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Language Learning Strategies Used by Chinese Language University Students

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Abstract

The idea of "learning strategies" became prominent in the 20th century, signifying a shift in educational thinking from focusing solely on observable behaviors (behaviorism) to considering internal mental processes (cognitivism). This cognitive shift has reshaped our understanding of the teaching-learning process, emphasizing learner-centered approaches in both conventional and digital learning environments. Research in second language acquisition underscores the significance of employing effective language learning strategies to foster learner autonomy, enhance communicative competence, and bolster overall proficiency in second or foreign languages. This research explores the utilization and patterns of language learning strategies among university students studying Chinese language, encompassing their overall strategy deployment and the six strategy categories delineated in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire devised by REBECCA L. OXFORD (1990). Employing convenience sampling due to practical constraints, 350 questionnaires were disseminated among Chinese language students at NUML (Confucius Institute and Chinese Department). Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS version 22 software, employing descriptive statistics to compute frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. This facilitated the classification of participants as low, medium, or high strategy users based on mean scores. Findings indicated that Pakistani CFL learners exhibited a medium level of overall strategy utilization, with a predilection towards social and meta-cognitive strategies demonstrated at a high frequency, and affective, cognitive, compensation, and memory strategies employed at a moderate frequency. The study holds significance for educational policymakers and researchers in informing policies pertaining to second/foreign language acquisition and pedagogy. Moreover, the outcomes offer valuable insights for prospective Chinese language

educators, enabling them to enhance the efficacy of Chinese language instruction in the Pakistani context and empowering students to become autonomous learners beyond the confines of the classroom.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, Chinese learners, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), direct Strategies, indirect Strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and cognitive strategies

Introduction

Given the rapid growth of the Chinese economy and its expanding political influence, there is a heightened global interest, including in Pakistan, in learning the Chinese language. Language acquisition demands substantial dedication from both learners and educators, particularly when dealing with languages as distinct as Chinese compared to Urdu and English. Consequently, mastering Chinese presents a significant challenge for Pakistani students. To overcome these difficulties and attain proficiency, it's crucial for Pakistani learners to adopt effective language learning strategies. This study seeks to explore this issue within the Pakistani context.

In recent years, research in Second Language (L2) education has primarily focused on learner-centered approaches to second language teaching, aiming to guide learners towards autonomous and independent language learning (Reiss, 1985; Wenden, 1991; Tamada, 1996). Simultaneously, the focus of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has shifted from the outcome of language learning to the learning process itself (Oxford, 1990). Due to this change in emphasis, Language Learning Strategies (LLS) have become not only a part of various language proficiency theoretical models (Bialystok, 1978; Canale and Swain, 1980; Ellis, 1985; Bachman and Palmer, 1996) but also a means of fostering learner autonomy in the language learning process (Oxford, 1990; Benson and Voller, 1997). However, research in this area indicates that not all students use language strategies in the same way. Many variables, such as language proficiency, motivation, and gender, among others, influence the types and frequencies of language strategies used by second/foreign language learners (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Kupper, 1985a; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Ehrman and Oxford, 1990).

Language learning strategies refer to techniques used by language learners for the purpose of regulating their own learning. Oxford (1990) defines them as specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more transferable to new situations of language learning and use. Deployment of appropriate strategies ensures greater success in learning and more confidence. Previous research using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) has mainly focused on how learner factors influence the choice of language learning strategies in a single learning environment. For instance, Oxford and

Nyikos (1989) and Dreyer and Oxford (1996) reported that females use more strategies than males. Mochizuki (1999) found that English major students are more inclined to use compensation strategies, social strategies, and metacognitive strategies compared to science major students. Oxford and Crookall (1989) reported that high-proficiency learners are more prone to using a wider range of strategies than low-proficiency learners. Park (1997) found that the more strategies learners use, the higher their TOEFL scores. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) and Okada, Oxford, and Abo (1996) found that highly motivated students use language learning strategies more frequently than less motivated students. In recent years, many researchers have focused on variables that promote language learning success. It is well known that even when students learn a language in the same class, their degree of language learning success differs, depending on individual differences/abilities (Motoki, 2006). Many studies are paying attention to these individual differences, and the expectation for research on the impact of these variables concerning language learning success is increasing.

Oxford's (1990) Classification of Language Learning Strategies:

In 1990, Rebecca Oxford published her influential work titled "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know," introducing the widely utilized "Strategy Inventory for Language Learning" (SILL) questionnaire. This questionnaire became a central tool in numerous research studies throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Oxford (1990) provides the most frequently cited and widely used classification of language learning strategies. Oxford divides language learning strategies into two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies, with indirect strategies further subdivided into six types.

Direct Strategies: These directly involve the new language and are divided into memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. As Oxford (1990) states, "all direct strategies involve mental processes with language."

Memory Strategies: These require mental processes to store new information in memory for later retrieval. These strategies include four groups:

(a) Creating mental links, such as grouping new words, making associations/elaborations, and putting new words in context.

(b) Applying imagery and sounds, such as using images, semantic mapping, using keywords, and representing sounds mentally.

(c) Reviewing, such as structured review.

(d) Employing actions, such as using physical responses or sensations and using mechanical techniques.

Cognitive Strategies: These involve conscious methods for processing the target language and are divided into four groups:

(a) Practicing, such as repetition, formal practice of pronunciation and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining.

(b) Receiving and sending messages, such as getting ideas quickly and using resources to receive and send messages.
(c) Analyzing and reasoning, such as analyzing expressions, analyzing comparisons (cross-linguistic), translating and paraphrasing.
(d) Creating structure for input and output, such as note-taking, summarizing, and highlighting.

Compensation Strategies: These enable learners to use the language in speaking or writing despite knowledge gaps. These strategies are divided into two groups:
(a) Intelligent guessing, such as deductive reasoning, using language clues, and other clues.
(b) Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing, such as switching to the native language, using mime or gestures, partially or entirely avoiding communication, selecting this topic, adjusting or approximating information, printing words, using circumlocution or synonyms, and seeking help.

Indirect Strategies: These include meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Indirect strategies provide indirect support for language learning through the use of different strategies, such as focusing attention, organizing, evaluating, seeking opportunities, reducing anxiety, etc. (Oxford, 1990).

Meta-cognitive Strategies: These help learners take control of their cognition. These strategies involve surveying and relating known material, focusing attention, producing delayed speech, organizing, setting goals and objectives, planning for a language task, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation.

Affective Strategies: These assist students in managing emotions, motivation, and attitudes related to learning. These can be achieved through:
(a) Reducing anxiety, such as progressive relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, music, laughter, etc.
(b) Encouraging oneself, such as making positive statements, taking wise risks, and self-rewarding forms.
(c) Controlling emotions, such as listening to the body, using a checklist, writing a language learning journal, and discussing feelings with others.

Social Strategies: These promote language learning through interaction with others. Language is a social behavior, and involving others in the learning process using appropriate social strategies is essential (Oxford, 1990). These strategies are divided into three groups:
(a) Asking questions, such as requesting clarification, verification, and correction.
(b) Cooperating with peers and other language users.
(c) Empathizing with others, such as developing an understanding of culture, being aware of others' ideas and feelings.

Based on these strategies, Oxford created a tool to measure students' language learning strategies called the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The purpose of designing the scale is to obtain information about the strategies used by language learners while learning a second language. Although Oxford's classification system is well-defined, she emphasizes that the understanding of learning strategies is still in its early stages, and "it is only a suggestion to be tested through classroom use and research."

The purpose of this study is to investigate the practices and pattern of language learning strategies used by university students in learning Chinese language in terms of their overall strategy use, and the six categories of the strategies presented in Oxford's strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). This paper examines the following question:

RQ: What are the practices and pattern of language learning strategies used by university students in learning Chinese language, in terms of their overall strategy use, and the six categories of the strategies presented in Oxford's strategy inventory for language learning (SILL)?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Survey Participants

The participants in this study are university students learning Chinese. All 350 students who took part in the survey were enrolled at the Confucius Institute and Chinese department at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad. Among them, 246 were male and 104 were female students. 221 students have been learning Chinese for more than a year, while 129 students have been learning Chinese for a year or less. The age group with the highest response rate was 21-30 years old range, with 219 participants.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The tool used in this research was the 50-item Language Learning Strategy Scale (SILL) developed by OXFORD (1990, 5.1st edition) (pages 283-291). This scale is widely used globally and is considered the most suitable tool for assessing learners' strategy use (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). The SILL is a standardized measurement for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and students of various other languages, making it suitable for collecting and analyzing information about a large number of students. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part captures participants' background information, including their gender, age, major, motivation for learning Chinese, and the amount of time they spend learning Chinese outside of their regular classes per week. The second part includes an adapted version of 50 statements, categorized into six types of language learning strategies:

1. Memory Strategies: e.g., grouping, visualization, rhyming, and structured review (nine items).
2. Cognitive Strategies: e.g., inference, analyzing, summarizing (all involving deep processing reflection), and general practice (14 items).
3. Compensation Strategies: (used to compensate for knowledge deficiencies), e.g., guessing the meaning from context during reading and listening, using synonyms and gestures when unable to express oneself accurately (six items).
4. Meta-cognitive Strategies: e.g., focusing attention, consciously seeking opportunities for practice, planning language tasks, self-assessing progress, monitoring errors (nine items).
5. Affective Strategies: (emotion and motivation-related) strategies, e.g., reducing anxiety, self-encouragement, self-reward (six items).
6. Social Strategies: e.g., asking questions, collaborating with native speakers of the language, enhancing cultural awareness (six items).

3.3 Procedure /Data Collection

Primary data for this research study was collected through the outcomes of the structured questionnaire which was distributed in Chinese classrooms at Confucius institute and Chinese department NUML, Islamabad. The instrument employed in the current study was adapted from Oxford's (1990, pp. 283-291) 50-item Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (version 5.1), which is widely used all over the world and most consistent with learners' strategy use (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). To increase the response rate, the respondents were assured that their feedback would be kept confidential and treated as a secret. The questionnaire was administered to 350 students during regular classes at the Confucius Institute and Chinese Department of NUML Islamabad. The distribution of questionnaires took place in their respective classrooms with the assistance of class teachers. Questionnaires were provided to students at different levels of Chinese classes, namely HSK 1, HSK 2, HSK 3, HSK 4, and HSK 5. Students were asked to fill out the questionnaires during the class session. The researcher was present during the process to address any queries or concerns raised by the participants.

It was emphasized to the students that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that their responses would solely be used for research purposes. Additionally, they were assured that their participation would be strictly confidential. They were also informed that they have the right not to participate. The questionnaires were collected immediately after each student filled out.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to identify the language learning strategy patterns used by Pakistani students while learning the Chinese language, the researchers calculated the scores obtained from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS 20 statistical program to obtain descriptive statistics. The primary aim of calculating descriptive statistics was to determine the participants' level of strategy usage (low, medium, or high) based on the mean and standard deviation values. By analyzing these statistics, the researchers could ascertain the extent to which the participants employed language learning strategies in their Chinese language learning process.

3.5 Reliability Analysis :

After employing Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of the SILL (Chinese version), it was found that the overall scale exhibited a remarkably high reliability ($\alpha = .97$). Furthermore, the alpha values for the different sub-scales were also reported in the table below, indicating satisfactory reliability across these sub-scales. As a result, the SILL is considered to be a dependable instrument for its intended purpose.

Strategies	**No. of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Memory Strategies	9	0.75
Cognitive Strategies	14	0.89
Compensation Strategies	6	0.75
Meta-Cognitive Strategies	9	0.91
Affective Strategies	6	0.73
Social Strategies	6	0.87
Overall Strategies	**50**	**0.96**

Table 3.1 Reliability Analysis of the SILL Sub-Scale Scores Using Cronbach Alpha

The table above presents the internal consistency reliability of the current Self-Regulated Learning Inventory (SILL) using Cronbach's alpha. Each variable's Cronbach's alpha value represents the reliability of the corresponding element in the questionnaire. The first strategy, "memory strategies," comprises 9 items and exhibits a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability. The second strategy, "cognitive strategies," includes 14 items and shows a higher reliability value of 0.89, signifying strong internal consistency. Similarly, the third strategy, "compensation strategies," also demonstrates a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75. Moving on, the fourth strategy, "meta-cognitive strategies," consists of 9 items and boasts a commendable reliability value of 0.91, reflecting its high internal consistency. The fifth strategy, "affective strategies," with 6 items, presents a

reliability value of 0.73, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency. Lastly, the sixth strategy, "social strategies," includes 6 items and exhibits a reliability value of 0.87, which suggests good internal consistency.

The overall reliability of the research instrument, which comprises a total of 50 items, is calculated to be 0.96 (96%), which is an excellent indicator of scale reliability. These reliability values compare favorably with those reported in previous studies (Park 1997; Tamada 1996; Cohen 1998), further validating the instrument's robustness. The reliability analysis based on Cronbach's alpha demonstrates that the SILL questionnaire has sound internal consistency across its various strategies, making it a reliable tool for assessing self-regulated learning.

3.6 SILL Scoring Criteria:

High	Always or almost always used.	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used.	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used.	2.5 to 3.4
	Generally not used.	1.5 to 2.4
Low	Never or almost never used.	1.0 to 1.4

Table 3.2 Key to Scoring the SILL

4. Data Analysis, results and discussion

4.1 The overall use of language learning strategies by Pakistani Students:

Descriptive statistics technique was used to calculate the frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation of the analyzed data. Descriptive statistics were calculated primarily to determine whether the participants were low, medium or high strategy users based on the means obtained.

The overall use of language learning strategies by the students has been shown in table 4.1 which presents the mean and standard deviation of strategy use among all the subjects. The average overall strategy use was ranged from a high 3.74 to a medium of 3.21 while the overall mean for the sample was 3.41 which indicates the medium strategy usage. As for strategy categories, social strategies were the most frequently used strategies (M=3.74) and memory strategies were the least frequently used strategies (M=3.21), while between the two in descending order were meta-cognitive strategies (M=3.68), Affective strategies (M=3.34), cognitive strategies (M=3.25), and compensation strategies (M=3.24).

Language Learning Strategies	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D.	Ranking
Memory Strategies	1.22	5.00	3.21	0.81	Medium
Cognitive Strategies	1.14	5.00	3.25	0.82	Medium
Compensation Strategies	1.00	5.00	3.24	0.86	Medium
Meta-Cognitive Strategies	1.00	5.00	3.68	0.96	High
Affective Strategies	1.33	5.00	3.34	0.84	Medium
Social Strategies	1.00	5.00	3.74	1.00	High
Overall	1.26	4.82	3.41	0.73	Medium

Table 4.1 Summary for Descriptive Statistics for Six LLS Subcategories

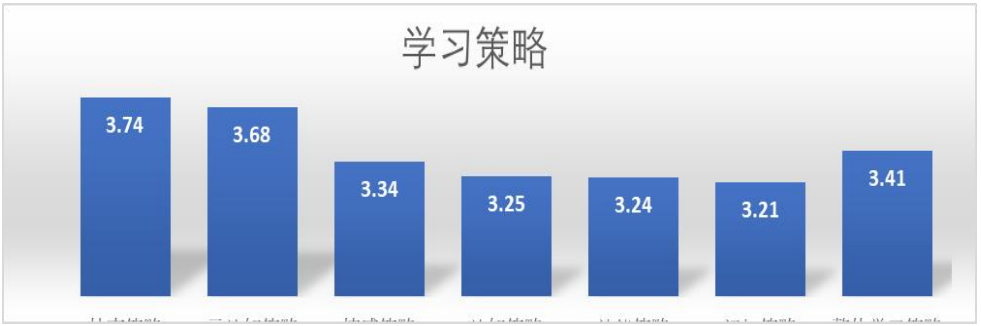

Figure 4.1 Strategies used by learners of Chinese language in Pakistani universities

4.2 Usage of six learning strategies of Chinese language by Pakistani students

4.2.1: Memory Strategies

			Percentage response rate (N=350)				
Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. Dev
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new	53	59	91	67	80	3.18	1.36

2. I use new Chinese words in a sentence so that I can remember them	43	43	55	93	116	3.56	1.37
3. I connect the sound of a new Chinese word and an image or picture of the word to help me	37	46	82	111	74	3.40	1.25
4. I remember a new Chinese word by making a mental picture of a	51	65	56	89	89	3.29	1.40
5. I use rhymes to remember new Chinese words	66	55	93	73	95	3.04	1.36
6. I use flashcards to remember new Chinese words	91	82	75	53	48	2.67	1.36
7. I physically act out new Chinese words	62	67	82	62	75	3.05	1.39
8. I review Chinese lessons often	34	30	72	88	11	3.61	1.30
9. I remember new Chinese words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board,	57	56	86	74	77	3.17	1.37

Table 4.2.1: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics with respect to "Memory Strategies"

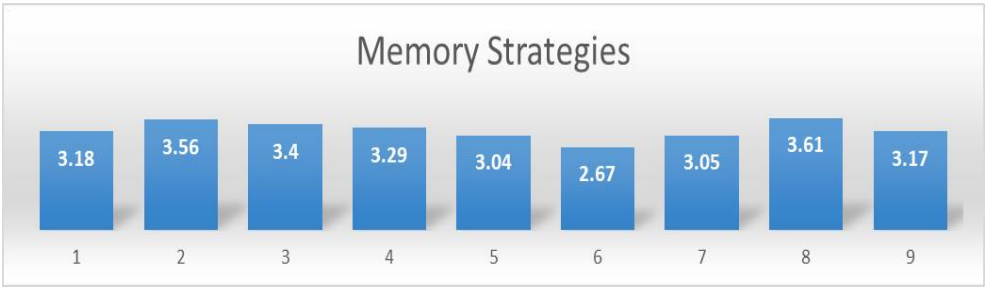

Figure 4.2.1: The use of memory strategies by students

The findings from the above table reveal the results by applying frequency distribution and descriptive statistics with respect to "Use of Memory Strategies". The frequencies and mean values of each item have been presented in table 4.2.1 which indicate that the most frequently used memory strategy is reviewing Chinese lessons often having a mean score of 3.61 and the least frequently used strategy is using flashcards to remember new Chinese words which has a mean score 2.67. Besides reviewing lesson the students also prefer to use new Chinese words in a sentences so that they can remember them, connect the sounds of a new Chinese word and character to help them remember the word, make a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used, think of relationships between what they already know and new things they learn in Chinese, remember new word by remembering their location on the page or board.

4.2.2: Cognitive Strategies

Table 4.2.2: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics with respect to

			Percentage response rate (N=350)				
Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. Dev
10. I say or write new Chinese words	5	4	6	8	1	3.46	1.40
11. I try to talk like native Chinese speakers	42	27	63	109	109	3.62	1.31
12. I practice the sounds of Chinese	35	36	45	10	13	3.74	1.32
13. I use the Chinese words I know in different ways	35	45	98	87	85	3.41	1.26
14. I start conversations in Chinese	37	82	70	73	80	3.22	1.31
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in Chinese or go to the movies	10	55	75	62	56	2.76	1.44
16. I read for pleasure in Chinese	64	78	78	69	61	2.96	1.44
17. I write notes, messages, letters or reports in Chinese	79	82	63	69	58	2.84	1.40
18. I first skim-read a Chinese passage (read over the passage quickly), then go back and read carefully	47	60	76	80	87	3.29	1.36
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words	51	59	64	72	10	3.34	1.42
20. I try to find patterns in Chinese	48	54	92	87	69	3.21	1.30
21. I find the meaning of a Chinese word by dividing it into parts that I	48	45	74	70	11	3.44	1.40
22. I try not to translate word for word	68	67	48	91	76	3.11	1.44
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in Chinese	54	64	86	67	79	3.15	1.37

"Cognitive Strategies"

Figure 4.2.2: The use of cognitive strategies by students

The findings from the above table reveal the results by applying frequency distribution and descriptive statistics with respect to "Use of Cognitive Strategies". The frequencies and mean values of each item have been presented in table 4.2.2 which indicate that the most frequently used cognitive strategy is to practice the sounds of Chinese words having a mean score of 3.74 and the least frequently used strategy is watching tv/movies in Chinese language which has a mean score 2.76. Besides their most preferred strategy of practicing sounds of Chinese words the students also use other strategies such as try to talk like native Chinese speakers, try to say Chinese words several times, try to find the meaning of the word by dividing it into parts that they understand, use the Chinese words in different ways, look for words in their own language what are similar to new words in Chinese, first skim-read a Chinese passage then go back and read carefully, start conversation in Chinese, try to find patterns in Chinese. Besides their least used strategy of watching Tv/movies in Chinese the students also didn't like to make summaries of information that they hear or read in Chinese, write notes, letters, or reports in Chinese, and also don't like to read Chinese for pleasure.

4.2.3: Compensation Strategies

Table 4.2.3: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics with respect to "Compensation Strategies"

			Percentage response rate (N=350)				
Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. Dev
24. To understand unfamiliar Chinese words, I make guesses	46	74	44	80	10	3.36	1.43
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in Chinese, I use gestures	34	56	74	93	93	3.44	1.29
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in Chinese	73	53	91	63	70	3.01	1.40
27. I read Chinese without looking up every new word	61	69	82	86	52	3.00	1.31
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in Chinese	32	44	75	12	74	3.47	1.21
29. If I can't think of an Chinese word, I use a word or phrase that	45	64	88	84	69	3.19	1.30

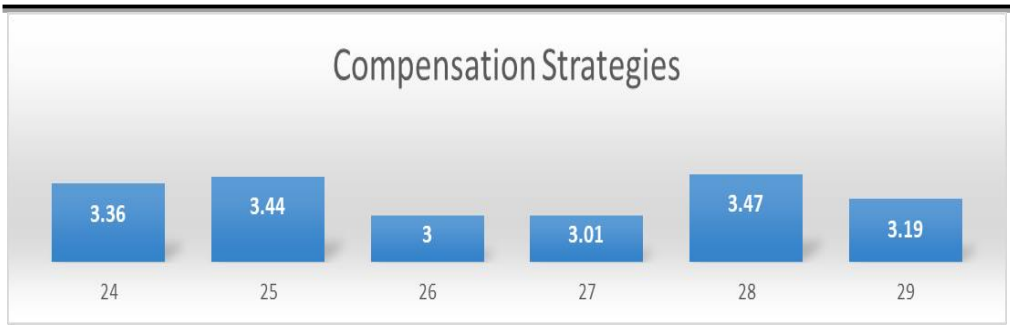

Figure 4.2.3 The use of compensation strategies by students

The findings from the above table reveal the results by applying frequency distribution and descriptive statistics with respect to "Use of Compensation Strategies". The frequencies and mean values of each item have been presented in table 4.2.3 which indicate that the most frequently used compensation strategy is try to guess what the other person will say next in Chinese having a mean score of 3.47 and the least frequently used strategy is to read Chinese without looking up every new word which has a mean score 3.00. Besides guessing what the other person will say in Chinese the students also prefer to use gestures when they cant think of a proper word during conversation in Chinese and also make guesses to understand unfamiliar Chinese words. Whereas besides their least preferred strategy of reading Chinese without looking up every new words they also don't use any alternate words with same meaning when they cant think of a Chinese word.

4.2.4: Meta-Cognitive Strategies

			Percentage response rate (N=350)				
Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. Dev
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my Chinese	35	42	93	82	98	3.47	1.28
31. I notice my Chinese mistakes and use that information to help me do better	31	41	52	77	149	3.78	1.34
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking Chinese	34	24	36	92	16	3.94	1.31
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of Chinese	34	28	50	98	14	3.81	1.30
34. I plan my schedule so that I will have enough time to study	32	51	88	89	90	3.44	1.26
35. I look for people I can talk to in Chinese	37	48	54	77	13	3.64	1.38

36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in Chinese	40	47	59	84	12	3.56	1.37
37. I have clear goals for improving my Chinese skills	42	24	61	11	11	3.65	1.31
38. I think about my progress in learning Chinese	24	32	65	63	16	3.90	1.28

Table 4.2.4: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics with respect to "Meta-Cognitive Strategies"

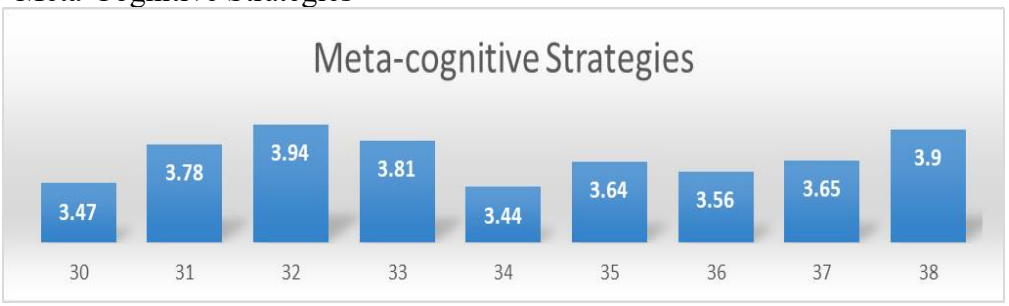

Figure 4.2.4: The use of meta-cognitive strategies by students

The findings from the above table reveal the results by applying frequency distribution and descriptive statistics with respect to "Use of Cognitive Strategies". The frequencies and mean values of each item have been presented in table 4.2.4 which indicate that the most frequently used cognitive strategy is paying attention when someone is speaking Chinese having a mean score of 3.94 and the least frequently used strategy is to plan their schedule so that they have enough time to study Chinese which has a mean score value 3.44. Besides paying attention to other people when they speak Chinese the students also think about their progress in learning Chinese, try to find out how to be a better learner of Chinese, notice their mistakes in Chinese to learn better, have clear goals for improving their Chinese language skills, look for people to talk to in Chinese. The students don't plan their schedule so that they will have enough time to study Chinese and also don't know different ways to use Chinese language also don't read in Chinese language to improve their language skills.

4.2.5: Affective Strategies

			Percentage response rate (N=350)				
Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. Dev
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using Chinese	46	34	78	99	93	3.45	1.32
40. I encourage myself to speak Chinese even when I am afraid of making a mistake	28	40	48	111	123	3.75	1.26

41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in Chinese	57	51	59	83	10	3.34	1.43
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using Chinese	39	48	98	85	80	3.34	1.27
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary	10	68	62	55	64	2.75	1.47
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning Chinese	48	45	66	89	102	3.43	1.38

Table 4.2.5: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics with respect to "Affective Strategies"

Figure 4.2.5: The use of affective strategies by students

The findings from the above table reveal the results by applying frequency distribution and descriptive statistics with respect to "Use of Affective Strategies". The frequencies and mean values of each item have been presented in table 4.2.5 which indicate that the most frequently used affective strategy is encouraging themselves even when they are afraid of making mistakes having a mean score of 3.75 and the least frequently used strategy is writing about their feelings in a language learning diary which has a mean score 2.75. Besides encouraging themselves in learning Chinese the students also try to relax whenever they feel afraid of using Chinese, talk to others how they feel while learning Chinese. Whereas students don't give themselves any reward or treat when they do well.

4.2.6: Social Strategies

			Percentage response rate (N=350)				
Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	St. Dev
45. If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow	42	21	56	57	174	3.86	1.40
46. I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk	46	22	48	94	140	3.74	1.38

47. I practice Chinese with other students	31	24	60	91	14	3.84	1.27
48. I ask for help from Chinese speakers	47	23	48	10	12	3.69	1.37
49. I ask questions in Chinese	3	2	9	8	1	3.59	1.28
50. I try to learn about the culture of	4	2	5	7	1	3.75	1.40

Table 4.2.6: Frequency Distribution and Descriptive Statistics with respect to "Social Strategies"

Figure 4.2.6: The use of social strategies by students

The findings from the above table reveal the results by applying frequency distribution and descriptive statistics with respect to "Use of Social Strategies". The frequencies and mean values of each item have been presented in table 4.2.6 which indicate that the most frequently used social strategy is asking other people to slow down while speaking Chinese when they don't understand something in Chinese having a mean score of 3.86 and the least frequently used strategy is asking questions in Chinese which has a mean score 3.59. Besides asking other people to speak slowly, the students also like to practice Chinese with other students, try to learn the culture of Chinese, ask Chinese people to correct them when they speak Chinese. Besides their least frequently used social strategy of asking questions in Chinese the students also don't ask help from Chinese speakers.

4.3 Correlation among use of six Chinese language learning strategies by students'

		Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Meta-cognitive	Affective	Social
Memory	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	350					
Cognitive	Pearson Correlation	.730(**)	1				
	Sig. (2-	.000					

	tailed)						
	N	350	350				
Compensation	Pearson Correlation	.597(**)	.703(**)	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
	N	350	350	350			
Meta-Cognitive	Pearson Correlation	.621(**)	.784(**)	.632(**)	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000			
	N	350	350	350	350		
Affective	Pearson Correlation	.475(**)	.567(**)	.589(**)	.548(**)	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	350	350	350	350	350	
Social	Pearson Correlation	.547(**)	.607(**)	.586(**)	.695(**)	.556(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.3 Correlation Analysis of Students' Utilization of Various Learning Strategies

The results in Table 4.3 indicate that there is a significant correlation among all variables by aggregating the values of Pearson correlation coefficients. The results in the table show that, at a significance level of 5%, all language learning strategies are significantly correlated with each other, reaching a significance level of 0.01. Among these six strategies, meta-cognitive strategies show the strongest correlation with cognitive strategies, with a correlation coefficient of 0.784. Next is the correlation between cognitive strategies and memory strategies, with a coefficient of 0.730. The correlation between memory strategies and affective strategies is the weakest, with only 0.475. Additionally, there is a positive correlation among all strategies, meaning that the more one strategy is used, the higher the usage rate of other strategies will be.

4.4 Research Results and Discussion:

The average overall strategy use in this study ranged from 3.74 to 3.21, with a sample mean of 3.41. Among the strategy categories, social strategies were the most frequently used (M = 3.74), while memory strategies were the least used (M = 3.21). The frequency of use from high to low was metacognitive strategies (M = 3.68), affective strategies (M = 3.34), cognitive strategies (M = 3.25), and compensatory strategies (M = 3.24). The most commonly used strategies within these categories were frequent reviewing of Chinese lessons (memory strategy), practicing the pronunciation of Chinese words (cognitive strategy), guessing what the other person will say in Chinese (compensatory strategy), paying attention when others speak in Chinese (metacognitive strategy), encouraging oneself even when afraid of making mistakes (affective strategy), and asking others to slow down when speaking Chinese (social strategy). The least frequently used strategies were using flashcards to memorize new words (memory strategy), watching Chinese TV/movies (cognitive strategy), reading without looking up every unknown word (compensatory strategy), planning study time and applying language skills in the classroom (meta-cognitive strategy), writing down their feelings in a language learning diary (affective strategy), and asking questions in Chinese (social strategy).

In this study, the most commonly used strategy category was "social strategies." Participants showed a strong preference for strategies such as requesting repetition, speaking slowly, practicing Chinese with other students, and trying to understand Chinese culture, but they were hesitant to ask questions in Chinese, possibly due to learning Chinese as a foreign language and lacking opportunities to interact with native Chinese speakers. Therefore, they were reluctant to ask questions in Chinese to their Pakistani classmates. Since these students were learning Chinese outside of a Chinese-speaking environment, they did not expect others to correct them when they made mistakes. These findings are consistent with previous literature (Phillip, 1999; Al-Buainain, 2010; Tse, 2011; Chang, 2011).

The second most commonly used strategy category was meta-cognitive strategies. These included "executive control" of language learning through planning, organizing, monitoring, and evaluating oneself, as well as managing emotions and motivating oneself through self-regulation. Therefore, metacognitive learning strategies enable learners to study effectively, which is crucial in a foreign language input environment like Pakistan. In the current study, participants seemed to be aware of the necessity of managing their learning processes. They employed various metacognitive strategies, such as "paying attention when others speak in Chinese, reflecting on progress in

learning Chinese, noticing errors in Chinese, and seeking ways to become a better learner," whereas using language skills in class while arranging study time was the least used strategy. This could be attributed to their living in a non-Chinese-speaking country.

The third most commonly used strategy category was affective strategies. The relatively lower use of affective strategies may be due to the lack of opportunities to practice Chinese with native speakers outside of the classroom. In this group, students seemed to experience high levels of language learning anxiety, which might make them reluctant to reflect on their emotional responses to language learning. They reported that despite their efforts to relax when they couldn't understand Chinese, fear of making mistakes often prevented them from trying. However, the most commonly used affective strategy was encouraging themselves to speak Chinese even when afraid of making mistakes and trying to relax when using Chinese while communicating their feelings to others. Students did not prefer writing their feelings in a language learning diary, which could explain why they generally were not proficient in writing. These results align with previous research (Oxford, 1990; Oh, 1992; Yang, 1993; Griffiths & Parr, 1999; Han & Lin, 2000; Nisbet, 2002; Yu, 2003; Griffiths, 2003; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Al-Otaibi, 2004; Chen, 2005; Yang, 2007; Al-Buainain, 2010; Chang, 2011).

According to O'malley and Chamot's (1990) research, cognitive (translation, analysis) strategies and metacognitive (planning, organization) strategies are often used together to support each other. In fact, adopting multiple strategies often yields better results than relying on a single strategy. In this study, Chinese major students were in an intensive learning environment, which might lead them to prefer using cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Chinese learners had a strong instrumental motivation to learn Chinese. Griffiths and Oxford (2014) argued that researchers and theorists should come together regarding the central cognitive and metacognitive aspects of LLS. The research results in the high-frequency use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies are consistent with previous studies (Sheorey, 1999; Abu Shamis, 2003; Liu, 2004; Khalil, 2005; Riazi, 2007; Al-Buainain, 2010; Chang, 2011).

In this study, the least favorite strategies among the participants were compensation strategy and memory strategy. The compensation strategy, ranked fifth, allows students to compensate for their lack of knowledge during the process of understanding or producing the target language (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Al-Buainain, 2010). Language learners use compensation strategies such as guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words, using a synonym or a phrase when they cannot recall a specific word, or creating new Chinese vocabulary or using gestures when lacking knowledge in grammar, vocabulary, and other

language components, to maintain effective communication. These findings are consistent with previous research (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Riazi, 2007; Al-Buainain, 2010; Chang, 2011).

The low usage of memory strategies was a surprising result. Such strategies align with the teaching methods commonly used in many Asian countries, which often emphasize rote memorization. Effective memory strategies are believed to include not only memorization but also imagination. It is possible that the participants in this study were unfamiliar with the use of memory techniques, leading to their limited use of memory strategies. Lee and Oxford (2008) pointed out that the construction of memory items in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) includes a series of memory strategies based on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic patterns, which may not be suitable for students in Pakistan. The most frequently reported memory strategies in this study were reviewing Chinese lessons frequently, using new Chinese words in sentences, associating words with sounds and mental images to help them remember the words and envisioning scenarios in which the words might be used.

It is worth noting that in other studies, students also ranked memory strategies as the least frequently used, such as in the study by Griffits and Parr (2001). Another study conducted by Oxford and Ehrman (1995) found that the frequency of using memory strategies was the lowest. Interestingly, Bedir's (2002) research on students from super and Anatolian high schools indicated that students did not favor the use of memory strategies, and the most commonly used strategies fell within the meta-cognitive category.

5. **Conclusion：**

This study examines the overall use of language learning strategies among university students studying Chinese. It investigates the linguistic learning strategy patterns of these students, particularly focusing on the six categories of strategies outlined in Oxford's "Language Learning Strategy Scale." The research is conducted on 350 Chinese language students from the Confucius Institute in Islamabad and the Chinese Language Department. The study starts with a preliminary investigation using 50 questionnaires and concludes with the distribution of the final questionnaire after the students' Chinese language tests and analysis.

The data collected is analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicate that the students have a moderate to high level of strategy use. They mainly employ social and meta-cognitive strategies to aid in planning and organizing their language learning. On the other hand, the use of memory strategies is relatively low. Lack of extracurricular exposure to the target language contributes to a lack of

integrative motivation among language learners. Therefore, it is essential for course developers, especially in the early stages of language learning, to provide appropriate connections between language course objectives and real-life applications. Modifying language courses to include activities that encourage practical use of the target language is crucial.

The findings of this research support existing studies on the use of language learning strategies. The results show that social cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies are more frequently used in overall language learning strategies among university students, while memory and compensatory strategies are used the least. Generally, the study emphasizes that strategy use is a complex phenomenon influenced by various interacting variables. These variables impact overall strategy use, strategy categories, and individual strategy use differently. Therefore, all stakeholders, especially teachers and administrators, should be aware of their roles in utilizing students' preferences for using these strategies to facilitate effective language learning processes. Understanding the use of learning strategies and the factors influencing students' learning patterns is one of the ways in which classroom teachers can help students become successful learners. The results of this study also provide language teachers with deeper insights into how to use students' learning strategies and how to design more effective learning tasks and activities to cater to university language students' needs.

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