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IDENTIFYING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY ESL LEARNERS AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL

Corresponding Author: **Syed Khuram Shahzad**, PhD Scholar in English, Linguistics, IELL, Sindh University, Jamshoro Email: Khuramshahzad83@gmail.com

Co-Author: **Dr Samina Sarwat** HoD, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, KFUEIT, Rahimyar Khan

Co-Author2: **Mahwish Jabeen**, M Phil in English, KFUEIT, Rahimyar Khan

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the language learning strategies used by ESL learners. The results of the study can help language teachers to promote teaching and learning skills. This study focuses on the identification of English language learning strategies used by BS students from four departments at KFUEIT district Rahim Yar Khan. Quantitative research design is applied with descriptive analysis. The researcher has selected the research topic “Identifying Language Learning Strategies Used by ESL Learners at Graduate Level” to recognize LLS and they are shown to be engaged in those activities that bring out self-confident and successful learners. The researcher has analyzed the relationship between six independent variables and learning strategies used and has found out the frequency of whether the participants are low, medium, or high strategy users. This research is according to the needs of the students and the students who have less ability to use LLS have been guided. In this research, students from all departments showed interest in “Meta-cognitive, Affective, Social, and Cognitive” strategies. Overall, the findings of this study showed that learning strategies supported learners more in their language learning.

Keywords: ESL Learners, English as a Second Language (ESL), Language Learning Strategies (LLSs), SILL Questionnaire, SPSS, Variables.

Introduction

Additionally, learning strategies can help learners become more self-reliant, independent, and lifelong learners (Allwright et al., 1991). However, students are not always aware of the benefits of intentionally utilizing L2 learning practices to accelerate and enhance learning (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993) Early research on so-called "excellent language learners" in the L2 field (Al-Ahdal & Al-Ma'amari, 2015) showed that these individuals regularly employed specific learning strategies, such as inferring meaning from context. Language learning techniques among students still need to be brought to their attention in terms of their significance for language acquisition and the advantages associated with using learning strategies that are appropriate for the skills that need to be acquired. Because language learning is a complicated process, it usually takes a long time to complete. Language learning methods (LLS) with modifications from O'Malley and Chamot target cognitive, meta-cognitive, memory, compensatory, social, and affective functions (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012). According to (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012) a learning strategy is "a decision the learner takes when using the second language or acquiring it that impacts learning."

The value of learning English has been linked to higher education. The implementation of LLS could have had a more favourable impact on learners' learning processes (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012) because there was a gap in comprehending language learning strategies among students in higher education (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012). To encourage learning among the graduates and support the development of English language abilities, an acceptable method has to be chosen. According to numerous academics and studies, LLS play important role in the acquisition of second languages (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012).

Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to identify the language learning strategies used by language learners. The results of the study can help language teachers to promote teaching and learning skills more successfully by concentrating not only on the teaching techniques but also on the learning strategies that learners engaged. This study focuses on the identification of English language learning strategies used by graduate students of different departments at KFUEIT district Rahim Yar Khan. It was suggested by the researcher under the umbrella of different research how to learn English successfully in order to get proficient in the English language and to develop the features of learners. Hence, this study is not only for ESL learners to know the learning strategies but also effective for teachers to instruct language learning strategies in classrooms. Likewise, the results would also provide instructions for any learner who aims to enhance their English learning and self-confidence learning.

Research Objectives

- 1) To identify the language learning strategies (LSS) used by ESL learners to learn English at BS level.
- 2) To analyze the most and least language learning strategies used by ESL learners to learn English at BS Level.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the language learning strategies (LSS) used by ESL learners to learn English at BS level?
- 2) What strategies do ESL learners use the most and least to learn English at BS Level?

Literature Review

Since a teacher must always ensure that the students are motivated to study, learning is a crucial component of all learnings (Chitravelu et al., 2005), making it a difficult skill to teach (SULAIMAN, 2016). According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Snow (2014), there are two learning challenges that both students and teachers must deal with: 1) A failure to comprehend what

learning implies; and 2) the process by which comprehension is attained. Learning is an active skill because understanding something requires learners to pay close attention to what they are learning.

Plans, blueprints, and methodical procedures are considered strategies in the teaching and learning of languages (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012). LLS teach students that LLS can be divided into three categories: formal language use relating to grammar and syntax, purposeful communication, and drawing inferences from guesses of the meaning of the unknown (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012). According to the researchers, socio-affective factors aid to control language learning anxiety, but cognitive and meta-cognitive factors are associated to language learning development. (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012) defined language learning strategies as acts taken by the learners' self-consciousness to choose their chosen learning approach, where occasionally education policies, commitments, and multicultural backgrounds are credited. Language learning techniques are described as activities chosen voluntarily by students for the sake of their own language acquisition, according to (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012). In addition, the researchers claimed that advanced students are more likely to employ meta-cognitive techniques and do so more frequently than less successful students. During the process of learning a language, language learning strategies are sometimes referred to as conscious methods, acts, or procedures (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012). Additionally, meta-cognitive and cognitive methods are frequently employed in classrooms where students are able to organize, track, and assess their own development.

Research Methodology

This research was carried out utilizing a survey research design employing Oxford's SILL-adopted questionnaires (1990). Because it is the most practical method for conducting this study and gathering the necessary data, a survey is used. Six elements make up the questionnaire: A (memory strategy), B (cognitive strategy), C (compensation approach), D (meta-cognitive strategy), E (affective strategy), and F. (social strategy). There are 50 questions in all, each on a 5-point Likert scale. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this questionnaire. From the English department, there were 200 students. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences is used to conduct a descriptive analysis of the raw data after it has been gathered (SPSS).

Research Design

This research study's primary design was a survey. According to Krathwohl, conducting a survey is the act of gathering information from a carefully chosen sample of a population, all of whom are treated as informants, and extrapolating their responses (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012).

Before beginning the study, the survey study researcher must prepare ahead and take many factors into account. The sample, the data collecting tool, the technique of acquiring data was carefully applied. (Bahanshal, 2015) asserts that survey research has a number of benefits. One benefit is that a significant amount of information can be obtained from numerous sources in a very short period of time.

In order to understand the significance and identify the language learning mechanisms employed by ESL students at the BS level, this study is descriptive and quantitative in nature. Nevertheless, data is gathered and examined quantitatively as well. In order to follow the triangulation method of data gathering and analysis, a mixed-method approach is used.

Findings and Discussion

The SILL survey results for the two groups of ESL graduates will be discussed in this section. The results are shown on a scale from 1 (never or almost never true) to 5 (always or almost always true), with 1 being the least likely to be true. To address the research questions for this study, the results from the scales are then converted into percentages.

Findings

The data were examined using SPSS to determine which LLS were utilized by the students. Inferential and descriptive statistical methods were employed in the analysis of the data. The study's findings are explained in the following way:

Table 1: Report

TABLE OF STRATEGY AND DEPARTMENT WISE DATA ANALYSIS

Department	C.STGY	F	N	Mean	SD
Agriculture	NT	14	50	1.82	1.401
	UNT	14	50	3.20	.422
	ST	14	50	4.58	.996
	UT	14	50	5.00	.000
	AT	14	50	2.80	1.476
	Total	70	200	3.40	1.552
Chemical	NT	14	50	3.40	.966
	UNT	14	50	2.00	.000
	ST	14	50	4.73	.905
	UT	14	50	5.00	.000
	AT	14	50	3.27	1.555
	Total	70	200	3.64	1.411
Civil	NT	14	50	1.90	1.449
	UNT	14	50	3.10	.316
	ST	14	50	4.82	.603
	UT	14	50	4.50	1.414
	AT	14	50	3.18	1.250
	Total	70	200	3.48	1.488
Mechanical	NT	14	50	2.67	1.323
	UNT	14	50	2.00	.000
	ST	14	50	4.73	.905
	UT	14	50	4.50	1.414
	AT	14	50	3.27	1.272
	Total	70	200	3.40	1.485
Total	NT	14	50	2.43	1.412
	UNT	14	50	2.56	.634
	ST	14	50	4.71	.843
	UT	14	50	4.74	.999
	AT	14	200	3.14	1.355
	Total			100.0%	3.48

This table indicates that 24 females students usually watch English movies and 12 males

students also watch English movies and 35 females students tried to search for

examples in the English language while 22 males also tried and 17 females students answered that they tried to communicate in English with others on the other hand 11 males gave the same answer and this statement is mostly true especially when the conversational environment inside and outside the classroom is available to develop

their L2 proficiency. Only 23 females replied that they usually do not watch English movies and 24 males also agree with the same statement. 22 females and 33 males said that they never translate each word during reading.

Table 2: Report

TABLE.OF.STRATEGY.AND.DEPARENT.WISE.DATA.ANALYSIS

Department	META STGY	F	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agriculture	NT	9	50	1.86	1.574
	UNT	9	50	3.00	1.483
	ST	9	50	2.90	1.101
	UT	9	50	3.86	1.069
	AT	9	50	4.53	1.246
	Total		45	200	3.40
Chemical	NT	9	50	4.13	.641
	UNT	9	50	3.27	1.489
	ST	9	50	2.11	.782
	UT	9	50	3.22	1.481
	AT	9	50	5.00	.000
	Total		45	200	3.64
Civil	NT	9	50	1.86	1.464
	UNT	9	50	3.00	1.468
	ST	9	50	2.86	.900
	UT	9	50	3.78	.972
	AT	9	50	5.00	.000
	Total		45	200	3.48
Mechanical	NT	9	50	2.88	1.356
	UNT	9	50	3.20	1.229
	ST	9	50	1.88	.354
	UT	9	50	3.00	1.414
	AT	9	50	4.75	1.000

	Total	45	200	3.40	1.485
Total	NT	9			
	UNT	9	50	2.73	1.552
			50	3.11	1.386
	ST	9	50	2.44	.927
	UT	9	50	3.45	1.252
	AT	9	50	4.81	.833
	Total	45	200	3.48	1.477

This table indicates that the 15 females and 20 males responded that they always learn from their mistakes to improve their language. English is very essential to improve the L2 proficiency. Graphical result shows that 31 females and 28 males responded that they always focus on spoken English therefore 12 females and 10 males did not focus on spoken English. 20 females and 22

males participants answered that sometimes they tried to use different ways for learning English words. Only 9 females and 12 males participants replied that they never made timetable for learning English. 35 females and 20 males students answered that they always interact with other people to learn language.

Table 3: Report

Department	AFFECTIVE.STGY	F	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agriculture	NT	6	50	3.77	1.922
	UNT	6	50	2.64	1.748
	ST	6	50	3.44	.527
	UT	6	50	3.86	1.069
	AT	6	50	3.40	1.647
	Total	30	200	3.40	1.552
Chemical	NT	6	50	4.62	.506
	UNT	6	50	3.55	1.508
	ST	6	50	2.50	.926
	UT	6	50	3.13	1.553
	AT	6	50	3.80	1.619
	Total	30	200	3.64	1.411
Civil	NT	6	50	3.46	2.025
	UNT	6	50	3.33	1.775
	ST	6	50	3.38	.518
	UT	6	50	3.75	1.035
	AT	6	50	3.56	1.333
	Total	30	200	3.48	1.488
Mechanical	NT	6	50	4.15	1.463
	UNT	6	50	3.17	1.642
	ST	6	50	2.25	.707

	UT	6	50	2.86	1.464
	AT	6	50	4.00	1.155
	Total	30	50	3.40	1.485
Total	NT				1.609
	UNT	6	50	4.00	1.651
	ST	6	50	3.17	.843
	UT	6	50	2.91	
	AT	6	50	3.40	1.303
		6	50	3.69	1.417
	Total	30	200	3.48	1.477

According to this table, 16 females and 23 males participants responded that were hey always afraid to speak English, on the other hand 22 females and 19 males participants replied that they speak they speak English with confidence by eliminating anxiety. 27 females and 22 males said that they usually speak English confidently. 26 females and 20 males’ participants answered that

sometimes they reward themselves for good performance while 15 females and 12 males’ participants did not reward themselves. When participants were asked if they share their information with others then 21 females and 12 males responded that they were strongly agreed to share information with others.

Table 4 Report

TABLE.OF.STRATEGY.AND.DEPAENT.WISE.DATA.ANALYSIS

Department	MEMORY.STGY	F	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agriculture	NT	9	50	1.00	.000
	UNT	9	50	3.50	.527
	ST	9	50	4.08	1.165
	UT	9	50	5.00	.000
	AT	9	50	2.64	1.502
	Total			200	3.40
Chemical	NT		50	4.00	.000
	9				
	UNT		50	2.00	.000
	9				
	ST		50	3.91	1.514
	9				
UT		50	5.00	.000	
9					
AT		50	3.42	1.564	
9					

	Total		200	3.64	1.411
	45				
Civil	NT		50	1.00	.000
	9				
	UNT		50	3.40	.516
	9				
	ST		50	4.27	1.009
	9				
	UT		50	5.00	.000
	9				
	AT		50	3.00	1.348
	9				
	Total		200	3.48	1.488
	45				
Mechanical	NT	9	50	2.86	1.464
	9				
	UNT		50	2.00	.000
	9				
	ST		50	3.91	1.514
	9				
	UT		50	5.00	.000
	9				
	AT		50	3.08	1.379
	9				
	Total		200	3.40	1.485
	45				
Total	NT		50	2.21	1.475
	9				
	UNT		50	2.73	.816
	9				
	ST		50	4.04	1.278
	9				
	UT		50	5.00	.000
	9				
	AT		50	3.04	1.429
	9				
	Total		200	3.48	1.477
	45				

The results of the obtained data signify that the first section is based on Memory strategies, students out of 200 showed that they usually formed connections between previous and new knowledge when they

learn the English language, 20 females agree with this statement on and 23 males also agree with this. Only 15 females and 23 males did not show any connection between previous and new knowledge and their

results remained the same in the use of their contextual words.

mostly used to make a visual image to remember a new word.

Females said that they often used new words in informal sentences, 10 females

Table 5 Report

TABLE OF STRATEGY AND DEPT. WISE DATA ANALYSIS

Department	SOC STGY	F	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agriculture	NT	6	50	3.42	1.730
	UNT	6	50	4.36	1.286
	ST	6	50	2.67	2.082
	UT	6	50	1.88	1.642
	AT	6	50	3.63	.806
	Total	30	200	3.40	1.552
Chemical	NT	6	50	3.83	1.586
	UNT	6	50	4.58	.996
	ST	6	50	4.75	.500
	UT	6	50	3.71	.756
	AT	6	50	2.40	1.056
	Total	30	200	3.64	1.411
Civil	NT	6	50	3.54	1.391
	UNT	6	50	4.42	1.240
	ST	6	50	5.00	.000
	UT	6	50	1.78	1.563
	AT	6	50	3.38	.650
	Total	30	200	3.48	1.488
Mechanical	NT	6	50	3.46	1.450
	UNT	6	50	4.57	1.089
	ST	6	50	5.00	.
	UT	6	50	3.00	1.500
	AT	6	50	2.23	.832
	Total	30	200	3.40	1.485
Total	NT	6	50	3.56	1.500
	UNT	6	50	4.49	1.120
	ST	6	50	4.27	1.421
	UT	6	50	2.55	1.583
	AT	6	50	2.93	1.033
	Total	30	200	3.48	1.477

This result shows that L2 proficiency can be got through communication skills. The

collected data shows whether participants improve their speaking skills with their friends or not, the number of 14 females and 20 males participants responded that they did not usually use this item while 15 females and 28 males always communicate with their companions in English. 25 females and 18

males always take help from the native language while 18 females and 22 males answered that they did not take help from the local language. 24 female and 26 male participants strongly agreed to study the culture of the native language.

Table 6: Report

TABLE OF STRATEGY AND DEPT. WISE DATA ANALYSIS

Department	COM STGY	F	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agriculture	NT	6	50	3.29	1.490
	UNT	6	50	2.20	1.398
	ST	6	50	3.29	1.799
	UT	6	50	4.63	1.061
	AT	6	50	4.00	1.069
	Total	30	200	3.40	1.552
Chemical	NT	6	50	3.41	1.417
	UNT	6	50	3.20	1.135
	ST	6	50	3.43	1.718
	UT	6	50	5.00	.000
	AT	6	50	3.50	1.604
	Total	30	200	3.64	1.411
Civil	NT	6	50	3.28	1.447
	UNT	6	50	2.25	1.389
	ST	6	50	3.14	1.676
	UT	6	50	5.00	.000
	AT	6	50	3.75	1.035
	Total	30	200	3.48	1.488
Mechanical	NT	6	50	3.00	1.254
	UNT	6	50	3.00	1.414
	ST	6	50	3.12	1.808
	UT	6	50	5.00	.000
	AT	6	50	3.13	1.553
	Total	30	200	3.40	1.485
Total	NT	6	50	3.25	1.385
	UNT	6	50	2.68	1.358
	ST	6	50	3.24	1.662
	UT	6	50	4.91	.514
	AT	6	50	3.59	1.316
	Total	30	200	3.48	1.477

This table indicates that 25 females and 12 males usually used unusual words in language learning and 12 females and 15 males always or almost use gestures and facial expressions during conversation when they didn't understand the meaning of words. 22 females and 25 males out of 200

Collective Result

Table offers a comparative outlook utilization of LLS by the students across four fields, as indicated in the figure below. This statistic shows that these participants are not using LLS effectively across the board. The amount of memory and affective methods used, both of which are crucial for a learner of a second language, is insufficient. Though, other four categories use is also insufficient (4.50 to 5.00). Meta-cognitive, affective, social,

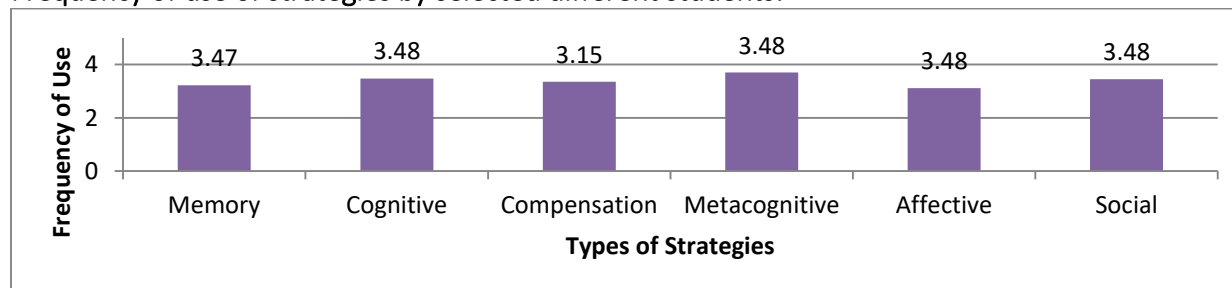
Types of strategies & their average use Table 7

Departments		Types of strategies and their average use				
Departments	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Meta-cognitive	Affective	Social
Agriculture	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Mechanical	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Chemical	3.6	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.64
Civil	3.8	3.48	3.48	3.48	3.48	3.48
Total	3.47	3.48	3.15	3.48	3.48	3.48
Grand Total (average) : 3.42						

participants disagreed that during conversation they did not use gestures. When the participants were asked about the use of similar words or phrases, then only 18 females and 15 males responded that they did not use similar words or phrases.

categories have been used on a larger scale (3.48). These strategies are where the learners try to review and connect what is being learned to content they already know, and individuals choose their goals for language learning, take note of their flaws, and monitor their development. Nevertheless, they frequently employ these tactics.

Frequency of use of strategies by selected different students:



Memory and meta-cognitive strategies are based on nine items, while cognitive strategies consist of fourteen items, in compensation, affective and social

strategies, six statements are included respectively. The cumulative result of the study described the ranges of the average use of all strategies. According to the result,

the range of average use is 3.15 to 3.48, as per language learning strategies the ranges were: (3.4–3.6) memory, (3.4 – 3.64) cognitive; (3.4 – 3.64) compensation; (3.4–3.64) meta-cognitive; (3.4–3.64) affective; (3.4–3.64) social strategies. It demonstrates that every student makes extensive use of these tactics, but not always. The sum also shows that these pupils use language learning tools to a medium extent. Students are given nine and six items on memory strategies and emotional strategies in the questionnaire (see the Appendix) to gauge how well they use their memories. This finding indicates that, in comparison to other language learning methodologies, students in the chosen departments lack the necessary memory and affective skills. Additionally, the average usage of affective techniques was between 3.4 and 3.64, and the use of memory methods was between 3.4 and 3.6 among all chosen subjects. These results show that these students are moderate users.

The overall findings of data analysis from the Oxford standardized questionnaire's SILL (7.0) version are presented in this chapter. To determine the validity of the study, the data was examined in terms of learners' use of strategies generally and their usage of specific strategy categories. The responses of participants were analyzed to verify the significance of using LLS. The data was gathered and assessed for general identification of participants' strategies and their use of different strategies. The collected data consists of the descriptive statistics results (average, frequency, means and standard deviation) to calculate the overall strategy use.

Discussion

According to the current study, there is a strong correlation between the identification of LLS and the usage of English proficiency. The findings revealed that, as assessed by Oxford's standardized questionnaire, the SILL, the language acquisition tactics employed by ESL learners across four different departments at the BS level were moderate. However, this average might be a little lower than that of other populations that have taken the SILL in many different nations (Alhaisoni, 2012). According to descriptive studies, certain tactics were adopted by participants more frequently than others.

In this current study the participants appear to be approximately high to medium language learning strategy users, and these participants used all six types of strategies at moderate level.

According to these findings which are explained in chapter four, two achievable explanations can be presented in this chapter. First, the participants reported their perspective in the study that English is not typically used for in ESL situations, however they examined that LLS did not have an urgent task in the second language learning. Additionally, this shows that this sample did not include language learners who were as complicated as other groups in various contexts.

The most employed method by the participants overall was Meta-cognitive. These are techniques that streamline and enhance how students learn. Participants in this study reported a desire to improve their English language abilities and learn from their mistakes. The overall result of four departments is 3.42 which are relatively higher than all learning strategies. Though, various participants make timetables in their learning. On the other hand a relatively

similar number of participants noted those with whom they could speak in English.

It was discovered that females students utilize a variety of techniques from different categories more frequently than males students, according to the results of the study comparing the usage of strategies by males and females participants. These results are comparable to those of Oxford and (Acevedo Nistal et al., 2012) who found that the way in which females participants used language acquisition strategies was only slightly, but statistically significantly, different from how men used them.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between students' test scores on language competency and their usage of language learning strategies. Using the students' average marks from four midterm tests given across the whole autumn semester, the performance of the students was evaluated in this study. The grammar, reading, vocabulary, and writing abilities are examined on two of these tests, which are production exams, and on the other two of these tests, which are multiple-choice exams. It is obvious that the kids' listening and speaking skills are not assessed. However, the language learning approaches that were examined in this study encompass every skill needed for language learning. Correlation study revealed no statistically significant relationship between language and analysis.

Conclusion

English language is widely used in today's world in all levels of education and it is crucial for learners to be able to use and converse using the language both in formal and informal situations. Learning and acquiring a second language are not an easy task. It takes courage, effort and a lot of hard work to acquire and master a second language. The aim of this study was not only to identify LLS

but also to examine its use by different students from four departments (Agriculture, Mechanical, Civil and Chemical) at BS level. It has been shown that the use of learning strategies affect the level of proficiency of learners. According to this present study the result of data analyses indicated that these students were high to medium users of strategies. In this study, the result showed that students from four departments favored the higher use of cognitive, compensation and social strategies respectively.

Finally, it has been observed that different learning strategies were used by ESL Learners to increase English proficiency in combined system. Though, these learners move to different English models and practices in reading and listening for better understanding and consideration. Moreover, they will engage in a variety of spoken and written practices to develop knowledge of these strategies in order to present them effectively. In this learning process the language learners are supported through self-analysis of their understanding to judge their language proficiency.

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