Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers on Impact of Language Learning Strategies

Purna Bahadur Kadel

Department of English Education, University Campus,

Tribhuvan University

Author Note

Dr. Purna Bahadur Kadel is an Associate Professor at Central Department of Education, Tribhuvan University. He has been teaching at the department of English Education for more than two decades. Dr. Kadel has supervised M.Ed. and Ph.D. theses at Department of English Education and Dean's office, Faculty of Education respectively. He has served as an editor of Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) Journal for a long time. He authored the book entitled Basic Education Research Methodology (2022) and Academic Writing (2018). He has presented dozens of research papers at home and abroad.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Purna Bahadur Kadel, Tribhuvan University. Email:

kadelpurna@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study attempts to identify pre-service teachers' perceptions on the impact of language learning strategies to achieve their academic performances and to find out the importance of language learning strategies to be self-regulated learners. This is a narrative inquiry research design in which an in-depth interview was used as a tool to collect data. Six pre-service teachers who have been studying in Master of Education English fourth semester were selected using a purposive, non-random sampling procedure. The findings of this study show that language learning strategies help second language learners be self-regulated learners; they help them learn quickly, fast, and effectively and help them encounter complicated tasks. Furthermore, language learning strategies help them to develop their self-assessment skills and enhance cooperation and collaborative learning.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, language learning strategies, academic achievement, narrative inquiry, self-regulated learners

Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers on Impact of Language Learning Strategies for their Academic Performances

Every parent expects that the academic performance of their offspring should be satisfactory at the college level. However, due to various reasons, the result of the pass-outs at the master's degree cannot always be 'A' and 'A- ' grades. One of the causes of poor performance in the English language of the foreign language learners at this level is that they are unlikely to keep on learning without using language learning strategies. Most of the students studying at the master's level are not experienced in applying language learning strategies compatible with their learning styles and personalities. The subject teachers who have been assigned to teach the particular course are basically accountable for finishing the course within the stipulated time (Shamim, 2008, as cited in Javel, 2017).

The teachers who have been assigned to teach at the master level follow the traditional methods and techniques like teacher-centered techniques to finish the courses in the stipulated time. If the students adopt language learning strategies, they can learn the target language much better and more easily and smoothly. The language learning strategies help them be aware of new information's learning process. The learning strategies help them internalize new techniques and skills to enhance learning proficiency in the target language.

Language learning strategies play a pivotal role in language learning success (Cohen, 1981; Oxford, 1990). They are any mental and physical necessity that helps learners attain learning to some extent. There is a dire need to apply language learning strategies by English teachers to facilitate them to increase the language learning performance of foreign language learners effectively. Macaro (2001) argues that language learning strategies are the system of decisions to put into action, consciously or subconsciously, appropriately and inappropriately. Language learning strategies are a special type of way of learning which is

consciously employed in the course of learning. Chamot (1987) argues that language learning strategies accelerate learners' language acquisition. Javel (2017) asserts that instruction training for language learning strategies should be incorporated as a part of the English teachers' training program. The main goal of learning strategies is to make them efficient and strategic learners to be aware of personal characteristics and their influences on the choice of learning strategies. Language learning strategies assist them in identifying self-knowledge. If the learners are educated with the learning strategies, they can develop task knowledge and content knowledge. As such, they can be strategic self-regulated learners.

Unless the learners are sensitized to the appropriate language learning strategies by their personalities, learning style, learners' needs, levels of proficiency, and learning styles of the second language, learners fail to attain competency in their learning. Language learning strategies support the learners in solving any complicated task. They work as a milestone for them to promote learning. To make the learners' learning successful, there should be a fine-tuning between learning tasks and learning strategies that the learners undertake (Oxford et al., 2004).

Learning strategies facilitate the learners to make their learning more comfortable, easier, and more effective. Successful and unsuccessful learners can be differentiated in terms of employing learning strategies in comprehension and production. Successful learners are very efficient in employing learning strategies compatible with their needs, level of proficiency, and nature of task accordingly. Second language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that learners often employ to improve their progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving, and using in second language acquisition (Oxford, 1990). For instance, memory, cognitive, and affective strategies are covert and unobservable,

and note-taking, metacognitive, and social strategies are overt and observable. Some learners use linguistic and paralinguistic strategies when they have difficulty remembering the appropriate words in the course of conversation.

Successful learners can become autonomous and self-regulated owing to the learning strategies. Many successful learners become what they are due to applying learning strategies in learning to some extent. Most of the research studies show that there is a positive association between the use of language learning strategies and second language learning. Learning strategies play a vital role in the process of second language learning. Thus, second language learners are to be made aware of learning strategies to promote their proficiency in the target language and to achieve success in learning.

Learning strategies are very significant for second and foreign language learners in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. It would be easier for successful learners to find out the gist or specific information from the text through skimming and scanning strategies. Likewise, highly proficient learners employ different types of effective strategies as much as possible to get information from the text.

Literature Review

Hymes's components of communicative competence were traces of the historical origin of language learning strategies in the 1970s. Hymes (1972) critiques Chomsky's description of communicative competence and performance detached from social language functions. There are four components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972).

The birth of language learning strategies in ELT commenced when Rubin (1975) wrote an article entitled "What the good language learner can teach us?"

Since then, the concept of language learning strategies has been in vogue in ELT formally. Language learning strategies have become a burning issue in second and foreign language learning since the 1990s. Rubin states that some language learning strategies facilitate the learners to promote learning, such as clarification, verification, monitoring, memorizing, guessing, inductive inference, deductive reasoning, and practicing. According to the prominent theoretical founders of language learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Cook, 1991; Oxford, 1990; Stern, 1983), they are to be studied by teachers to implement in schools, colleges, and universities.

Oxford (1990) argues that language learning strategies are very crucial for the enhancement of second language learning. Moreover, language learning strategies support them to foster their academic achievement. Learning strategies are special plans for self-directed learning. The appropriate learning strategies boost up language proficiency and self-confidence of the learners. Learning skills, learning to learn skills, thinking skills, and problem-solving skills are also used alternatively with learning strategies. According to Oxford (1990), the characteristics of learning strategies are contribute to the main goal; communicative goal; allow the learners to become more self-directed; expand the role of the teacher; problem-oriented; the specific action was taken by the learners; involve many aspects of the learners, not just the cognitive; support learning both directly and indirectly; are not always observable; and are often conscious and flexible.

Likewise, there are six types of language learning strategies, viz. memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (Oxford 1990). These strategies are categorized t under direct and indirect strategies.

The language learning strategies which are directly associated with the target language are called direct strategies, such as memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. There is a direct connection between memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies to mental processing. However, the indirect learning strategies are not explicitly connected to mental processing in the course of learning.

Cook (1991) argues that good language learners share six learning strategies: memory, cognitive, compensational, metacognitive, social, and effective strategies. Good language learners are always aware of second language learning strategies. They can modify their learning behaviors to be compatible with the second language learning strategies. Stern (1983) argues that there are four language learning strategies: an active planning strategy, an academic learning strategy, a social learning strategy, and an effective strategy. Good language learning involves active language learning strategies. First of all, good language learners make goals and sub-goals and, in turn, plan to achieve the goals actively.

Zimmerman argues (1989) that the learners are self-monitors about the effectiveness of their learning strategies, method, learning contents, syllabus, and teachers. The learners need self-esteem, self-concept, and self-actualization to develop self-regulated learning. According to constructivists, very young children cannot become self-regulated due to geocentricism and the inability to use language covertly to guide function. Self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-perception are the main motivating factors for self-regulated learners and academic achievement.

Second language learning is more complicated than learning the first language since second language learners are frequently influenced by their prior knowledge of the first language. So, second language learning is exclusively

conscious learning that cannot be accomplished effectively without learning strategies. They help them to solve cognitively demanding tasks easily. The learners would fail to encounter the problem-solving task without learning strategies. Due to language learning strategies, thousands of millions of second language learners are facilitated to learn a second language successfully. To perform a particular task, the learners should deploy task-appropriate strategies. The learning strategies play a vital role in performing a particular task to enhance second language learning.

Language learning strategies make the learners aware of employing different strategies, viz. top-down, bottom-up, and interactive strategies accordingly (Abbott, 2006). Successful learners are familiar with a wider variety of learning strategies. Accordingly, they can employ appropriate and selective learning strategies to carry out the tasks. Thus, learning strategies make the learners easier, faster, and more comfortable to foster second language learning. Learning strategies help them develop language learning skills and broaden their competencies in grammar and vocabulary. Less proficient learners are catered to special learning strategies to grapple with specific problems. Thus, less successful learners are efficient in employing selective and appropriate learning strategies to speed up their learning. So, the learners can solve the specific problems through language learning strategies. Once they are automated with effective learning strategies, they can carry out any task independently. They become independent learners who do not need any help from their peers and teachers. They are thus successful in being autonomous learners. Eventually, successful learners are driven to be self-regulated learners due to their repertoire of learning strategies.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were i) to identify pre-service teachers' perceptions of the impact of language learning strategies (memory, cognitive,

metacognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies) on academic performance and ii) to find out the importance of language learning strategies for language learners to be self-regulated.

Methodology

The narrative inquiry research design was used to conduct this study. An interpretive paradigm was adopted to analyze and interpret the subjective perspectives of the pre-service teachers on the impact of language learning strategies on their academic achievement in this study. In the interpretive approach, reality (ontology) would be from multiple perspectives of the respondents regarding the impact of language learning strategies for better academic performance. A purposive, non-random sampling procedure was used to select the informants in this study. In-depth-interview was used as a tool to collect data in this study. Having had a friendly rapport with them, I administered in-depth-interview as a tool to collect their stories on the impact of applying language learning strategies to get the academic achievement. I transcribed their verbatim correctly without losing the main essence. I collected and recorded the participants' stories from one-to-one interviews (Creswell, 2013).

Meanwhile, I maintained the ethical norms and values in interviews with the participants. I assured everyone of maintaining their confidentiality and anonymity. This study represents the respondents as R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, and R6. Three boys were represented as R1, R2, and R3. Likewise, three girls were represented as R4, R5, and R6.

Results and Discussion

I collected the data from six participants who have been studying M.Ed. in English Education in the fourth semester. The recorded verbatim of the participants was coded and decoded to develop the primary themes. Out of 10

basic themes, I developed five global themes, which have been discussed, analyzed, and interpreted below:

Self-regulated Learners

Learning strategies are essential for the students to get success in learning. Particularly, learning strategies, such as cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies, are very important for learners to achieve success in learning. If the learners are proficient in using all of the six learning strategies, viz. memory, cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, social and affective, they can be self-regulated learners. One of the respondents (R1) argued:

I use the new word with the help of an image or mental picture of new words to remember the words in the course of holding a conversation with my friends. I am immensely motivated to watch YouTube to produce native-like pronunciation in English. I keep on watching English movies on TV, laptop, and smartphone. Most of the time, I listen to BBC, which helps me to improve my pronunciation. I have developed native-like pronunciation with the help of language learning strategies. I have been successful to get 'B+ in the first and second semesters due to the employing of language learning strategies in learning phonetics and phonology, grammar, linguistic application, interdisciplinary readings, reading literature, etc.

It can be inferred that learners become self-regulated with the help of language learning strategies so they can achieve better academic performance. In a similar vein, R4 claimed:

language learning strategies are the main guidelines for the learners to achieve learning in the classroom. I sometimes use gestures to support my expression while conducting a presentation.

While reading critically, I use the compensation strategy to guess
the meaning through the context with the help of internal
components in the passage to get the meaning. I become self-
regulated learners with the help of applying a metacognitive
strategy which supports me to be a self-directed learner.

Zimmerman argues (1989) that the learners are self-monitors about the
effectiveness of their learning strategies, methods, learning contents, syllabus, and
their teachers. Language learning strategies help the learners to be more self-
regulated. Likewise, the affective strategy supports them to be self-motivated
learners through the help of rewards, motivating music, songs, games, and other
means of entertainment to refresh exhausted minds (Oxford, 1990). It can be
inferred that language learning strategies help second language learners to be self-
regulated. Learning strategies enable them to learn second and foreign languages
effectively.

Easier, Faster, and More Effective Learners

Language learning strategies make ESL and EFL learners learn easier and
faster. If the ESL and EFL learners are familiar with applying language learning
strategies appropriately, they can be successful learners. Any given learning task
can be carried out easily and effectively if they use learning strategies as much as
possible. One of the participants, R1, asserted:

learning strategies help the learners become successful learners
since language learning strategies are special types of plans,
actions, and techniques that are the means to achieve the goals.
The complicated tasks of learning can be accomplished faster and
easier if those tasks are shared among friends. The learner can
accumulate diverse feedback and comments, which can be very
useful in solving the problems.

Chamot (1987) defines that "learning strategies are techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information" (p. 71). In this regard, one of the respondents, R5, stated:

language learning strategies will facilitate the learners to find out the gist by reading the text through guessing, using reasoning, and critical thinking skills. Having found the main central ideas of the text, the learner can proceed ahead through the write-up.

Specifically, successful learners are those learners who use language-learning strategies effectively. Learning of any area, whether language, science, mathematics, or content knowledge, can be learned fast, easily, and effectively with the support of language learning strategies. In this regard, Abbott (2006) argues that language learning strategies make the learners aware of employing different types of strategies, viz. top-down, bottom-up, and interactive strategies adequately.

Tackling Complicated Tasks

Learning grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, phonology, linguistic application, literature, language power, or critical discourse is a very challenging task. Had the learners been strategically accustomed to language learning strategies, they would be able to solve any challenging tasks in the course of learning. In this regard, one of the respondents, R6 claims:

to be a successful learner academically, s/he should be accustomed to the language learning strategies to carry out some challenging tasks. Sometimes, learners can get meaning by guessing the meaning from the context. Some of the tasks cannot be solved by individual learners; rather, those tasks are to be solved

collaboratively. Social strategies are necessary to solve complex

tasks in language learning.

Collaborative research and learning are in vogue as strategies for the way out of any complicated issues. Language learning strategies are beneficial for solving any problem in the course of learning. They are procedures that facilitate the learners to accomplish learning tasks. Language learning strategies are conscious and goal-directed in tackling unfamiliar tasks (Chamot, 2005). The respondent R3 asserts that "if the tasks are sequenced and graded in order scientifically, learners will use different types of techniques and way out to learn. Further, the task of learning should be arranged adopting comprehensible input of the Krashen". According to Krashen (1982), the learning task of every content in the syllabus is to be designed following the i+1 formula in which each learning item is designed by adopting Krashen's principle of comprehensible input.

Developing Self-assessment Skills

Language learning strategies help learners develop the different types of action, techniques, vision, and mission. The learners can be a very thoughtful planner to complete the learning productively. One of the respondents, R1 contended:

> proactive learners can use metacognitive strategies to have
> scientific planning of any task to carry out fruitfully. More
> importantly, the learners can evaluate their learning themselves
> using metacognitive learning strategies. They can monitor their
> academic achievement with the help of a metacognitive strategy.

Many successful learners have used metacognitive strategies to find out how much they have learned without the help of an external assessor of their academic achievement. In a similar vein, another respondent, R4, stated:

learning strategies are paramount for the students to develop their self-assessment skills for their academic achievement. The learners can identify their strengths and weaknesses in the course of learning. The skills of self-assessment make the learners insightful learners.

Metacognitive strategies are planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating (Oxford, 1990). From the data provided by the respondents, it can be inferred that there are a lot of advantages of being educated with language learning strategies. Metacognitive strategy is very useful for ESL and EFL learners to be successful learners academically.

Enhancing Cooperation and Collaboration in Learning

Language learning strategies inspire the learners to be cooperative and collaborative learners. Specifically, female students are directed by social and affective language learning strategies. One of the respondents, R4, asserted:

when I could not understand any work individually, I take help

from my friends collaboratively. I generally understand some

issues of language and power and critical discourse analysis

through discussion in the group. Language learning strategies help

to enhance cooperation and collaboration in learning.

Female learners prefer employing social strategies in developing their learning. Social strategies can be developed through posing questions, collaborating, cooperating, and empathizing with each other (Oxford, 1990). Some language learning strategies are inevitable to develop cooperation and collaboration in learning.

Conclusion

Language learning strategies help the second language learners to be self-regulated learners who can develop their abilities to be independent learners, make the ESL and EFL learners learn easily, fast, and effectively, help them

tackle the complicated task, develop self-assessment skills and enhance cooperation and collaborative learning. Language learning strategies are essential for ESL and EFL learners to be smart language learners. All learners must apply adequate language learning strategies compatible with their learning styles and personalities in the course of learning. The introvert and self-judging learners can use cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Likewise, extrovert, frank, and friendly learners can apply social and affective learning strategies to make their learning effective and successful. Language learning strategies are beneficial for learners to be successful. There should be practices of applying learning strategies based on the learning styles of each learner in the language classroom to make the pre-service teachers experts in this regard.

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