Chapter 5
Assessment of Language Learning Strategies in Technology–Enhanced Learning Environment

Wagdi Rashad Ali Bin-Hady
 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4116-113X
Hadhrmout University, Yemen

Abdu Al-Kadi
 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3805-7507
Ibb University, Yemen

Ali Abbas Falah Alzubi
 https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6252-9522
Najran University, Saudi Arabia

Hassan Saleh Mahdi
University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This chapter reports on the Yemeni and Saudi EFL learners' use of language learning strategies (LLSs) in technology-mediated language learning contexts. The study examines whether nationality and gender play a significant role in using LLSs on electronic platforms. The study adopted a correlative design in which 100 Yemeni and Saudi university students were recruited to respond to an online close-ended questionnaire. Drawing on Oxford's classification of learning strategies, the findings of this study showed that metacognitive and cognitive strategies were used more frequently compared to the other LLSs. Moreover, the findings of t-test showed a significant difference in the use of LLSs attributed to nationality in favor of the Saudi learners and no significant difference in the choice of LLSs attributed to gender. The study provided some suggestions for EFL learners to benefit from technology in their English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning can be affected by a number of factors such as age, gender, personality, motivation, self-concept, life-experience, learning style, excitement, anxiety, and technology (Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Williams & Robert, 1997; Zhou & Wei 2018). Language learners naturally follow effective ways to learn the target language. In the classroom, they are consistently exposed to new input and challenging tasks given by their instructors. When processing new information and performing language tasks, language learners use learning strategies, either consciously or unconsciously (Al-Maktary, 2018; Lee, 2010; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Yanju & Yanmei, 2016). Prior research findings have revealed that successful language learners employ language learning strategies (LLSs) better than their counterparts (Al-Maktary, 2018; Maldonado, 2016; Metcalfe & Noom-Ura, 2013; Yanju & Yanmei, 2016). This belief inspired educators and researchers to explore the LLSs that successful learners tend to use. Such strategies are suggestively useful for less successful learners to develop certain language skills (Al-Maktary, 2018; Maldonado, 2016; Lee, 2010).

The advent of technology has created several opportunities for students to learn easily and quickly. It has given learners more responsibility and autonomous learning roles to tackle their language learning in almost instructor-free learning settings regardless of time and place (Ahmed, Al-kadi & Hagar, 2020; Alzubi, 2019). Since the amount of information to be processed by language learners is high in language classrooms, learners use different language learning strategies in performing language tasks and processing the new input they face on their own in virtual spaces. They tend to employ cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies to process, understand, remember, and assess language learning input they obtain on their own. Nevertheless, not all learners have the same ICT facilities. For instance, in some contexts inadequate access to the Internet is still a salient barrier that prevents implementing ICT for effective language learning. Thereby, it is important to consider accessibility to educational technology in different contexts. The previous studies which examined the impact of ICT on language instruction were conducted in contexts with either high or low internet connection. There is a need to fill this gap by assessing the use of LLSs in two different technology-enhanced language learning contexts. This chapter is a report of a descriptive study that explored differences in utilizing LLSs in a technology-enhanced language environment. The context of language (Khamkhien, 2010; Oxford, 1990) and genders of learners are very important players that could affect language learning strategies (Božinović, & Sindik, 2011; Zare, 2010). More pointedly, the study intended to elucidate whether there were differences in the use of learning strategies between Yemeni and Saudi EFL learners, and ascertained differences in use of LLSs between the two samples due to differences in access to the ICTs tools. It also sought to examine if there was any difference regarding the gender of learners.

The following questions guided the investigation:

1. Which language learning strategies are highly used in ICT-enabled learning environments?
2. Are there any significant differences in the use of LLSs in ICT-enhanced learning environments attributed to the learning settings?
3. Are there any significant differences in the use of LLSs in ICT-enhanced learning environments attributed to gender?

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