UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

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JUDUL: AN ANALYSIS ON THE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG FINAL YEAR TESL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

SESI PENGAJIAN: 2003/2004

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AN ANALYSIS ON THE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG FINAL YEAR TESL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor Science and Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
University Teknologi Malaysia

MARCH 2004
I admit that this project (Title: **AN ANALYSIS ON THE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG FINAL YEAR TESL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY**) is my own research except for, the citation and summary, which the resources of each have been stated.

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim...

Dedicated to:

My beloved parents, abah (Mohamad B. Mat Aris) and mama (Baidah Ab Aziz), thanks for everything...thanks for being kind, lovely, understanding and supportive to me, thanks for your patience and courage,

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ABSTRAK

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to identify the use of language learning strategies among final year TESL students of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. This study investigated what types of language learning strategies employed by learners in their L2 learning, what skills in language learning strategies associated with learners’ language learning as well as the activities learners selected when they used the language learning strategies. This small scale study involved 35 respondents. Questionnaire was used in collecting data and the respondents were required to answer all the questions. The presentation of the data obtained was tabulated in the forms of graphs and tables and was later analyzed and discussed. As a whole, it was found that cognitive learning strategy was favourably employed by learners and vocabulary skill was the skill frequently chose by learners as their language learning strategies. Based on this study, it is proven that all language learners applied the use of language learning strategies in their L2 learning.
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L1 : First Language
L2 : Second Language
TESL : Teaching English As a Second Language
UTM : Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Learning strategies have received much attention since the late 1970s and second language (L2) researchers have devoted attention to the cognitive aspects of language learning (Hismanoglu, I-TESL-J). The findings indicate that individual students differ considerably in their use of learning strategies and the end products of language learning which result in the learners’ language competence.

The use of language learning strategies differ for L2 learners where according to Reiss, 1985 (in Lee, Asian EFL Journal 2003), during the past decade, the emphasis on foreign language research had shifted from the teacher to the learner, and educational research had identified a number of factors that account for some of the differences in how students learn. Soon, the role of teacher to spoon feed her students before has shifted to the teacher as a facilitator to her students. That means, students are now more independent to find their own strategies in L2 learning that are most suitable with them, and this later will contribute to their L2 acquisition in language learning.
In regards with language learning strategies, it has been acknowledged that language-processing strategies exist and influence learners’ second language acquisitions (Wenden and Rubin, 1987). The main focus according to Wenden and Rubin, will be on how learners process new information and what kinds of strategies they employ to understand in order to learn or remember the information. These strategies then, will contribute to the learners’ language learning acquisition and skills related to the language. The most general finding among the investigation of language learning strategies was that the use of appropriate language learning strategies leads to improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skill areas (Wenden and Rubin 1987; Chamot and Kupper 1989; Oxford and Crookall 1989; Cohen 1990; O’Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1993; Oxford et al. 1993 in Lee, Asian EFL Journal 2003).

L2 refers to English language whereby, in Malaysian educational context, English language has been taught as a second language, after Bahasa Melayu, which is the national language. L2 may be acquired by learners in a naturalistic way, that is learners acquired it outside the classroom or in an instructed way, that is by having lessons or classes. In contrast with L2, first language or L1, is usually the individual’s mother tongue. Individual’s L1 may be different from each other where Malay usually speaks Malay language, Chinese with their Mandarin or English, Indian with their Tamil or English and so on. L1 may be different from each person, but L2, in this research, will refer to English language.

In coherent with learners of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), the use of language learning strategies has contributed to the learners’ language performances and skills even though the learners themselves did not realize that they actually use the language learning strategies. The realization of language learning strategies among these learners is important because as future teachers, they are responsible to foster the suitable way of learning English to their students. According to O’Malley et al. (1958b) in Lee, Asian EFL Journal 2003, the learning strategies of good language learners once identified and successfully taught to less competent learners, could have considerable potential for enhancing development of second language skills. Thus, to be a language learning strategies conscious is not only benefits the learners themselves but also their students in future.
Language learning strategies have been used by learners to accomplish the task of speaking, reading, vocabulary or writing that have been presented in a naturalistic or instructed ways of learning language. By recognizing that there is a task to complete or problem to solve, (Oxford, 1990:9) language learners will be more oriented to their development of language competence. Thus, it has contributed to the learners’ performance of using language learning strategies in L2 learning, either by developing or using language learning strategies that have already exist.

1.1 Background of Problem

Second language learning strategies are specific actions and behaviors or techniques students use, in order to improve their comprehension and to apprehend in learning the L2 (Oxford, 1990b). Early researchers tended to make lists of strategies and other features that considered as an essential in order to be “good L2 learners”. Rubin (1975) suggested that good L2 learners are willing and accurate guessers; have a strong drive to communicate; are often uninhibited; are willing to make mistakes; focus on form by looking for patterns and analyze it, take advantage of all practice opportunities, monitor their speech as well as that of others, and lastly pay attention to meaning. Without having a suitable language learning strategies, learners would not identify the steps that should be taken when they face with certain problems in learning L2. As for an example, when learners come across with a reading problem like how are they are going to finish reading all the chapters in a short time that have been assigned to them. So, by realizing the use of language learning strategies, they would manage to overcome this problem that is by skimming and scanning the text. These two activities according to Stern (1992) (in Hismanoglu, I-TESL-J, 2000) are language learning strategies that come under cognitive strategies which requires direct analysis according of the text.
Since the amount of information to be processed by language learners is high in language classroom, learners use different language learning strategies in performing the tasks and processing the new input that they face (Hismanoglu, I-TESL-J, 2000). Language learning strategies are good indicators of how learners approach tasks or problems encountered during the process of language learning. According to Fedderholt (1997), the language learners who are capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve their language skills.

Most of the learners especially among L2 learners, did apply language learning strategies in their learning but they did not realize the approaches that they are using were considered as one of the strategies in language learning. So, it is important to know the right strategies to learn L2, to find the strategies that best suit with learners’ need in order to acquire the language. In most of the research on language learning strategies, the primary concern has been on identifying what good language learners report on what they do to learn the second language. According to Oxford (1994) in www.ericdigest.com, considerable research has been conducted on how to improve L2 students’ learning strategies. In many investigations, attempts to teach students to use learning strategies have produced good results. However, not all L2 learning strategies have been successful or conclusive. Some strategies have been effective in a particular skill, but not to other skills and vice versa.

As a result, it will be vital to know the learning strategies of the learners in learning English or L2. In this study, the researcher focused on identifying and classifying language learning strategies that mostly employed by learners, skills involved with language learning strategies among learners and what activities learners frequently choose while they study L2. Thus, research on the language learning strategies among final year TESL students of UTM should not only gain the awareness from undergraduate TESL students and their lecturers to the use of these strategies but also encourage them to develop their own profiles of the language learning strategies in their future teaching.
1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is carried out to investigate the learning strategies employed among final year TESL students of UTM. This is due to the importance of learning English language with the right approach which contributes to their second language performance, as they are currently undergraduate students who have undergone the TESL courses in UTM for four years. This study will look at the L2 learning strategies and at the same time what are the skills and activities that mostly associated with learners when they used language learning strategies in their L2 learning.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 To identify the types of strategies for language learning that mostly used among final year TESL students of UTM.

1.3.2 To investigate which skills that mostly related with language learning strategies.

1.3.3 To find the activities that L2 learners apply in their L2 learning or classroom.

1.4 Research Questions
This study tries to answer the following questions:

1.4.1 Which types of the language learning strategies are most favourably employed by learners?

1.4.2 What are the skills that mostly involve with language learning strategies among learners?

1.4.3 What are the activities that learners frequently choose while they study second language?