



# Assessing Students' Use of Language Learning Strategies and Their Impact on Study Year

Dagim Degissew<sup>1,\*</sup>, Italo Beriso<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Wolaita Sodo University, Sodo, Ethiopia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## Email address:

ddegissew@gmail.com (D. Degissew)

\*Corresponding author

## To cite this article:

Dagim Degissew, Italo Beriso. Assessing Students' Use of Language Learning Strategies and Their Impact on Study Year. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 10, No. 2, 2022, pp. 77-85. doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20221002.13

**Received:** February 7, 2022; **Accepted:** March 2, 2022; **Published:** March 11, 2022

---

**Abstract:** Language learning strategies become the main factor that determines how and how well students learn a second or foreign language. They are essential tools for enabling students to learn successfully in acquiring the desired knowledge and skills. However, students' proficiency and achievement in English language at different educational levels are not as expected from them. Therefore, this study attempted to assess the language learning strategies which were used by English major students of Addis Ababa University. The study employed mixed approach. The type of research method was descriptive survey. The total numbers of participants were 37 English major students of Addis Ababa University. The data were collected through questionnaire and interview. SPSS version 24 software was utilized to mainly analyze the quantitative part. For the qualitative part, Open code software was used. The result indicated that students were medium user of language learning strategies. The order of strategy use from the most used to the least used was as: metacognitive, social, affective, compensation, cognitive and memory respectively. All strategy type did not indicate Low range use. Statistically a significance difference was reported between second year ( $M=3.62$ ,  $SD=0.44$ ) and third year students' score ( $M=3.05$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ) in using strategies in general,  $t(30)=2.552$ ,  $p=0.016$ . Thus, Study year, had an impact on students' use of strategy in the study. So as to increase strategies use, language learners are recommended to become familiar with language learning strategies. Finally, factors such as, motivation, proficiency level and learning style need to be further investigated.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language, Language Learning Strategies, Strategy Use, Student, Study Year

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

These days, the approach in foreign language teaching and learning is changing from teacher centered to learner centered instruction. In learner centered instruction students are expected to participate actively to construct their own knowledge and understanding by taking responsibility for their own learning. Teachers' role is also vital for encouraging, monitoring and evaluating students' performance being as a facilitator for their self-initiation of learning a language. This change from teacher to learner centered instruction has brought the concept of language learning strategies in to consideration.

According to Oxford, learning strategies are "specific

actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" [8, 20].

Very recently, Oxford revised her old definition which was used for more than 30 years and defined as "contextually specific thoughts and actions that can be both mental and physical. They are combinable in clusters or chains and have cognitive, emotional, and social roles. In addition, their use in self-regulation is complex in nature". [18, 28]

Learning strategies are therefore very essential tools for enabling students to learn successfully in acquiring the desired knowledge and skills. These in turn will help students for better achievement and success.

Language learners vary in terms of different factors such as: aptitudes, attitude, demography, emotion, sociability,

learning styles, and learning strategies when they learn English as second/foreign language. These factors have effect on how the learners approach language learning tasks and how successful they are. Among these and other factors, the researchers believe that language learning strategies become the main factor that determines how and how well students learn a second or foreign language.

Learning strategies according to Oxford are classified into six groups: memory, compensation, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social [20]. Therefore, when the learner consciously chooses them, they become a useful instrument for effective, active, target oriented and self-initiation of learning.

Academically, successful students are able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information; communicate effectively with others; are cooperative and sociable, are self-motivated, self-decisive and problem solver are some features of successful learners [6].

Hence forth, the researchers are motivated to investigate the issue with the premise that strategies are important if students are to learn effectively. Because the researchers believe that learning is the most important element that we should concern with among other issues as long as we teachers are there to really help students. So the desire to contribute further knowledge and understanding in this area has been the main motivation of the study.

### **1.2. Study Year and LLS Usage**

In the field of language, different scholars researched the relationship of language learning strategies and learners duration of language studies. For instance, Uztosun's finding revealed that compensation and cognitive strategies were preferred by more experienced than less experienced students. On the other hand, social strategy was preferred by less experienced students [30].

The finding of Ramirez also showed that senior learners obtained the highest mean in cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies when compared to freshmen and juniors. The finding indicated that second year students preferred meta cognitive strategies. Thus, study year had an impact on students' use of metacognitive strategies [23].

Griffiths reached in a conclusion that students' level of learning had a positive relationship on language learning strategies usage [12]. A study by Oxford and Nyikos also repeated the significant impact of study year on strategies use [19]. Similarly, a study by Al-Buainain identified a positive relationship between LLS use and study year [2].

Furthermore, another study by Magno, indicated that duration of studying English had a significant effect on students language learning strategies' employment. The finding indicated those who have been learning English for a long time used strategies more frequently than those who have been learning short [15].

Contrary to the above findings, a study by Alhaysony revealed that study year had no significant difference on students learning [3].

In conclusion, as indicated by most studies, there was a positive relationship between duration of language study and use of language learning strategies. According to the findings, more experienced learners frequently used more varied language learning strategies than less experienced learners.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

After the communicative language teaching emerged in the early 1970s, the role of learners has been given a due attention [31]. Students are highly promoted to participate actively in the process of acquiring knowledge in the communicative or interactive approach. Following this, language educators began to take into consideration the central role of learners in the teaching learning process.

Learning is a constructive process that occurs best when what is being learned is relevant and meaningful to the learner and when the learners are actively engaged in creating their knowledge and understanding by connecting what is being learned with prior knowledge and experience [33]. The process of acquiring knowledge and understanding is thus highly depend on the awareness, active selection and appropriate use of language learning strategies.

According to different researchers' findings, such as: [12, 17, 20, 22, 24, 26], employing variety of language learning strategies lead to more success and performance. Therefore; in order to maximize students success and performance students should be helped with their choice of language learning strategies and should be introduced these strategies through instructions.

Though learners in Ethiopia have started learning English since elementary grades, students' proficiency and achievement in English language at Schools, Colleges and Universities levels were not as expected from these levels almost in all skills. Regarding this, Atlabachew discussed that students become incompetent in the university due to lack of enough preparation in the preparatory schools [4]. Haregewoin identified that preparatory students' expectation in the university causes for the decline of students' proficiency [13]. Teshome further conformed most Ethiopian students' proficiency at all stages of learning has been found out below the expected range level [27].

In addition to these findings, the researchers' teaching experience along with colleagues' complain about the English language deficiency of students at different level gave insights that students at university level lack the required language proficiency.

In learning foreign languages such as English, students are expected to construct their own knowledge or skill by using appropriate strategies. However, the employment of learning strategies in our country in different educational levels are not deeply and continuously studied in varied contexts. Most local researchers focused on investigation of the use of discrete language skills (writing, reading, speaking, listening, vocabulary and grammar). For instance; Girma and Yechalework on reading strategies [10, 34], Birhanu on listening strategies [5], Tsegaye on speaking strategies [29], Yemisrach on grammar learning strategies use [35], Teshome

(2007) on writing [27], Abebe, Getnet and Lemlem on vocabulary learning strategy use [1, 9, 14].

However, the overall language learning strategies that EFL learners use are not sufficiently assessed. There are indeed, little attempts such as EFL learning strategy use of students at a preparatory school level, by Endaweke [7], an exploration of beliefs about language learning and their language learning strategy use of EFL learners at DebreMarkos university by Niguse [16] and language learning strategy use of high and low achievers at Mekele college of teachers education by Seyoum [25].

As a result, little or insufficient information on the area is available. Since there are few works on the overall strategies' use; there is a way to go further in this area. And above all, local researches do not focus on English major students' strategies use and their impact on study year.

To fill this gap, this study has intended to assess English major students strategies' use and their impact on them. Therefore, this research is going to be carried out based on the belief that students studying at the university should be aware of and appropriately use strategies. Hence, the researchers are initiated to assess the actual practice of English major students' strategies use and their impact on study year at Addis Ababa University (AAU).

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

In order to address the objectives of the study, the present study specifically deal with the following research questions:

What are the language learning strategies that are employed by students?

Does study year have an impact on the choice of language learning strategies?

#### **1.5. Objectives of the Study**

##### **1.5.1. The General Objective**

The general aim of this study is to examine what language learning strategies AAU English Major Students employ in learning English.

##### **1.5.2. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the present investigation are:

To describe the types of language learning strategies students employ;

To determine the effect of study year on the choice of language learning strategies.

#### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

The results of the study may have the following significances: the result of the study will enable students to be aware of the language learning strategies and help them to use appropriately in learning a foreign language. It will also help teachers and students to be aware of potential factors that influence strategies' use. For curriculum developers and syllabus designers, the result of the study will help them to take in to consideration the inclusion of LLS on students and teachers guide books to create awareness about LLS.

Furthermore, the result of the study will serve other researchers as a springboard for further study in the area.

#### **1.7. Scope of the Study**

The current study is delimited to the use of LLSs and their impact on study year at AAU English major students in learning English as a foreign language.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Design**

The researchers employed a mixed (both qualitative and quantitative) approach because the data collection involved gathering both numeric information (e.g., with questionnaire) as well as text information (e.g. with Interview).

Since the principal objective of this study was to assess students' use of LLSs a descriptive survey method was employed.

### **2.2. Research Setting and Population of the Study**

The setting of the study was Addis Ababa University (AAU). Addis Ababa University, which was established in 1950 as the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), is the oldest and the largest higher learning and research institution in Ethiopia. Since its inception, the University has been the leading center in teaching-learning, research and community services.

The participants of this research were English major students of Addis Ababa University (AAU). Second and third year students were enrolled for the academic year. Therefore, all these students were considered for gathering the data as there was no problem of data management.

The total numbers of students in these sections were 37. Of these, 36 students completed the questionnaires; however, 32 questionnaires were considered valid and used for data analysis. Four questionnaires were found to be incomplete and were excluded from the study.

### **2.3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

All (100%) second and third year students around 37 participants were taken as a sample using a comprehensive sampling technique.

### **2.4. Data Gathering Instruments**

In the study, a questionnaire and Interview were employed to collect data pertinent to the study.

#### **2.4.1. Questionnaire**

To assess the LLSs which were used by language learners, the Rebecca Oxford's [20] Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was employed.

The SILL Version 7.0 was used to measure learning strategy preferences of students. The SILL (version 7.0) which comprises 50 items is classified into six strategy groups. The categories are based on Oxford's classification of

language learning strategies as direct and indirect [20].

Therefore, SILL was used to obtain detailed information on the students' use of language learning strategies. SILL was the main data collection instrument for the study.

#### 2.4.2. Interview

A semi structured Interview was conducted with students in order to supplement the data obtained through the self-report questionnaire.

#### 2.5. Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the quantitative data using SPSS version 24 software. Firstly, the means and standard deviations of the questionnaire data were computed. Next, an independent sample t-tests of inferential statistics was used to compare the means of second and third year students' use of LLSs. Regarding the qualitative data, thematic analysis was done using open code soft wear.

#### 2.6. Reliability of the Instrument

According to SPSS Cronbach's alpha result, the internal reliability coefficient of the AAU English Major Students SILL for a total of 50 items was .94 which was very high. In other words, the questionnaire was proven to be a reliable instrument in assessing students' LLSs use.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Language Learning Strategies Employed by Students

Research question one aimed to assess English major students use of LLSs. In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics of SPSS version 24 were utilized to

analyze the data. The final result yielded the mean score for overall language learning strategies and for each category.

#### 3.1.1. Descriptive Analysis and Findings of an Overall SILL

The subjects of this study reported that they were using a variety of language learning strategies to learn English. The following analysis of learning strategies was based on the descriptive analysis of the participants' responses to the SILL. The frequencies of responses: means and standard deviations for all the SILL items are presented in this section.

Descriptive analyses of the participants' responses to the SILL were conducted for two reasons: to examine the overall use of language learning strategies and to investigate the strategies which were most or least frequently used by EFL learners when they learn English. The five point Likert scale items of the SILL range from 1 (never) to 5 (always) used. Three frequency criteria were adopted for assessing the degree in which strategies were used: high frequency use (3.5-5.0), medium frequency use (2.5-3.49), and low frequency use (1.0-2.49) based on Oxford's [20] criteria.

The SILL items are subdivided into six sub groups: (1) memory strategies (items 1 to 9), (2) cognitive strategies (items 10-23), (3) compensation strategies (items 24-29), (4) metacognitive strategies (items 30-38), affective strategies (items 39-44), and social strategies (items 45-50)

Table 1 shows the overall descriptive statistics of participants' response to strategies' use. Based on the result, the specific strategy mostly chosen was item 32 (paying attention when someone is speaking English) of metacognitive strategy with mean=4.06 and the least one was item 14 (starting conversations in English) of cognitive strategy with mean=2.69. The other 48 items ranged in between the least and the highest average means scores.

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of all items.

Language Learning Strategies	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	32	2.97	1.470
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	32	3.38	1.264
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	32	3.03	1.448
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	32	3.56	1.105
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.	32	2.91	1.489
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.	32	2.84	1.247
7. I physically act out new English words.	32	2.84	1.139
8. I review English lessons often.	32	3.63	1.362
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	32	3.09	1.445
10. I say or write new English words several times.	32	2.91	1.228
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.	32	3.22	1.560
12. I practice the sounds of English.	32	3.44	1.366
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.	32	3.13	1.157
14. I start conversations in English.	32	2.69	1.378
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English	32	3.03	1.576
16. I read for pleasure in English.	32	3.06	1.435
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	32	3.41	1.241
18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	32	3.53	1.391
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	32	3.63	1.385
20. I try to recognize and use patterns in English.	32	3.22	1.070
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	32	3.38	1.408
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.	32	2.75	1.244
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	32	3.41	1.388
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	32	3.44	1.390

Language Learning Strategies	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	32	3.38	1.157
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	32	3.16	1.167
27. I read English without looking up every new word.	32	2.75	1.391
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	32	3.09	1.532
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same.	32	3.47	1.270
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	32	3.25	1.414
31. I notice my English mistakes and I use that information to help me do better.	32	3.97	.967
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	32	4.06	1.162
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	32	3.91	1.400
34. I plan my schedule, so I will have enough time to study English.	32	3.53	1.295
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.	32	3.34	1.208
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	32	3.66	1.450
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	32	3.81	1.203
38. I think about my progress in learning English.	32	3.47	1.436
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	32	2.97	1.402
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	32	3.56	1.366
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	32	3.50	1.481
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	32	3.56	1.294
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	32	2.91	1.400
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	32	3.03	1.282
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	32	3.41	1.365
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	32	3.75	1.191
47. I practice English with other students.	32	3.78	1.211
48. I ask for help from English speakers.	32	3.56	1.190
49. I ask questions in English.	32	3.44	1.294
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	32	3.34	1.405
Total \ Overall Strategy	32	3.32	.681
Valid N (listwise)	32		

As shown in Table 1, the descriptive statistics for overall strategy use was ( $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=.68$ ), and this indicated that the participants used a medium degree of strategy use. The statistics also indicated a medium use of the six strategy categories.

**Table 2.** The Six Categories of Strategy Use of Participants.

Categories of Strategy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strategy use	Rank
Memory Strategy	32	3.1389	.78110	Medium	6
Cognitive Strategy	32	3.1987	.78702	Medium	5
Compensation Strategy	32	3.2135	.76345	Medium	4
Metacognitive Strategy	32	3.6667	.94744	High	1
Affective Strategy	32	3.2552	.88393	Medium	3
Social Strategy	32	3.5469	.92286	High	2
Total \ Overall Strategy	32	3.3225	.68130	Medium	
Valid N (listwise)	32				

### 3.1.2. Descriptive Analysis and Findings of the Six Categories of SILL

Table 2 shows the frequency of participants' response regarding the six types of strategies they used. The frequently used strategy was metacognitive which gains 3.67 mean score. Meanwhile, the least strategy reported was memory strategy with mean of 3.14.

The results indicated that AAU English major students were labeled as medium users of LLSs. The mean score of the overall SILL ( $M=3.32$ ) suggested that AAU English major students, on average, sometimes used LLSs when learning English as a foreign language. As seen in the table above, the mean scores for AAU English major EFL students in the six categories of language strategies ranged from 3.14 to 3.67.

Based on the scale, four categories of LLSs; memory, cognitive, compensation and affective fell in the medium use range level, whereas two strategies; metacognitive and social strategies were in high frequency usage level.

AAU English major EFL students, on average, reported metacognitive strategies as the most frequently used with mean score of ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ) followed by social strategies as the second high preferred strategies with mean score of ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=.92$ ) among all the six categories of LLSs. Based on the scored mean, English major students usually used these strategies when they were learning English as a foreign language. Affective strategies was in third rank with mean score of ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ). While compensation strategies with mean score of ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=0.76$ ) were in fourth place. Participants ranked cognitive strategies as the fifth chosen strategies with mean score of ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=0.79$ ) whereas memory strategies in last order, as the least preferred strategies with mean score of ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ).

### 3.2. Strategy Use and Study Year

Research Question two requested to examine whether study year had an impacts on the students' uses of strategies. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation

of the assumptions of level of measurement, independence, normality and homogeneity of variance before conducting analysis. Following the preliminary analysis, an independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether the use of

the overall or particular language learning strategies differed significantly whether students were second or third year. The difference between second and third year use of LLSs are presented as follows:

*Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and T-Test Result on Strategies Use and study year.*

Categories of Strategy	Study Year	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Memory Strategy	Second	15	3.2148	.36240	.537	.597
	Third	17	3.0719	1.02811		
Cognitive Strategy	Second	15	3.5762	.43487	2.934	.007
	Third	17	2.8655	.88492		
Compensation Strategy	Second	15	3.4667	.77970	1.827	.078
	Third	17	2.9902	.69590		
Metacognitive Strategy	Second	15	4.0444	.76151	2.254	.032
	Third	17	3.3333	.98992		
Affective Strategy	Second	15	3.5444	.82005	1.800	.082
	Third	17	3.0000	.88192		
Social Strategy	Second	15	3.9556	.67983	2.016	.554
	Third	17	3.1863	.97518		
Total /Overall Strategy	Second	15	3.6240	.44144	2.552	.016
	Third	17	3.0565	.75393		

The result of the independent t-test, in table 3, shows second year students with mean score (M=3.62, SD= .44) and third year students' mean score (M=3.05, SD= .75) in using all LLSs in general,  $t(30)=2.552$ ,  $p=.016$ . The magnitude of the differences in the means was very large (eta squared= .18). Thus, study year, in this study, had a significant effect on the students' use for an overall language learning strategies. There was a significant difference between second and third year students' use of LLSs in which second year students use was better than third year students,

Regarding the impact of study year and each category of language learning strategies' use, the same analysis was conducted. The independent sample t-test result on the use of the memory strategies revealed no statistical significance different,  $t(20.36)=.537$ ,  $p=.597$ , between second year students' mean score (M=3.21, SD=.36) and third year students' mean score (M=3.07, SD=1.03).

A significant difference,  $t(23.91)=2.93$ ,  $p=.007$ , was found between second year students (M=3.58, SD= .43) and third year students score (M=2.87, SD= .88) in employing cognitive language learning strategies.

The results showed no statistical significant difference between the mean score of second year students (M=3.47, SD= .78) and the mean score of third year students (M=2.99, SD= .70) in utilizing the compensation strategies,  $t(30)=1.827$ ,  $p=.078$ .

In the use of metacognitive strategies, the test was significant,  $t(30)=2.254$ ,  $p=.032$ . The mean score of second year students (M=4.04, SD= .76) and the mean scores of third year students (M=3.33, SD= .99) differed significantly in employing the metacognitive strategies.

In evaluating the participants' usage of the affective strategies, the independent sample t-test yielded no statistical significant difference between students,  $t(30)=1.80$ ,  $p=.082$ . The results indicated that, the mean score of English major second year students (M=3.54, SD= .82) and the mean score

of third year students (M=3.00, SD= .88) had no difference in utilizing the affective strategies.

Study year had no statistical significant difference on the students' use of the social strategies,  $t(30)=2.016$ ,  $p=.554$ . The mean score of AAU second year students (M=3.96, SD= .68) and the mean score of third year students (M=3.19, SD= .98) in employing the social strategies revealed no statistical significant difference between them.

## 4. Discussions

Using research questions as framework, the following section discusses the findings of the data analyses. Each section offers discussion of findings based upon the analysis of the data sources (questionnaire and interview). The research findings of the study are then compared with the findings of the previous studies.

Research Question 1: What are the language learning strategies that are employed by students?

Based on the descriptive analyses of the SILL, this study identified EFL learners' overall language learning strategies, strategy use in the six categories, and the most and least frequently used strategy items.

The descriptive statistics for overall strategy use showed that the participants used a medium degree of strategy use (M=3.32, SD= .68). This indicates that participants of the study used language learning strategies at a moderate/average level. The finding of the interview result also supplemented the finding.

The frequently used strategy was metacognitive which gains 3.86. Meanwhile, the least strategy reported was memory strategy with mean of 3.14.

With regard to the six categories of strategies, the findings of this research also reported a medium frequency use of the four categories of strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation and affective) with a mean statistics within the range from 3.14 to 3.26. However, two strategies category

(i.e., metacognitive and social strategy) falls into the high use range with means score 3.55 and 3.67 respectively.

The order of strategy use as reported by respondents from the most used to the least used was as follows: metacognitive strategies ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ), social strategies ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=.92$ ) affective strategies ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ), compensation strategies ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=0.76$ ), cognitive strategies ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=0.79$ ) and memory strategies ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ).

Low range of strategy use was not found for each of the six strategy categories in the study.

The most preferred strategy by EFL learners in this study was metacognitive and social strategies. The preference for metacognitive and social strategies might be attributed to the age and educational level of the respondents. As the subjects of the study were English major EFL learners, they might be aware of the pressure of university life and adjusted to their new environment by managing their learning and developing their social interaction with other students. It may also be attributed to the belief that learners are more self-directed and that they recognize the importance of setting priorities.

The findings of this research was consistent with the results of the earlier researches conducted among EFL students by Wharton [32], Park [21] Niguse [16]. On the other hand, the result of this study disagrees with the research conducted by Green and Oxford [11], EFL learners reported a high frequency of strategy use in English learning.

Studies by Wharton (2000) and Niguse (2013) reported metacognitive as the most frequently used strategies, and memory strategies as least frequently used by EFL learners in which the results were consistence with the study.

Research Question 2: Does year of learning have an impact on the choice of language learning strategies?

An independent sample t-test was conducted to see whether there was a difference on second and third year students' use of language learning strategies or not. The result of the independent t-test revealed a significant difference between second year students with average scores ( $M=3.62$ ,  $SD=.44$ ) and third year ( $M=3.05$ ,  $SD=.75$ ) in employing all language learning strategies in general,  $t(30)=2.552$ ,  $p=.016$ . The magnitude of the differences in the means was very large ( $\eta^2=.18$ ). Thus, Study year, in this study, had a significant effect on the students' choice or frequency use for an overall learning strategy. The result revealed that second year students tend to use more language learning strategies than third year students.

Regarding each category strategies, the findings indicated that there were a statistical significant differences on students use of cognitive strategies  $t(23.91)=2.93$ ,  $p=.007$  and metacognitive strategies,  $t(30)=2.254$ ,  $p=.032$ . On the other hand, no statistical significant differences were found on students' use of LLSs and study year on memory strategies  $t(20.36)=.537$ ,  $p=.597$ , compensation strategies  $t(30)=1.827$ ,  $p=.078$  affective strategies  $t(29.904)=1.809$ ,

$p=.081$  and social strategies,  $t(30)=2.016$ ,  $p=.554$  with study year.

In all strategy types, second year students use LLSs in a better way than third year students.

Thus, the result of the study agrees with Ramirez [23], Oxford and Nyikos [19], Griffith [12], Al-Buainain [2] and Magno [15] who identified that year of study would influence students' use of the strategies.

Nonetheless, the result of the study disagrees with Alhaysony [3] who revealed no significant difference was found in relation to duration of studying English, although students with long duration reported using LLS most frequently.

The result of the study was similar to Ramirez's [23] finding that the result was statistically significant for metacognitive strategies in favor of students in the second year.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section summarizes the data analysis, the results of the study and the major findings discussed in AAU EFL students' use of language learning strategies. The descriptive statistics for overall strategy use indicated that the participants used a medium degree of strategy use. The statistics also indicated a medium use of the four categories of strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation and affective) with a mean statistics within the range level from 3.14 to 3.26. However, two strategies category (metacognitive and social strategy) falls into the high use range level with means score 3.55 and 3.67 respectively. The finding indicated that AAU EFL students were a medium/average users of LLSs. They preferred to use these strategie in the order: metacognitive, social, affective, compensation, cognitive and lastly memory strategies.

Study year, in this study, had an impact on the students' choice or frequency use for an overall learning strategy. The result revealed that second year students tend to use more language learning strategies than third year students. Regarding each category of language learning strategies, the finding indicated that there were statistical significant differences on students' use of cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. On the other hand, no statistical significant differences were found on students' use of language learning strategies and study year on memory strategies, compensation strategies, affective strategies and social strategies, with study year.

To maximize students use of LLSs, awareness rising should be done. This consequently, increase their competence and success in learning English as a foreign language.

The influence of other variables on language learning strategies use other than study year such as motivation, proficiency level land earning styles need to be researched for better understanding of individual differences in strategy use.

---

## References

- [1] Abebe, G. (1997). Strategies of vocabulary learning of AAU freshman learning English as a second/foreign language. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [2] Al-Buainain, H. (2010). Language learning strategies employed by English majors at Qatar University: Questions and Queries. *ASIATIC*, 4 (2), 92-120.
- [3] Alhaysony, M. (2017). Language Learning Strategies Use by Saudi EFL Students: The Effect of Duration of English Language Study and Gender. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 7 (1), 18. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0701.03>.
- [4] Atlabachew, G. (2017) Reading engagement and academic performance: A case of Adama Science and Technology University first year students. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Addis Ababa University.
- [5] Birhanu, B. (1993). Listener strategies in collaborative discourse of Addis Abeba university, fourth year students. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [6] Brockman, M. S. & Russell, S. T. (2007). Academic success. Building partnerships for youth. Retrieved November 14, 2019 [http://calscf.calsnet.arizona.edu/fcs/bpy/newsletters/bpybulletin issue 06.html](http://calscf.calsnet.arizona.edu/fcs/bpy/newsletters/bpybulletin%20issue%2006.html)
- [7] Endaweke, A. (2008) EFL learning strategy use: the case of male and female preparatory students. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [8] Fraenkl, J. & Wallen, N. (2000). How to design and evaluate research in education (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). United States of America: McGraw-Hill Company.
- [9] Getnet, G. (2008). Vocabulary-learning strategy use: The case of high and low achiever students in Gondar college of teacher education. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [10] Girma, G. (1994). A preliminary investigation into the reading strategies of AAU first year students. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [11] Green, J., M., & Oxford, R. (1995). A closer look at learning strategies, L2 Proficiency and Gender, *TESOL Quarterly*, 29 (2), 261-297.
- [12] Griffiths, C. (2003). Language learning strategy use and proficiency: The relationships between patterns of reported language learning strategy (LLS) use by speaker of other languages (SOL) and proficiency with implications for the teaching/learning situation. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. University of Auckland.
- [13] Haregewoin, A. (2008). The effects of communicative grammar on the grammatical accuracy of students' academic writing: An integrated approach to TEFL. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Addis Ababa University.
- [14] Lemlem, S. (2013). Students' preferences and use of vocabulary learning strategies: Awash military college in focus. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [15] Magno, C. (2010). Korean students' language learning strategies and year of studying English as predictors of proficiency in English. *TESOL Journal*, 2, 39-61.
- [16] Niguse, M. (2013). An exploration of beliefs about language learning and their language learning strategy use of EFL learners: Debremarkos university in focus. Un Published PhD Dissertation. Addis Ababa University.
- [17] O'Malley J. and Chamot, A. (1990). Learning strategies in second language acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [18] Oxford, R. (2017). Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Self-regulation in context. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- [19] Oxford, R. and Nyikos, M. (1989). Variables affecting choice of language learning strategies by university students. *Modern Language Journal* 73 (2), 291-300.
- [20] Oxford, Rebecca (1990). Language Learning Strategies: What every Teacher should know. The university of Alabama. Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- [21] Park, G. (1997). Language learning strategies and English proficiency in Korean university students. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30 (2), 211-221.
- [22] Pei-Shi, W. (2012). The effect of learning styles on learning strategy use by EFL learners. Tamkang University: New Taipei City. *Journal of Social Sciences* 8 (2): 230-234, 2012. ISSN 1549-3652.
- [23] Ramirez, A. (1986). Language learning strategies used by adolescents studying French in New York schools. *Foreign Language Annals*, 19, 131-141.
- [24] Rubin, J. (1981). Study of cognitive processes in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 17-31.
- [25] Seyoum, A. (2009). Language learning strategies use: The case of high and low achievers at Mekelle college of teacher education. Unpublished MA. Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [26] Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 31: 304-318.
- [27] Teshome, T. (2007). Exploring the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of the writing skills: Asella college of Teachers' Education in Focus. Unpublished M. A. Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [28] Teshome, Y. (2003). Transformations in higher education: experience with reform regional training in Ethiopian higher education system'. Keynote Paper Prepared for Regional Training Conference on Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Acray.
- [29] Tsegaye, T. (1995)' Speaking strategies employed by first year students at Kotebe college of teacher education. Unpublished M. A Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [30] Uztosun, M. S. (2014). The impact of language experience on language learner strategy use in Turkish EFL context. *International Journal on Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 5 (1), 157-168.
- [31] Wenden, A. L. (1991). Learner strategies for learner autonomy Planning and implementing learner training for language learners.
- [32] Wharton, G. (2000). Language learning strategy use of bilingual foreign language learners in Singapore. *Language Learning*, 50, 203-243.

- [33] Yalew. E. (2004). Psycho-educational and family factors that contribute to aggression in schools. A PhD Dissertation. University of Leipzig, institute of Applied psychology, Leipzig.
- [34] Yechalework, A. (2017). Reading strategy use: the case of high and low achievers at private high schools of KB academy grade nine and ten students. Unpublished M. A. Thesis. Addis Ababa University.
- [35] Yemeserach. B. (2015). Grammar learning strategies use of grade 11 students at Medhanealem preparatory school: gender in focus. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University.