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EFFECT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES ON LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF CHINESE AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

In Malaysia, the practice of teaching Chinese as a foreign language dates back to 1963 and has grown in acceptance. The attainment of Chinese as a Foreign Language ultimately depends on the action's students take to enhance their learning, or Language Learning Strategies. Student achievement is determined on how Language Learning Strategies are used. The present research aims to investigate the correlation between Language Learning Strategies and the Chinese language proficiency of learners in Malaysia. This study applies the theory of Language Learning Strategies through correlational research, which is a quantitative research method. 379 University of Selangor undergraduate students made up the study sample. The findings demonstrated the relationship between student achievement and language learning strategies.

Keywords:

Chinese as Foreign Language, Language Learning Strategies, Language Learning Achievement

Introduction

Malaysia is a nation that provides a learning environment where multiple languages are used. The Malaysian population consists of Malays, who are also referred to as 67.4% of Bumiputras, 24.6% of Chinese, 7.3% of Indians, and 0.7% of other ethnic groups. The Malay ethnic group constitutes the largest portion of the population, accounting for the majority of the 28.3 million people (Malaysia,2019). The Malay Language is officially designated as the national language of the country.

Chinese standard language, or Mandarin standard language, refers to this in this context. It is derived from a specific dialect that is spoken in Beijing. The most commonly spoken dialect of Chinese worldwide is Mandarin Chinese. Mandarin uses a large number of synonyms from other nations and regions. China refers to the language as "Mandarin" or "Chinese," while Taiwan refers to it as "Guoyu." In nations in Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia and Singapore, it is also called "Chinese." The Republic of China (Taiwan), the People's Republic of China, and Singapore all have Mandarin as their official language. Malaysian Chinese speak Mandarin as their primary language, while they are also proficient in various dialects (Tan et al., 2017).

The official language of Malaysia is Malay. Other languages that are learned and used besides Malay are also regarded as foreign languages. Languages such as English are considered second languages in Malaysia. Third languages are generally defined as languages other than English and Malay. A variety of foreign language courses, including English, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, German, Spanish, and Thai, are frequently offered by Malaysia's public higher education institutions. These courses may be required or elective. The government introduced foreign languages, including Arabic, Japanese, French, and German, in national high schools under the 1996 Education Act. This illustrates the government's dedication to foreign language instruction given its advantages in the political, economic, and sociocultural spheres (Yin & Ho, 2013).

China now has one of the largest economies in the world thanks to its economic growth. In response, China has opened a large number of non-profit Chinese language schools across the globe since 2002. The name given to them currently is Confucius Institutes. In order to build bridges between China and other countries, these institutes seek to advance Mandarin and Chinese cultural understanding through education. As of December 2017, Yu (2018) reports that there were 1,113 Confucius Classrooms and 525 Confucius Institutes located in 146 different countries and territories across the globe. Individuals from foreign nations need to become fluent in Chinese in order to conduct business or provide services in China. As a result, studying Chinese has become quite popular in the modern day.

Yap carried out two separate studies: "A Study on the Development of TCSL in Malaysian Universities" and "Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) in Malaysia." The last study looked at the development and factors that have influenced "TCSL in Malaysian Universities." However, research results on the transmission of the Chinese language based on a macro-comprehensive study and a global perspective are still pending. The aim of this research is to investigate the national development of TCSL. As a result, this research is useful for formulating theories for both the local Chinese language spread and the TCSL in Malaysian colleges. It is also deserving of international citation (Yap, 2011).

Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) was initially taught at Malaysian higher education institutions in 1963, although the number of students studying Chinese there has been rising annually. Additionally, the Department of Chinese Studies at the University of Malaya offers Chinese courses that non-Chinese students can enroll in. As a result, Malaysia has produced a top CFL for nearly 50 years. As of September 2011, all 20 state institutions in Malaysia offered Mandarin classes. However, Tan et al. (2017) claim that Malaysian institutions have failed to produce a standard framework that meets the needs of all. See and Ching state that Mandarin courses at the university level are either required courses for foreign language majors or free electives. Nevertheless, even after completing the course, most people still struggle with communication, therefore there are still many gaps in their performance. Most respondents said that learning Chinese letters was more difficult than acquiring Hanyu Pinyin pronunciation (See, 2013).

According to Oxford (1989), language learning strategies (LSS) are "behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable." He thinks there are several reasons why language learning techniques are important. First, there is a strong correlation between successful language achievement and proper LSS. Learners will gain a great deal if they understand how to use LSS properly. According to the second point, students who employ suitable LSS assume responsibility for their education by "improving learners' self-reliance, independence, and autonomy." Third, LSS is teachable, in contrast to the majority of other learning traits (ability, attitude, and personality) (Oxford & Crookall, 1989).

Although the importance of LSS is widely recognized, there are differences in viewpoints regarding its classification. Oxford is credited with creating the most well-known language type, LSS, which it states is "the most comprehensive classification of LSS to date" (1999). LSS are divided into two groups: direct strategies, which are immediately related to the target language, and indirect strategies, which are "not directly related to the subject itself, but are essential for language learning" (Oxford, 2011). Direct methods include memory, cognition, and compensating procedures; indirect strategies include emotive, social, and metacognitive strategies.

The effect of LSS on language learning achievement (LLA) among Malaysian students studying Chinese as a foreign language would be the main focus of this study.

Statement оf Problem

LSS and LLA were shown to be significantly correlated; most research indicated that employing more LSS would affect achievement (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001). At the p<.05 level, the findings show a positive correlation between LLA and the widespread use of LLS (Abdul-Ghafour & Alrefaee, 2019). The results of the study are consistent with those of Cohen and Macaro (2009), who discovered a favorable correlation between LLS and LLA. Conversely, Abu Shmais discovered no connection between LLS and LLA in Palestinian EFL students (Shmais, 2003). In CFL research, is there a meaningful correlation between LLS and LLA? The majority of studies examine the status of LLS and LLA; however, there aren't many that concentrate on CFL. For that reason, the goal of this study is to ascertain the degree of LLA and LLS among CFL students.

Research Questions
RQ1: What are the Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement level among Chinese as Foreign Language students?
RQ2: What is the relationship between Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

Research Method
The design of this study is non-experimental; that is, no environment, set of conditions, or experience have been altered. Without introducing any treatments or making any adjustments, the researcher simply gathers data. The control and treatment groups cannot therefore be compared. In non-experimental design, like survey research, a sample is chosen from the population, the study is conducted on the sample, and the research findings are then extrapolated to the entire population (Piaw, 2013). This study was carried out using a survey methodology, with respondents receiving a questionnaire.

This study focuses on one of Malaysia's biggest public colleges, where CFL's class has about 9000 pupils. This study centers on this eminent Selangor university, which has amassed the most number of CFL students in Malaysia. A table created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) aids the researcher in determining the sample size (with 95% confidence); 368 is an adequate sample size for a population of 9000. Thus, 379 Selangor undergraduate students make up the study sample. Because they are the group who finished the Mandarin circle in university, this study will concentrate on students who completed level 3 Mandarin.

The Oxford-developed SILL questionnaire, version 5.1, was used in this study. It included memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The five-point likert-scale instrument (1: Never or almost never true of me; 2: Generally not true of me; 3: Somewhat true of me; 4: Generally true of me; 5: Always or almost always true of me) was used (Oxford, 2011).

Here, SILL is emphasized as the most popular language learning strategy assessment tool in the world. But a lot of additional approaches for evaluating strategies can also be applied in other contexts. SILL's validity and dependability are also thoroughly documented. In numerous reliability tests, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency index is 0.94-0.98 when managed in English (80 SILL). The Alpha value of 50 items is.89-.90 when English-speaking non-native English speakers—including those who speak several distinct native languages—are collected and handled. The final exam grade is used in this study as the dependent variable for language learning success.

Table 1: Items of SILL

Part	Strategies	No. items
A	Memory	14
B	Cognitive	19
C	Compensation	8
D	Metacognitive	16
E	Affective	7
F	Social	9

Table 1 showed the total number of items on the SILL questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises six different methods: memory strategy (14 items), cognitive strategy (19 items), compensatory strategy (8 items), metacognitive strategies (8 items), affective strategy (16 items), and social strategy (4 items).

Research Findings

RQ1: What are the Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement level among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

		ACH	MEM	COG	COM	MET	AFF	SOC
N	Valid	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
Mean		3.60	3.61	3.53	3.61	3.68	3.51	3.69
Std. Deviation		.627	.615	.617	.654	.651	.736	.666
Skewness		.548	.171	.171	.059	.172	.126	.298
Std. Error of Skewness		.125	.125	.125	.125	.125	.125	.125
Kurtosis		-.618	-.142	.332	.317	-.347	-.203	-.627
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.250	.250	.250	.250	.250	.250	.250

Table 2 showed the mean score for the following strategies: Memory (3.61, SD.615), Cognitive (3.53, SD..617), Compensation (3.61, SD.654), Metacognitive (3.68, SD.651), Affective (3.51, SD.736), Social (3.69, SD.666), and CFL accomplishment (3.6, SD.627). The data also has a normal distribution, skewness between -2 and 2, and kurtosis between -7 and 7.

RQ2: What is the relationship between Language Learning Strategy and Language Learning Achievement among Chinese as Foreign Language students?

Table 3: Correlations

		ACH	MEM	COG	COM	MET	AFF	SOC
ACH	P	1	.720**	.751**	.696**	.768**	.676**	.691**
	Sig		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
MEM	P	.720**	1	.780**	.648**	.720**	.682**	.630**
	Sig	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
COG	P	.751**	.780**	1	.706**	.800**	.683**	.664**
	Sig	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379

COM	P	.696**	.648**	.706**	1	.709**	.590**	.642**
	Sig	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
MET	P	.768**	.720**	.800**	.709**	1	.700**	.734**
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
AFF	P	.676**	.682**	.683**	.590**	.700**	1	.684**
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379
SOC	P	.691**	.630**	.664**	.642**	.734**	.684**	1
	Sig	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 showed the findings of the inter-correlation analysis, indicating a significant association between LLA and Memory Strategy (r= .72), Cognitive Strategy (r=.751), and Metacognitive Strategy (r=.768). The results indicate a moderate connection between LLA and Compensation Strategy (r= .696), Affective Strategy (r= .676), and Social Strategy (r= .691). All of the correlations exhibit statistical significance at a p-value of less than 0.05. The test results indicate that LLA has a considerable impact on CFL learning, and there is also a correlation between LLS and LLA.

Discussion
LLS refers to actions made by students to improve their education. Strategies are crucial in language learning as they serve as instruments for active, self-directed engagement, which is fundamental for the development of communicative competence. She put forward a more precise delineation of LLS. That is, "the specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more interesting, more self-directed, more effective, and more adaptable to new situations." (Oxford, 1990).

Oxford (1990) states that there is a strong correlation between the use of suitable language learning strategies (LSS) and good language achievement. The results indicate that the Memory Strategy has a correlation coefficient of 0.72, the Cognitive Strategy has a correlation coefficient of 0.751, and the Metacognitive Strategy has a correlation coefficient of 0.768. The results indicate a considerable association between LLA and Compensation Strategy (r= .696), Affective Strategy (r= .676), and Social Strategy (r= .691). Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates a significant relationship between LLS and LLA, as indicated by p<.05.

Conclusion
There is a growing need for more Chinese teachers to meet this demand due to the growing interest in Chinese and the rise in local students studying the language. Given the significant of the relationship between LLS and LLA, it can help Mandarin language teachers apply the LLS to students.

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