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### Language Learning Strategies and L2 Acquisition

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#### ABSTRACT

Learning and teaching a second language is always considered a big issue and has been a great problem for the learners and teachers in rural areas schools. Present study aims to explore some strategies for learning a second language like English which has a second language status in Pakistan. It tries to suggest some strategies which are useful and helpful in learning a second language. Moreover, all the essential information and material for this study about learning a second language strategies was obtained through rural elementary school level students enrolled in an English language class. The task and lists of words which were applied on in students are presented in the form of tables as well as the results are also shown in the form of table. This study is designed to know the role and the effect of the use of different strategies on learners in the learning and acquisition of second language.

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#### Introduction

As Lessard-Clouston (1997) stated that many language learning strategies are available for L2 teachers while teaching to students that how to remember vocabulary and words in another language. Moreover, to know which types of language learning strategies are suitable for which types of learners might help teachers in the selection as well as using of language learning strategies. In order to Know the cognitive style that how learners think, enables the teachers to create materials in order to meet the needs of L2 language learners. The combination to know the cognitive style and to match language learning strategies might result in the form of improving the teaching as well as learning of L2 language vocabulary.

In Pakistan, according to Government announcement, the English Language exam is administrated under the supervision of Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education. Preparing students for such an examination, it was considered to include memory strategies to enhance the learning of L2 language as well as to review cognitive style known as thinking style for the purpose of this study, as the use of all these elements might be helpful for the exam's preparation.

The amount of information is so high which is being processed by learners of a language in a language classroom (Hismonoglu, 2000). To make language learning more useful Kinoshita (2003) points out that learners should be directed towards the use of learning strategies within a language lesson. Also, as according to Schmeck (1983) foreign language learners focus on analytic (detail) or focus on global (overview) learning styles. Furthermore, there are many learning strategies in the form of 'toolkit' which are useful for the second language students as well as teachers.

#### Language Learning Strategies

Strategies to learn a language are techniques used by learners in order to improve the development of their language (Schmeck, 1983). To learn a language within studies, a view is explained by Oxford (1990) that there were not any kind of significant differences between sexes in the performance of

language, but females use more learning strategies as compared to males. The type of learning strategies and their number reported by males were similar to females who had shared their cognitive style. The number of these strategies might be less important than the learners 'use of them. The learners those who are unsuccessful to learn a second language, they try to use different strategies but not in organized manner. Learning strategies like language practice (cognitive) or metacognitive strategies like evaluating and planning at the time of one's study should take priority than motivational strategies such as rewarding oneself and social strategies like studying with others (Oxford, & Cohen, 1992).

#### Initial Letter Strategy

It is based on a mnemonic technique. Mnemonics speed up learning (Loftus, 1980). Wilson (1991) reported that Initial letter strategy helps the learners to improve recall. In that study's section where instructions are given it was thought that students might not be able to recall acronyms in English. Therefore, it was told the students to remember the acronyms in Urdu.

#### The Story Strategy

This strategy was used by Crovitz (1979) for brain damaged individuals in order to help them in learning some English language's words. He gave a list of the words that were needed to be learnt, used in a story. The learners were told by him to produce different bizarre stories in order to improve their recall. It was also told by the researcher to the students that after using the words in a bizarre story it may be easier to remember the words which they want to learn.

#### The Grouping Strategy

According to Baddeley (1990) report, the learners actively organize material. The tendency of placing items within groups that contained the members of the general category, was called clustering. Tulvng & Pearlstone (1966) reported that to give the names of categories at testing time helps to enhance recall, according to Baddeley (1990) it was important to link organization and categorization for retrieval.

### The Imagery Strategy

It gained popularity as a used strategy in the 1960s, both as the words' judged image ability and instructions of using imagery which had strong effects on the learning's rate lists of words and passages of prose. Moreover, Paivio (1966) stated that "concrete nouns" gave rise to imagery more than "abstract nouns". So, in this study all of the included words were "concrete nouns".

### Materials

The 48 students of rural elementary school who enrolled in an English language class were presented a booklet containing general instructions, four lists of "concrete nouns" written in English which were belonging to 4 different categories i.e. furniture and also four learning strategies (Imagine a Picture, Initial Letter, Group in the same family and Make into a Story). The researcher taught the students that how to use each strategy and the booklet also contained the same instructions. It was also told the students that two minutes would be given to them to learn each strategy and ten minutes would be given to them to learn list of words. It was told to them that they would write down the strategy which they used to learn the words in each list. They were also given the Cognitive Styles Analysis; an instrument presented by computer to measure two basic cognitive styles like the Verbal-Imagery style (VI) and the Wholist – Analytic style (WA). It was selected because it provides a quick and simple means to assess the position of an individual on two bi-polar cognitive style dimensions: Verbal-Imagery and Wholist-Analytic (Test like the Embedded figures Test (Witkin, 1971) merely assesses a singular style dimension).

### Sample Research Materials

Learning strategies' list

- The Imagery Strategy
- The Story Strategy
- Initial Letter
- The Grouping Strategy

### The Imagery Strategy

Make a list of all those things that belong to one group and those which are of the same colour by showing all brown animals in the same picture like a brown horse, a brown cat, a brown wolf, a brown cat, a brown dog, a brown snake, a brown lion or make a nonsense picture in order to help you to remember for example a brown horse with a brown snake around its neck looking as if it were its necklace.

### The Story Strategy

Write a nonsense or a real story that contains all the words which you want to remember, i.e. there is a nonsense story in order to remember the following list of words:

1. Cat
2. Dog
3. Tiger
4. Toad
5. Emu
6. Owl
7. Rat
8. Eel
9. Snake

An Honest farmer

He saw an owl, rat, toad, emu, eel and snake in the zoo. He had cat and dog at his farm. However, he also saw a tiger outside the house.

### Initial Letter Strategy

Try to make a nonsense or real word, using the each word's first letter as for example, the names of the Rivers in Pakistan

are: Sutlej, Chenab, Ravi, Indus, Beas, Jhelum. The first letter of each of the lakes makes the word "SCRIBJ". Example of making a nonsense word like the names of rainbow's colours are:

violet, orange, blue, indigo, green, red, yellow. The first letter of each color makes the nonsense word "VOBIGRY".

### The Grouping Strategy

Grouping the words together, belonging to the same category i.e. Make a list of all those things that belong to the same family for example animals like dog, horse, lion, tiger, cat, zebra, wolf. From a larger list of all things, try to separate those words that belong to similar category e.g. tiger, shoulder, runway, palm, elephant, subway, highway, eye, railway, kangaroo, arm, snake like parts of body – eye, palm, shoulder, arm.

### Task

The following table consists the list of concrete nouns in English that the students were given to remember:

**Table 1. Lists of Concrete Nouns in English**

Fruit-names	Transport-names	Furniture names	Things used-in school
orange	submarine	chair	pen
apple	ship	table	pencil
lemon	plane	desk	paper
banana	car	lamp	tape recorder
pear	helicopter	sofa	book
peach,	motorcycle	bed	scissors
melon	bicycle	board	ruler
cherries	train	book	crayon
Strawberry	truck	bench	glue
plum	bus	stool	painting

### Results and discussion

To remember the list of English words, the story strategy was used by girls in compared to boys. The learners' number who did use a specific strategy in order to remember the words which were given in the word lists is in the following Table 1.

**Table 2 Strategy Use**

		N
Story	0	8
	1	40
Initial	0	31
	1	17
Group	0	43
	1	5
Imagery	0	47
	1	1
Gender	1.00	21
	2.00	27

### Strategy use

The initial letter strategy was used by girls more than boys in order to remember the lists of English words. There were four strategies (story, grouping, imagery and initial letter). One of the Strategy which was used the most is that of story strategy followed by Grouping Strategy, Imagery and Initial Letter. Little girls possess larger vocabulary than boys and learn second language easily more than boys (Kimura, 1985).

### Conclusion

Met, (2008) stated that there are less common opportunities of second language learning in rural areas' schools. Furthermore, the average number of school level students get limited hours of instruction during the two years of learning a second language and this has been found as inadequate in order

to develop a suitable level of proficiency (Met, 2008). However, the students find it much difficult to learn a second language so suggested strategies in this study will help them to get rid of this difficulty. So, the mentioned results in this study aware us that learners who learned second language by suggested strategies find it quite interesting and easy.

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