (items.1,2,6,8) belong to GMS; two to MSRLS (items.13,19,20), and one of them to MSPLS (item.24). Hence, these strategies reported by females in addition to the ten strategies reported highly frequently across all the students seem to characterize female students. These strategies used by female students highly frequently and which are not used by all the students or male students highly frequently characterize female students.

It is interesting to note that these eight strategies reported by females at high frequency levels belong to all four stages of metacognitive processing, unlike those reported by males (see table.6, p.66). Three of these strategies (items.6,13,24) are categorized under reflecting and selecting, which may well suggest the importance and use of this level for females since it helps them to build ideas and conceptions about the task in the target language, before actually starting to work on it. Furthermore, three of these strategies (items.1,2,20) are set under the level of planning, which may indicate an awareness of the value of setting plans for tasks in the target language, to guarantee the well-functioning of learning. This planning may well involve time and effort management to work efficiently and effectively in the light of the set goals.

One of the strategies (item.19) was reported under the monitoring stage, which may be because female students focus on checking the progress reached in approaching reading comprehension tasks, through developing an awareness of the various elements of the reading task. Females, however reported using one strategy highly frequently under the area of evaluating unlike male students, which may reveal their interest in assessing how well they worked on a task in the target language, so that they know their mistakes and try to improve their future performance.

#### **2.3.4. Patterns of Metacognitive Strategies Use across Gender**

The average reported frequency of metacognitive strategies across gender differences revealed that overall females scored higher than males, in terms of quantity and quality of the strategies used. Females reported using eight strategies at high frequency levels from all the sub-groups of strategies, with six strategies matching with those reported across all the students (see table.5, p.64). Males, however, reported using only five strategies highly frequently, and only two of them matched with those ten strategies used at high frequency rates across all the students.

Among the eight strategies reported to be used highly frequently by females (items 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 18, 20, 25), six strategies (items 1, 2, 3, 6, 18, 25) matched with the ten strategies reported across all the students, highly frequently. These strategies involve both “**Core Strategies**” (items 1, 2, 3, 6), since they are used for learning in general to work on any language task, and “**Central Strategies**” (items 18, 25), which are rather devoted to work on specific areas of knowledge. The two left strategies reported highly frequently by females (item.8) which is a GMS, and (item.20) as a MSRLS may be known as “**Extra Strategies**”, as shown in table.7 below:

Type of strategy		MLLSQ	Statements
Core Strategies	GMS	01	I regularly check my progress
		02	I define goals for my learning tasks
		03	I set plans for my learning tasks
		06	I think about ways to become a better English learner
Central Strategies	MSRLS	18	I identify what I do not understand while reading
	MSPLS	25	I check whether i have accomplished my goal in communication
Extra Strategies	GMS	08	I ask myself questions about issues learned
	MSRLS	20	I think about important information for the listener

**Table.7: Patterns of metacognitive strategies use by female students.**

Extra strategies (items 8, 20) were not reported to be used highly frequently across all the students, as well as across male students. These strategies are belonging to the sub-group of GMS and MSRLS, accordingly. On the one hand, item.8 is a general metacognitive strategy which involve female students in a self-questioning process about issues they learned in the classroom, to check whether they find them convincing. This self-questioning process can actually take place outside the classroom through a metacognitive revising process to improve comprehension. The use of this strategy reflect

female students’ awareness about the need for building personal comprehension through questioning the information learned.

On the other hand, item.20 is a metacognitive strategy for the receptive learning skill of reading, in which females look for opportunities to read in English. This strategy entails the interest of females in both intensive and extensive reading, which reveals their reading purposefulness, and their awareness of the importance of reading to elaborate their reading fluency and language proficiency. Consequently, these two strategies (items 8, 20) are extra strategies that are characterizing female students.

Across male students, five strategies were reported to be used highly frequently (items 2, 6, 7, 14, 21), with two strategies only (items 2, 6) matching with those reported highly frequently across all the students, forming “**Core Strategies**”. Remarkably, no strategies were reported to match with the pattern of “Central Strategies”, instead three strategies (items 7, 14, 21) reported to be used highly frequently by males were “**Extra Strategies**” as shown in table.8 below:

Type of strategy		MLLSQ	Statements
Core Strategies	GMS	02	I set plans for my learning tasks and work according to these plans
		06	I think about possible ways to become a better English learner
Extra Strategies	GMS	07	I notice my mistakes and use that information to help me do better
	MSRLS	14	While listening, I periodically check whether the information is making sense to me
	MSPLS	21	I decide about my goal for speaking by thinking about what I want to communicate

**Table.8: Patterns of metacognitive strategies use by male students.**

Hence, while those two “**Core strategies**” (items 2, 6) are used for learning situations in general, “**Extra Strategies**” (items 7, 14, 21) are situation specific strategies, used to apply certain tasks occasionally. Item.7 is a GMS used by males through the stage of

revising and evaluating (self-evaluation) to look closer into their mistakes while learning, so that they avoid repeating them upon future task performance.

Moreover, item.14 is a MSRLS in which male students make flashbacks while listening to link the information, so as to form comprehensive wholes. This is also included under metacognitive revising, since one thinking is carried about the task while it is carried. Concerning item.21 which is a metacognitive strategy for speaking, male students reported using it highly frequently when approaching speaking tasks. It entails deciding about the goal behind speaking, in respect to the topic of speech, which reveals one of the basic characteristics of LLS; their being action-specific. These “**Extra Strategies**” which are used by males highly frequently, but not across females or across all the students are characterizing male students.

### **2.3.5. Frequency of General Metacognitive Strategies Use and Gender**

As stated earlier, three strategies among those reported to be used highly frequently by male students were GMS (see table.2, p.59). These strategies (items. 2, 6, 7) have to do with setting plans, reflecting upon learning ways, and noticing mistakes. The focus on these strategies may well be interpreted in terms of males’ awareness of the importance of planning their way of approaching tasks, to work in the direction of their set goals. Then, the interest in checking their level in the target language through noticing mistakes and thinking about possible ways to evolve in the language, may stem from male students’ explicitness towards their actions through being aware of their needs in the target language.

Four of those strategies (items. 1, 2, 6, 8) that females reported to use at high frequency levels belong to the sub-group of General Metacognitive Strategies (see table.5, p.64). This may well depend on females’ reliance on their awareness of their high levels of thinking to manage their learning in general with the aim of becoming better language learners. These strategies that include all of defining goals, setting plans, thinking about

better ways for learning the target language, and reflecting upon issues learned are at the heart of metacognitive processing, and may reveal female students' potential for language learning.

### **2.3.6. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Skills Use and Gender**

Remarkably, male students reported using only one strategy (item.14) highly frequently from the sub-group of MSRLS (see table.5, p.64). The strategy (item.14) had to do with listening, in which male students try to monitor their listening comprehension while the listening task is carried. This may well reflect that males consider listening with monitoring a useful metacognitive language learning strategy. This may also indicate an awareness about the information acquired so far in the target language and the possibility to relate them to new ones to build listening comprehension for the task at hand.

Among those eight strategies that were reportedly used highly frequently by female students (see table.5, p.64), three strategies (item.13,19,20) belong to the sub-group of Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Learning Skills (MSRLS), one to the skill of listening (item.13), which may show the value of reflecting in establishing listening comprehension by selecting among the available information and linking its content to previous learned information; and two strategies are reading strategies (item.19,20) that involve female students in researches aimed to improve their reading performance from one hand, and enrich their comprehension of the topics read as well as knowledge in the language from the other hand.

### **2.3.7. Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies for Productive Skills Use and Gender**

For this sub-category of MSPLS, male students reported using only one strategy highly frequently (item.21) which focuses on setting a goal for speaking in the target language (see table.5, p.64). This metacognitive strategy for speaking involves the students in a process of reflection and selection, as well as planning, since their production in

speech depends on their goal and the topic to be communicated. This may well reflect male students' conscious selection and identification of information to satisfy the requirements of the speaking task.

Female students reported using the strategy (item.24) of paying attention when someone speaks English (see table.5, p.64). This strategy is a metacognitive strategy for speaking, which makes the students set their primary metacognitive capacities of paying attention into functioning. The interest in speaking may depend on the overall aim that female students state for learning the language, which may be becoming a fluent speaker. Hence, paying attention to the way other people speak the language may help them develop their own speaking skills. This may well reveal their focus on identifying basic aspects of the language to compare and evolve their speech in the target language.

#### **2.4. Summary of Results and Findings**

In this chapter, interest was directed to examining the frequency of metacognitive learning strategies in learning English as a foreign language among the students in general, with the aim of finding out the overall frequency of use, and across gender differences in particular to investigate whether there exist differences among males and females in the reported frequency of these strategies. The results obtained indicates that students reported using metacognitive learning strategies at high levels of frequency, with a general tendency towards some strategies more than others; these reported strategies to be used highly frequently were not of one type, but were varied in terms of quality among the sub-groups of strategies.

Moreover, the study reveals that, overall, the frequent use of a large number of metacognitive learning strategies is reported by female students. Within these findings, it is necessary to note that, it is possible that overall reported frequency (quantity) may be important, but also is the quality of the strategies chosen, since some strategies appear to

be typical of male or female students. Patterns of strategy use across all the learners have shown that the learners used “Core Strategies” and “Basic Strategies” the most in their high frequently reported strategies. Besides, patterns of strategy use in terms of gender have revealed that both males and females use strategies from the pattern of strategies used highly frequently across all the students, with some “Extra Strategies” that characterize every group.

These results may require some extra efforts from the learners in terms of quantity to enlarge their repertoire of using metacognitive strategies, and in terms of the quality of the strategies used, by choosing more specific metacognitive learning strategies to satisfy the needs of each stage of metacognitive processing. Female students scored higher than males in the overall reported frequency of metacognitive strategies, as well as across the sub-groups of strategies across the questionnaire.

Although not highly significant a difference in strategy use, it was found that females use metacognitive strategies more than males. This difference may be well found to be more significant qualitatively speaking, by means of the difference in the quality of the strategies that were reported at high frequency levels. In fact, males and females differed in the quality of strategies chosen to be rated highly frequently, which implies that it is not the frequency of the strategies only that may draw the difference between males and females, but rather the quality of the strategies reported, as will be shown in the second part of the study.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the frequency of metacognitive language learning strategies use. Focus was directed to the overall reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use firstly, across all the students, and then across gender differences. It was found that the students use metacognitive strategies at high rates of

frequency. Moreover, it was also discovered that there exist differences in terms of gender in the use of these strategies, with females reporting a high frequency of use in comparison to males. The difference was not simply found in the number of strategies used, but also in the range of metacognitive strategies employed by every group, with females reporting to use numerous and varied metacognitive strategies, in comparison to males.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

---

## **METACOGNTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES USE AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**





Student profile 7: Omar .....	97
Student profile 8: Mounia .....	98
Student profile 9: Karima .....	99
Student profile 10: Linda .....	100
Student profile 11: Kadour .....	101
Student profile 12: Massoud .....	102
<b>3.4. Discussion of the Results .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>3.5. The Difference in the Key Strategies in terms of Gender .....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>3.6. Relationship between metacognitive Strategies Use and Success in Language</b>	
<b>Learning .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>3.7. Summary of Results and Findings .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>125</b>

## **Introduction**

Learning strategies are not isolated devices, or functioning in isolation of other learning elements and constructs. They reflect various elements interacting at the same time, to result in the effective performance of the task at hand. Being used to accomplish tasks in the target language, or to deal with new situations, Learning strategies are holding the intention of the learner and his/her purpose when they are used (Macaro, 2004). The focus of this chapter is qualitative in essence, in order to investigate the relationship between the use of metacognitive language learning strategies and the individual student, in terms of gender differences and learning achievement. The chapter begins by identifying methodological issues, through presenting a rationale, as well as the qualitative design followed. Then it introduces the profiles of the interviewees and a summary of the results. Finally, the chapter discusses the results found in the light of the interviewees' gender and achievement, in their relationship to metacognitive strategy use.

### **3.1. Rationale**

Language learners are more than animated columns of statistics in researches or studies. They represent variations in various terms, and unique ways of approaching their language learning as Horwitz (1999: 112) puts it: "language learners are individuals approaching language learning in their own unique way". This suggests that there is an individuality to respect and a method to consider when researching themes of relation to areas in language learning. The researcher has to consider also the contradictions that researches about the same theme in a given field of research might find, because the difference can result from the fact that the learners studied are indeed different individuals.

For this reason, the need to use a multi-method of data collection becomes more than a necessity, in order to achieve a rounded perspective by approaching the questions from as many perspectives as possible (White, 1993, as cited in Griffiths, 2003a). Hence, with the aim of

reinforcing the results obtained within the quantitative questionnaire data and to illustrate the findings, it was decided to use a complementary qualitative data collection method.

One of the main techniques that researchers use to find out about the complexities of learners as individuals is the interview. The use of the interview in research marks a move away from considering learners as data and statistics, towards seeing them as individuals characterized by their unique structure. More than this, the interview gives a chance to the participants (being interviewer or interviewee) to exchange ideas about a certain area and how they view given situations from their own points of view.

As a research tool, the interview is used for many purposes depending on the needs of the research; for example, it may be used for evaluating a person in some respect, or to test and develop hypotheses, or to gather data, as in surveys or experimental cases. For this study, the purpose behind using the interview is to add a qualitative dimension to the quantitative data obtained so far from the questionnaire, which is important to “capture the richness of learners’ construction” (Oxford, 2001: 94).

The importance of using interviews is further emphasized by Green and Oxford (1996: 293) who insisted that using a variation of techniques results in insights “that are at once broadly applicable and rich in observed detail”. Consequently, governed by the fact that they deal with real learners, the interview can help to set the “depersonalized statistics” into a context (Griffiths, 2003a: 110). This also emphasizes the view of Nunan (2000: 8) that “we can learn a great deal from listening to our learners”.

Qualitative research is linked to in-depth exploratory studies where the opportunity for quality responses exist. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) maintained that qualitative research involves studying ‘things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (as cited in Denkin, 1994: 33) Researchers who use qualitative methods seek a deeper truth. They aim to "study things in their

natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”, as Black (1994: 49) explained ,and they use “a holistic perspective which preserves the complexities of human behavior” (Denkin, 1994: 36).

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research set in the form of interviews aims at describing the meaning of basic themes in the life of the subjects, as well as covering factual data. What does the expression ‘qualitative research’ mean? Shank (2002, as cited in Green and Thorogood, 2004 ) has defined qualitative research as the investigation carried about processes or behaviors as natural phenomena happening in their natural settings, through which the interviewer tries to interpret the studied phenomena and the meanings attributed to them by the interviewees. As a result, the main focus of qualitative research is interpreting and understanding things in their context.

The central task of interviews is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale,1996, as cited in Black, 1994). Moreover, the interview is particularly useful for gathering the necessary elements of the story behind the interviewee’s experience. This technique is helpful because it allows too much space for the interviewer to pursue in-depth information around the theme, that is why, they function as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, in order to further explore their responses. (McNamara,1999, as cited in Singh, 2006)

The interview is the most widely used method of producing data in qualitative research. In essence, an interview is a conversation that is directed, more or less, towards the researcher’s particular needs for data (Green and Thorogood, 2004: 80-81). As Blaster, Hughes, & Tight (2006: 172) defines it: “The interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. It can be a very useful technique for collecting data which would likely not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires”. As a result, the interview is an attractive suggestion for researchers.

Though it looks like a simple conversation, the interview is actually something more than being a simple conversation. It is a set of assumptions and understandings about a certain area, which differs from the elements of a casual conversation (Denscombe, 2007). In other words, the interview is a method of collecting data that can be used as such, or connected to other research methods as a follow-up process. That is why; the interviews should never be random, instead the researcher has to invest the necessary time to make them workable. (Swetnam, 2004)

The interview is a widely used tool to access people's experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of reality, in which the interviewer works directly with the respondent, and that is what makes them a far more personal form of research than questionnaires. Hence, language is central in interviews, being the most common form of data that researchers produce, first orally, then written as transcriptions or reports presenting qualitative data. How far the researcher directs the interview, through specifying the topics investigated and the way they ought to be approached, is one perspective by which research interviews could be categorized (Green and Thorogood, 2004: 81).

This reflects the same division of interviews if based on their degree of structuring, since Nunan (1992) divided interviews into three categories: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Structured interview is the interview that is formed of a set of predefined questions, which would be asked in the same way and order for all the interviewees. This category is used to minimize the effect of both the instrument and the interviewer's intrusion to the research results. In reality, the structured interview is similar to the questionnaire except that it is administered orally rather than writing.

Semi-structured interview stands in between in terms of the flexibility of the interview process. The interviewer prepares predefined questions characterized by being more open-ended compared to the question in the structured interview. Yet, in the course of the interview, the interviewer have enough room for adjusting certain questions, or adding others depending on the needs of his/her topic, and the orientation of the conversation. The final category, unstructured interview is defined as an interview in which neither the question nor the answer categories are

predetermined; it relies on the social interaction between the interviewer and the respondent to elicit information. (Fontana and Frey, 2005)

The most popular form of semi-structured interview is the one-to-one formula which is built on the meeting between one researcher and one respondent. This popularity stems from the fact that it is relatively easy to arrange. Moreover, the opinions and information expressed originate from only one source: the informant. This certainly helps the interviewer to locate specific data with specific people. There is also to consider that the one-to-one interview is easy to control, because the interviewer works with one person at a time, which means that there is one person's ideas to question and grasp, and one interviewee to guide throughout the interview. The one-to-one interview is also practical in terms of interview transcription, because it is far easier to transcribe a recorded interview when the talk is about only one interviewee. (Denscombe, 2007)

The interview technique has been used successfully by many researchers in the field of language learning strategies, including O'Malley .et al (1985: 35) who claim that "generally we had considerable success in identifying learning strategies through interviews". in fact, interviews are completed by the interviewer depending on the responses presented by the interviewee. Hence, in the area of language learning strategies, interviews are maintained as a useful technique to obtain the necessary data, as Wenden (1991: 76) points out: "the best way to get at what strategies learners actually use as they go about their learning tasks is to ask them".

For the sake of the present study, the semi-structured interview was selected as the most suitable because of its flexibility, and the large amount of data that such category of interviews can supplement (Griffiths, 2003a). As Denscombe (2007: 176) explains:

. . .with the semi-structured interview the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. The answers are open-ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest.

According to Gillham (2001: 65, as cited in Green and Thorogood, 2004), the semi-structured interview is “the richest single source of data”. Using the interview is aimed at bringing a human, qualitative touch to the quantitative data gathered using the questionnaire, through collecting more in-depth information to amplify questionnaire responses (Burton and Steane, 2004). This was reinforced by the interaction created within the interviewees, instead of clinical distance that the situation may impose sometimes.

Interviews were recorded using audio tapes as was planned, and taking notes while the interviews were carried. As Green and Thorogood (2004) asserts, it is a useful activity to compare handwritten notes of an interview with a transcript of a tape of the same interview. Recording through an audio-tape is more practical, because most researchers find that through the use of notes taken by hand, they may lose or miss key issues or quote phrases in the interview which were not said by the interviewee, or even mistake their own utterances for those of the interviewee.

Hence, an audio-tape which is accurately transcribed is “most reliable record of an interview” (Green and Thorogood, 2004: 100). In order to test the quality of the audio-taped interviews, the interview was piloted on few students just to ensure the good quality of the tapes from one hand, and check whether the interviewees are going to respond naturally to the idea of being recorded, from the other hand. As Sapsford and Jupp (2006: 103) suggest:

An important purpose of a pilot is to devise a set of codes or response categories for each question which will cover, as comprehensively as possible, the full range of responses which may be given in reply to the question in the main investigation. For this to work effectively, the pilot sample must be representative of the variety of individuals which the main study is intended to cover.

Thus, the positive results obtained both concerning the quality of interviews, and the interviewees’ reaction, encouraged us to make audio tapes of the interviews. The data gathered was later examined for strategy patterns, for links with other parts of the study, and for new understandings.

## **3.2. Method**

### **3.2.1. The participants**

From the population of third year students of English at Farhat Abbas University, 20 students were selected to be interviewed. The interviews took place after the phase of the Metacognitive Language Learning strategies Questionnaire has been completed, so that these selected students did not participate in the initial questionnaire. The interviewees were purposively selected to be as representative as possible of the learner variable included in the study in terms of gender, in addition to the element of the success or otherwise they achieved during their courses (information obtained from their class teachers and from the exam results). Patton (1990) explains that the overall aim of purposive, as opposed to probability sampling is to involve 'information-rich cases for in-depth study' (Patton 1990: 182). Accordingly, the interview phase of the study was ended when the 20<sup>th</sup> interview was completed, on May, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

### **3.2.2. Materials**

In the first part of the study, the MLLSQ was used to account for the overall reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use across all the students, as well as the differences possible to be existent between males and females. In this part, the MLLSQ is used in parallel with the interview guide to verify the results achieved so far quantitatively speaking in terms of gender at the individual level. Moreover, more focus is set on examining the relation between strategy use, gender, and achievement in language learning. Hence, the scores of the interviewees in some modules and overall averages were gathered.

#### **3.2.2.1. The Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was used as the main instrument to collect information about the interviewed students' reported frequency of using metacognitive language learning strategies, in respect to the three sub-groups of the questionnaire, and to stimulate the students' ideas concerning the use of metacognitive language learning strategies. (see Materials, chapter 3, for further details).

### **3.2.2.2. Interview instructions**

The guide of the interview contained five central questions (concerning key strategies, difficulties in English learning, good aspects of English learning, apprehension of new strategies, and the effect of gender on the use of strategies). These questions were designed with the aim of further exploring the students' strategy use, and investigating some of the interfering factors in metacognitive strategy use. The interview guide (see. Appendix.2 for details) was designed to add a qualitative dimension stated mainly in the form of ideas, opinions, beliefs or reactions, to the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire.

As the interview was going, the interviewer asked the questions to the student, and was at the same time recording the answers through an audio tape and taking notes so that the student will not feel perplexed, and these notes with the tapes will be used for later analysis. The students were encouraged to elaborate and expand their responses through illustrating and explaining their personal views, all of which was fully noted and taped by the interviewer.

### **3.2.2.3. Scores**

The scores of the students are further collected to examine if there exist a relation between the students' achievement in language learning and their strategy use, in terms of their responses to the questionnaire and the interview. Hence, the scores of the students interviewed in the modules of oral expression, British literature, and their overall averages in the first term exam were collected. The choice of oral expression module stemmed from its focus on listening and speaking skills and their integration to fulfill learning tasks. Moreover, the choice of British literature module originated from the fact that it focuses on reading and writing skills the most to accomplish learning tasks. All of these skills were also treated in the MLLSQ through its sub-sections with the aim of discovering the relation of strategy use to achievement in language learning.

### **3.2.3. Data collection procedures**

After completing the Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire (MLLSQ), the 20 students selected (from the whole population, see p.77 for details) for interviewing were

invited to a semi-structured interview which lasted about one hour and a half, during which time all the provided answers and insights were audio-taped. It is worth noting that the students were not rewarded materially in any way to guarantee their agreeing to participate. Indeed, they all welcomed the idea of being interviewed and showed a great will to do so, perhaps because they viewed the occasion as an opportunity for interacting in English.

During the interview, the students' answers provided to the MLLSQ were discussed, through asking them about the strategies they found the most useful to learn English, the difficulties they faced while learning the language, and the strategies they used to help them overcome these difficulties, and in contrast, students were also asked about the activities they enjoy while learning and the strategies they use to help them improve their level in these activities. Moreover, the students were asked about any improvements in strategy quantity and quality due to the effect of English learning, and whether they thought that their individual characteristics have an impact on their strategy choice and use. All the resulting insights were taped and noted.

#### **3.2.4. Data analysis procedures**

After completing the interviews and transforming them from recorder audio tapes into a written transcript, the analysis phase started to probe useful ideas about metacognitive strategies use and twelve were chosen for closer study. These twelve students were selected to respect the variables of gender and success or otherwise obtained results during their courses; this included both success in general over the whole term, and their performance on two main modules being oral expression in which the focus is more on Listening and Speaking skills, and British Literature module which focuses on reading and writing language skills.

The aim from including these two modules was to integrate both skills within the notion of strategy use, respecting the construction of the MLLSQ. Another basis for selecting these twelve interviewees stemmed from the quality of information provided during their interviews, and the extent to which these information added new insights to previous interviews.

Through the use of the transcript and notes of the interview and the responses reported by the student to the MLLSQ, profiles of the twelve students interviewees were built. Profiles were

used to reduce the data in order to present the interview material, and then analyze and interpret it (Walcott, 1994). In fact reducing data is one of the most difficult steps in the process of analyzing qualitative data, because, inevitably, “it means letting interview material go” (Seidman, 2006: 119).

Crafting the profile of an interviewee’s experience is believed to be an effective way of sharing interview data and opening it for analysis and interpretation. As Seidman suggests, being presented in the informant’s words, the profile allows the interviewer to present the interviewee in context, to clarify the intended meanings, and to imply the importance of both time and process, all of which are considered to be essential elements in qualitative analysis. Indeed, profiles are powerful because they are presented in the interviewee’s words, that is why faithfulness in reporting the words of the informant in the profile is strongly recommended. (Griffiths, 2003a)

Consequently, the learners’ profiles were prepared through making use of the characteristics of the students involving gender and age, as well as the results obtained from the MLLSQ (average reported frequency, number of metacognitive strategies at a high frequency level, number of MSRLS reported highly frequently, and number of MSPLS used highly frequently). Additionally, achievement in terms of the rate of success in the first term university exam, and the grades in the two modules of Oral Expression and British Literature were used. Added to these were the learning difficulties, good aspects of English learning, and key strategies considered useful by the students, all of which were employed to construct learners’ profiles.

As a final step, the correlation between the students’ use of metacognitive strategies and their success in English learning was calculated. The correlation between students’ grades obtained in the modules of British literature and oral expression, as well as their general average in the first term exam, and the use of metacognitive learning strategies was calculated. The correlation technique is defined by Coolican (1994: 293) as:

Correlation is the measurement of the extent to which pairs of related values on two variables tend to change together. It also gives a measure of the extent to which values on one variable can be predicted from values on the other variable.

Hence, when used as a technique or method of research, correlation intends to check whether there exists a relationship between two variables. If a relation is proved to be existent, then correlation techniques try to specify the direction of this relationship and its magnitude (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

### 3.4. The Profiles of Students and Résumé of Results

#### Student profile 1: Soumia

##### **Learner characteristics**

Gender: female                      Age : 21

##### **MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      4.0

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 14

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 6

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 3

Average obtained in the first term exam: 14.85

Oral expression grade: 15                                      British literature grade: 16.5

**Learning difficulties:** Understanding the spoken language

**Good aspect of English learning:** Reading

##### **Key strategies:**

- ❖ Putting effective plans according to tasks
- ❖ Seeking other people’s evaluation
- ❖ Listening to conversations and songs in English

##### **New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to tapes and records
- ❖ Watching movies and programs in English

##### **Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ females revise their lectures more than males
- ❖ Females read more than males

**Student profile 2: Raouf****Learner characteristics**

Gender: male                      Age : 21

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:              3.8

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 14

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 6

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 3

Average obtained in the first term exam: 11.31

Oral expression grade: 12                      British literature grade: 08

**Learning difficulties:** Pronunciation

**Good aspect of English learning:** Writing

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Positive attitude towards tasks
- ❖ Considering the audience for both speaking and writing tasks
- ❖ listening to broadcasts for listening practice
- ❖ Preparing short summaries of read material
- ❖ Asking for help

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ summarizing written documents

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Males use audio and visual aids more than females
- ❖ Males interact with native speakers more than females

**Student profile 3: Salim****Learner characteristics**

Gender: male                      Age : 21

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      3.9

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 15

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 6

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 3

Average obtained in the first term exam: 12.57

Oral expression grade: 13                      British literature grade: 8.5

**Learning difficulties:** Pronunciation

**Good aspect of English learning:** Reading and writing

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Self-reliance in understanding
- ❖ Listening to tapes
- ❖ Reading the material many times for more comprehension
- ❖ Revising lessons
- ❖ Linking items in terms of order

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to tapes of native speakers for speaking practice

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Males organize their learning better than females

**Student profile 4: Houda****Learner characteristics**

Gender: female                      Age : 21

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      4.3

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 16

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 7

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 4

Average obtained in the first term exam: 13.64

Oral expression grade: 13                      British literature grade: 15

**Learning difficulties:** vocabulary

**Good aspect of English learning:** Reading                      speaking

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Self-questioning the theme
- ❖ Thinking of many ways to solve tasks
- ❖ Summarizing to get key information
- ❖ Role play through imitating the teacher
- ❖ Reading small books
- ❖ Asking for help
- ❖ Reflecting on previous information

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Specifying purposes for every learning task
- ❖ Using more varied sources to obtain information

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Females are more attentive than males



### Student profile 6 : Lamia

#### **Learner characteristics**

Gender: female                      Age : 21

#### **MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      4.2

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 18

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 6

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 7

Average obtained in the first term exam: 12.95

Oral expression grade: 13                      British literature grade: 8.5

**Learning difficulties:** Vocabulary

**Good aspect of English learning:** Speaking

#### **Key strategies:**

- ❖ Selecting appropriate information for tasks
- ❖ Use a schedule to organize time
- ❖ Defining the purpose for learning
- ❖ Revising lectures in form of story telling
- ❖ Asking for help

#### **New strategies learned:**

- ❖ listening to music and tapes in English

#### **Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ females focus on revising their lectures
- ❖ females read a lot in English

### Student profile 7: Omar

#### **Learner characteristics**

Gender: male                      Age : 23

#### **MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      3.2

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 7

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 1

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 1

Average obtained in the first term exam: 7.33

Oral expression grade: 13                      British literature grade: 04

**Learning difficulties:** Phonetics

**Good aspect of English learning:** Speaking

#### **Key strategies:**

- ❖ Asking for help
- ❖ Writing the read material in personal words
- ❖ Repetition
- ❖ Comparing works with others for evaluation
- ❖ Talking to native speakers
- ❖ Reading books
- ❖ Using dictionaries
- ❖ Self-evaluation

#### **New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Talking to native speakers
- ❖ Reading in English

#### **Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Males prefer to understand more than learning by heart

**Student profile 8: Mounia****Learner characteristics**

Gender: female                      Age : 22

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      3.2

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 9

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 2

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 4

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 3

Average obtained in the first term exam: 8.55

Oral expression grade: 12                      British literature grade: 4.5

**Learning difficulties:** Vocabulary

**Good aspect of English learning:** Writing

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Asking questions
- ❖ Searching for resources
- ❖ Management of self-confidence consciously

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to tapes in English
- ❖ Watching movies

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Females attend their lectures always
- ❖ Females learn by heart while revising

**Student profile 9: Karima****Learner characteristics**

Gender: female                      Age : 21

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      3.5

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 14

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”:    3

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”:    8

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”:    3

Average obtained in the first term exam: 5.77

Oral expression grade: 5.5

British literature grade: 09

**Learning difficulties:** Vocabulary

**Good aspect of English learning:** Learning vocabulary

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Asking for help
- ❖ Watching movies for listening practice

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to tapes to practice English
- ❖ Watching movies

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Writing diaries in English

**Student profile 10: Linda****Learner characteristics**

Gender: female                      Age : 21

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      3.1

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”:    9

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”:        5

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”:     3

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”:     1

Average obtained in the first term exam: 5.22

Oral expression grade: 11                                      British literature grade: 1.25

**Learning difficulties:** Writing

**Good aspect of English learning:** Speaking

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Using the dictionary
- ❖ Asking for others' evaluation
- ❖ Asking for help
- ❖ Working with a group
- ❖ Understanding the lecture's main points

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to tapes and music in English
- ❖ Making short summaries of read books

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Females read more than males
- ❖ Females use English amongst them more than males

**Student profile 11: Kadour****Learner characteristics**

Gender: male                      Age : 23

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      2.9

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”: 2

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 2

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 1

Average obtained in the first term exam: 4.85

Oral expression grade: 05                      British literature grade: 01

**Learning difficulties:**

- ❖ Writing
- ❖ Understanding spoken English

**Good aspect of English learning:** Speaking

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Repetition

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to tapes and music

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Males do not revise their lectures as much as females

**Student profile 12: Massoud****Learner characteristics**

Gender: male                      Age : 24

**MLLSQ results:**

Average reported frequency of use:                      2.8

Number of strategies reported to be used “always”: 5

Number of GMLS reported to be used “always”:    2

Number of MSRLS reported to be used “always”: 2

Number of MSPLS reported to be used “always”: 1

Average obtained in the first term exam: 4.55

Oral expression grade: 09                                      British literature grade: 03

**Learning difficulties:** speaking

**Good aspect of English learning:** speaking

**Key strategies:**

- ❖ Using the dictionary
- ❖ Learning from native speakers

**New strategies learned:**

- ❖ Listening to records and songs in English

**Effect of Gender on the use of strategies:**

- ❖ Males do not read a lot
- ❖ Males do not learn by heart

The results of the MLLSQ of the twelve selected interviewees are set in table.9 below, in order to make the process of comparing the results of each interviewee with the other an easier one. Items that rated 5 are emphasized through shading them.

Those strategies that were used highly frequently across all the students (average=3.5 or above) are marked through shading them.

Those strategies reported to be used highly frequently by males are marked with “M”, and those strategies used by females at high rates of frequency are marked with “F”.

The bottom of the table summarizes data about all of these statistics:

**Av:** average reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use

**NS:** number of strategies that rated (5, “always”)

**NGMS:** number of general metacognitive strategies that rated (5, “always”)

**NMSRS:** number of metacognitive strategies for receptive skills that rated (5, “always”)

**NMSPS:** number of metacognitive strategies for productive skills that rated (5, “always”)

**Orl.Exp ACH:** Oral expression achievement

**Brit.Lit ACH:** British literature achievement

**ACH:** Overall achievement in English learning.

<i>MLLSQ</i>	<i>Soumia</i>	<i>Raouf</i>	<i>Salim</i>	<i>Houda</i>	<i>Kadour</i>	<i>Mounia</i>	<i>Omar</i>	<i>Karima</i>	<i>Elwalid</i>	<i>Lamia</i>	<i>Linda</i>	<i>Massoud</i>
1 *F	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	5	5	3
2 *F M	5	5	1	5	2	3	4	5	5	5	3	1
3 *	4	1	3	3	5	3	2	1	2	3	5	2
4	5	2	5	2	4	3	2	3	5	2	5	3
5 *	2	5	5	5	1	1	3	2	3	5	2	1
6 *F M	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
7 M	5	5	5	4	1	2	2	5	5	5	1	3
8 F	4	5	3	5	3	5	5	2	5	5	5	5
9	5	3	5	5	4	3	3	3	5	5	3	3
10	5	5	2	5	2	5	5	5	3	3	2	2
11	3	3	5	5	1	5	5	5	2	5	1	1
12 *	3	5	4	4	5	2	3	5	5	3	5	3
13 F	5	1	3	5	1	1	4	2	5	5	5	2
14 M	3	5	5	5	5	4	2	5	4	5	2	5
15	5	1	5	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	3	2
16	5	5	3	4	3	1	5	5	5	2	1	3
17 *	5	3	5	5	2	1	5	5	5	3	5	2
18 *	4	4	3	3	4	3	2	2	4	3	3	5
19 F	5	5	5	5	3	5	3	1	4	5	3	2
20 F	4	5	5	3	2	5	1	5	5	5	4	2
21 M	2	4	4	5	3	3	2	2	4	5	2	4
22	5	5	5	5	4	2	4	5	5	5	3	1
23 *	3	3	5	4	1	5	2	3	4	5	1	4
24 F	4	5	3	5	4	2	3	5	5	5	5	2
25 *	5	4	5	3	2	3	3	1	3	5	3	3
26	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	2	5
27	5	2	3	4	2	5	3	3	4	4	1	2
28	3	2	2	4	3	4	1	3	3	3	3	4
29	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	2	2	3	4	2
30	4	3	2	4	4	1	4	2	2	4	3	3
<b>Av</b>	4.0	3.8	3.9	4.3	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.5	4.1	4.2	3.1	2.8
<b>NS</b>	14	14	15	16	5	9	7	14	15	18	9	5
<b>NMS</b>	5	5	5	5	2	2	1	3	6	5	5	2
<b>NMSRS</b>	6	6	6	7	2	4	5	8	6	6	3	2
<b>NMSPS</b>	3	3	3	4	1	3	1	3	3	7	1	1
<b>Orl.Exp ACH</b>	16	14	14.5	12.5	5.5	11	12	05	17	14.5	9.5	09
<b>Brit.Lit. ACH</b>	15.5	08	8.5	16	01	4.5	04	5.5	10	8.5	1.25	03
<b>ACH</b>	14.85	11.31	12.57	13.64	4.85	8.55	7.33	5.77	10.26	11.95	5.22	4.55

**Table.9: Reported frequency ratings of metacognitive language learning strategies use (MLLSQ) by interviewees 1-12 with achievement.**

### 3.5. Discussion of the Results

With the aim of supporting and reinforcing the findings of the first part of the study obtained using the questionnaire, the analysis of the interviews will reveal how individual students both males and females report to use metacognitive language learning strategies (see table.9 above), and the way it is linked to their success in language learning. Soumia, for example, who got an average of 14.85 in her first term university exam reported using many metacognitive language learning strategies at high frequency levels, and added some strategies that she frequently used. Soumia had chosen to pursue her university studies in English language because she believes that “*English is a dominating language*”. Soumia reported using metacognitive strategies highly frequently, in accordance with her results of the MLLSQ (average= 4.0), with 14 strategies reported to be used “always”.

Among these 14 strategies rating 5, Soumia reported using 4 strategies (items 2, 6, 17, 25) from the 10 strategies reported to be used highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 4 strategies (items. 2, 6, 13, 19) from those reported to be used at high frequency levels by female students (see table.5, p.64). From the group of 4 strategies which belong to the 10 strategies of all the students, reported to be used highly frequently by Soumia, 2 strategies are related to the sub-group of GMS (items 2, 6), one(item.17) to MSRLS, and one (item.25) to MSPLS. As for the strategies that were used with rate 5, and matched with those used by females at high frequency levels, Soumia reported using 2 strategies (items 2, 6) from GMS, and 2 (items. 13, 19) from MSRLS, while no strategy was reported from MSPLS.

During the interview, Soumia said that she liked English because it has an attractive pronunciation, and that she found difficulties in understanding native speakers while listening to them, that is why she did not consider herself to be good for an English speaker. Consequently, Soumia had found that listening to conversations and songs in English is a key strategy to develop her listening and speaking skills, an area in which she lacked self-confidence.

She also focused on reading as a receptive skill out of which she would enrich her knowledge in English. Soumia also reflected a good practice of planning through the rates shed gave to item 2: “I set plans for my learning tasks and work according to these plans”. Moreover, she kept thinking about workable ways to improve her English, as maintained from the high frequency rating of item 6. As for the new strategies she learnt while studying English, Soumia said that she learned strategies of relation to listening, through the use of tapes and records for listening practice, as well as watching movies or programs in English for both speaking and listening practice.

Soumia also thinks that her being a female affected her general tendencies for using learning strategies, because she focuses on revising her lectures, and trying to look for opportunities to read in the target language. These strategies she believe, are used by females more than males. Being a successful student in view of her achievement, it is difficult to judge whether her use of these strategies is behind her effective language learning, or her being a successful language learner is giving her the necessary confidence for effective strategy use.

Although his university average is not as high as Soumia’s high average, Raouf reported using a good number of strategies highly frequently. He reported using 14 strategies in the MLLSQ at high frequency levels just like Soumia, although the strategies reported differed in quality. Raouf had decided to go for a university carrier in this language, because of his belief that English “*is the first means of communication in the world*”. Among the 14 strategies reported to be used highly frequently by Raouf, 4 strategies (items. 2, 5, 6, 12) were among those ten reported to have a high frequency of use across all the students (see table.2, p.59). Three of these 4 strategies (items. 2, 5, 6) belong to the sub-group of GMS, and one (item.12) to MSRLS. Raouf had also reported using 4 strategies (items. 2, 6, 7, 14) from those reported to be used highly frequently across male students (see table.5, p.64), three of which (items.2, 6, 7) are GMS, and one (item.14) is a metacognitive strategy for receptive learning skills.

In his interview, Raouf said that the major problem he faces while learning English is pronunciation. He thought that he is not a good language learner, because he is a foreign language learner. As a result, a key strategy for Raouf is listening to English broadcasts for listening practice, to develop his receptive listening skill, and his ability to pronounce well, within. Raouf had also stated using another strategy regarding both speaking and writing tasks, which is to prepare them in respect to the audience that will receive them. More than this, he said that he always approaches his learning tasks with a positive attitude, which reflected a high level of self-confidence and determination for learning. This is well supported by the fact that (items.12, 14) that were reported to be used highly frequently by Raouf are metacognitive listening strategies.

Additionally, Raouf had shown a great interest in reading through making short summaries of whatever material read, with an extra advantage strategy of asking other people's help if needed. Indeed, this latter strategy implies a sociable learner who employs the learning environment to develop his language ability. Noticeably, all of these strategies used by Raouf were working under a certain methodology, which Raouf had stated in terms of planning(item.2), reflection (item.6), and classifying (items.5, 7). Raouf confirmed that the new strategy he learned while studying English is the strategy of summarizing. He stated that he did not make use of this strategy at high school, because he did not recognize its importance, but through continuous contact with writing and reading skills, he learned how to use this strategy effectively.

He also maintained that his being a male interferes in the types of strategies used, indicating that he makes use of visual aids and audio tapes a lot for more practice of the language. More than this, Raouf said that he also prefers to get the language pure from its native sources by talking to native speakers, which is not often the case for females. These metacognitive strategies in addition to those key strategies that Raouf had reported to use, suggest the headlines for a competent student. As a result, Raouf is a good student (a statement achieved from his teachers)

with an average of 11.31, which may be explained by the numerous and various set of strategies he engages for learning.

Another interviewee was Salim who got a good average of 3.9 for the use of strategies on the MLLSQ, as well as 15 strategies reported to be used highly frequently. For this student, English was chosen for university studies because he has such a great affection for this language, yet, no difficulties were escapable, since the problem of pronunciation is his main difficulty while learning. Salim reported using 15 strategies that rated 5, out of which 5 strategies (items. 5, 6, 17, 23, 25) were among those ten reported at high frequency use across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 3 strategies (items.6, 7, 14) from those reported at high frequency use across males (see table.5, p.64). Moreover, he reported using some key strategies that were not used by the other interviewees. For instance, he said that he used his own strategies to understand tasks without asking others, which indicates his high degree of self-confidence.

To develop his speaking and listening skills, Salim reported using the key strategy of “listening to tapes”, which was further supported by the fact that 3 strategies (items. 14, 23, 25) that rated 5, were metacognitive strategies for listening and speaking skills. Additionally, for his reading tasks, Salim said that he relied on reading the material several times to better understand its ideas. This was reinforced by the strategy of linking items in terms of order whether for reading tasks, or different learning tasks, which matched with 2 strategies (items. 5, 7) used highly frequently across the MLLSQ, being strategies meant more for classifying and organizing learning.

Furthermore, Salim indicated a considerable care for his learning, through continuous revising of his lectures. Concerning the new strategies learned, this interviewee said that he learned to use the strategy of listening to tapes in order to practice them and improve his speaking skill. He also maintained that the main point that makes him as a male select different strategies from those of females is the fact that he likes to organize his learning in every way possible. With an average of 12.57, during his first term university exam, it may be possible that

using the stated various set of metacognitive strategies and key strategies are behind the results Salim had achieved in English learning.

Among the twelve interviewees, Houda had the highest average for reported frequency of strategy use (average=4.3), and a high number of metacognitive strategies that rated 5. She reported using 16 strategies “always”, out of which 4 strategies (items. 2, 5, 6, 7) were among those reported at high frequency rates across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 6 strategies (items. 2, 6, 8, 13, 19, 24) among those reported highly frequently across female students (see table.5, p.64). For her explanation of the choosing English for university studies, Houda said that she liked the language under the effect of the good teachers she got at high school. Meanwhile, she claimed that her big problem was vocabulary, since she always faces new words and new meanings.

Houda used key strategies that differed considerably from those of the other interviewees. She stated, for example, that she asked questions about her learning tasks with the aim of understanding the general idea behind them, a strategy which is sustained by using items 5, 8, and 19 at rate 5, since they all include questioning, summarizing and organizing learning tasks. Houda had also said that it was not sufficient for her to use one way to solve tasks all the time, instead she thought of all the possible ways to work on it. This may reveal a high level of reflection about effective ways to work on tasks, in respect to the objectives set. This reflection is also stated through item.6 “I think about possible ways to become a better English learner”, by looking for effective means to evolve in English, and through the key strategy of reflecting on previous information that she stated during her interview.

This interviewee had additionally said that she understood her lectures perfectly through imitating her teachers in the way they taught them, at home. This, she explained, helped her to better remember things instead of learning them by heart. Besides, Houda said that she enjoyed reading in English, basically small books since she found them more useful to learn more words, and for her time schedule to keep balance between her learning in the classroom and outside.

For her new strategies learned while learning English, Houda stated that she basically learned the strategy of identifying every task's purpose for better results, because she thinks that this helps her to do better on them. Besides, she also said that she learned to look for information about what she learns in all available sources. This she said was not the case at high school, where she was focusing on the teacher as the source of everything. As a female, Houda thought of the fact that females pay attention to the lectures presented at the classroom more than do males. Regarding the high average of 13.64 that Houda had obtained in her first term exam, it may be claimed that the range of various metacognitive strategies are greatly indulging in this result.

Like Salim, Elwalid reported using 15 strategies at rate 5. Among these strategies, 4 strategies (items 2, 6, 12, 17) were reported highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 3 strategies (items 2, 6, 7) were among those reported to be used highly frequently across males (see table.5, p.64). Elwalid said that he had chosen English because he liked the language. Yet, he encountered a great difficulty in understanding British English pronunciation. Hence, with the aim of putting an end or minimizing this difficulty, Elwalid decided to use key strategies that had to do with listening, because for him speaking and listening skills were the best thing he liked about English. Elwalid said that he listened to English conversations or broadcasts attentively and with much care for better comprehension, which was maintained also through item 12 "I reflect on what I heard to check my listening comprehension", since it showed an interest in full understanding.

This student had also indicated his care for developing his listening and speaking skills through looking for people to talk in English, and through using special designed programs in the language. This pushed him to focus on grammar and vocabulary textbooks, because they supplement his speaking abilities seeking for both enriching his personal vocabulary, and using the language accurately. More than this, unlike the other interviewees, Elwalid claimed that he used translation, from English to his mother tongue or another language that he knew. This, he

said, helped him for better memorization of words and expressions, as well as general information. Elwalid said that he memorized things better if he learned them on computer screen; a strategy that may reflect his audiovisual learning style.

Furthermore, this interviewee reflected a good care for reading as he said that he liked to read amazing stories, and declared as a response to [item.17](#) “I imagine scenes or draw pictures of what I am reading”, which is a metacognitive strategy for reading. Besides, Elwalid said that the new strategies learned while studying English were linked to listening and speaking the most, through the use of audio and video tapes for listening practice, and talking to native speakers in order to improve his speaking fluency.

Elwalid stated that he used different strategies from those used by females because he preferred to practice the language more than revising the lectures, which he believed helps him to become a better learner. Despite all these strategies reported to be used, Elwalid did not succeed to get a high average in his first term exam like Salim. His 11.26 average may be interpreted by means of his investing too much effort on his communicative abilities, instead of building a good level in formal areas. This implies that creating a balance between the strategies is an important factor in defining good rates of success.

Lamia outnumbered all the interviewees in the reported number of strategies, with 18 strategies used at rate 5 “always”, and with a high average of 4.2. These 18 strategies included 6 strategies (items 1, 2, 5, 6, 23, 25) among those strategies reported highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 8 strategies (items 1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 19, 20, 24) among those reported to be used highly frequently across females (see table.5, p.64). To explain the reason why she chose English for university studies, Lamia said that she simply liked the language, and about her difficulties, she said that she had problems in vocabulary.

Remarkably, Lamia had also stated a different range of strategies to use while learning, just like Houda, Salim, and Elwalid. She said that before approaching tasks, she tried to select the

appropriate information that would facilitate her work on them. Moreover, she pointed out that she always use a schedule to organize her learning time, by devoting each task the required time for its completeness. She had also expressed that she defined purposes for her learning tasks. These two strategies which match with items 1 and 2 in the MLLSQ were not surprisingly reported at rate 5 of frequency. To explain the way in which she approached her lectures, Lamia said that she turned them into short stories and telling them to herself, because this she emphasized, helped her to better understand and memorize the information.

She also revealed an interest in getting the others' help when needed, even if she expressed that she invested all her efforts before coming to this stage. In response to the question about the new strategies she learned to use while studying English, Lamia said that they have to do with listening, through using tapes to practice her listening skill. As for the effect of her being a female on the strategies she used, she said that generally speaking females revise their lectures more than do males, and that females focus on reading more than other skills to develop their language. It is worth noting that these key strategies that Lamia had reported had to do with learning in general, with no focus on skill development. This may reflect that she used these strategies on each learning task, and this may well be behind her good average of 12.95 in the first term exam.

Omar was an ambitious student who sought for opportunities to become a good English learner. Despite the small number of strategies reported to be used highly frequently, and the low average of frequency of 3.2 compared to Raouf and Salim, he stated a number of key strategies that were not remarkably used by the other interviewees. Out of 7 strategies that rated 5, only one strategy (item.17) was among the strategies reported highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and no strategy from those reported highly frequently by males.

Omar said that he had chosen to study English at university because he did not have a choice. He also expressed that his main learning problem in English was phonetics. To face this problem, Omar said that he used the dictionary to check words and the way to pronounce them,

if not he would ask for help from his teachers or friends. Among the key strategies he used, Omar stated that he understood lectures or readings better if he wrote them in his personal words. This means that after understanding the main ideas, he would be able to generate them in his own way.

This interviewee had also expressed his need for repetition while learning since he said that he did not like to write a lot, because he believed that this would facilitate the task of memorizing. Besides, he said that he liked to evaluate his work personally, and then through comparing it to the works of others, being colleagues or friends. Omar also considered speaking as one of the good aspects he liked about English, that is why; he said that he used the strategy of talking to native speakers via internet, to improve his speaking skill. More than this, he also reported reading books as a key strategy, which indeed emphasizes the high frequency of items (15, 16, 17) which are metacognitive strategies for reading at rate 5.

Concerning the new strategies he learned by means of learning English, Omar said that he learned to use the chat rooms to talk to native speakers, because this helped him to improve his English speech and pronunciation. He also stated that he learned to read a lot in English, through reading books, novels, articles, and other reading materials, because it helped him to enrich his vocabulary. Being a male, Omar thought that he focused on understanding the lecture and its main points is the main strategy that most males use, instead of learning by heart which he said was used by females.

Omar, however, got a low average of 7.33 in his first term exam. This may be interpreted by the fact that he did not run for English willingly, so he is not investing all of his capacities, since the basic motif is lacking. It may be also explained in terms of the small number of strategies used at high frequency levels, as well as the quality of these strategies; his key strategies reflect a passive learner who relied on available sources like teachers, dictionaries, , books, the internet, friends, etc, instead of using his own strategies that would develop his weak learning aspects.

Unlike the other interviewees, Mounia found considerable difficulties to understand the questions. She reported using 9 strategies “always”, out of which only one strategy (item.6) belonged to those ten strategies reported to be used highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 4 strategies (items 6, 8, 19, 20) from those reported to be used at high frequency levels by females (see table.5, p.64). To explain why she chose English, Mounia said that she liked this language, and that her central problem was vocabulary.

This interviewee reported using only three key strategies. The first was concerned with asking questions to understand better, which went with item 8 “I ask questions about what I learn in the classroom to decide if you find it convincing”. She also stated that she looked for resources about the tasks to work on, so that the instructions she found would help her do the task successfully. To minimize her anxiety and low self-confidence, Mounia said that she tried to relax whenever she felt like anxious.

As for the new strategies learned while learning English, Mounia said that she learned to listen to tapes in English to improve her listening skill, and that she focused on watching movies to improve her speaking. She went further to state that females were attending their lectures more than males so as to explain the difference in the strategies used in terms of gender. This, she confirmed, helped females to memorize the lectures more easily than males. Besides, Mounia stated that females memorize their lectures through learning them by heart, which was not the case of males, who learn the key points only, according to her.

Considering her obtained average of 8.55 in the first term exam, it may be suggested that anxiety and her shaking level of self-confidence which pushed her to look for every kind of help except from herself, did not allow Mounia to reflect on her real weaknesses in the target language. Besides, this little use of strategies may well be behind her restricted ways of approaching various learning tasks.

Despite the fact that she reported using 14 strategies at rate 5, Karima got an average reported frequency of use of 3.5 only. Among these 14 strategies, she reported using 6 strategies (items 2, 6, 12, 17, 20, 24) from those reported to be used highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 4 strategies (items 2, 6, 8, 13) from those used highly frequently by females (see table.5, p.64). Karima stated that she selected English for her university studies because she loved the language, and that her difficulties in the language had to do with vocabulary and the fact that she always faced new words. Yet, she emphasized that vocabulary was the best thing she liked English for.

During the interview, Karima reported that she used only 2 key strategies, whether asking for other people's help to work on the difficulties she found while learning, or watching movies to practice her listening, with the aim of developing her listening and speaking skills. The new strategies she learned while studying English, as Karima put them, were more focusing on listening to tapes seeking for language practice opportunities, as well as watching movies in English to learn about the native speakers' culture, and learn to speak like them.

As a female, Karima said that she learned to keep her diaries in English, because this gave her the opportunity to express her feelings and emotions from one hand, and put into practice the vocabulary she learned so far and the new words she learned into practice, in order not to forget them, from the other hand. In fact, The limited number of strategies used to cope with the needs of tasks may well be the cause for the low average (7.55) obtained by Karima in her first term exam. Besides, although she stated that vocabulary was her major problem in language learning, she did not indicate any strategies that she used to deal with it.

Like Karima, Linda also did not get a high average reported frequency of use (average= 3.1), and reported using 9 strategies only at high frequency levels. These 9 strategies include 5 strategies (items 1, 3, 6, 12, 17) from those reported to be used highly frequently across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 5 strategies (items 1, 6, 8, 13, 24) from those reported to be used highly frequently by females (see table.5, p.64). During the interview, Linda stated that she

chose to study English because it is an international language used by all people, and that her main problem in learning was writing, while the best thing she liked about English is speaking.

Linda reported that a key strategy she used was to use the dictionary to check the meaning of words to make sure she was using them appropriately while writing. She had found that it was important to ask for the assessment of her performance from others, because this would make her aware of her weak points. Moreover, she also expressed her care for working with a group because this as she said, would make her understand and memorize things easily. This allowed her to use another key strategy which was asking for other's help, whether teachers or friends, because this she insisted made the information memorable.

Linda had also said that she could not understand a lecture if she did not find what was its major theme, so that she linked the various elements of the lecture together. Noticeably, none of the key strategies had to do with managing her difficulties in writing. In her indication of the new strategies she learned while studying English, Linda said that she learned to listen to tapes and music for the sake of developing her speaking and listening practice. Moreover, she also reported that she learned to make summaries of the things she read in the target language, to help her revise when needed.

As for the strategies determined by means of her being a female, Linda said that females show a great interest in their lectures through continuous revising, and that they make more use of English between them seeking for practice opportunities. Linda, however, got a low average of 5.22 only in her first term exam, which may be due to her set of key strategies that reflect a reliance on others more than herself. In fact, all of Linda's key strategies were tending towards working with someone else, or using resources, instead of self-reliance. This may well depend on the level of self-confidence with which she approached her tasks.

Kadour did not get a high average for reported frequency of use (average= 2.9), and reported using only 5 strategies "always", out of which 3 strategies (items 3, 6, 12) were among those

reported to be used highly across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 2 strategies (items 6, 14) among those reported to be used at high frequency levels by males (see table.5, p.64). The reason why he chose English he said, was being able to speak the language, maintaining that speaking was the best aspect of English, while restricting his major difficulties to both writing and understanding spoken language. Kadour reported using only one key strategy, which is repetition. He said that he just keeps repeating things as a rehearsal to memorize them, a strategy which was also reported to be used by Omar.

In response to the inquiry about the new strategies learned while studying English, Kadour said that he learned to listen to tapes and music as a way to develop his listening and vocabulary of the target language. He also stated that females revise their lectures much more than males, in order to set the difference in terms of gender concerning the use of learning strategies. With regard to his average of 4.85 in his first term exam, it is suggested that the strategies Kadour used are far from sufficient and efficient in covering the weaknesses and difficulties he reported to have.

The last interviewee Massoud got the lowest average of reported frequency of strategy use, with an average of 2.8 only, and reported using 5 strategies only at rate 5, out of which 2 strategies (items 6, 18) were among those reported to be used across all the students (see table.2, p.59), and 2 strategies (items 6, 14) were among those reported to be used highly frequently by males (see table.5, p.64). Massoud said that he was not sure about the reason for which he had chosen to study English, and that he found difficulties with speaking. During the interview, Massoud could not answer the questions easily and escaped most of them, stating “*I don't know*” as an answer.

Yet, he said that he used two key strategies, one meant to deal with writing to check the correctness of words, through using the dictionary, and the other was for speaking by trying to learn from native speakers through listening to them and watching TV. Massoud also stated that he learned to listen to records and songs in English as new strategies used for his learning, which

he did not use before. Additionally, he explained that the difference between males and females in the use of strategies lies in the fact that females revise their lectures a lot if compared to males, and that they focus on learning by heart, which is not the preference of males who focus on understanding.

These strategies, though targeted towards the main difficulties Massoud faced, were not enough to make him get a high average; he got an average of 4.55, which was the lowest among those of all the interviewees. This may well be dependent on the limited range of strategies used, and the absence of goal specification behind learning in general, which may go deeper into individual learning tasks.

### **3.6. The Difference in Key Strategies in terms of Gender**

The aim of the interviews was to check the use of strategies across gender differences from the point of view of the individual learner, in order to reinforce the findings of the first part of the study. The results of the interviews show (see table.10 below) that female students used metacognitive strategies slightly at high frequency rates compared to males, and that they preferred to use some strategies more than others. It was found that both successful males and females reported using various sets of strategies according to the sections of the MLLSQ, besides other strategies which were not mentioned in the questionnaire. These later strategies included other categories of strategies which were not the focus of this study. Less successful students had also indicated their range of strategies used to face their needs and difficulties, added to their limited range of from the MLLSQ at high frequency levels. Yet, these strategies were not firstly numerous as those reported by successful students, and secondly did not really work in the light of the learning difficulties mentioned.

Among those successful students, both males and females did not report using the same key strategies, and used the same strategy sometimes with different labels. For instance, they meant the same listening strategy but expressed it differently. It is worth noting that despite the

difference in the used strategies, all successful students both males and females reported using a good number of strategies at rate 5 even if females outnumbered males slightly, and they got higher averages of reported frequency of strategy use, with successful females scoring higher than successful males also.

This high frequent use of strategies as deduced from the interviews, may be explained by many factors. These successful students were actually more focused in their strategy use, since they indicated their difficulties, and then stated the suitable set of strategies to overcome them. By contrast, less successful learners knew their learning weaknesses, but lacked the efficiency needed to select the appropriate strategies which would help them put an end to such difficulties. Moreover, the range of strategies they reported to use in terms of the MLLSQ as well their key strategies, were noticeably qualitatively different from those reported by successful students.

Less successful learners reported using key strategies that differed quantitatively and qualitatively from those reported by successful students (see table.11 above). Less successful female students however, got higher averages of reported frequency of strategy use compared to males. Indeed, the key strategies used by less successful male and female students did not differ too much, reflecting students who were not enough self-confident or motivated for learning. Motivation is not the focus of the current study, but is certainly having an impact on both the strategies used and the rates of success achieved by the students.

The effect of motivation on the use of language learning strategies is explained by Dornyei (2005: 172) who states that this relation is making sense, theoretically speaking, since LLS are defined as “examples of motivated learning behavior”. Hence, while successful students were highly motivated for English learning, less-successful showed little signs of motivation. This may be deduced from their response to the reason behind choosing English for a university career; while all successful learners (males and females) confirmed that their choice stem from their own conviction and personal desire, most less successful declared a lack of motif for studying the language.

Sex	Key strategy	
Males	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Positive attitude towards tasks</li> <li>❖ Considering the audience for both speaking and writing tasks</li> <li>❖ listening to broadcasts for listening practice</li> <li>❖ Preparing short summaries of read material</li> <li>❖ Asking for help</li> <li>❖ Self-reliance in understanding</li> <li>❖ Listening to tapes</li> <li>❖ Reading the material many times for more comprehension</li> <li>❖ Revising lessons</li> <li>❖ Linking items in terms of order</li> <li>❖ Listening carefully</li> <li>❖ Focus on grammar and vocabulary textbooks</li> <li>❖ Learning through the use of computer for better remembering</li> <li>❖ Using special programs to develop speaking</li> <li>❖ Reading amazing stories</li> <li>❖ Find friends to talk in English</li> <li>❖ Translation to another language</li> </ul>
	Less Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Asking for help</li> <li>❖ Writing the read material in personal words</li> <li>❖ Repetition</li> <li>❖ Comparing works with others for evaluation</li> <li>❖ Talking to native speakers</li> <li>❖ Reading books</li> <li>❖ Using dictionaries</li> <li>❖ Self-evaluation</li> <li>❖ Repetition</li> <li>❖ Learning from native speakers</li> </ul>
Females	Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Putting effective plans according to tasks</li> <li>❖ Seeking other people's evaluation</li> <li>❖ Listening to conversations and songs in English</li> <li>❖ Self-questioning the theme</li> <li>❖ Thinking of many ways to solve tasks</li> <li>❖ Summarizing to get key information</li> <li>❖ Role play through imitating the teacher</li> <li>❖ Reading small books</li> <li>❖ Asking for help</li> <li>❖ Reflecting on previous information</li> <li>❖ Selecting appropriate information for tasks</li> <li>❖ Use a schedule to organize time</li> <li>❖ Defining the purpose for learning</li> <li>❖ Revising lectures in form of story telling</li> </ul>
	Less Successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Asking questions</li> <li>❖ Searching for resources</li> <li>❖ Management of self-confidence consciously</li> <li>❖ Asking for help</li> <li>❖ Watching movies for listening practice</li> <li>❖ Using the dictionary</li> <li>❖ Asking for others' evaluation</li> <li>❖ Working with a group</li> <li>❖ Understanding the lecture's main points</li> </ul>

**Table.10: Key strategies of successful and less successful males and females.**

Moreover, the interviews also indicated that students reported using strategies according to their learning styles, which is not the focus of this study, also. Successful students knew which way helped them to learn better according to whether they preferred listening tasks only or listening and watching at the same time, learning individually or with a group, etc. For instance, in the interviews, Elwalid had shown considerable care for using audio visual aids in his learning which might reflect his audio visual learning style, while Linda was more interactive through preferring group work.

Additionally, many of the key strategies that students reported using require the use of certain resources (TV, tapes, books, dictionaries, people, movies, the teacher, etc). These strategies that are built on the use of resources were not mentioned in the MLLSQ and are in essence categorized under other classes of strategies. Meanwhile, it is apparent that more successful students used these strategies because they were convinced that they helped them to become better learners.

The major topic that emerged out of the interviews, however is not linked to strategy use neither in terms of quantity nor in terms of quality; it is more an issue to do with the expression of the use of “strategies in language learning”. During the interviews, all the interviewees found difficulties to understand what the term “strategy” entails exactly; all of them (males and females) were conscious of the strategies they used for their learning, but found difficulties in understanding what was meant by the term “strategies”.

To exemplify, the interviewees could not make the distinction between learning strategies and language learning skills, and answered many of the interview questions by just mentioning one broad language skill, instead of a strategy which is a specific action used for language learning. Raouf, for example could not make the distinction between technological means used in language learning and the notion of strategy, while Elwalid who reported using a varied range of strategies to satisfy his learning needs, could not figure out what a strategy was exactly to respond correctly; he was thinking loudly during the interview stating “*strategies, strategies!*”

...um...*Let me see, strategies!*” which reflected a lack of understanding of what the term “strategies” really expressed, in as much the same way as Salim who could not distinguish “learning skills” from “learning strategies”, and used both to refer to “Strategies”, basically.

### 3.7. Relationship between Metacognitive Strategies Use and Achievement in Language Learning

The interviews showed that both male and female students used metacognitive strategies, while the difference lied in the quantity of the strategies used, for which females reported using more strategies than males, and in the quality of the strategies used, for which both groups used various strategies depending on their purposes and the nature of the learning tasks. The difference was more significant, however, when considering the rate of success achieved by the students. It was found that there is a correlation between metacognitive strategies use and the rate of success achieved by the students in their English learning, as shown in table.11 below:

Average	Value of correlation (r) with metacognitive strategies use
Oral.exp average	+0.421
Brit.lit average	+0.707**
General average (GA)	+0.610**

\*\* All correlations are significant beyond the 0.01 level

**Table.11: Correlation (r) of metacognitive strategies use with students’ average of success in British literature (Brit.lit), Oral expression (Oral.exp), and general average (GA).**

To specify the relationship between the two variables of students’ success and their use of metacognitive language learning strategies, we used the Spearman Rank Order Coefficient of Correlation (-Rho) which “is a useful non-parametric test” (Singh, 2006: 240). In this correlation, The data are presented in ranks instead of scores. This test is used in case the number of the pairs presented in ranks is fewer than thirty, and when there are few ties in rank. (Singh, 2006)

The results of table.11 (above) reveal that there is an average correlation of 0.42 between metacognitive strategies use and the students' results in oral expression module, there is a strong correlation of 0.70 between metacognitive language learning strategies use and the students achievement in the module of British literature, and a strong correlation of 0.61 between the use of strategies and the general average of the students in the first term exam.

Looking at the results of the students in Oral expression (see table.9, p.99), in which the results of successful and less successful students were all positive, and considering the average correlation achieved, it may be suggested that the students' use of these strategies is not efficient to promote their learning, or that this kind of strategies is not the only one they need to achieve positive results in this module. This rises the need for strategy clustering (Cohen, 2007), or using other strategies from other classes (Oxford, 1990).

The students' results in British literature (see table.9, p.99) show that almost all successful students who reported using metacognitive strategies highly frequently got positive results; this was not the case of less successful students. The strong correlation of 0.70 between the use of metacognitive strategies and achievement suggests that the more the students use these strategies, the more positive results will be achieved. Moreover, considering the general averages obtained by the twelve interviewees, it appears that the successful students achieved higher averages compared to those of less successful students. Then, the strong correlation between the use of MLS and the overall achievement may suggest that the students who use metacognitive strategies for their learning in general are more successful in English learning.

As a result, the positive correlation found to be existing between the two ranks of metacognitive learning strategies and the students' success in language learning, whether in specific areas of study or learning in general, indicates that there is a strong agreement between the use of metacognitive language learning strategies and success in English learning. It is further suggested that the strategies successful language learners reported using, in respect to their variety in terms of quantity and quality (in the light of the questionnaire, besides their key strategies) are behind their success in language learning.

### 3.8. Summary of Results and Findings

The results achieved in the first part of the study (chapter 2) have shown that the students reported using metacognitive learning strategies highly frequently, with variation in the frequency of use reported in terms of gender. In this part, moreover, through the use of interviews, the results show that there was a significant difference in the quality of the strategies reported to be used across all the students in respect to the items of the MLLSQ, and through the key strategies that the students reported to use for their English learning.

Although there was a difference in the frequency of metacognitive and key strategies use between males and females, it was more the quality of the strategies reported that differed significantly.

Within this difference in the quality of strategies according to gender in the reported frequency of metacognitive strategy use as stated in the MLLSQ, or through the various key strategies reported by the interviewees, the factor of success further reinforced the obtained results; successful students, males or females, reported a highly frequent use of metacognitive strategies as stated in the questionnaire, and reported a varied set of key strategies during the interviews, in comparison to less successful students who did not report a high frequent use of metacognitive strategies when responding to the questionnaire, while their key strategies used for their English learning were not focused towards their difficulties.

The significance of the agreement existing between the use of metacognitive strategies and success in English learning was calculated across the interviewees, through the use of the correlation technique. It was found that there was a positive relationship between the students' metacognitive strategies use and their success. Hence, metacognitive strategies were used more frequently by successful students. Besides, those strategies reported to be used by less successful students do not suggest that they are unproductive, but that they are not sufficient to satisfy their real needs and weaknesses.

## Conclusion

This chapter used both questionnaire and interview to account for the differences in metacognitive strategy use across gender and in terms of learning achievement. It was found that there exist differences between males and females in the use of metacognitive strategies, both in respect to strategy quantity and strategy quality. Moreover, it was further discovered that there is a correlation between metacognitive strategy use and the learners' achievement in language learning. Hence, female students who reported using metacognitive strategies highly frequently achieved better results in respect to their scores, in comparison to male students who reported a low frequency of metacognitive strategies use, and their lower rates of success.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

---

## **DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

## **AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

## CHAPTER FOUR

---

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	126
<b>4.1. Discussion of Key Findings</b> .....	126
<b>4.2. Pedagogical Implications</b> .....	130
4.2.1. Language Use Strategies .....	131
4.2.2. Language Learning Strategy Instruction .....	133
4.2.3. Language Learning Strategy Workshops .....	137
4.2.4. Strategy Integration into the Language Classroom .....	138
<b>4.3. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research</b> .....	139
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	141

## **Introduction**

The focus of this study was to examine the correlation between metacognitive strategy use and individual differences, basically gender and learning achievement. This chapter discusses the findings resulting from this research in their relation to previous research in the area. Then, it suggests some recommendations for language learners, in the light of the problem of the study on one hand, and the results achieved on the other hand. Finally, the chapter states some of the limitations of this study regarding the settings and methodology of the research, and presents some suggestions for further research in the area.

### **4.1. Discussion of Key Findings**

In the agenda of language learning strategies, researchers (Cohen 2007; Macaro, 2004, & Oxford, 1990) found that some factors interfere in the selection of strategies and the effectiveness of task performance. Some of these factors according to them are person-dependent (age, gender, intelligence, motivation, etc), and described to be stable and determining to larger extents the way learners approach tasks. Other factors are task-dependent related mostly to the variation of tasks, and the variety of strategies employed to perform them, because as Gu (2005: 14) states : “different types of tasks call for different strategies”.

Another factor that affects strategy choice and effectiveness is the learning context, which indicates the learning environment. Gu (2005: 15), clarifies this issue stating: “The learning context can include the teachers, the peers, the classroom climate or ethos, the family support, the social, cultural tradition of learning, the curriculum, and the availability of input and output opportunities”. This aims to make a distinction between the learning context and the language context that refers to the text or discourse in which a given word was uttered.

In the context of the present study, the focus was on investigating the students' use of metacognitive language learning strategies in English learning as a foreign language. The overall average reported frequency of these strategies (average=2.7) by the students was not a significant one, as indicated by Oxford (1990) and used by Nyikos and Oxford (1993) (that is average= 3.5 or above). The students reported using some metacognitive strategies highly frequently, depending on their point of focus in the learning process. In fact, those metacognitive strategies for learning in general were reported highly frequently than those related to specific learning tasks devoted to one learning area. Consequently, we confirm that metacognitive language learning strategies are used by the students frequently in their process of language learning.

Across gender differences, the use of metacognitive strategies was reported highly frequently by female students, in comparison to male students. Although not significant, females' overall average reported frequency of metacognitive strategy use, and their reported frequency of using categories of strategies as stated through the sections of the research questionnaire outnumbered the average reported frequency of male students in every direction. Even in terms of target strategies used highly frequently, females reported using more metacognitive strategies than males. Noticeably, metacognitive strategies for general learning were also the most reported highly frequently across both males and females, with females scoring higher than males.

Analyzing the strategies reported at high frequency levels in terms of their classification into levels of metacognitive processing, showed that the students employed strategies from all four stages, with differences in the number of strategies reported for every level. Female students reported using strategies from all levels of metacognitive processing, in contrast to male students, who stated only strategies from three stages. Hence, the frequency of the reported strategies was not significant only quantitatively

speaking, but also qualitatively speaking, in respect to the resulting difference in terms of metacognitive strategy use across gender.

Patterns of metacognitive strategies use were recognized within those strategies reported highly frequently across all the learners, and across gender differences. Across all the respondents, ten strategies were reported to be used highly frequently representing “**Core Strategies**” that are used for learning in general, and “**Central Strategies**” that belong to specific learning areas. Moreover, patterns of strategy were found within male and female groups of students; added to their use of “**Core**” and “**Central**” strategies, a pattern of “**Extra Strategies**” resulted from the strategies employed by males and females. This pattern of strategies characterize every group since the strategies used are typical of them.

The quality of these reported strategies also differed ( see table.5, p.60), with female students making the most use of metacognitive strategies from all the stages. It is worth noting that male and female students focused more on the two stages of metacognitive processing (reflecting and selecting, and planning) for which the majority of metacognitive strategies reported at high frequency levels belong, over the other two stages (monitoring and evaluating), for which male students did not report using any strategies for the evaluating stage.

The results of interviews proved the difference that females make more use of metacognitive strategies than males. The average reported frequency for females, both successful and less successful, was higher than the average reported by males. Although not highly significant with successful males and females, this difference in average reported frequency was more considerable at the level of the less successful students. Less successful female students reported using strategies highly frequently than male students.

Moreover, less successful females appeared to be more focused on their selection of key strategies than males.

The difference between successful students and less successful students in the overall average reported frequency for each group was also significant, since successful students used metacognitive strategies highly frequently than less successful students. Additionally, successful students were more focused in their selection of key strategies to satisfy their needs in the target language, than less successful students who could not meet their needs in English learning through the appropriate selection of learning strategies.

Although there were some exceptions in students' key strategies, as was the case with Soumia and Elwalid, who were both successful students, and while Elwalid reported using significantly more strategies than Soumia, their rates of success were considerably different.

Through the use of Spearman Rank Order Coefficient of Correlation, the findings stated that there existed a positive correlation between students' use of metacognitive strategies and their success in English learning. Through comparing the results of the students in the averages of two modules of their English university program, and their overall achievement in the first term exam, in respect to their average reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use, it was found that successful students made more use of metacognitive strategies than less successful students.

In sum, it was found that there was a positive agreement between metacognitive strategies use and the students' success in English learning. As a result, we confirm our hypothesis that there are differences in terms of both gender and language achievement, and metacognitive language learning strategies use.

## 4.2. Pedagogical Implications

The beginnings towards instructing an area of knowledge always start by questioning phenomena. The field of language learning strategies had built a strong base for itself in the general scope of language learning after almost four decades of research, due to the enormous number of questions it raised. Since the pioneering research of Rubin (1975, as cited in Chamot, 2004) and Stern (1975, as cited in Chamot, 2004) in the mid 1970's, research in the field of language learning strategies has succeeded to identify new items that formed the essence of an enlarged topic of investigation. While earlier research focused on the nature of LLS and their classification (O'Malley. et al, 1985; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Cohen, 1998), and much debate was raised concerning their real identity (Cohen,1996), recent studies tended more towards the practical side of language learning strategies; i.e. their use.

A comparison between LLS and LUS will reveal that some of them appear to be similar, such as certain rehearsal strategies, whereas others are unique belonging to one group and not the other. To illustrate, Cohen (2002) gives the example of strategies related to initial learning of a new vocabulary related to a health condition, versus strategies for using the new vocabulary once it has been learned well enough for both recognition and production of words. Cohen (2010) explains that LLS are the strategies used for initial learning of material, like when the learners encounter the word "egregious", here LLS are those used to learn the word.

Hence, LUS are the strategies learners use to perform their knowledge about the word once they know it to at least some degree. They are the actual performance of the acquired knowledge during the learning process and are complementary and completed devices; they are complementary because they serve LLS when taking the learners to real use of

what they learned, and they completed by LLS because it is impossible to set something into practice without its being existent. Hence, LLS represents knowledge learned and LUS indicates knowledge performed.

#### **4.2.1. Language Use Strategies**

In explaining language use strategies, Cohen (1999) states that they are operating once the language material is already accessible. Hence, if the main purpose behind the use of LLS is to improve the learners' knowledge about the target language, language use strategies' main focus is to help the learners use the language they have already learned to whatever extent. Cohen (1998) has given examples of language use strategies including strategies for retrieving information about the language already stored in memory, target language structure rehearsal strategies, cover strategies to avoid the stupid, unprepared appearance in the language classroom, and language communication strategies despite gaps in target language knowledge.

What was revolutionary in the ideas of Macaro and Cohen (2007) is the fact that a new comprehension of the concept of LLS was presented, through making the distinction between language learning strategies and language use strategies. The study of language learning strategies in the research literature falls into two basic types. The first is a broad collection of *descriptive* studies, in which the major concern was to define the characteristics of a Good Language Learner, which comprise the total number of the strategies that the learners use through organizing taxonomies for them (Oxford, 1990 ; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) ; and comparative studies between the strategies used by groups of learners.

The second type of studies is a set of *intervention* studies. These studies aimed at discovering whether there is a possibility to alter learners' strategy use, mostly through

strategy training by the teachers or the researchers. This means that the focus is on describing how teachers actually help their learners to learn how to learn, with the underlying aim of developing language competence. (Macaro, 2001)

This study was taken from the standpoint that the strategies language learners use are “an extremely powerful learning tool” (O’Malley et al, 1985: 43) for language learning. In theory, language learning strategies had been classified into many categories, which intervene in the learning process slightly or extremely depending on the learner using them. In the current study, the sub-group of metacognitive strategies use was viewed to be critical for English learning, and differently approached by males and females.

The first part of the study used the Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies Questionnaire (MLLSQ) to survey a sample of both male and female students to explore their patterns of metacognitive language learning strategies used. In the second part, a qualitative dimension was added through the use of interviews after stimulating by means of the questionnaire (MLLSQ), to examine how metacognitive strategies were approached from the point of view of the individual learner, and to investigate how learner’s success might be linked to metacognitive strategies use. Within these achieved findings in the current study, the discovery that students did not report using metacognitive strategies highly frequently suggest that the problem of awareness is raised. Awareness is at the heart of metacognition and language learning strategies, because it reflects purposefulness of the students’ behaviors and actions while learning. The students need to be trained in recognizing their needs in the target language efficiently, and appropriate strategies to employ within.

Male students who report low averages of reported frequency of strategy use in comparison to females, will be encouraged to know that the difference was not so highly

significant, and need to direct their learning in the areas where significant differences were found. This will result from their better knowledge of themselves as language learners, by specifying the areas in which they find difficulties the most. After specifying the problems, it will be an easy task to select among the available solutions (in this case strategies) the ones suitable for them.

#### **4.2.2. Language Learning Strategy Instruction**

The shift that occurred in the last few decades in the focus of language instruction towards the interest in the needs of the language learners, has made the teachers as instructors targeting their efforts towards knowing more about the goals and objectives of their learners in the target language. Through this knowledge, it has been aimed that learners would receive the required instruction amenable to their designed objectives (Cohen and Weaver, 1994). Inherent in this instruction is the responsibility of the individual learner in determining his/her capacities in the target language, and his/her needs that ask for treatment. Metacognitive language learning strategies will help the language learner satisfy the stated needs, when selected appropriately,. As Weaver and Cohen (1994: 287) state it:

If students can learn to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own language learning through the systematic application of language learning strategies, as well as know how to deal with difficulties they encounter during the learning process, they will be able to take more responsibility for self-directing the learning process and thus can more fully benefit from classroom language instructions.

The students need to be instructed in using metacognitive strategies because this will make them aware of the strategies they are already using to learn the target language, and expose them to those strategies that they do not use, so that they develop new ranges of

strategies, which will widen their opportunities for selecting the appropriate strategies to work on specific tasks. As a matter of fact, the instruction in metacognitive language learning strategies is capable of making the students reflect on their own reflection and make full engagement of their abilities of monitoring and evaluating to filter the quality of their language learning. (Cohen & White, 2008)

Hence, the students' instruction in the area of metacognitive strategies use will be more than a necessity. This goes with the old Chinese proverb which says "do not give me fish, but teach me how to fish". The implication of this proverb in the area of metacognitive strategies is that the students have to be trained in using these strategies instead of getting the information ready from their instructors. As Cohen (2008) assures, the overall task of strategy instruction can be done separately from language instruction. The new concerns in quality encountered in the area of education in general, and the field of language learning in particular is raising the need for more efficient learning programs that would guarantee offering equal opportunities for all learners to develop their abilities in the target language (Cohen and White, 2008).

This instruction is also going to develop a considerable amount of autonomy in the students, to set their own map of language learning. This map will draw on the objectives set to use the appropriate aids to bring them true. Metacognitive language learning strategies use present one of the necessary aids, because they permit the student first and for most to design the overview of the map, through defining goals, setting plans, and thinking of the process proceedings.

At later stages, metacognitive strategies will allow the learner to monitor the information perceived, by looking critically to their construction and meaning. Moreover, instructing the students in using metacognitive language learning strategies will free the

teacher from the heavy responsibilities of providing prompts all the time. This means that the students will learn to use the strategies spontaneously, through weighting the needs of the task, and the appropriateness of the strategies employed. This will help in constructing self regulated students, who can make decisions accurately, and who can solve the problems faced in language learning efficiently.

This instruction is firstly the responsibility of the teacher as the instructor and guide for the students' learning. This responsibility would be assumed first by providing lectures or integrating the notion of strategies explicitly in the course of teaching. The teacher can draw the students' attention to the range of metacognitive strategies possible to be used for the task at hand, and ask the students to look for others depending on their experience in language learning. For instance, during a session for speaking, the teacher will ask the students about the strategies they use to become better speakers of the target language. This will help to identify the students needs in speaking, identify the strategies already used by the students, and give the teacher the opportunity to make the students practice other strategies that would be useful for their level.

Second, this responsibility require the teacher to offer opportunities for practice of using metacognitive language learning strategies for all the students. These opportunities require the variation of tasks, so that numerous strategies will be useful. It must be emphasized in this context that the teacher is going to provide the opportunities, but the selection of which strategies to use is ultimately the responsibility of the students. That is why the students should be encouraged to reflect on their learning in every possible way, to make their metacognitive strategies selection an appropriate one. This involves the students in more complex processes, because they will work at the metacognitive level which is already beyond cognitive, and start thinking about the regulation of the strategies they use for this high stage.

Additionally, instruction in the use of metacognitive language learning strategies has to focus on the importance of *strategy clustering* in better building of knowledge and better success in language learning. Strategy clustering means that the student can use many strategies joined together to work on a learning task. This is useful because it sets the student in a better position in terms of time and effort in achieving the designed learning goals. The teacher has to provide the opportunities for using strategy clustering through selecting tasks that require its use. Besides, the teacher can interfere in organizing the clusters of strategies used by the students that may not be workable for the task in question.

Upon metacognitive strategy use, the teacher has to provide the strategy with explicit explanation of its use and importance. This is interesting because it introduces the strategy with a detailed account for the student. The teacher has also to provide guidance as the strategy is used, so that the student's practice of language learning is directed in every aspect. The role of the teacher in metacognitive strategy instruction is also recognizable in the light of consolidating the already existent information within the student about metacognitive strategies, by helping the student identify the strategy, and the tasks for which it may be useful. Then, the teacher is supposed to make the student work on the strategy independently, through choosing the tasks that will lead to the use of the target strategy. As a final step, the teacher has to develop the student's potential for learning, by making the student recognize the possibility of applying the strategy to new tasks.

The need for instruction in the area of language learning strategies produced some programs, such as the CALLA handbook for second language strategy instruction. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach is a program designed to help foreign language teachers interested in helping their students becoming better language learners, and as Cohen (2008:48) explains: "to increase the school achievement of students who are learning through the medium of an L2". This model focuses on language and cognitive

development, through the integration of content, language, and strategy training. (Chamot, 2004).

Furthermore, the CALLA handbook presents numerous learning strategies that teachers can introduce to their students in order to make them autonomous language learners. The use of such programs in the area of language learning strategies in which the teacher focuses on more special categories of strategies, as is the case for this study, would be more fruitful. Since the students would be introduced to theoretical issues first about the learning strategies in question, and then receive intensive practice in language learning tasks. The importance of this lies in the fact that the student would become aware of the effect of the use of strategies on his learning, so that their use spreads beyond the limits of classroom settings.

#### **4.2.3. Language Learning Strategy Workshops**

Metacognitive strategy use instruction may be achieved through the use of strategy workshops (Cohen and Weaver, 1994). These workshops comprise different activities and tasks aiming at developing specific learning strategies in general, or one class of strategies such as metacognitive strategies, and they may integrate strategies together through strategy clustering for more efficiency. In addition to this, these strategy workshops can work on strategies in general, such as the use of general metacognitive strategies of planning or defining goals, and they be more precise through being directed towards the use of metacognitive strategies in one specific area of language learning, being listening, speaking, reading, or writing, as well as vocabulary, and grammar, etc.

Moreover, these workshops can make groups of learners learn together and from each other. In the case of this study, it may be possible to make males and females exchange ideas in the use of metacognitive strategies, in order to benefit from the experiences of

each other. The teacher in these workshops may design the general map for the strategies to be integrated within every session, and at the same time direct the learners to identify the strategies they already use in order to focus on those strategies which are not used.

#### **4.2.4. Strategy Integration into the Language Classroom**

Whether language learning strategies are involved in language textbooks or not, Cohen and Weaver (1994) emphasized that teachers had to be aware of the various other possibilities to integrate learning strategies into their language coursework. This integration process provides the learners with numerous opportunities to enlarge their repertoire of strategies, as well as profit from the range of strategies used by the other learners. This may function as an efficient motivating device since it creates an interaction atmosphere among the learners. O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 184) stress the importance of strategy training integration in the context of the language classroom is a useful approach "in order to demonstrate to students the specific applications of the strategies and to promote the transfer of strategies to new tasks".

Teachers are viewed as the dynamic agents in this classroom strategy integration process. Oxford (1990) and Cohen (1991) arranged the various roles that may be assigned to teachers within classroom strategy integration. First, the teacher is a *change agent*, who works on helping the learners to become independent and develop self-autonomy in language learning, and language strategy use. Second, the teachers acts as a diagnostician who helps the learners to identify their learning strategies, through raising their awareness about the strategies they are using and their utilization through varying the contexts of use. Moreover, the teacher increases the learners' awareness about the best ways to make better achievement in language learning. Third, the teacher performs the mission of training his/her learners in using language learning strategies appropriately. This reflects also the

role of a coach or collaborator, through working with every individual learner so as to design the best language study program for him/her.

Additionally, within this designed program, the teacher has to be a coordinator who organizes the ongoing process with its stable and changing steps, respecting the needs of the learner. One further role for the teacher in this context of strategy integration is to act as a classroom researcher by following the track of development of his/her learners, through keeping records of the types of strategies used, the nature of tasks, learning styles, etc. the teacher is also viewed as a consultant who provides advices and guidance for his/her learners on an ongoing basis. The best role for teachers yet, remains his/her acting as a language learner, by putting himself/herself in the role of the learner in order to stay tuned to what language learning really entails.

#### **4.3. Limitations of the study and Suggestions for Further Research**

Like any study this study has a number of limitations. The first limitation might be related to the students involved in the study, whose characteristics in terms of age, and their motivation to study English may have affected the results of the study. Since none of these characteristics, amongst other important ones, such as learning styles, and personality types were examined to see how they make the students differ, and within they may have an impact on the findings of the study. The time span for conducting the study, mainly the distribution of the questionnaire (MLLSQ) might produce inconsistencies in the results achieved.

Added to this is the fact that the study did not consider the students' proficiency level in English language learning, due to time limits, so that the students would be categorized according to their level of proficiency, and the comparison between reported frequency of metacognitive strategies use might look more consistent. This holds true for the interviews

also, since the dependence on the results achieved through students' courses and exams, might be comprising inconsistencies at the level of the obtained results.

As for the correlation found between metacognitive strategy use and students' success in English learning might not be consistent, since no test was conducted for the students to decide for their level of success. Finally, the small number of interviewees and their characteristics that form basic individual differences (some of which were considered in the research literature to be considerably influencing the choice of strategies to be used upon language tasks completion), although selected according to the needs of the study, might intervene in the results achieved so far.

As this study had produced findings about the relationship between the use of metacognitive language learning strategies, gender differences, and language achievement by students of English as a foreign language, it has also raised some key questions that might open the gate for further research. Among these research areas, the following might be:

- ❖ Similar research might be carried with students in different settings by enlarging the sample of male students selected, or by considering differences in the age of the participants through comparing between university and high school levels, to check how each group make use of these strategies. At the level of university settings, the comparison might be made between students of English as a foreign language, and students studying English for specific purposes.
- ❖ The key strategies reported in the interviews of the successful students and those they reported to be used highly frequently in the questionnaire might be introduced to less successful students in the form of workshops or intensive courses, to check their impact on their success in English learning, via longitudinal studies.

- ❖ Work needs to be carried with metacognitive strategies as one category of language learning strategies, which might be through linking them to particular areas of study.
- ❖ More work needs to be carried in the area of training English students as a foreign language for more effective use of metacognitive language learning strategies.

## **Conclusion**

As the study focused on finding out the rate of correlation between metacognitive strategy use, gender, and learning achievement, this chapter provided a summary of the key findings reached so far all along the practical chapters of the research. Finding out that females reported using metacognitive strategies more frequently than males, and discovering the positive correlation between metacognitive strategy use and learning achievement, this chapter provides some recommendations and pedagogical implications in the direction of the results found, through making strategy workshops for groups of learners in which gender differences are melting, and more interest is set on those strategies that affect achievement directly. The limitations of the study are stated in respect of what was done practically speaking through the phases of the study, and some suggestions are introduced for future research in the area.



# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

---

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the context of this study, Language learning strategies were considered as self-directing devices for the learners. Self-direction is of paramount importance for language learners, because contrary to other learners, they do not always have the teacher with them for guiding purposes (Oxford, 1990). Unfortunately, self-direction is most of time an absent factor in the learning agenda, because learners are passive and teacher relevant, which make them prefer instructions over creativity. Consequently, success in being self-directed is the key to develop self-confidence, proficiency, and the feeling of being involved.

Not all language learning strategies are observable due to their nature. Some language learning strategies are directly observed by the human eye, such as cooperation that includes a learner working with someone else for a given task, while learners' mental associations as a tremendous aspect of memory strategies is not observable. In this direction, Parpura (1999, as cited in Takac, 2008: 55) states that the: "absence of observable behavior does not imply an absence of a mental process". As a matter of fact, teachers find it often a difficult task to identify the LLS used by their students, because these strategies are most of the time applied outside the classroom settings.

The focus of this study was on discovering the use of metacognitive strategies as a sub-group of language learning strategies, in its relation to gender and achievement in language learning. Regarding the results of this study in general, it was found that female students have reported using metacognitive strategies more frequently than male students. The findings of the quantitative part of the study indicate that overall, the students do not use metacognitive strategies, defined as higher order executive skills that build on planning, monitoring, and evaluating the success of learning tasks, at high frequency rates,

while at the level of gender differences, females scored higher than males in the use of these strategies.

The results of the quantitative part of the study show that the learners use metacognitive strategies in general to regulate their language learning, but with no high frequency rates. These general metacognitive strategies were however, reported to be used at high frequency rates in comparison to those metacognitive strategies that are linked to specific areas of language learning, being productive or receptive skills. In terms of gender differences, female students used metacognitive strategies more than male respondents, and differences were not recognized within quantity only, but also at the level of quality of the strategies used by every group. For instance, females focused on those strategies that had to do with evaluating and monitoring more than did males.

At the individual level in the qualitative part of the research, examinations of the questionnaire findings with the students interviewees state that overall, female students use metacognitive strategies highly frequently than males. The results of successful male and female students reflect that they use metacognitive strategies highly frequently than less successful students. Upon close probe of the relation between the students' frequency of metacognitive strategies use, and their success, it was found that successful students make greater use of these strategies, in comparison to less successful students. Although some exceptions were existent within some students who reported using strategies frequently, but their rate of success was not considerable.

The results also show that the students do not use only metacognitive strategies for their learning, but include a set of other key strategies that they think are useful for better learning achievement. While both successful students and less successful students reflected a strong awareness of the difficulties they face in English learning, the results indicate that the key strategies used by successful students were more focused in terms of orienting

them towards their stated problems. Less successful students, however, succeeded to identify their major difficulties in English learning but were far from diagnosing the appropriate strategies to help them overcome these problems.

The correlation which was found between the students' success upon particular areas and overall achievement, and their use of metacognitive language learning strategies, although correlation is not meant to suggest causal relations, indicate that the use of metacognitive strategies affects the students' rate of success in language learning. The metacognitive strategies used by less successful students, and those key strategies they stated to be using are basic strategies that form the platform for language learning. They are not considered to be non-productive because they fulfill certain tasks they are meant for, but they are not enough to raise the quality of students' learning. These less successful students might need more instruction and training in the use of metacognitive learning strategies to learn more efficiently.

Consequently, language learning strategies have to be included in the work of teachers. In the literature of applied linguistics, teachers are awarded various roles (instructor, manager, parent, leader, etc) that cause difficulties at the level of communication due to the change of status. Some teachers view this change as a challenge, while others are satisfied with the various functions and welcome new ones as creativity. Considering the scope of language learning strategies, teachers may be given new roles, such as identifying, developing, and training the learners in using learning strategies. Making males and females, successful and less successful learners learn from each other through strategy instruction may become one of the key functions of teachers' profession.



# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

---



# REFERENCES

---

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. N.**(2002). “Second Language Learning Strategies”. In E. Hinkel.(2005). *Handbook of Research in Second language Teaching and Learning*: 365-387. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Antonuis, R.**(2003). *Interpreting Quantitative Data with SPSS*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Bacon, S.**(1992). “The relationship between sex, comprehension, processing strategies and cognitive and affective response in second-language listening”, *Modern Language Journal* 76: 160-178.
- Bailey, K. M. & D. Nunan.**(eds).(1996). *Voices from the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, P.**(2006). “Autonomy in language Learning”. pp.17-29. Retrieved on Saturday 03, 2010 from: <http://ec.hku.hk/autonomy/what.html>
- Bialystok, E.**(1991). “Achieving Proficiency in a Second Language: A Processing Description”. In Phillipson et. al (eds): 63-77.
- Black N.**(1994). “Why we need qualitative research”. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 1994, Vol.48: 25-48.[Medline]
- Blaxter, L., C. Hughes, & M. Tight.**(2006). *How to Research*. Open University Press.
- Breen, M. P.**(ed.).(2001) *Learner Contributions to Language Learning*. Harlow: Longman
- Brown, H. D.**(2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Brown, H. D.**(2001). “In the minds of the methodologists”, *EL Teaching Matters*, April 2001, v.31: 173-191.
- Burton, S. & P. Steane.**(2004). *Surviving Your Thesis*. Routledge, Francis & Taylor Group.

**Byram, M.** (ed.).(2003). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*.

London: Routledge

**Chamot, U. A.**(2004). “Issues in Language Learning Strategy research and Teaching”.

*Electronic Journal of Foreign Language teaching*, Vol.1, No.1: 14-26. Centre for Language Studies, National University of Singapore.

**Chamot, A.U., K. Keatley, C.F. Meloni, M. Gonglewski, & A. Bartoshesky.**(2004).

*Learning Strategies Instruction in Higher Education*. National Capital Language resource Center.

**Cohen, L., L. Manion, & K. Morrison.**(2000). *Research Methods in Education*.

Routledge Falmer, Taylor and Francis Group.

**Coolican, H.**(1994). *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology*. Hodder & Stoughton.

**Cohen, A.**(1991). “Learner Strategies: The Role of the Teacher”. *Bulletin: Initial and in-service foreign language teacher education*. (1991), 4, 46-58. (Greek Applied Linguistics Association).

**Cohen, A.**(1996). “Second language Learning and Use Strategies: Clarifying the issues”: 21-56. Revised version. *Center for Advanced Research on language Acquisition*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

**Cohen, A.**(1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. London and New York: Longman

**Cohen, A.**(1999). “Language learning strategies instruction and research”. In Cotterall, S & D. Crabbe (eds): 61-68.

**Cohen, A.**(2003). “The Learners’ side of foreign language learning: Where do styles, strategies, and tasks meet?” *IRAL* 41 (2003), 279–291.

**Cohen, A.**(2007). “Coming to terms with language learner strategies: surveying the experts”. In Cohen, A. & E. Macaro.(2007). *Language Learner Strategies: Thirty Years of*

*Research and Practice*: 29-45. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Cohen, A.**(2007). “The Coming of Age for Research on Test-taking Strategies”. In J. Fox, M. Weshe, D. Bayliss, L. Cheng, C. Turner, & C. Doe (Eds).(2007). *Language testing reconsidered* (pp.89-111). Ottawa: Ottawa University Press.

**Cohen, A.**(2008). *Strategy Instruction for Learners of Japanese: How do you do it and what’s in it for them?* In Y.A. Hatasa (Ed.) (2008). *Gaikokogo to shite no nhongo kyooiku: Takakutei shiya ni motozuku kokoromi ‘Japanese as a foreign language education: Multiple perspectives’*: 45-60. Tokyo: Kurosio Shuppan.

**Cohen, A. D. & J. Chi.**(2002).“Language Strategy Use Survey”. Hebrew Higher Education.

Retrieved from [http://carla.acad.umn.edu/profiles/cohenpapers/lg\\_strat\\_srvy.html](http://carla.acad.umn.edu/profiles/cohenpapers/lg_strat_srvy.html)

**Cohen, A. & Z. Dornyei.**(2002). “Focus on the Language Learner: Motivation, Styles and Strategies”. In Schmitt, Norbert (ed.): 170-190.

**Cohen, A. & E. Macaro.**(2007). *Language Learner Strategies: Thirty Years of Research and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Cohen, A. & C. White.**(2008). “Language Learners as Informed Consumers of Language Instruction”. In Stavans, A & I. Kupferberg (Eds.) (2007). *Studies in Language and language Education: Essays in honor of Elite Olshtain*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press: 185-205.

**Cotterall, S. & D. Crabbe.**(eds.)(1999) *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Defining the field and effecting change*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

**Davies, A. & C. Elder.**(eds.)(2006). *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

**Denkin, N. K. & Y. S. Lincoln.**(1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage, 1994.

- Denscombe, M.(2007).** *The Good Research Guide : for small scale social research project.* Open University Press.
- Denzin, N.K & Y.S. Lincoln.(eds).(2002).** *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.,). Thousand Oak: Sage Publications.
- Dole. A.J., D.J. Nokes, & D. Drita.(2005).** “Cognitive Strategy Instruction”. In Duffy, G & S.E. Israel (Edt). *Handbook of Research on Reading Comprehension.* Erlbaum: 1-59.
- Dornyei, Z.(2003).** *Questionnaires in Second Language Research.* Muhwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Dornyei, Z.(2005).** *The Psychology of the Language Learner.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Duffy, G. & S. E. Israel.(eds).(2005).** *Handbook of Research on Reading Comprehension.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ehrman, M. & R. Oxford.(1989).** “Effects of Sex Differences, Career Choice, and Psychological Type on Adult Language Learning Strategies”, *The London Language Journal*, Vol.73, No.1: 1-13.
- Ehrman, M. & R. Oxford.(1990).** "Adult Language Learning Styles and Strategies in an Intensive Training Setting", *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol.74, No.3: 311-327.
- Ehrman, M. & R. Oxford.(1995).** "Cognition Plus: Correlates Of Language Learning Success", *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol.79, No.1: 67-89
- Ellis, R.(1986).** *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, Rod.(1994).** *The Study of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ellis, R.(2004).** “Individual Differences in Second language Learning”. In Davies, A & C. Elder.(eds.), *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (pp.525-551). Oxford: Blackwell.

- Fontana, A. & J. H. Frey.**(2005). “The interview: From neutral stance to political Involvement”. In Denzin, N.K & Y. S. Lincoln. (eds). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Vol.4: 365-382. Thousand Oak: Sage Publications.
- Fox, J., Weshe, M., Bayliss, D., Cheng, L., Turner, C & Doe, C.**(Eds).(2007). *Language Testing Reconsidered*. Ottawa: Ottawa University Press.
- Gibilisco, S.**(2004). *Statistics Demystified*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Green, J. & N. Thorogood.**(2004). *Qualitative Methods for Health Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Green, J. M. & R. Oxford.**(1995). “A Closer Look at Learning Strategies, L2 Proficiency and Sex”, *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.2: 261-297.
- Grenfell, M. & V. Harris.**(1999) *Modern Languages and Learning Strategies: In Theory and practice*. Routledge: The Taylor and Francis group.
- Griffiths, C.**(2003a). *Language Learning Strategy Use and Proficiency*. University of Auckland. Retrieved from <http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>
- Griffiths, C.**(2004). “Language Learning Strategies: Theory and Research”. *School of Foundations Studies*, Vol.18: 1-19. AIS St Helens, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Griffiths, C. & J. M. Parr.**(2001). “Strategies for success: How language learning strategies relate to proficiency in language learning” *Many Voices*, Vol.17: 27-31.
- Gu, P.**(2005). *Learning Strategies : Prototypical Core and Dimensions of variation*. Oxford University Press.
- Gu, Y., W. Qiufang & W. Danxia.**(1995). “How often is *Often*? Reference Ambiguities of the Likert-scale in Language Learning Strategy Research”, *Occasional Papers in English Language Teaching Vol 5*. ELT Unit, Chinese University of Hong Kong: 19-35.
- Hatasa, Y. A.**(ed.).(2008). *Gaikokogo to shite no nhongo kyooiku: Takakutei shiya ni*

*motozuku kokoromi 'Japanese as a foreign language education: Multiple perspectives'*.

Tokyo: Kurosio Shuppan

**Hewitt, D.**(2008). *Understanding Effective Learning*. Open University Press.

**Hinkel, E.**(2005). *Handbook of Research in Second language Teaching and Learning*. Vol. II - Part V. Methods and Instruction in Second Language Teaching. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

**Hope, H.**(1998). "Metacognition in Teaching and Learning: An Introduction".

*Instructional Science*, Vol. 26: 1-3. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

**Horwitz, E. K.**(1999). "Cultural and situational influences on foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning: a review of BALLI studies", *System*, Vol.27: 557-576.

**Kaplan, R.**(2002). *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Kaylani, C.**(1996). "The influence of Gender and Motivation on EFL Learning Strategy Learning Use in Jordan". In Oxford, R (Ed.), *Language Learning Strategies around the World: Cross-cultural Perspectives* (pp.75-88). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

**Klee, C.**( 1995). *Faces in a crowd: individual learners in multisection programs*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

**Kuhn, D.**(2000). Metacognitive Development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. Vol.9: 178-181.

**Larsen-Freeman, D.**(2001). "Individual cognitive/affective learner contributions and differential success in second language acquisition". In Breen, Michael P. (ed.): 12-23.

**Larsen-Freeman, D. & M. H. Long.**(1991). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. London & New York: Longman

**Little, D.**(2000). "Autonomy and autonomous learners". Byram, M. (ed.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge: 69-72.

**Livingston, J. A.**(2003). "Metacognition: An Overview". *Educational Resources*

*Information Center*, Vol.12: 1-9.

**Macaro, E.**(2001). *Learning Strategies in Foreign and Second language Classrooms*. London: Continuum.

**Macaro, E.**(2004). "Fourteen Features of a Language Learner Strategy". *Applied Linguistics and Modern Languages Education*, Working paper No.4: 22-47. University of Oxford, England.

**Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.** (2009).

Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster/defenselink.mil./privacy/notice/osd>.

**Merriam, S. & A. Caffarella.**(1991). *Learning in Adulthood. A comprehensive Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Nunan, D.**(1991). *Language Teaching Methodology*. New York: Phoenix

**Nunan, D.**(1992). *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Nunan, D.**(2000). "Seven Hypotheses About Language Teaching and Learning", *TESOL Matters*, Vol. 10, No.2, 1&8.

**Nyikos, M.**(1990). "Sex related differences in adult language learning: socialization and memory factors". *Modern Language Journal*, Vol.3: 273-287.

**Nyikos, M. & R. Oxford.**(1993) "A Factor Analytic Study of Language-Learning Strategy Use: Interpretations from Information-Processing Theory and Social Psychology". *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol.77: 11-22.

**O'Malley, J. M.**(1987). "The Effects of Training in the Use of Learning Strategies on Learning English as a Second Language". In Wenden, Anita & Joan Rubin (eds): 133-143.

**O'Malley, J. M. & A. U. Chamot.**(1990). *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**O'Malley, J. M. & A. U. Chamot.**(1994). "Learning Strategies in Second Language

Learning”. In the International Encyclopedia of Education (Vol.6, pp.3329-3335). Oxford: Oxford: Pergamon Press.

**O’Malley, J. M., A. U. Chamot, G. Stewner-Manzanares, L. Kupper & P.R. Russo.**(1985). “Learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students”, *Language Learning*, Vol.35, No.1: 21-46.

**Oxford, R. & M. Nyikos.**(1989) "Variables Affecting Choice of Language Learning Strategies by University Students", *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 73, iii: 291-300.

**Oxford, R.**(1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York: Newbury House

**Oxford, R.**(ed.).(1995). *Language Learning Strategies around the World: Cross-cultural Perspectives*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

**Oxford, R.**(1996). “Employing a Questionnaire to Assess the Use of Language Learning strategies”, *Applied Language Learning*, Vol.7, Nos1&2: 25-45.

**Oxford, R.**(1999). ‘Relationships between Second language Learning Strategies and language Proficiency in the Context of Learner Autonomy and Self-regulation’. *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 38: 108-126.

**Oxford, R.**(2001). “The bleached bones of a story: learners’ constructions of language teachers”. In Breen, Michael P. (ed.): 86-111.

**Oxford, R. & A. Cohen.**(1992). “Language Learning Strategies: Crucial Issues of Concept and Classification”, *Applied Language Learning*, Vol.3, Nos1&2: 1-35.

**Oxford, R., Y. Park-Oh, S. Ito, & M. Sumrall.**(1993). “Japanese by Satellite: Effects of Motivation, Language Learning Styles and Strategies, Gender, Course Level, and Previous Language Learning Experiences on Japanese language Achievement”. *Foreign Language Annals*, Vol.26: 359-371.

**OZ, H.**(2005). “Metacognition in Foreign/ Second Language Learning and Teaching”.

*H.U. Journal of Education*. Vol.29: 147-156.

**Patton, M. Q.**(1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

**Phillipson, R., E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M. Sharwood-Smith, & M. Swain.**(1991) *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research*. Clevedon, Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

**Robinson, P.**(ed.).(2004) *Individual Differences and Instructed Language Learning*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

**Rubin, A. & E. Babbie.**(1997). *Research Methods for Social Work*. Brooks/ Cole Publishing Company: USA.

**Sapsford, R. & V. Jupp.**(2006). *Data Collection and Analysis*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. The Open University.

**Schwartz, B. L., L. S. Benjamin, & R. A. Bjork.**(1997). "The Inferential and Experiential Basis of Metamemory". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol.6: 132-137.

**Seidman, I.**(2006). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. Teachers College, Columbia University.

**Schmitt, N.**(ed.).(2002) *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics*. London: Edward Arnold.

**Singh, K. Y.**(2006). *Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics*. New Age International (P) Ltd., Publishers.

**Skehan, P.**(1998). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

**Skehan, P.**(2002). "Theorizing and Updating Aptitude". In Robinson, P. (ed.): *Individual Differences and Instructed Language Learning*: 98-119. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

**Smith, M. K.**(1999). "Learning Theory". *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. Vol.6, 1999: 1120-1143. [www.infed.org/biblio/b-learn.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-learn.htm).

- Stavans, A. & I. Kupferberg.**(eds.).(2007). *Studies in Language and language Education: Essays in honor of Elite Olshtain*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press.
- Sunderland, J.**(2000). “New understandings of gender and language classroom research: texts, teacher talk and student talk”, *Language Teaching Research*, 4,2: 149-173
- Swetnam, D.**(2004). *Writing Your Dissertation*. Spring Hill House.
- Takac, V. P.**(2008). *Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Foreign Language Acquisition*. Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Takeushi, O., C. Griffiths., & D. Coyle.**(2007). “Applying Strategies to contexts: the role of individual, situational, and group differences”. In Cohen, A & E. Macaro. (Eds.). (2007). *Language Learner Strategies: Thirty Years of Research and Practice*.
- Vandergrift, L.**(1997a). “The Cinderella of Communication Strategies: Receptive Strategies in Interactive Listening”. *Modern Language Journal* 81/4: 494-505.
- Veenman, V. J., H. A. M. Bernadett, V. Houtolers., & P. Afflerbach.**(2006). “Metacognition and Learning: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations”. *Springer Science+ Business Media, Inc.*2006: 3-14.
- Weaver, S. J., & A. Cohen.** (1994). Making Learning Strategy Instruction a Reality in the Foreign Language Curriculum. In C. Klee.(Eds). *Faces in a crowd: individual learners in multisection programs*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 285-323.
- Wenden, A. L.**(1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. U.K.: Prentice Hall.
- Wenden, A.**(1999). “An Introduction to Metacognitive Knowledge and Beliefs in Language Learning”. *System*, 27: 435-441.
- Wenden, A. L. & R. Joan.**(eds).(1987) *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*. UK: Prentice Hall.
- Wharton, G.**(2000). “Language Learning Strategy Use of Bilingual Foreign Language learners in Singapore”. *Language Learning*, 50 (2): 203-244.



# APPENDICES

---

## APPENDIX 1

### The Metacognitive Language learning Strategies Questionnaire

**Your Name:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Your sex:** ..... **Your age:** .....

Male  Female

This questionnaire is designed to investigate students' use of reflective-metacognitive strategies while learning English. We rely on your help and require from you to answer the following questions. There is no right or wrong answer for the questions, and you may be assured that your response will remain completely confidential.

It is important that you answer each question carefully so that the information provided will guarantee the success of the investigation. Work as quickly as you can with considerable care, and be sure to read all the answer choices before marking your answer. This usually takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Following are a number of statements indicating various learning strategies. We would like you to indicate your opinion after each statement by putting an 'X' in the box that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you very much for your help.

#### Section One: General Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies

1. I define goals for every English language task.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

2. I set plans for my learning tasks and work according to these plans.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

3. I regularly check my progress in English learning.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
4. I gather multiple sources (lectures, readings, and discussions) to understand a lecture.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
5. I organize course material through the use of charts, diagrams, or tables.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
6. I think about possible ways to become a better English learner.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
7. I notice my mistakes and use that information to help me do better.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
8. I ask questions about what I learn in the classroom to decide if I find it convincing.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
9. I think of new ways to solve a task.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

Section Two: Metacognitive Strategies for Receptive Learning Skills

10. Before I start listening, I try to predict what information I will hear.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
11. I decide about specific aspects of information to listen to in advance  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
12. I reflect on what I heard to check my listening comprehension.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*
13. I pay attention to meaning when I listen to conversations in English.  
*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

14. While listening, I periodically check whether the information is making sense to me.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

15. I decide in advance what my reading purpose is, and then I read with that goal in mind.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

16. Before I read, I think about what I already know about the topic.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

17. I imagine scenes or draw pictures of what I am reading.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

18. I identify what I do not understand while reading.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

19. while reading, I ask myself questions about the implicit information.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

20. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

### Section Three: Metacognitive Strategies for Productive Learning Skills

21. I decide about my goal for speaking by thinking about what I want to communicate.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

22. I think about what information is most important to the listener so I can focus on it while speaking.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

23. Before I start speaking, I brainstorm words and phrases I can use when talking.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

24. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

25. I check whether I have accomplished my goal in communication.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

26. I set a plan to follow before I start writing.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

27. I reflect upon what I wrote and revise accordingly.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

28. I gather multiple sources of information about the topic I am writing about.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

29. I think of different writing forms to write about a topic.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

30. I correct my mistakes and evaluate my performance after completing the writing task.

*Never*  *Rarely*  *Occasionally*  *Often*  *Always*

*Thank you very much*

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

1. which language learning strategies do you found most effective for your English learning?
2. Since you started learning English, what difficulties have you found?
  - a) Which strategies have you used to overcome these difficulties?
3. What activities do you enjoy the most while learning English?
  - a) Which strategies have you found useful to help you develop your abilities in these activities?
4. What new strategies have you learned while studying English?
5. How do you think your gender affect the choice of the strategies you use?



## APPENDIX 3

### Fiabilité

\*\*\*\*\* Method 1 (space saver) will be used for this analysis \*\*\*\*\*

#### RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (ALPHA)

##### Item-total Statistics

	Mean	Scale Variance	Scale Item- Total Correlation	Corrected Alpha
	if Item Deleted	if Item Deleted		if Item Deleted
VAR00002	62,9659	278,4471	,9481	,9769
VAR00003	63,1023	282,1388	,9469	,9767
VAR00004	62,9432	283,3646	,9527	,9766
VAR00005	65,1705	307,5453	,8336	,9778
VAR00006	62,8523	305,4377	,7068	,9780
VAR00007	62,2273	292,4995	,8556	,9771
VAR00008	65,4091	314,5664	,5731	,9788
VAR00009	63,3182	293,0930	,9039	,9768
VAR00010	65,1136	304,2398	,8069	,9776
VAR00011	65,1705	307,5453	,8336	,9778
VAR00012	65,1932	307,9508	,8188	,9778
VAR00013	62,4886	290,0918	,9391	,9766
VAR00014	65,0000	301,5632	,8386	,9773
VAR00015	63,3864	291,7571	,9314	,9766
VAR00016	65,4773	317,4478	,4511	,9792
VAR00017	65,4659	316,9184	,4763	,9791
VAR00018	62,4659	290,0908	,9413	,9765
VAR00019	65,0568	301,0197	,7826	,9776
VAR00020	62,8068	282,4565	,9462	,9767

VAR00021	65,3523	312,5067	,6494	,9785
VAR00022	65,4545	316,4117	,4989	,9790
VAR00023	62,4318	285,2827	,8782	,9772
VAR00024	62,6364	287,3145	,9297	,9767
VAR00025	65,0568	302,7209	,8272	,9774
VAR00026	64,7614	311,7930	,7295	,9783
VAR00027	64,5795	292,8902	,8702	,9770
VAR00028	64,8864	296,0329	,8267	,9773
VAR00029	65,8923	313,5067	,6494	,9785
VAR00030	65,1932	307,9508	,8188	,9778

## Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases = 88,0

N of Items = 30

Alpha = ,9784

## APPENDIX 4

### CORRELATION

Corrélations			MOYE.GNR	BRIT.LIT	ORAL.EXP	LLS.USE
Rho Spearman	de MOYE.GNR	Coefficient de corrélation	1.000	.697**	.447	.610**
		Sig. (bilatérale)	.	.001	.063	.007
		N	12	12	12	12
	BRIT.LIT	Coefficient de corrélation	.697**	1.000	.496*	.707**
		Sig. (bilatérale)	.001	.	.036	.001
		N	12	12	12	12
	ORAL.EXP	Coefficient de corrélation	.447	.496*	1.000	.421
		Sig. (bilatérale)	.063	.036	.	.082
		N	12	12	12	12
	LLS.USE	Coefficient de corrélation	.610**	.707**	.421	1.000
		Sig. (bilatérale)	.007	.001	.082	.
		N	12	12	12	12

\*\* . La corrélation est significative au niveau.01 (bilatérale).

\* . La corrélation est significative au niveau.05 (bilatérale).



# APPENDICES

---

## French Summary

Cette recherche concerne l'usage des stratégies métacognitives de l'apprentissage des langues pour apprendre l'anglais en tant qu'une langue étrangère. Les stratégies métacognitives de l'apprentissage des langues sont cruciales pour les étudiants des deux sexes afin qu'ils puissent apprendre efficacement. La recherche pratique est faite au niveau du département de l'anglais à l'université FARHAT ABBES, Sétif, Algérie, avec les étudiants de troisième année qui apprennent l'anglais comme une langue étrangère. Il est supposé que plus les apprenants utilisent des stratégies métacognitives de l'apprentissage des langues, plus ils réussissent dans l'apprentissage de ces dernières. L'étude est disposée en deux parties principales. La première partie est quantitative dans laquelle le Questionnaire des Stratégies Métacognitives de L'apprentissage des Langues est administré pour expliquer les différences dans la fréquence rapportée de stratégies métacognitives de l'apprentissage des langues utilisées par tous les étudiants, et à travers les différences du genre. La deuxième partie est une étude qualitative qui utilise des entrevues pour expliquer l'usage de ces stratégies au niveau individuel, dans leur relation avec le genre des étudiants et dans l'exploit de la langue. Les résultats de la partie quantitative ont révélé que l'usage de stratégies métacognitives de l'apprentissage des langues est considérable chez tous les étudiants, et que les différences entre le genre masculin et le genre féminin sont aussi considérables dans la fréquence d'usage de ces stratégies. En outre, les résultats de la partie qualitative ont reflété des différences plus considérables dans l'usage de stratégies métacognitives de l'apprentissage des langues au niveau de genre et d'exploit des langues. La recherche se termine en réunissant l'ensemble des conclusions clés et quelques suggestions pour d'autres recherches supplémentaires.

## Arabic Summary

تتحرى هذه الأطروحة استعمال استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما فوق المعرفية لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تبدأ الأطروحة بمسلمة مفادها أن استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما فوق المعرفية حاسمة لدى طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، بغرض تحقيق تعلم أكثر فعالية، و بأن هنالك اختلافات من ناحية الجنس في استخدام هذه الاستراتيجيات. تناقش الأطروحة في جانبها النظري استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما فوق المعرفية خصوصا، و استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية عموما، بالإضافة الى استعراض مجال البحث. أما جانبها العملي، فقد أنجز على مستوى معهد اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة فرحات عباس- سطيف، الجزائر، مع طلبة السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية. تقوم الأطروحة على ضوء الفرضية التي تنص على أنه كلما ارتفع مستوى استعمال استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما فوق المعرفية من طرف الطلبة، ارتفع مستوى التحصيل اللغوي لديهم. وتنقسم هذه الدراسة الى جزئين رئيسيين. الجزء الأول كمي ويستخدم فيه استبيان استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما وراء المعرفية لتفسير الاختلافات في التردد الوارد في استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما وراء المعرفية، عبر كل الطلبة، وكذا بالنظر الى اختلافات الجنس.

أما الجزء الثاني فهو دراسة كيفية استعملت فيها المقابلة لتفسير استعمال هذه الاستراتيجيات في المستوى الفردي، بالموازاة مع علاقتها بالجنس وتحصيلهم اللغوي. هام لاستعمال استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما وراء المعرفية عبر كل الطلبة، و اختلافات بين الطلاب والطالبات في تردد استعمال هذه الاستراتيجيات.

أكثر أهمية في استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوية ما وراء المعرفية في مستوى الجنس والتحصيل اللغوي. ختمت الأطروحة بملخص لأهم النتائج الرئيسية وبعض الاقتراحات في ميادين البحث.