Journal of Language and Linguistics in Society
ISSN: 2815-0961
Vol: 04, No.02, Feb-Mar 2024
http://journal.hmjournals.com/index.php/JLLS
DOI: https://doi.org/10.55529/jlls.42.10.16

Exploring Language Learning Differences among Students Majoring in English

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Received: 08 November 2023 **Accepted:** 26 January 2024 **Published:** 06 March 2024

Abstract: ***The study sought to determine the level of Strategic Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) techniques among female and male students. This study is quantitative by nature which involved 100 students taking up English as their major. Results showed that both male and female obtained high descriptive level in all indicators of SILL: Memory, Cognition, Compensation, Metacognition, Affective, and Social. Moreover, findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in language learning strategies of the students when analysed according to sex.***

Keywords: ***Strategic Inventory of Language Learning, Language Learning, English Major, Language Learning Differences.***

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender gaps are fascinating phenomena that occurs in culture today. Wherein gender gaps have its contribution towards the acquisition of a second language. A notable outcome of the transition towards a learner-centered approach in language acquisition was in understanding the behaviour of learners towards the language learning. Previous studies have detailed the gender difficulties in language acquisition [1-3]. The first to have done research in this topic was Lakoff, in which the results revealed that when women spoke there are variations when compared with how men spoke [4].

In 1990, Oxford devised the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This became a widely used instrument in second language learning particularly in the field of pedagogy. SILL included direct and indirect learning procedures that will help students in acquisition of a

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language. However, not all learning strategies are applicable to students because of various aspects that may surface as a direct result of gender differences.

Various studies have documented gender difference in language learning. One study found that gender differences is critical in language acquisition. It was observed that men and women have varying educational results [5]. Another study highlighted that gaps between men and women is attributed to their reading engagement. Moreover, teachers often view women as superior language learners when compared with men [6]. These results have also been consistent with previous studies [7-9]. However, it was found that reason for the underperformance of mean is rooted in a "pro-girl" bias. This bias in intra-household rural communities treated females favourably more than males [10].

Previous studies were able to document that women are better than men when compared in language learning however studies in the local were sparse in using the SILL framework. This prompted the researchers to pursue this study using SILL and contribute to the existing body of knowledge specifically on difference of Language Learning for both males and females.

2. RELATED WORK

Differences in Language Strategies of Men and Women. The academe today puts a lot of emphasis in learning English as a second language. Unfortunately, there are many students who encounter problems in learning the English language. Teachers have constantly sought diverse teaching strategies however the issue persists even today [29-30]. One of the reasons being a discrepancy in teaching and learning. This shows that there is a disconnect in the teaching strategies formulated by teachers and the learning strategies of students [21].

Studies documented the differences in language strategies of both men and women. In one study comprising 155 English language learners, it was found that there are differences in the language strategies. The most significant found in the perception of language learning perceptions of males and females. As observed, men underestimated the time needed to learn the English [22]. In another study, men preferred public speaking since they felt obligated to establish their place in the community [23] while women were observed to be auditory learners that thrived in quiet situations [24-25].

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. SILL is utilized in several ways in contemporary language acquisition studies. It is commonly used as a standard technique for measuring second language learning strategy usage and as a tool for confirming the effectiveness of new methods for understanding language acquisition [26]. Moreover, the SILL has been utilized to compare students' learning styles and teachers' instructional techniques [27]. Researchers have even utilized SILL, or its variations, for various reasons such as assessing language learning strategy usage, establishing connections between LLS and learner beliefs, and identifying relationships between LLS and language proficiency [28].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative by nature since it involved the usage of numerical data to analyse, classify, and understand variables of interest. The researchers utilized the SILL questionnaire devised by Oxford. Particularly version 7.0 of the questionnaire. An acceptable sample size for

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quantitative studies is 40 participants [11]. There were even studies that opted to go beyond the recommended number [12-14]. In the case of this study, it involved 100 participants divided into two groups: 50 for male and 50 for female. Moreover, the participants are students majoring in English.

Mean and T-test were used for the statistical treatment. Mean was used to determine the level of SILL among male and female students while a T-Test was used to determine the difference between the male and female students in employing the six components of SILL.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of SILL for Female English Major Students

Table 1 presents the mean scores of the SILL of the 50 female English major students. As shown, the overall level mean score is 3.80 which can be described as high. This high level is attributed to all components of SILL garnering a high rating. The following are the mean scores of each component of SILL (Memory = 3.67, Cognition = 3.83, Compensation = 3.63, Metacognitive = 4.05, Affective = 3.82 and Social = 3.81). Among all indicators of SILL, Metacognitive got the highest rating. The results show that female students garnered a high descriptive level in all indicators of SILL. This demonstrates that females are use the six major categories of language learning strategies in acquiring a language.

Table 1. Level of SILL for Female English Major Students

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Memory	3.67	0.62	High
Cognition	3.83	0.57	High
Compensation	3.63	0.55	High
Metacognitive	4.05	0.67	High
Affective	3.82	0.65	High
Social	3.81	0.73	High
Overall	3.80	0.50	High

Level of SILL Techniques of Male English Major Students

Table 2 presents the mean scores of the SILL of 50 male students. As shown, the overall mean score is 3.86 which can be described as high. This high level is attributed to all components of SILL garnering high ratings. The following are the mean scores of each component of SILL (Memory = 3.72, Cognition = 3.93, Compensation = 3.62, Metacognitive = 4.21, Affective = 3.68 and Social = 3.99). Like the results of the SILL level of female English major students, it can be observed that among all SILL indicators Metacognitive got the highest mean score. The distinction being the descriptive level of male English major students since the rating for male students got very high. The high descriptive level indicates that male students are highly inclined in using the six major categories of language learning strategies.

Table 2. Level of SILL for Male English Major Students

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Memory	3.72	0.48	High

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Cognition	3.96	0.52	High
Compensation	3.62	0.61	High
Metacognitive	4.21	0.63	Very High
Affective	3.68	0.64	High
Social	3.99	0.63	High
Overall	3.86	0.46	High

Significant Difference on SILL between Female and Male English Major Students
Table 3 presents the results of the significant difference of SILL among English major students among Females and Males. Results show the t-value (0.531) and a p-value(0.596). Given that the p-value is higher than the 0.05 level of significance, this meant that the null hypothesis is not rejected. In other words, there is no significant difference between male and female English major students in terms of language learning strategies. As such, both males and females have comparable levels of SILL. The results were excepted since similar results were found in previous studies [15]. However, previous studies have posited the differences of language learning in terms of sex [16-18].

Table 3. The significant difference of SILL between male and female students

Indicators	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Female	3.80	0.46	0.531	0.596
Male	3.86	0.50		

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

It is observed that the study was able to generate results which were different from previous studies. This variation in results can be attributed to the use of different indicators of language learning. Variation in results from different indicators is a key feature of research technique, frequently leading to different insights and conclusions. It was emphasized that the selection of indicators significantly influences the results of a study. Indicators act as substitutes for intricate phenomena, representing dimensions or elements of the larger subject being studied [20]. Variations in indicators can result in varied outcomes because they have varying capacities to capture important details and differences within the phenomenon being studied [31]. In the context of this study, the indicators used for language learning in this study was extracted from Oxford's SILL [19].

5. CONCLUSION

The results led to the following conclusions. First, both female and male students exhibit high levels of the six indications of SILL: Memory, Cognition, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social. Second, there is no significant difference in SILL when comparing the results of male and female English Major students.

Recommendation
The following recommendations were made for each beneficiary of this study.

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1. Students must examine their learning preferences, appraise their strengths, and develop their potential in the target language. They can be presented with a range of learning strategies derived from six components of SILL.

2. Teachers require valid and reliable assessment data collected from SILL to evaluate the strength and weakness of their students. By being provided with the necessary data, teachers will be able to strengths areas that students need for improvement.

3. School Leaders can use this information for school self-evaluation to provide accountability data to their employers and educational administration for assessing student academic success.

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