©KY PUBLICATIONS RESEARCH ARTICLE

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature

(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)

http://journalofelt.kypublications.com

Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

ENHANCING ESL LEARNER'S LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USE

Dr. ATONU KAKOTY

Associate Professor, Department of English

DDR College, Chabua, Assam, India

doi: 10.33329/elt.8.3.5

Dr. ATONU KAKOTY

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the impact of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) instruction on the use of LLSs by Assamese ESL learners. It is an intervention study conducted on a sample of 20 undergraduate learners from two colleges in Assam. The goal of this paper is to examine if LLSs instruction enhances experimental groups' use of LLSs. A SILL based questionnaire and a strategy checklist were used to identify learner's use of LLSs. Though there was no significant difference between control and experimental groups in their use of LLS in reading and writing activity in English before strategy instruction, it was found that there was an impact after the LLSs instruction which is evident from the independent samples t-test. The obtained T-values (2.104 and 4.556) were significant (p=.050, p=.05 and p=.000; p<.05) for SILL based questionnaire and strategy checklist respectively. This indicated that the mean scores in the use of LLSs by the experimental and control groups differ statistically significantly after the LLSs treatment. Thus, it can be concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the use of LLSs after receiving LLSs instruction.

Key words: Language Learning Strategies, Assamese ESL Learners, LLSs Inventory, Ethnicity and LLSs Use, Enhancing LLSs Use.

Introduction

Awareness of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) in the field of Second or Foreign Language (SL/FL) learning is the byproduct of shifting emphasis from teacher and teaching to learner and learning during the last few decades. LLSs are 'operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information…; specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations' (Oxford, 1990:8). Therefore, LLSs are good indicators of how learners approach tasks or problems encountered during the process of language learning. The ability of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve a language learner's language proficiency. In the course of time, the learner builds up learner independence and autonomy that enables the learner capable of taking control of his/her own learning. Moreover, LLSs contribute to the development of the communicative competence of the students. Therefore it is evitable that teachers who train students to use LLSs can help them become better language learners.

In Assam English as a Second Language (ESL) is taught more as a content based subject rather than a skill-based subject. Moreover, most ESL classrooms are less learner centric and more teacher centric. As a result, less or no attention is paid to how a learner learns the target language. This makes ESL learning monotonous and unfruitful to a great extent. Despite being exposed to English right at the primary level of

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) ISSN:2455-0302

education, the learners exhibit poor competence and low performance usually below the expected level even at the undergraduate level. The present study is therefore undertaken to investigate the impact of LLSs instruction with an aim to enhance Assamese ESL learners' LLSs use.

Literature review

More than forty years have passed since the two pioneers in the field Stern (1975) and Rubin (1975) first talked about Language Learning Strategies. For Rubin (1975), learning strategies are "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge (Rubin, 1975:43). She further categorized LLSs into direct and indirect strategies depending on their contribution to learning. During the same time, Stern (1975:304-318) produced a list of ten language learning strategies which he believed to be characteristic of good language learners. Since then, there has been awareness that LLSs are important learning tools.

A large number of studies have been carried out worldwide to identify the use and raising awareness of LLSs to diverse group of leaners in SL and FL contexts. The results of such studies are mostly positive in the sense that they increases strategy awareness as it is reflected in the appropriateness and increased use of LLSs in the post training period. For example, Bremner (1999), Hong-Nam and Leavel (2006), Yang (2007) etc.

Bremner (1999) surveyed the language learning strategies used by a group of Hong Kong learners. The aims of the study were to investigate levels of strategy use among the group, and to examine levels of association between strategy use and language proficiency. The SILL questionnaire (Strategies Inventory of Language Learning) by Oxford (1990, pp. 293-300) was used. The results showed that compensation and metacognitive strategies were the most used, while affective and memory strategies were the least used.

Hong-Nam and Leavel (2006) investigated the language learning strategy use of 55 ESL students with differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds enrolled in a college Intensive English Program (IEP). The IEP is a language learning institute for pre-admissions university ESL students, and is an important step in developing not only students' basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS), but more importantly their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Proficiency with academic English is a key contributor to students' success in learning in their second language. Using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the study examined the relationship between language learning strategy use and second language proficiency, focusing on differences in strategy use across gender and nationality. The study found a curvilinear relationship between strategy use and English proficiency, revealing that students in the intermediate level reported more use of learning strategies than beginning and advanced levels. More strategic language learners advance along the proficiency continuum faster than less strategic ones. The study found that the students preferred to use metacognitive strategies most, whereas they showed the least use of affective and memory strategies. Females tended to use affective and social strategies more frequently than males.

Yang (2007) carried out a study to investigate the effects of ethnicity and language proficiency on the use of language learning strategies by junior college students. Specifically, the study aimed to find out whether the frequency of strategy use across aboriginal and non-aboriginal junior college students and across high, intermediate and low English proficiency groups varied significantly. To identify the learning strategies that different ethnic and proficiency groups use, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was administrated to 451 junior college students. It was found that ethnicity did play a significant role in the selection of language learning strategies. Language proficiency influenced learners' use of language learning strategies. More proficient students reported using strategies more often than less proficient students.

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) ISSN:2455-0302

Hypothesis and Research Questions

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The following hypothesis and research questions guided the present study.

H_0: There is no significant impact of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) instruction on the use of LLSs by the Assamese ESL learners in reading and writing in English.

Research Questions:

What are the most and least frequently used LLSs categories by the Assamese ESL learners before LLSs instruction?

What are the most and least frequently used LLSs categories by the Assamese ESL learners after LLSs instruction?

Is there any difference in the use of LLSs by the experimental and control groups before LLSs instruction?

Is there any difference in the use of LLSs by the experimental and control groups after LLSs instruction?

Methodology

This is an Intervention Study that adopted a 'pre-test - post-test control-group design'. A sample of 20 students from two colleges of the population of first semester undergraduate students of Dibrugarh University participated in this study. The learners were pretested before LLSs treatment. They were then divided into control group (N=10) and experimental group (N=10). The control group did not receive any special teaching. They received traditional method of teaching. The experimental group received LLSs instruction for four weeks on different LLSs pertaining to reading and writing in English. After the treatment sessions, the groups were again post tested on the same reading and writing activity questionnaire in order to identify the impact, if any, of the LLSs instruction on the experimental group. The instruments used in the study were a Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) based questionnaire (Oxford, 1990), a strategy checklist, a reading and writing activity questionnaire.

Results and Findings

Results for the Research Questions:

1. What are the most and least frequently used LLSs categories by the Assamese ESL learners before LLSs instruction?

In reporting the frequency of use of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs), Oxford's (1990) key to understanding mean scores on SILL based questionnaire is employed. The scale of the SILL based questionnaire ranges from 1 to 5 as follows:

1. HIGH USE = 3.5to 4.4 (usually used) and 4.5 to 5.0 (almost always used)
2. MEDIUM USE = 2.5 to 3.4 (sometimes used)
3. LOW USE = 1.0 to 1.4 (never or almost never used) and 1.5 to 2.4 (usually not used)

Table 1 shows the Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the reported use of all the six broad categories of LLSs before the application of language learning strategies instruction. It can be observed that the metacognitive strategy is the most frequently used strategy with a mean of 3.89 and standard deviation of .45 and compensation strategy is the least frequently used one with M=3.22, SD=.69.

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

Table 1: Frequency of LLSs Use in Pre-test

Strategy	N	Mean	SD	Rank	Strategy use
Metacognitive	20	3.8944	.44805	1	High
Social	20	3.6000	.79472	2	High
Affective	20	3.5125	.74549	3	High
Cognitive	20	3.4885	.45630	4	Medium
Memory	20	3.4500	.51327	5	Medium
Compensation	20	3.2200	.68947	6	Medium
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Next to metacognitive strategy, the students seem to use social followed by affective, cognitive and memory strategies. The Assamese ESL learners reported high use of LLSs categories, as the mean of overall strategy use is 3.53.

2. What are the most and least frequently used LLSs categories by the Assamese ESL learners after LLSs instruction?

It is evident from Table 2 that the metacognitive strategy is the most frequently used strategy (M=3.97, SD=.51) which was also the case before LLSs instruction. On the other hand, students seldom use affective strategy (M=3.47, SD=.69). Next to metacognitive strategy, the students use cognitive (M=3.62, SD=.49), compensation (M=3.61, SD=.67), social (M=3.60, SD=.81) and memory strategies (M=3.53, SD=.54). The overall mean LLSs use is 3.63. Thus, it indicates the high use of LLSs.

Table 2: Frequency of LLSs Use in Post-test

Strategies	N	Mean	SD	Rank	Strategy use
Metacognitive	20	3.9710	.51022	1	High
Cognitive	20	3.6220	.49476	2	High
Compensation	20	3.6100	.67270	3	High
Social	20	3.5995	.80946	4	High
Memory	20	3.5340	.53554	5	High
Affective	20	3.4650	.69075	6	Medium
Valid N (listwise)	20				

3. Is there any difference in the use of LLSs by the experimental and control groups before LLSs instruction?

An independent-samples t-test is conducted in order to see if there is any significant difference in the use of overall LLSs of SILL based questionnaire between the experimental and control groups in the pre-test context.

Table 3: Mean Scores of the Overall Use of LLSs of SILL in Pre-test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SILL Strategies	Experimental Group	10	3.5833	.19928	.06302
	Control Group	10	3.5238	.40500	.12807

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

The comparison of the mean scores of the two groups in Table 3 (experimental group M=3.58, SD=.20; control group M=3.52, SD=.41) does not reveal a high difference in the use of LLSs.

Table 4: T-test of Groups in Overall Use of LLSs of SILL in Pre-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
SILL Strategies	Equal variances assumed	5.149	.036	.417	18	.682	.05952	.14274	-.24035	.35940
	Equal variances not assumed			.417	13.117	.683	.05952	.14274	-.24856	.36761

The Leven's test of equality of variances in Table 4 reports that the F test (F=5.149) is significant (p=.036, p<.05). It implies that the variability of the two groups is significantly different from each other. However, the t-value obtained (.417) is not significant (p=.683, p>.05). Thus, there is no significant difference between the two groups in the use of overall LLSs of SILL based questionnaire before the LLSs instruction.

An independent samples t-test is carried out to investigate if any statistically significant difference exists between the experiment and the control group in using the LLSs of the strategy checklist.

Table 5: Mean Scores of the Groups in Overall Use of LLSs of Checklist in Pre-test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Checklist Strategies	Experimental Group	10	7.50	1.080	.342
	Control Group	10	7.40	1.265	.400

Table 5 shows that the mean strategy use of the experimental group (M=7.50, SD=1.08) is slightly higher than the control group (M=7.40, SD=1.27).

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

Table 6: Comparison of Mean Scores in Overall Use of LLSs of Checklist in Pre-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Checklist Strategies	Equal variances assumed	.424	.523	.190	18	.851	.100	.526	-1.005	1.205
	Equal variances not assumed			.190	17.569	.851	.100	.526	-1.007	1.207

Table 6 presents the result of the t-test. The Leven's test of equality of variances shows that F test (F=.424) is not significant (p=.523, p>.05). It implies that the variability between the two groups is not significantly different. The T-value (.190) is also not significant (p=.851, p>.05). This indicates that the difference in the use of LLSs of checklist is not statistically significant between the two groups in the pre-test context. Therefore, both SILL and strategy checklist indicate that before LLSs treatment the groups were homogenous in their use of LLSs.

4. Is there any difference in the use of LLSs by the experimental and control groups after LLSs instruction?

The group statistics in Table 7 reveals that there is difference in the mean scores (experimental group M=3.83, SD=.24; control group M=3.52, SD= .39) of the two groups in the use of LLSs in the posttest context.

Table 7: Mean Scores of the Groups in Overall Use of LLSs of SILL in Post-test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SILL Strategies	Experimental Group	10	3.8260	.24107	.07623
	Control Group	10	3.5190	.39335	.12439

Table 8 shows that there is no variability between the two groups as the Leven's test of equality of variance shows that the F test (F=4.196) is not significant (p=.055, p>.05). The T-value obtained (2.104) is significant (p=.050, p=.05).

Therefore, it can be concluded that in the post-test context, there is statistically significant difference in the use of LLSs of the SILL based questionnaire between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group students outperformed the control group students in the use of LLSs.

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

Table 8: T-test of Groups in Overall Use of LLSs of SILL in Post-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Average SILL Strategies	Equal variances assumed	4.196	.055	2.104	18	.050	.30700	.14589	.00050	.61350
	Equal variances not assumed			2.104	14.925	.053	.30700	.14589	-.00409	.61809

An independent samples t-test is carried out to identify if there is any difference between the experimental and the control groups in the use of LLSs of strategy checklist in the post-test context.

Table 9: Mean Scores of the Groups in Overall Use of LLSs of Checklist in Post-test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Checklist Strategies	Experimental Group	10	12.30	2.058	.651
	Control Group	10	8.50	1.650	.522

Table 9 shows that the mean strategy use of the experimental group (M=12.30, SD=2.06) is greater than the control group (M=8.50, SD=1.65) in the post-test context.

Table 10 shows the result of the independent samples t-test. The Leven's test of equality of variance states that the F value (.123) is not significant (p=.729, p>.05). In other words, there is no variability between the two groups. The t value obtained (4.556) is significant (p=.000; p<.05). This indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups in the use of LLSs of the checklist in the post-test context. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and it can be concluded that there is a significant impact of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) instruction on the use of LLSs by the Assamese ESL learners in reading and writing in English.

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

Table 10: T-test of Groups in Overall Use of LLSs of Checklist in Post-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Strategies	Equal variances assumed	.123	.729	4.556	18	.000	3.800	.834	2.048	5.552
	Equal variances not assumed			4.556	17.189	.000	3.800	.834	2.042	5.558

Discussion

The SILL based questionnaire and strategy checklist were the two instruments to measure the use of LLSs. It was found that metacognitive strategy was the most frequently used strategy followed by cognitive, compensation, social and memory and affective strategies. This finding is consistent with Bremner (1999), Hong-Nam and Leavel (2006), Yang (2007) who have also found that higher level learners use more metacognitive strategies.

The t-test revealed that before the LLSs instruction, the groups were homogenous in the use of LLSs. However, after the LLSs treatment, a statistically significant difference between the experimental and the control groups was witnessed. The experimental group outperformed the control group in the use of LLSs after receiving LLSs instruction. Increase in the LLSs use implies greater awareness on the part of the learners regarding the usefulness of LLSs in effective language learning.

Conclusion

The study revealed that undergraduate Assamese ESL learners are high users of LLSs and they use more metacognitive than any other strategies. Moreover they used more strategies after LLSs instruction. The study recommends that LLSs instruction should be introduced in the Assamese ESL teaching learning situation to increase language proficiency through raising awareness of LLSs. The findings further suggest that the curriculum planners and policy makers should integrate strategies-based instruction in the educational system from early stages of learning.

References

Bremner, Stephen. (1999). Language learning strategies and language proficiency: investigating the relationship in Hong Kong. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 55*(4), 490-514. Retrieved on 12/05/2019 from https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/cmlr.55.4.490

Hong-Nam, Kyungsim & Leavell, Alexandra G. (2006). Language learning strategy use of ESL students in an intensive English learning context. *System 34,* 399–415.

International Journal of ELT, Linguistics and Comparative Literature
(*Old Title-Journal of ELT & Poetry*)
http://journalofelt.kypublications.com
Vol.8.Issue.3. 2020(May-June) **ISSN:2455-0302**

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

Rubin, J. (1975). What the 'good language learner' can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly, 9*, 41-51.

Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review, 31,* 304-318.

TOEFL. (2005). *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test and score manual.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Yanng, Ming-Nuan. (2007). Language learning strategies for junior college students in Taiwan: investigating ethnicity and proficiency. *The Asian EFL Journal, 9*(2), 35-57. Retrieved on 03/10/2018 from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Atonu Kakoty, is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, at DDR College, Assam, India. He did his PhD in Linguistics from North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India. He is an MA in English as well as Linguistics. He did PGCTE and PGDTE from CIEFL (presently EFLU), Hyderabad, India. He is a member of English Language Teachers Association of India (ELTAI). He teaches English language and literature. His research interest is second language education and Applied Linguistics. Email: atonu_kakoty@yahoo.co.in Address: Dibrugarh, Assam, 786001, India.