

THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES BY TURKISH ELEMENTARY AND UPPER-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL PREPARATORY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate the use of language learning strategies reported by 114 students at the Preparatory School of Cyprus International University. The study was conducted in the 2009- 2010 academic year with Elementary and Upper-Intermediate level students. The study is based on one independent variable (learners' proficiency levels), six dependent variables (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies) and possible relationships between these variables. 84 students from the Elementary level and 30 students from the Upper-Intermediate level participated in the study. The results of the study showed that Upper-Intermediate level students use language learning strategies more frequently than Elementary level students. Statistically significant difference was found between the learners' proficiency levels and their use of cognitive, compensation, and social strategy.

Keywords: Language, language learning, language learning strategies, proficiency level, upper- intermediate, elementary.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In recent years, there have been a lot of developments in industry, economy, business, trade, politics, communication and education. America and England have become the power in those fields. Many international and multinational companies have set up and in lots of universities the education language has become English. As a result of these changes, it is preferable to learn English as a second language all over the world. Today millions of people in the world are trying to learn English.

Besides the developments in industry, culture and communication, also an important shift has taken place in the field of education. English has become the most learnt language all around the world. A lot of methods and techniques are used by language teachers but in the last decades an important emphasis has been given to communicate with others rather than learning grammar rules of English. As a result of this change, also the roles of the learners' and teachers' have started to change. In the past, during the learning process teachers had more responsibility than learners but during the last two decades, learners have had more responsibility about their learning process and learning a second language has become more learner-centered than teacher-centered. Clouston (1997, p.1) summarizes this change as "less emphasis on teachers and teaching and more emphasis on learners and learning."

With learner-centered methods, the importance of individual differences of the learners started to come into prominence. In studies it is seen that under the same conditions, with the same teachers and the same methods some students are more successful than others. Some researchers such as Rubin (1975, 1981) and Stern (1975) tried to define the characteristics of Good Language Learners (GLLs). In these studies the importance of strategy use was understood. It was seen that every student uses some strategies while learning a foreign language and their strategy choice was affected by different variables (gender, culture, proficiency level of English, personality type, etc.).

Language Learning Strategies

Although the definition of term LLS has been concerned of many authors and researchers it is not an easy task to define and classify the language learning strategies. Ellis (1994, p. 529) describes this complexity as a “fuzziness”. Gu (1996, p.2) states that “there is, as yet, not a general developmental pattern in the conception of learning strategies.”

Ellis (1994) presents the definitions of LLSs based on the defining of Stern (1983), Weinstein & Mayer (1986), Chamot (1987), Rubin (1987) and Oxford (1989) in a well summarized and brief table. According to Ellis' brief table it is seen that strategies are mostly defined as general tendencies, overall characteristics, behaviours, thoughts, techniques, approaches, deliberate actions, sets of operations, steps, plans, routines, processes which are consciously selected by learners to improve their learning. In one of the earliest studies was made by Rubin (1975) a very broad definition of learning strategies was given. She defines learning strategies as “the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge.” (Rubin 1975, p. 43). Six years after defining the learning strategies she divided them into two categories. Rubin (1981 cited in Griffiths, 2004) categorized language strategies as direct strategies that directly contribute to learning and indirect strategies that indirectly contribute to learning. She divides the direct learning strategies into six types (classification/verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing/inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, practice) and the indirect strategies into two types (creating opportunities for practice, production tricks). Under production tricks she includes communicative strategies, which are controversial since language strategies and communicative strategies are seen by some researchers as two quite separate manifestations of language learning behaviour.

According to Ellis (1986), who views learner strategies as a more general phenomenon, language strategies have two quite different subsets as: strategies for using and strategies for learning a language. He defines communication strategies as “devices for compensating for inadequate resources” (Ibid, p. 165) and includes them under strategies of using a language. He also argues that it is possible that successful use of communication strategies may actually hinder language learning since skilful compensation for lack of knowledge may obviate the need for learning.

Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies

Language Learning Strategies have been classified by many researchers such as Rubin (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990) etc., but most of these attempts to classify LLS reflect more or less the same categorization without any fundamental changes.

Rubin's Taxonomy

In Rubin's (1987) there are three types of strategies used by learners which contribute directly or indirectly to language learning. These are;

Cognitive learning strategies are the steps or processes used in learning or problem solving tasks that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin (1987) states that there are six main cognitive learning strategies (clarification/ verification, guessing/ inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, and monitoring) which directly contribute to language learning.

Metacognitive learning strategies are used to supervise, control or self-direct language learning. Various processes such as planning, prioritising, setting goals, and self-management are involved in metacognitive learning strategies.

Communication strategies are the strategies which are less directly related to language learning because they focus on the process of participating in a conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intends. They are used by speakers when they are confronted with misunderstanding by a co-speaker.

Social strategies provide the learners with the opportunities to interact with others and practise their knowledge. Despite creating exposure to the target language, they contribute indirectly to obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using language.

O'Malley and Chamot's Taxonomy

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) identify 26 strategies under three main groups of metacognitive, cognitive and social/ affective strategies.

Metacognitive strategies is a term which requires planning for learning, thinking about the learning process which is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. It is possible to include direct attention, selective attention, self-management, advance organizers, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, and self-evaluation among the main metacognitive strategies.

Cognitive strategies are more limited both to specific learning tasks and learning material itself. Repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, elaboration, contextualization, auditory representation, transfer, etc., are among the most important cognitive strategies.

Socioaffective strategies involve interaction with another person. Socioaffective strategies are questioning for clarification and cooperation with others in order to solve a problem.

Oxford's Taxonomy

According to Oxford (1990) there are six main strategies. Oxford as Rubin (1987) divides the strategies into two major groups as direct strategies that include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies and indirect strategies that include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. According to her definition direct strategies are involved in conscious mental processes, while indirect strategies are not consciously applied but are essential to language learning.

Memory Strategies have a specific function to help students for storing and retrieving new information. Memory strategies help learners to link a L2 item with another without involving deep understanding.

Cognitive Strategies enable learners to understand and produce new language by different means, e.g., through reasoning, note-taking, summarizing, etc. They are not only used for mentally processing the language to receive and send messages, but they are also used for analyzing and reasoning. Moreover, they are used for structuring the input and output.

Compensation Strategies help learners to keep the communication going in the target language in spite of the gaps in their knowledge. They aim to make compensation for limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. When learners come across with unknown expressions, they try to guess their meanings. They help learners to produce written or spoken expressions in the target language without the necessity of complete knowledge of it.

Metacognitive Strategies allow learners to control their own cognition, go beyond the cognitive devices and enable learners to coordinate with their own learning process by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating. They provide some guidance for the learners who are usually “overwhelmed by too much ‘newness’ – unfamiliar vocabulary, confusing rules, different writing systems, seemingly inexplicable social customs, and (in enlightened language classes) non-traditional instructional approaches” (Oxford, 1990, p. 136).

Affective Strategies help learners to have better control over their emotions, motivations and attitude towards the language learning. If learners know how to control their emotions and attitudes towards learning, that may influence learning positively and learning may become more enjoyable and effective.

Social Strategies help students to learn how to promote their learning through interaction with the speakers of the target language. They are very important because they determine the nature of communication in a learning context.

Factors Affecting Strategy Choice

A lot of studies have been made in order to find out the factors that affect learners' LLS use. It has been seen that learners' LLS preferences have been influenced by a great deal of different factors such as learners' gender, personality type, motivation, proficiency level, nationality, learning styles, and attitudes and beliefs about language learning.

The effect of gender on LLS use has been investigated by many researchers (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Green and Oxford, 1995; Chandler, Lizotte and Rowe; 1998; Ghadesi, 1998; among others cited in Rahimi, Riazzi and Saif, 2008). In some studies distinct gender differences in strategy use are discovered (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989 ; Oxford and Nyikos; 1989 ; Green and Oxford, 1995 cited in Griffiths, 2004). However, in their other study, Ehrman and Oxford (1990) failed to discover any evidence of difference between LLS use and learners' genders.

Another factor that affects learners' language strategy use is related to learners' personality type. Ehrman and Oxford (1989) stated that there was not a clear relationship between learners' LLS use and learners' personality type. In a later study Ehrman (1990 cited in Ellis, 1994) finds some differences between learners' LLS use and their personality type. His study shows that extrovert learners are willing to take risks but with dependency on outside stimulation and interaction. Another finding of the study shows that introvert learners use strategies in significantly great rates, which involve searching for and communicating meaning, than extrovert learners.

Motivation is an important factor that affects learners' LLS use. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) surveyed 1,200 students who were studying a foreign language in Midwest American University in order to examine the types of LLSs used by the students. It was found that “the degree of expressed motivation was the single most powerful influence on the choice of language learning strategies” (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989, p. 294). Oxford (1994, p. 2) states that “more motivated students tended to use more strategies than less motivated students, and the particular reason for studying the language (motivational orientation, especially as related to career field) was important in the choice of strategies.”

Proficiency level is another factor that affects learners' LLS use. In many researches (Chang, 1990; Green and Oxford, 1995; Park, 1997; Chen, 2002; among others cited in Rahimi et al., 2008) a high level of proficiency has been associated with an increased use of both direct and indirect strategies. Some more specific studies were made (Ku, 1995; Peacock and Ho, 2003 cited in Rahimi et. al. 2008) and it was found that there are high correlations with cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and high proficiency levels. In his study O'Malley et al (1985 cited in Rahimi et. al. 2008) studied with

beginner and intermediate high school students who were learning a foreign language. The results of the study showed that both groups used more cognitive than metacognitive strategies while intermediate students used more metacognitive strategies than beginner students. However, translation strategy was used more by beginners, whereas contextualization strategy was used more by intermediate level students. Chen (1990 cited in Rahimi et al 2008) made a study to find out the relationship between communication strategies and the proficiency level of L2 learners. The results of the study showed that communication strategies were used more by learners with low-proficiency than learners with high-proficiency. The same study indicated that learners with high-proficiency levels mainly employed linguistic-based communication strategies more frequently than high-proficiency learners, while learners with high-proficiency levels mainly made use of knowledge-based strategies. Park (1997) studied with 332 Korean EFL students to find out the relationship between learners' proficiency levels and their LLS preference. The results of his study showed that there is a linear correlation between learners' proficiency level and LLS use. For the study it was examined that there was a significant correlation between learners' Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores and their all six categories of LLS use and the overall strategy use. Peacock and Ho (2003) examined 1006 students who were learning English for Academic Purposes and a significant relationship was found between students' proficiency level and their LLS preference. As a result of the study, it was found that cognitive and metacognitive strategies were used by the participants with high-proficiency levels. Compensation strategies were favored by participants who had both high- and low- proficiency levels.

One of the factors that affect LLS preference is nationality. Griffiths and Parr (2000, cited in Griffiths 2004) reported that European learners use LLSs significantly more frequently than learners of other nationalities. According to their study, it was found that especially strategies related to vocabulary, to reading, to interaction with others and to the tolerance of ambiguity were more significantly used by European learners.

Learning style is another factor that affects learners' language strategy use. Oxford (1994) states that learning styles of the students often determine their choice of L2 learning strategies. For example, learners, who have analytic-style, prefer strategies such as contrastive analysis, rule-learning, and dissecting words and phrases, while global students used strategies to find meaning (guessing, scanning, predicting) and to converse without knowing all the words (paraphrasing, gesturing).

The last factor that affects learners' LLS preference is their attitudes and beliefs about language learning. Oxford (1994) emphasizes the importance of attitudes and belief of students as "These were reported to have a profound effect on the strategies learners choose, with negative attitudes and beliefs often causing poor strategy use or lack of orchestration of strategies". Bialystok (1981, cited in Ellis 1994) studied with Grade 10 and 12 learners who were learning French as a second language in Canada. They believed that language learning involved formal opposed to functional practice, and this belief influenced their choice of strategies. Wenden (1987) emphasized that learners ,who thought learning the rules of language was more important than using the language, preferred to use cognitive strategies that helped them to understand and remember specific items of language. On the other hand, learners, who thought using language was more important than learning the rules, employed few learning strategies, relying instead on communication strategies. Learners who stressed personal factors failed to manifest any distinct pattern of strategy use.

Purpose of the Study

In order to reach the main aim of the study it was aimed to find an answer to the following sub-questions;

- Is there a significant relationship between students' proficiency levels and their use of language learning strategies?

- What are the most and least frequently used language learning strategies by Turkish elementary and upper-intermediate level preparatory school students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study aims to examine the general language learning behaviour of young adult Turkish learners of EFL and constitutes both a quantitative and descriptive design with a specific focus on Oxford's taxonomy of language learning strategies (LLSs).

Accordingly, the study focuses on the particular language learning behaviour of using strategies. The research was carried out with the students from the preparatory classes of Cyprus International University. The research instrument includes the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) (Version 7.0. Oxford, 1990). The LLS items in the SILL are taken part with a five-point Likert scale on which the students mark their frequency of use of each strategy.

The mean scores of overall strategy use of the SILL were analyzed by using *t*-test. The mean scores were examined for the six subcategories of strategies of the SILL, each of which was treated as a separate dependent variable, in relation to the independent variable (proficiency levels of the students).

Participants

The participants of the study were students from the language preparatory classes of Cyprus International University in Nicosia, TRNC. 114 students participated in the study. For this study the lowest and highest levels of Cyprus International University Preparatory School at the end of the fall semester, in January 2010 were selected. Elementary level was the lowest and Upper-Intermediate level was the highest level in fall semester of 2010. When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 30 (26.3%) of the students in this research are Upper-Intermediate students and 84 (73.7%) of the students are Elementary students.

Table 1: The range of students according to their levels of English

English Level of Students	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Upper-Intermediate	30	26.3
Elementary	84	73.7
Total	114	100.0

Instrument

In this study Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0, which was prepared by Oxford (1990) and translated into Turkish by Cesur and Fer (2007), was used as the instrument of the study. Turkish version of the inventory was used in order to be sure that all participants of the study could understand the questionnaire items with clarity. This was found more efficient as Oxford (1990, p.277-278) had stated that SILL could be used in the participants' native tongues wherever required.

Data Collection Procedure

Before administering the questionnaire to the students the Director of Foreign Languages School of Cyprus International University was informed and was received the required permission to conduct the study. The Turkish version of the questionnaire was applied in the last week of the fall semester, just before the level and proficiency examinations. SILL questionnaire was given to instructors who

worked in Preparatory School of Cyprus International University and they were asked to give them to the participants during the English course.

It was told that there are no right or wrong answers and they should choose the correct option according to their attitudes towards English. In other words, when they answered the items they should not answer them by considering “how it should be” but “what they are doing during their learning process”.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were collected through SILL and analyzed by SPSS for 17.0. First, the overall rates for each strategy were collected. A t - test was applied to each strategy for students’ proficiency levels. Totally six t-test analyses were collected.

FINDINGS

The 114 preparatory school students attended to the study. It was asked them to choose the correct options according to their attitudes towards English language learning. When the collected data was analyzed by using a t-test, the following results were found. The results were showed in Table 2.

Table 2: The Relationship Between Students’ Proficiency Levels and Their Use of Language Learning Strategies

Strategy	Proficiency Level	n	mean	Std. Dev.	t	p	Level of significance
Memory	Upper-Intermediate	30	26.86	5.87	.195	.846	p>.05*
	Elementary	80	26.60	6.39			
Cognitive	Upper-Intermediate	30	47.20	10.58	3.01	.003	p<.05*
	Elementary	80	40.98	9.36			
Compensation	Upper-Intermediate	30	19.60	4.44	2.72	.007	p<.05*
	Elementary	80	16.96	4.75			
Metacognitive	Upper-Intermediate	30	33.36	7.83	1.32	.189	p>.05*
	Elementary	80	31.21	7.59			
Affective	Upper-Intermediate	30	17.00	5.63	.430	.668	p>.05*
	Elementary	80	16.54	4.68			
Social	Upper-Intermediate	30	21.43	4.91	2.47	.015	p<.05*
	Elementary	80	19.00	4.52			

n= number, Std. Dev.= standard deviation, t= t value, p= level of significance, *p<.05

As can be seen in Table 2, the number of Upper-Intermediate students is 30 and the number of Elementary students is 80. The mean of Upper-Intermediate students in memory strategy use is 26.86; while the mean of Elementary students in memory strategy use is 26.60.

The standard deviation of Upper-Intermediate students in memory strategy preference is 5.87; in the meanwhile the standard deviation of Elementary students in memory strategy preference is 6.39. When the means are examined it is seen that memory strategy is used more by Upper-Intermediate students than Elementary students. Whereas when the level of significance is examined, it is seen that the level of significance is $p (.846) > .05$ and statistically there is no significant difference between proficiency level and memory strategy preferences.

The mean of Upper-Intermediate students in cognitive strategy use is 47.20; while the mean of Elementary students in cognitive strategy use is 40.98.

The standard deviation of Upper-Intermediate students in cognitive strategy preference is 10.58; in the meanwhile the standard deviation of Elementary students in cognitive strategy preference is 9.36.

When the means are examined it is seen that cognitive strategy is used more by Upper-Intermediate students than Elementary students. Whereas when the level of significance is examined, it is seen that the level of significance is $p (.003) < .05$ and statistically there is a significant difference between proficiency level and cognitive strategy preferences.

The mean of Upper-Intermediate students in compensation strategy use is 19.60; while the mean of Elementary students in compensation strategy use is 16.96.

The standard deviation of Upper-Intermediate students in compensation strategy preference is 4.44; in the meanwhile the standard deviation of Elementary students in compensation strategy preference is 4.75.

When the means are examined it is seen that compensation strategy is used more by Upper-Intermediate students than Elementary students. Whereas when the level of significance is examined, it is seen that the level of significance is $p (.007) < .05$ and statistically there is a significant difference between proficiency level and compensation strategy preferences.

The mean of Upper-Intermediate students in metacognitive strategy use is 33.36; while the mean of Elementary students in metacognitive strategy use is 31.21.

The standard deviation of Upper-Intermediate students in metacognitive strategy preference is 7.83; in the meanwhile the standard deviation of Elementary students in metacognitive strategy preference is 7.59.

When the means are examined it is seen that metacognitive strategy is used more by Upper-Intermediate students than Elementary students. Whereas when the level of significance is examined, it is seen that the level of significance is $p (.189) > .05$ and statistically there is no significant difference between proficiency level and metacognitive strategy preferences.

The mean of Upper-Intermediate students in affective strategy use is 17.00; while the mean of Elementary students in affective strategy use is 16.54.

The standard deviation of Upper-Intermediate students in affective strategy preference is 5, 63; in the meanwhile the standard deviation of Elementary students in affective strategy preference is 4.68.

When the means are examined it is seen that the rates are very close to each other and affective strategy is used more by Upper-Intermediate students than Elementary students. Whereas when the level of significance is examined, it is seen that the level of significance is $p (0.668) > 0.05$ and statistically there is no significant difference between proficiency level and affective strategy preferences.

The mean of Upper-Intermediate students in social strategy use is 21.43; while the mean of Elementary students in social strategy use is 19.00.

The standard deviation of Upper-Intermediate students in social strategy preference is 4.91; in the meanwhile the standard deviation of Elementary students in social strategy preference is 4.52. When the means are examined it is seen that asocial strategy is used more by Upper-Intermediate students than Elementary students. Whereas when the level of significance is examined, it is seen that the level of significance is $p (.015) < .05$ and statistically there is a significant difference between proficiency level and social strategy preferences.

When the *t*-test results are examined it is seen that cognitive strategy is the most commonly used strategy by Upper- Intermediate students. When the means of Upper-Intermediate students for the

strategies are considered, it is seen that metacognitive strategy is the second most commonly used strategy with the mean of 33.36, memory strategy is the third commonly used strategy with the mean of 26.86, social strategy is in the fourth place with the mean of 21.43, compensation strategy is in the fifth place with the mean of 16.90 and affective strategy is the least used strategy by Upper-Intermediate students with the mean of 17.00.

For Elementary level students cognitive strategy is the most commonly used strategy with the mean of 40.98. Metacognitive strategy is the second commonly used strategy with the mean of 31.21. Memory strategy is in the third place with the mean of 26.60. Social strategy is in the fourth place with the mean of 19.00. Compensation strategy is in the fifth place with the mean of 17.00 and affective strategy is the least used strategy by Elementary students with the mean of 16.96.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that Upper-Intermediate level students use LLSs more frequently than Elementary level students. Statistically significant difference was found between the learners' proficiency levels and their use of cognitive, compensation, and social strategy.

Comparison of the Study with Recent Studies

Proficiency level of the learners was the factor which was investigated in this study. According to the results of the current study significant differences are found between the learners' proficiency levels and their compensation, cognitive and social strategy preferences. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategies and compensation and affective strategies are the least frequently used strategies by the Upper-Intermediate and the Elementary level students. When the means of the Upper-Intermediate and the Elementary level students are compared, it is seen that the overall means of the Upper-Intermediate level students are higher than the means of the Elementary level students.

Some researchers (Chang, 1990; Green and Oxford, 1995; Park, 1997; Chen, 2002 cited in Rahimi, Riazi and Saif, 2008) found that learners with high proficiency levels have an increased use of both direct and indirect strategies. When the results of the current study are compared with the results of these studies it can be said that there results of the studies are the same.

O'Malley et al (1985 cited in Rahimi, Riazi and Saif, 2008) found that students with high proficiency levels use more metacognitive strategies than lower levels. The results of the O'Malley et al's study and the results of the current study are the same.

According to the results of the study of Peacock and Ho (2003) it was found that learners with high proficiency levels use cognitive and metacognitive strategies more frequently than other learners. It is seen that the results of the study and the results of the current study are the same.

Goh and Foong (1997) found that metacognitive and compensation strategies were the most frequently used strategies, whereas social and memory strategies were the least frequently used strategies by both the students with high and low proficiency levels. When the results of the Goh and Foong's study (1997) and the results of the current study are compared it is seen that there are some similarities between the results of both studies.

Bozatlı (1998) found that learners with high proficiency levels use language learning strategies more frequently than learners with low proficiency levels. The results of the Bozatlı's study (1998) and the results of the current study are the same.

The results of the Doering's study (1999) showed that the students with high and low proficiency levels use cognitive strategy more frequently than other strategies. Also the results of the current study showed that compensation strategy is the most frequently used strategy by the Upper-Intermediate and the Elementary level students.

Acunsal (2005) pointed out that, students with high proficiency level of English used compensation and metacognitive strategies with the highest frequency while they used social and affective strategies at the lowest rates. On the other hand, students with low proficiency level used metacognitive and social strategies at the highest frequency while they used cognitive and affective strategies at the lowest rates. The results have some similarities with the results of current study. Both for the highest and lowest levels cognitive and metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategies, whereas compensation and affective strategies are the least frequently used strategies.

The results of the Yalçın's study (2006) show that language learning strategies are more commonly used by the students who had low proficiency levels and he found significant differences between the levels of the students and their preferences of memory, metacognitive and social strategy. In the current study significant differences were found between the learners' proficiency levels and their use of cognitive, compensation and social strategies.

Griffths (2007) found a significant relationship between the proficiency levels of the students' and their frequency of strategy use. According to the results of the study it was understood that students with higher proficiency levels use a larger repertoire of strategies more frequently than the students with lower proficiency levels. The result of the study was different from the result of the current study, because in the current study significant differences were found only between the students' proficiency levels and their use of cognitive, compensation and social strategies.

Lai (2009) tried to find out a relationship between the learners' proficiency levels and their language learning strategy preferences. The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between the learners' proficiency levels and their language learning strategy preferences. It was found that students with higher level use language learning strategies more frequently than students with lower proficiency level. According to the results it was seen that compensation strategy was the most frequently used strategy; whereas affective strategy was the least frequently used strategy. When the results of the Lai's study and the results of the current study were compared, it was seen that in both studies the least frequently used strategy according to the students' proficiency levels was the affective strategy.

Thu (2009) found that social strategy was the most frequently used strategy by high proficiency level students. In the current study social strategy was the fourth frequently used strategy by the high proficiency level students.

Yang (2010) tried to find out the relationship between the learners' proficiency levels and their overall use of language learning strategy preferences. It was found that proficiency level is a significant effect on the students' overall strategy use.

Anugakul (2011) found that there was no significant relationship between overall use of language learning strategies and proficiency levels of the students, but it was found that students with high proficiency levels use language learning strategies more frequently than students with low proficiency levels. However, in the current study a significant relationship was found between the proficiency levels of the students and their use of cognitive, compensation and social strategies.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study was conducted with 114 students who were in Elementary and Upper-Intermediate levels of Preparatory School of Cyprus International University. First of all, further researches can be done with Starter, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper- Intermediate and Advanced level students.

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