RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL LEARNING STRATEGIES IN EFL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

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With the progress of learner-centered education learning strategies as conscious actions taken by learners to improve their learning have been prolific field of research. However, few researchers have addressed the issue of educational and socio-contextual factors influencing the types and frequencies of social leaning strategies. This survey investigates social learning strategies in EFL context of Iranian non-governmental English language institutes. Based on social learning strategies' questionnaire data from two different language institutes of more than 180 language learners in different levels were collected. Based on the research findings different strategies almost had different frequencies and Asking Questions was the most prevalently used ones but Cooperating with Others was the least used strategy type. The research indicated very narrow or no relationship between demographic features and the types of social learning strategies unlike proficiency level and language learning duration. Interesting findings and pedagogical implications are discussed at the end.

Key words: Constructivism, Social Learning Strategies, EFL context

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Second language acquisition or learning has largely been regarded as the major field of research in both general and applied linguistics to study how additional languages are acquired. The history of academic SLA dates back to before 20th century when grammar translation was dominant followed by Direct Method (Audio-lingual), Behaviorist's S-R-R(Skinner), Universal Grammar and LAD(Chomsky and Krashen), Information Processing Method (Anderson and McLaughlin), and lastly social interactionism(Vygotsky and Halliday). All of these can be categorized under three main approaches according to (G. Hall) as Linguistic approach emphasizing language structure and accuracy, cognitive approach underpinning personal and universal features of learning psychology, and

ultimately sociocultural approach converging on language application in social contexts which is the point of departure for this study.

Constructivism: Social - Cognitive

Based on constructivism perspectives learning is an individual matter reflecting that based on our unique experiences and prior knowledge we construct unique reality. Social constructivism driven from constructivismhas prioritized social context affecting the process of learning in two ways of cultural systems and social interactions with more knowledgeable one (Pritchard and Woollard 45-50). Social constructivism introduced by Vygotskymainly developed in the midst of the crisis between naturalistic and humanistic perspectives on human development which insisted on the psychological (individual) and environmental (social) elements of

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second language learning(Lantolf and Thorne, 3-59).Based on this theory human being is endowed with two definite levels of low-level biological foundations and higher-level abilities through applying them like cultural tools for instance language, numeracy, literacy, logic, etc., we can gain control over consciousness. Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), for instance, mainly developed by Halliday (Introduction to Functional Grammar3-43) emphasized on language function as a social semiotic system and a resource for meaning across variety of contexts to achieve particular goal rather than its structure. Based on Halliday in "towards a language based theory of learning" language is not a domain of human knowledge but it is the process of transforming experience into knowledge as the essential condition of knowing.

Pritchard andWoollardbelieve that social constructivists base their multi-faced theory mainly on their three common conceptions as: reality, knowledge and learning. According to this perspective on learning reality is co-constructed through human social interactions not waiting to be discovered and is uniquely formed as an individually shaped matter. Knowledge in the realm of social constructivist as a humanistic creativity is constructed through applying social and culture factors. When it comes to learning they assume it neither individual nor passive but an active social process resulting from real engagement when the receiving input is related with the pre-existing knowledge so learning is distributed, interactive, contextual, resulting from real participation in the community of learning.

Pritchard and Woollardalso suggest that learning happens quite naturally unnoticed in many ways and in difference with what we may call "formal learning". Laboratory and classroom researches have increased our knowledge of the process of learning. While the former have done break through discoveries on the subject of brain the latter have been doing studies concerning learning strategies like questioning techniques or the immediate influences of environment on this process. At the end variety of approaches to question of learning process has led us to accept that there is no clear cut fitting answer to the question of how we learn and how should our teachers teach but at least they can know how to improve and enhance the learning experiences and outcomes of their learners through their changes in their planning and teaching.

Piaget, the main advocate of cognitive constructivism, assumes learning as an actively engaged process and implies that if learner is showed how to do rather than actively engaged in discovering how to do learning process may be inhibited. Cognitive growth is biological, age-related and developmental and children cannot extend their capabilities beyond their current developmental stage. Based on Piaget's theory mastery occurs at various paces for different learners and maturation and development have to be considered into curriculum and instruction planning. Knowledge is a self-regulatory not imposed from outside, a dynamic process based on built in blueprints. For Piaget intellectual growth as the number and complexity of interconnected schema is adjustment or adaptation to the world. This process happens through assimilation while applying an existing schema to new situations, accommodation by adapting inappropriate schema to new conditions, and equilibration as the force driving the learning process into new situation when existing schema cannot help and learner has to make a new balance (McLeod).

According toVygotsky,main founder of social constructivism, learning happens when learner is actively engaged and develops while internalizing social experience gained through appropriate help. It is mediated socially through the role played by more knowledgeable other by the means of scaffolding suggesting that a learner can do tomorrow what he is able to do today with the help of the other. Teacher provides challenging opportunities needed for a learner's development in the ZPD (in the zone of proximal development) not in age based strict activities. Accordingly our activities occur mediated by language and other symbolic systems which can be well-understood if their historical development is studied in their specific cultural contexts. Vygotsky emphasized the dynamic interdependence of personal and social

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processes by introducing two main issues in his approach to learning, mediation and meaning.

In what he calls ZDP(zone of proximal development) mediation means the meaningful social activities with the help of mediating agents initiating the process of transforming impulsive, unmediated and natural behavior into higher mental processes using instruments and biological tools. These tools may include three categories as material tools like picture cards to help memorizing new words, symbolic systems like silently rehearsing new learned vocabularies and mediation of peers and adults in the learning processes (Kozulin 39-59;Eun12-13) .

In Vygotesky's perspectives on social interaction meaning is what making social communication possible cross different contexts. As children develop the capacity to acquire meaningful speech in their communication and interaction with others by asking questions whenever it seems not understandable. In this meaning making process what is firstly learned is specific and context driven concepts which gain a generalized and context independent knowledge through further communication in various contexts as a product of the child's intellectual activity (Lantolf; Eun).

Social Learning or observational theory is another concept which implies that learning can happen through observing others' behavior, attitudes and outcomes resulting from continuous reciprocal interaction among cognitive, environmental and behavioral factors. Bandura (Social Learning Theory1-12, "Social Cognitive Theory in Cultural Context") called this observational learning which can make three forms as: a live model including an actual one performing the behavior. Verbal instruction model emphasizes details and description of the behavior, symbolic model of observational learning involving a real or fictional model demonstrating the behavior through movies, books and other social media sources. Modeling or observational learning can happen if these features of attention, retention, reproduction and motivation are available in the learner. Bandura in "Social Cognitive Theory in Cultural Context"defining his social cognitive theory outlines the three argentic perspectives which are determined differently in different cultures as personal agency exercised individually, proxy agency done through influencing others to achieve desired outcomes and at last collective agency in which people act in groups to develop, change or adapt.

-Learning Strategies

Instead of embarking on new teaching methods newly gained momentum towards learner-centered education has led to increasing researches and profound theories concerning the most efficient learning strategies, learners' role and responsibility in learning, and answering the question of how learners approach the task of learning and why? (Abhakorn; Cohen, Strategies in Learning, Strategy Training; Oxford, "Language Learning Styles and Strategies"). In order to arrive at this ideal point learner centered education has to adopt seven minimum standards outlined by Schweisfurthincluding first: Engaging and motivating lessons, second: Atmosphere of mutual respect between learners and teachers, third: Attending to learners existing knowledge and learning experiences, forth: a dialog not transmission as the norm of learning, fifth: a relevant curriculum to learners' lives and future needs in an accessible language, sixth: Creativity, thinking and skill-based content of curriculum, and seventh: assessment based on skills and differences rather than root-learning.

This paradigm shift has convinced scholars to think twice on the necessary changes needed in the balance of power in class, content function, the role of teacher, the responsibility of learning, and the purpose and processes of evaluation (Weimer). As there are numerous of professional minds who blame our teacher centered education for raising passive, unsuccessful, immature and dependent learners who mostly with no voice in shaping the future of their education and career, always wait for instructors to value their learning targets, strategies and outcomes (Brookfield,; Brown; Cohen, Strategy Training; Dornyei, Kumaravadivelu; Oxford, "Language Learning Styles and Strategies").

Considering language learning class as a sociocultural learning context with multiple interactions between learners and teacher (Vygotsky), new learning strategies are developed

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which may result in effective or ineffective learning. Language learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques developed by second language learners to enhance their learning are broadly classified under six main categories including metacognitive, cognitive, memory, compensatory, affective and at last social ones(Oxford, Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know, "Language Learning Styles and Strategies").

Social learning strategies include four main categories (Oxford, What Every Teacher Should Know,"Language Learning Styles and Strategies"). The first is asking questions, for instance asking for clarification or verification, asking for correction. The second is cooperating with others, for example, cooperating with peers and proficient users of the new language and the third is empathizing with others like developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of others´ thoughts and feelings. The forth is seeking opportunities for example to read, listen, write and speak with natives, teachers and proficient peers.

To realize how these learning strategies may be influenced by cultural features of different contexts Van Lier believes that we have to adopt a new look at the context and sociocultural factors. For this purpose the primary step to understanding a language in a context is understanding the context first and the language then and systematically combining the both (Hymes). Vygotsky emphasizes the primary and determining role of socio-cultural setting in promotion of higher forms of human mental development.

Culture with its new extended and conclusive definition plays a discernible role in modern education. Nietoincludes ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, world-views created, shared and transformed by people with common language, religion, history and geographical locationas cultural features when defining it. She also regards every one with his/her unique culture and mentions that culture is dynamic (resulting in fluid, transformative and liberating curriculum, multifaceted (cultural identifications are multiple, eclectic, heterogeneous and mixed), embedded in context (ecologically sensitive), influenced by social, economic, and political factors,

created and socially constructed (not handed-down or product-in-place but constructing us and constructed by us), learned (not a matter of genes or inheritance), and dialectical(culture of survival and culture of liberation as two faces of culture as a coin).

In the same line Halliday in "Towards a Language-Based Theory of Learning" andFunctional Grammar believed in the ecological theory of language in which language is theorized, described and analyzed within its environmental habitat. He further mentioned how our environment and culture influences us through language and how we affect and changed our world through it. Norenzayan suggests that differences in cognitive accessibility, differences in selection of cognitive processes to solve a given problem, and differences in actual cultural inventions out of universal primitive are three main ways in which cognition is formed by cultural variation.

When it comes to the magnitude of the role of culture in learning, E. Hall regards culture as an iceberg with its visible and vastly invisible features.Hanleyregards language, music, dance, literature, dress, games as the visible but concepts like child raising, decision making process, conversational patterns, cooperation, individualism vs. group, handling of emotions and so many others as invisible.

Hofstede in "Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning" andSoftware of the Mindshowed how perplexities can arise in interaction between teacher- student and student – student when the concept of culture is notwell perceived. For instance power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity, long-termvs.short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. self-restraint dimensions of cultures can have their specific influences on interaction and learning patterns. His concepts of high-context culture vs. low-context culture and their different communicational strategies emphasized the importance of recognizing context and culture as influencing factors on learning and communication

Nisbett and Norenzayan conclude that "It seems increasingly clear that thinking develops in a

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cultural context and that cultural processes markedly affect the functioning of human minds" (28). They also emphasize that although all culture may possess the same cognitive toolkits, for problem solving the tool choice may be completely different across different culture.Halliday in his eminent work, Functional Grammar, defined language as system and text simultaneously leading to the concept of "instantiated" meaning that language is a potential resource of meaning making in different contexts and cultures. When learning is defined as changes happened in individual resulting from experience (Slavin) and culture as mind programming process (Hofstede, Software of the Mind) the role of culture in learning process is more illuminated.

Batstone suggests two kinds of contexts demanding different communication strategies. Communicative contexts outside classroom in which learner attends important social interaction to perform his functions, and learning contexts in them input and output are fashioned to improve or practice second language commands. Halliday in Language and Educationmentioned two basic concepts as "context of culture" and "context of situation" and concludes that when language is regarded a system (lexical items and grammatical categories) contexts should be considered as context of culture (including nonverbal environment of language use), but when instances of language are studied (a text for instance) context has to be studied as context of situation. Parrish and Linder believe that teachers should be cognizant of this main instructional principle that some learning behaviors are based on deeply cultural values and should not be challenged while some others are just superficially culturally bound and for the purpose of learning can be challenged.

Learning strategies have been under research lenses of many scholars. Ananisarab and Abdi in their research concerning frequencies and types of different learning strategies in different context of EFL in Iran confirmed that context and even gender can influence the types and frequency of learning strategies learners applied. Green and Oxford also found a positive connection between proficiency and strategy application to get more

involved by advanced learners. Phothongsunan studied specific social learning strategies among university students and found that the most prevalent strategies were the most easily accessible ones and proposed that ideal strategy varies based on individual and contextual factors.

This research is an innovative survey of social learning strategies in EFL context since it is to study different social learning strategies and their relations with demographic features and proficiency level of second language learners in private language institutes in Iran.

The Main Research Questions:

What types of social learning strategy were used by second language learners and with what frequencies?

What kind of relationships were between the types of social learning strategies and demographic feature and proficiency level of the second language learners?

Method andMaterials

Data collection procedure was based on 30 item-questionnaire developed using Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) of Oxford, Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know, and Phothongsunanin which each item was scored on a Likart scale from one to four(1.rarely, 2. few times, 3.many times, 4.often). For the purpose of making it as more context-sensitive as possible it was translated into Farsi (the official language of education in Iran and its translation was evaluated by 5 top language instructors in the institutes) and some items were adapted to socio- cultural context of English language institutes for instance instead of asking about listening to radio programs in English as a social learning strategy we replaced it with using new social networking systems like Face book, chat rooms,…. 250 questionnaires were distributed by attending teachers and the researcher and one-week time was given to the responding students to answer the questions and return to their language institutes. At the beginning of the distribution time the teachers and the researcher were given enough time to describe the questionnaire, its main purpose and answer the likely questions of learners. After one week-time 184 questionnaires were returned to the two institutes, 128 males and 56 females (both

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institutes were male dominated). Based on Oxford ,Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know, and Phothongsunan the items were indicating main social learning strategies like Asking Questions (AS in the data analysis section No:1, 9, 15, 16,17,19,23), Cooperation with Others (C, No: 12, 13, 14, 20), Empathizing with Others (E, No:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 21, 29), Seeking Opportunities (SO, No:18, 26, 28, 30), Emphasizing with Others and Asking Questions (Eso, No:22, 24, 27), Asking Questions and Seeking Opportunities(Asso, No: 5). The questionnaire included 30 item and demographic information were in 4 sections included: Age,

Gender, Duration (language learning period), Language (learners' language level in the institutes in three levels of Level One (low intermediate), Level two (intermediate) and Level three (upper-intermediate).

In order to evaluate the construct validity of the questionnaire Confirmatory Factor Analysis based on SPSS was applied.

1. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling and Adequacy/Bartlett's Test ofSphericity: the test showed the acceptability of sample based on the Table A. Accordingly adequacy of 0.735 can be a good indication of sample adequacy for the study.

Table A.KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.735
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1334.921
df	435
Sig.	.000

2. **Anti-image Matrices:** Based on Table B the majority of responses were factor 1, 2, and 3 which accounted for 18 items respectively related to

Asking Questions and Empathizing With Others as main social learning strategies in Iran.

Table B. Total Variance Explained

Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Initial Eigenvalues			
Cumulative %	% of Variance	Total	Cumulative %	% of Variance	Total	Component
19.645	19.645	5.894	19.645	19.645	5.894	1
28.501	8.856	2.657	28.501	8.856	2.657	2
34.488	5.986	1.796	34.488	5.986	1.796	3
40.034	5.547	1.664	40.034	5.547	1.664	4
44.785	4.750	1.425	44.785	4.750	1.425	5
49.427	4.642	1.393	49.427	4.642	1.393	6
53.872	4.445	1.334	53.872	4.445	1.334	7
57.727	3.855	1.156	57.727	3.855	1.156	8
61.351	3.625	1.087	61.351	3.625	1.087	9
64.689	3.337	1.001	64.689	3.337	1.001	10
			67.687	2.998	.899	11
			70.595	2.908	.872	12
			73.326	2.731	.819	13
			75.866	2.541	.762	14
			78.335	2.468	.741	15
			80.758	2.424	.727	16
			82.891	2.132	.640	17
			84.962	2.071	.621	18
			86.846	1.884	.565	19

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			88.720	1.874	.562	20
			90.307	1.587	.476	21
			91.710	1.403	.421	22
			93.094	1.384	.415	23
			94.381	1.287	.386	24
			95.640	1.259	.378	25
			96.705	1.064	.319	26
			97.754	1.050	.315	27
			98.695	.940	.282	28
			99.391	.696	.209	29
			100.000	.609	.183	30

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Data were analyzed (using IBM SPSS statistics version 22) and based on the two main factors of Pearson Chi-square and Pearson's R, co-relations between types of social learning strategies and demographic features and proficiency levels were studied. Frequencies and percentages for every item of the questionnaire were obtained.

Results and discussion

In 4tables the mean and the percentage for every strategy (in Table-1, 2), mean for every category (Table-3), the relations between learning strategies and demographic and proficiency are presented (Table-4).

Table-1: (ESO: empathizing and seeking opportunities, ASSO: asking questions and seeking opportunities)

The type of social strategy, item on the questionnaire	Main category	mean
1. If I do not understand something in English I ask the other to slow down or repeat.	Asking questions	2.43
2. To improve my language I try to watch English movies.	Emphasizing	2.73
3. To improve my language I try to watch all English programs on T.V as much as I can.	Emphasizing	2.37
4.To improve my language I try to listen to English songs.	Emphasizing	2.69
5. I try to sense others feelings when they write to me in English	Emphasizing	2.49
6. I pay close attention to the thoughts and feelings of others when I interact with them.	Emphasizing	2.74
7. I read extra books or sources in English.	Emphasizing	2.48
8. I try to use what I have learned from teachers or peers.	Emphasizing	3.12
9. I try to ask my questions in English in class.	Asking questions	3.16
10. I read and try to understand English signs and directions.	Emphasizing	2.86
11. I try to sense others' feelings when I speak English face to face	Emphasizing	2.89
12. I have regular language learning friends.	Cooperating…	2.35
13. I keep in touch with native English speakers or foreigner friends on internet.	Cooperating…	1.89
14. I try to find opportunities to speak and socialize with native English speakers or foreigner friends.	Cooperating…	2.61
15. I ask others whether they have understood me when I speak with them.	Asking questions	2.48
16. After reading a text if I do not understand I ask others.	Asking questions	2.98
17. I try to ask for general help in language from advanced learners	Asking	2.66

		questions	
18. I try to attend extra-curricular programs at language institute.	Seeking oppor...	2.11
19. I ask teacher or learners to correct me when I make mistakes in language.	Asking questions	2.78
20. I communicate with natives or friends to practice, review and share information	Cooperating...	2.37
21. I try to learn more about native speakers, culture.	Emphasizing	2.89
22. I use internet to know about English language, natives and their culture.	ESO	2.66
23. I ask teacher or friends to correct me when I write to them	Asking questions	2.83
24. I play games in English with myself or friends.	ESO	2.70
25. I try to speak in English with my friends	ASSO	2.55
26. I attend extra activities related to language of the institute.	Seeking oppor...	2.09
27. I attend free discussion classes in English.	ESO	2.27
28. I use English movies or CDs to improve my listening.	Seeking oppor...	2.68
29. I try to gain more information about native's culture and customs	Emphasizing	2.89
30. I use new social networking facilities like Face book, viber…to improve my English language.	Seeking oppor...	2.72

Table- 2. percentages of every social learning strategy

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
q1	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q2	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q3	182	98.9%	2	1.1%	184	100.0%
q4	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q5	179	97.3%	5	2.7%	184	100.0%
q6	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q7	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q8	180	97.8%	4	2.2%	184	100.0%
q9	180	97.8%	4	2.2%	184	100.0%
q10	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q11	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q12	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q13	181	98.4%	3	1.6%	184	100.0%
q14	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q15	182	98.9%	2	1.1%	184	100.0%
q16	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q17	182	98.9%	2	1.1%	184	100.0%

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q18	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q19	182	98.9%	2	1.1%	184	100.0%
q20	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q21	181	98.4%	3	1.6%	184	100.0%
q22	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q23	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q24	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q25	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q26	181	98.4%	3	1.6%	184	100.0%
q27	180	97.8%	4	2.2%	184	100.0%
q28	184	100.0%	0	0.0%	184	100.0%
q29	183	99.5%	1	0.5%	184	100.0%
q30	182	98.9%	2	1.1%	184	100.0%

Table- 3: Mean of every category of social learning strategies

The type of social learning strategies in the questionnaire	Mean
1. Asking Questions	2.76
2. Empathizing with others	2.74
3. Seeking opportunities	2.40
4. Cooperating with others	2.30

Table-4 The relationship between social learning strategy types and demographic features and proficiency level
(Based on Chi-square or Pearson's R)

Chi-square	age	gender	Leaning duration	Language level
Asking questions	-0.004	0.061	-0.001	0.018
Empathizing	-0.068	-.256	0.160	0.101
Seeking opportunity	-0.018	-.045	0.032	0.068
Cooperation	-0.106	-.156	0.166	0.124

Table-1

As Table-1 demonstrates the highest mean score belonged to item number 9, *I try to ask my questions in English in class*. However, the kind of questions asked still remains unclear. While in the research by Phothongsunan item 1, *if I do not understand something in English I ask the other to slow down or repeat*, has the highest mean which in my opinion confirms the context and culture sensitivity of social learning strategies. The second most used strategy was item 8, *I try to use what I have learned from teachers or peers*, which differs with Phothongsunan showing learners' intention to watch TV programs as much as they could as the second and third most used strategies. Items: 16, 11, 21, 29 were at the third category citing the most prevailing social strategies accordingly among them item 16, *After reading a text if I do not understand I ask others* stood the highest confirming our learners' preference of questioning as the favored social leaning strategy.

The least used strategy by learners according to Table-1 was item 13, *I keep in touch with native English speakers or foreigner friends on internet.* As a cooperating strategy based on the four major categories, but in the research done by Phothongsunan itis item, *I practice listening to English language tapes,* which receives the lowest ranking. Attending extra-curricular activities and programs related to English language in institutes

(items 18, 26 both belonging to Seeking Opportunities group) were ranked as the second lowest categories.

Table - 2

Based on data represented in this table it can be concluded that almost all learners in all three levels applied variety of social learning strategies. However strategies number: 7, 10, 12, 18, 23, 24, 28 were used by 100 percent of language learners. Accordingly item 5, *I try to sense others feelings when they write to me in English,* was selected by the least percent of the surveyed language learners.

Table -3

According to the information outlined in Table 3 the four main categories of social learning strategies were as Asking Questions, Empathizing with others, Seeking Opportunities and at last Cooperating with Others. The data indicated that among social learning strategies Iranian second language learners favored Asking questions the most and Cooperating with others as the least.

Table-4

Table-4 indicates the Chi-square or Pearson's R, a statistical feature used to show any relationship between two elements, while the cutoff point for Pearson's R is 0.05 meaning that anything lower than this point is considered a very low probability, however, anything above this is thought of as a reasonable probability. Accordingly the demographic feature of age it had the least probability with any of the social learning strategy types, while language level had a positive relation with all four types of the strategies confirming whatDreyer and Oxford in their research also confirm that high proficiency level is connected with high rate of learning strategies. Clearly in this research high level language learners applied more Empathizing, Seeking Opportunities and Cooperating strategies than lower levels except for Asking question. When it came to gender except its positive relationship with Asking Questions (in female) it had negative correlation with the other three strategy types of Seeking opportunities, Cooperation and Empathizing with others. At last data indicated a positive relationship between language learning duration with three of the strategy types of Seeking Opportunities, Cooperating with Others and

Empathizing, but it had no correlation with the Asking Question category.

Conclusions

Halliday,Language as Social Semiotic,in his revolutionary approach to language "return to language" insisted that language shapes the way we see the world and because of its richness as meaning making resource enables us to shape our world. In the era of postmethod the hope for miraculous method to answer all questions of theorists and practitioners of pedagogy faded but opened a new horizon to see learners rather than teachers. With the advent of constructivism especially social constructivism and regarding language leaning as a social activity influenced by contextual and individual factors social learning and social learning strategies are greatly emphasized. Learning strategies attracted precise academic attention and extensive examination when it was questioned to know how and why bright language learners advanced more and leaned sooner. Studies on learning strategies haveencouragededucators to focus on strategies training programs like strategy workshops, strategy-based instruction, learner awareness training and tutoring by peers. This research was designed to investigate the types and frequency of social leaning strategies applied by EFL learners in EFL context of Iran and their correlation with demographic features and proficiency level.

In the same line with other researches (Ananisarab and Abdi; Riley and Harsch;Oxford,Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know) this study approved that females used more Asking Questions strategy than the males and high level second language learners also applied high frequencies of strategies than the lower levels. Language learning duration was positively connected with three types of social learning strategies of Empathizing with Others, Seeking Opportunities, and Cooperating with Others. Innovatively this research studied specific social learning strategies and confirmed their contextual-cultural correlations, as it showed questioning and applying their gained knowledge were favored most by Iranian learners different with what Phothongsunanconcluded in Thai learners. Among the four types of social learning strategies

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Cooperating withOthers still remained the least used social strategy type indicating the EFL conditions influencing the types and frequency of social learning strategy types. The study highlights the need to pay close attention to contextual and subjective factors reflecting what Kramsch outlined as a neglected magical dimension of second language learning. As Abhakorn ascertained all effort is to increase learners' metacognitive knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process and the possibility of selecting among a large spectrum of learning strategies to lead them to autonomous learning.

There is still a large area for future investigation concerning social learning strategies in EFL context. Studying the types of questions asked by EFL learners, cooperating technics and newly developed opportunities like social networking devices for instance face book leading to virtual learning strategies, and comparison with ESL contexts can shed more light on the upcoming trends of strategy-based instruction.

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