

The Effect of Instructing Speaking Strategies Used by Successful EFL Learners on Unsuccessful Learners' Speaking Improvement in Iran

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Abstract

Over the recent years, the study of language learning strategies has received much attention worldwide in general, and in Iran in particular. Many scholars have tried to investigate the function of language learning strategies in EFL learning and teaching. Not enough attention, however, has been paid to language skills, especially speaking skill, in Iran. Therefore, the present study aimed at shedding some light on language learning strategy and speaking, through answering the two research questions: 1. What Language Learning Strategies are used by successful language learners? 2. Does instructing Language Learning Strategies used by successful learners to less successful learners have any significant effect on developing their speaking ability? To collect information, Oxford's (1990) SILL, Naiman's (1978) GLL questionnaires, along with the two proficiency tests including TOEFL and IELTS were utilized. The results revealed that successful language learners use a variety of strategies; memory strategies being the most frequently used strategy, and metacognitive strategies being the least frequently used ones. T-test was used to test the hypotheses, and it was revealed that instructing learning strategies to less successful learners significantly affects their speaking ability.

Keywords: EFL learners, Language Learning Strategies, Speaking ability, Strategy Instruction, Successful learners, Unsuccessful learners.

Introduction

The history of language education beginning with the so-called theoryless Grammar-translation Method to the more communicative approaches suggests that too little attention has been devoted to the efforts learners themselves make in mastering a second/ foreign language. Since the 1970s, however, the shift of focus in language education from teaching to learning brought learners to the forefront and created an explosion of research aimed at investigating learner characteristics and language acquisition (Purpura, 1997). One of these characteristics which has enjoyed notable attention is the learning strategies employed by the learner in the process of acquiring a second or foreign language.

The important part they play in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been language learning strategies as one of the most important factors accounting for individual differences in language learning. Both Ellis (1985) and McLaughlin (1987) included language learning strategies as one of the three processes, along with production and communication strategies, in their models of SLA. The above mentioned shift of trend changed the taste of many researchers in their academic endeavors. A whole new array of studies began in the world of second/ foreign language education research. Research concerns in the field of foreign language learning and teaching changed from the methods of teaching to learner characteristics and their influence on the process and product of learning a foreign language

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(Purpura, 1997). Among other issues, some scholars observed that, all other things being equal, some students were better than others in learning a second or foreign language and they began to investigate characteristics of good language learners, because it is assumed that some of the superiorities of successful learners can be attributed to learning strategies (Rubin, 1987). Related to studies of "successful language learners' strategies" is the assumption that once the strategies of good language learners are identified, they can be made available, and where useful, used by less successful learners to enable them to learn a second or foreign language more effectively (Hosenfeld, 1979). An important new role assigned to teachers was that of providing an environment in which students can use those strategies which worked best for them, and suggesting alternative strategies to the learners (Rubin, 1987).

This study enjoys a twofold significance, one from that of learning strategies, and the other from the importance of speaking. In the words of Oxford and Ehrman (1995), learning strategies, the steps students take to improve their own learning, are very important to ultimate language performance. Among the four language skills, "speaking ... has tended to receive the greatest attention and emphasis in recent years and for which achievement has tended to be the most disappointing ..." Chastain 1988; p. 270). Thus, the significance of the present study lies in its attempt to show the effect of teaching language learning strategies on speaking ability of Iranian EFL learners in order to further clarify this somewhat new, and important issue of language learning strategy training in Iran's context. The researchers tried to identify the strategies used by successful Iranian EFL learners, and then to teach those strategies to less successful learners to see if this training has any effect on their speaking improvement.

As a starting point, a look at the "Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics" gives us the following definition of learning strategy: "a way in which a learner attempts to work out the meanings and uses of words, grammatical rules, and other aspects of a language" (Richard, Plat & weber 1985; p. 162). Chastain (1988) cites Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defining learning strategies as "behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning and that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process. For Oxford (1989) "language learning strategies are

behaviors or actions which learners use to make their language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable".

Oxford (1990) has identified six categories of interrelated strategies, each entailing a number of subcategories. These categories contribute to language learning either directly or indirectly. The direct category consists of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. All direct strategies require mental processing of language. Indirect strategies are called "indirect" on the grounds that they support and manage language learning mostly without the direct involvement of L2. Oxford contends that they can be applied to all language learning situations and all four language skills. The indirect class is divided into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

In addition, related to the issue of proficiency, Mullins (1992) found high use of compensation, cognitive and metacognitive strategies and medium use of the social, memory and affective strategies among 110 Thai university EFL students. She reports a positive association between the use of compensation and metacognitive strategies and proficiency. Ehrman and Oxford (1995) studied 262 English native-speaker government employees studying different foreign languages at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute. They found that the most frequently used strategies were from the compensation category followed by social and cognitive, then metacognitive, memory and affective strategies. Only compensation strategies were associated (weakly) with proficiency. Green and Oxford (1995) surveyed 374 tertiary-level Puerto Rican ESL students split equally among three courses (prebasic, basic, and intermediate). They report significantly higher strategy use among more proficient students in the cognitive, compensation, metacognitive and social categories. Seventeen individual strategies were used significantly more often by more proficient students; one strategy was used significantly less than others. They also report higher strategy use among females in the memory, metacognitive, affective and social categories.

On the other hand, connection of learning strategies and speaking skills can be clarified in a study conducted by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). In this study, the improvement on certain language tasks for three groups of learners was compared, and the learners' performance was related to the strategy training they had received.

On the speaking task, the group given explicit training in metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies improved significantly more than the control group. In another study conducted by Gallagher-Brett (2007), students were asked to answer open-ended questions in order to find out the strategies used while speaking in the foreign language. Gallagher-Brett found that the three strategies used most by students were practicing, revising, and repetition at home. Although the results were from a very small number of participants, they revealed that the participants used strategies when speaking a foreign language. The students stated that practicing and revising are the most important activities conducive to successful speaking of a foreign language.

Research Questions

Prompted by the above mentioned ideas, the present study tries to find answer to the following questions:

1. What Language Learning Strategies are used by Iranian successful EFL learners?
2. Does instructing Language Learning Strategies to less successful learners have any significant effect on developing their speaking ability?

Based on the research questions mentioned above, the following null hypotheses emerges:

H_{01} = Iranian successful EFL learners do not use any particular language learning strategies.

H_{02} = Instructing successful learners' strategies to less successful learners does not have any significant effect on developing their speaking ability.

Method

The participants of the present study were 70 students of both genders, female and male, chosen from among 90 students taking part in IELTS preparation course in Hiva Language Institute, where the researcher taught the course. As to their proficiency level, participants were all upper-intermediate language learners, and this was determined by the use of a TOEFL sample test. Focusing on their speaking ability, these participants were interviewed and divided into two groups of high-proficiency, or successful, and low-proficiency, or unsuccessful speakers using the IELTS speaking scale. Regarding the age, the participants were all 25-35 years old, and their mother tongue was Persian.

Instruments

A number of instruments were utilized in this study, which will be presently introduced alphabetically.

A. The GLL, Good Language Learner, questionnaire which was developed by Naiman (1978), and used by Wenden in 1991, consisting of 20 questions grouped under 7 parts of:

1. The good language learner finds a style of learning that suits him/her.
2. Good language learners are actively involved in the language learning process.
3. Good language learners try to figure out how the language works.
4. Good language learners know that language is used to communicate.
5. Good language learners are like good detectives.
6. Good language learners learn to think in the language.
7. Good language learners try to overcome their feelings of frustration and lack of confidence.

For the GLL, Cronbach's test was used to measure the reliability, and the obtained value was 0.866. Since an alpha value bigger than 0.7 is considered as reliable, the GLL was regarded as reliable.

B. The IELTS, International Language Testing System, "is used to assess the language proficiency of students from a non-English-speaking background who want to live and study in an English-speaking country" (Cameron, 2002; p.1). The IELTS test is divided into two Modules, Academic and General Training. The Academic module is "for students seeking entry to a university or institution of higher education offering degree and diploma courses" and the General Training module is "for students seeking entry to a secondary school, to a vocational training course or for people taking the IELTS test for the purposes of immigration or employment" (Jakeman & McDowell, 2008; p. 189). The speaking test which is the same for candidates of both Academic and General Training Modules, is in the form of a one-to-one interview, and takes about 11-14 minutes. There are three parts in this section. In part 1, which takes 4-5 minutes and is the easiest part, the candidate is required to speak on familiar topics. In part 2, with an approximate time of 3-4 minutes, the candidate is asked to think about a topic for one minute and then talk about it for 1 to 2 minutes. The last part, which

is a two-way discussion, lasts for 4-5 minutes. Here, the candidate is asked more abstract questions on the topic introduced in part 2. The candidate's language is rated on a scale of 1-9 in four broad areas of fluency, vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, and pronunciation (Jakeman & McDowell, 2008). In this study, the researcher used the speaking part of the IELTS test.

C. The SILL, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, is a questionnaire developed by Oxford (1989, 1990). As reported by Oxford and Ehrman (1995), the SILL's reliability is ordinarily in the range of 0.90s. The 50-item version has strong predictive and concurrent validity as related to language performance and sensory preference (Borzabadi, 2000). The 50-item version of the SILL, used in this study, comprises six parts as below:

- Part A: Memory strategies – 9 items
- Part B: Cognitive strategies – 14 items
- Part C: Compensation strategies – 6 items
- Part D: Metacognitive strategies – 9 items
- Part E: Affective strategies – 6 items
- Part F: Social strategies – 6 items

D. The TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language, is a general proficiency test, whose purpose is "to measure the English proficiency of non-native speakers who intend to study in institutions of higher learning in the USA and Canada. The earliest version of this test, i.e. the PBT, standing for the Paper-Based Test, which was used in the present study, consists of four parts: Listening, Grammar and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension, and Writing. The score of the Writing section (referred to as the Test of Written English, TWE) is not part of the final score; instead, it is reported separately. The TOEFL and IELTS exams used in the present study are internationally administered. But in this study, one point about the IELTS is that only one section, i.e. speaking part of the IELTS test was used, so its reliability had to be determined. To this end, As Hatch and Farhady (1982) stated if the variance of participants' mean score in the TOEFL exam (x) is divided by the variance of their mean score in interview (y), then we'll have the reliability of interview.

$$R = \frac{\text{var}(x)}{\text{var}(y)} = \frac{1.61}{1.63} = 0.983$$

According to Hatch and Farhady (1982), the magnitude of reliability can range from zero to one, so the above number (0.983) is close to one and this shows the high reliability of the interview.

Procedure

The study began with 90 language learners doing their IELTS preparation course in Hiva language institute in Tehran. First, they were given a TOEFL sample test, paper-and-pencil (P&P) form. On the basis of mean score and also standard deviation, 20 low performers whose score were less than mean were excluded. The remaining 70 upper-intermediate students, served as real participants. Since speaking skill was at the center of attention, these 70 students were interviewed using the IELTS speaking test. According to the histogram inserted in Figure 2, the extreme scores of 1 and 2 from the bottom, and the score of 9 from the top, which rarely show up, were ignored. Based on standard deviation, those participants whose scores fell below the mean were taken as unsuccessful learners, and those students whose score were above the mean were considered successful learners. To guarantee the reliability of scores, the "test-retest" technique was utilized, that is each participant was interviewed twice. The high-proficiency participants (successful learners) were separated, and the low-proficiency ones (unsuccessful learners) were randomly divided into two equal groups, one of which serving as control group, and the other as experimental group. In the next step, the strategies used by successful speakers were identified using the 50-item version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). To have a more precise profile of good language learners, Naiman's (1978) GLL (Good Language Learner) questionnaire was also given to the successful learners. When the strategies of successful speakers were identified, these strategies were taught to only the experimental group of the low-proficiency ones, in a semester consisting of 15 ninety-minute sessions. In this period, the control group received only their usual lessons of the semester, devoid of anything on strategies. Regarding strategy training, the Strategic Teaching Model of Jones et al. (1987) was adopted in the present study. The sequence of steps used in this Model is as follows:

1. Assess strategy use with: Think-aloud Interviews, and a Questionnaire

2. Explain strategy by: Naming it, Telling how to use it, step by step

3. Model strategy by: Demonstrating it, Verbalizing own thought processes while doing tasks

4. Scaffold instruction by: Providing support while students practice, Adjusting support to student needs, Phasing out support to encourage autonomous strategy use

5. Develop motivation by: Providing successful experiences, relating strategy use to improved performance

Finally, at the end of the term, both the experimental and control groups were interviewed again to see whether this training had any significant effect on the speaking improvement of the experimental group which received treatment or not.

Table 2
Participants' TOEFL Score

Score range of 377 to 677	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
377-488	20	22.2	22.2	22.2
489-590	62	68.9	68.9	91.1
591-600	8	8.9	8.9	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of participants' TOEFL Score

N	90
Valid missing	0
Mean	488.5556
Median	486.5000
Std. Deviation	53.83331

On the base of table 3 which shows the descriptive statistics of data and the histogram in Figure 1, those participants whose score were below the mean, which is about 488, were excluded from the normal distribution and considered as low-proficiency group.

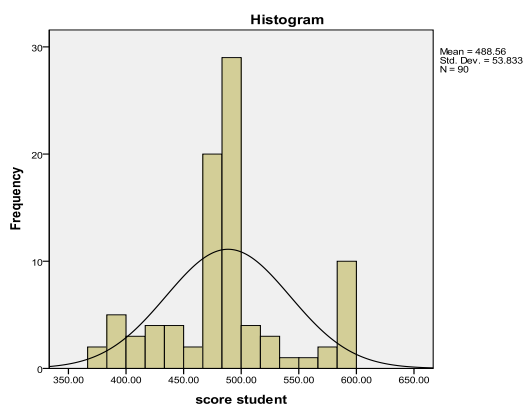


Figure1. Histogram of Participants' TOEFL Score

Results of the study

Table 1 gives some descriptive statistics about the participants, regarding their sex to have some general information about them.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Participants

gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
female	47	52.2	52.2	52.2
male	43	47.8	47.8	100.0
Total	90	100.0	100.0	

A TOEFL sample test, as a proficiency test, was administered to them and the following data inserted in Table 2 were obtained:

Excluding the lowest group which entailed 20 students, 70 students considered as high-proficiency, remained as the actual participants of the study. The remaining 70 participants were interviewed using the IELTS speaking test. To have a more reliable result, each participant was interviewed twice and the average of the two scores was calculated for each participant. Tables 4 and 5 provide information on the participants' scores on the two repeated interviews:

Table 4
Result of First Interview

mark	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	11	15.7	15.7	15.7
4	13	18.6	18.6	34.3
5	13	18.6	18.6	52.9
6	15	21.4	21.4	74.3
7	8	11.4	11.4	85.7
8	10	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 5
Result of Second Interview

mark	Fre- quency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	10	14.3	14.3	14.3
4	15	21.4	21.4	35.7
5	9	12.9	12.9	48.6
6	15	21.4	21.4	70.0
7	16	22.9	22.9	92.9
8	5	7.1	7.1	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 shows the means for the two interviews:

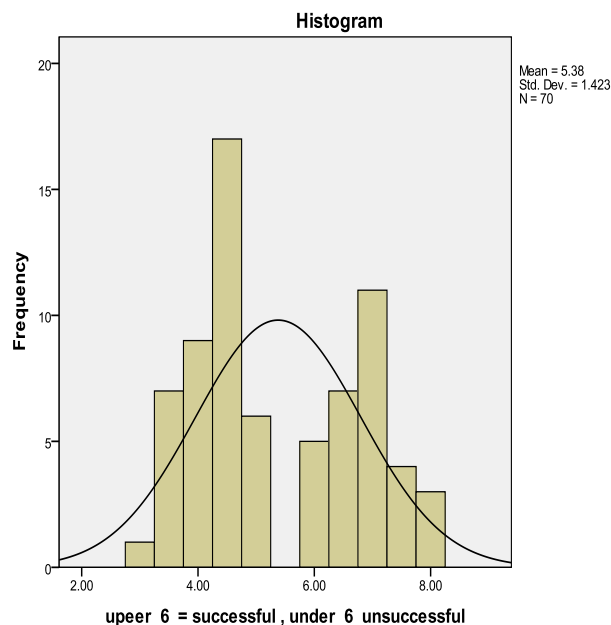
Table.6
MEAN of First & Second Interviews

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3.00	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
3.50	7	10.0	10.0	11.4
4.00	9	12.9	12.9	24.3
4.50	17	24.3	24.3	48.6
5.00	6	8.6	8.6	57.1
6.00	5	7.1	7.1	64.3
6.50	7	10.0	10.0	74.3
7.00	11	15.7	15.7	90.0
7.50	4	5.7	5.7	95.7
8.00	3	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Based on histogram inserted in Figure 2 and standard deviation, scores of 3-5 i.e. 40 students, which fell below the mean were considered less or unsuccessful, and scores of 6-9 i.e. 30 students, which were above the mean were considered successful learners (Table 7).

Table.7
Descriptive Statistics of Successful & Unsuccessful Participants

Group	Fre- quency	Per- cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unsuccessful	40	57.1	57.1	57.1
successful	30	42.9	42.9	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	

**Figure.2.Histogram of Participants' IELTS Score**

To investigate the research question 1, i.e. the strategies used by successful EFL learners, Oxford's SILL was used. The questionnaire which comprises 6 parts of memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies was analyzed. The results show up in Tables 8 to 13.

Table.8
Frequency of Use for Part A: Memory Strategies

Part A: Memory strategies	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Rarely	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
Some- times	2	6.7	6.7	26.7
Usually	18	60.0	60.0	86.7
Always	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

As Table 8 shows, the choice "usually" had the highest frequency, i.e. 18 out of 30 students which constitutes 60 percent of all chose this part.

Table.9
Frequency of Use for Part B: Cognitive Strategies

PART B: Cognitive strategies	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
Rarely	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
Sometimes	4	13.3	13.3	33.3
Usually	17	56.7	56.7	90.0
Always	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	10.0

Again, Table 9 illustrates for cognitive strategies, most participants selected the choice "usually"

This option is selected by 56.7 percent of the participants which are in fact, 17 people.

Table.10
Frequency of Use for Part C: Compensation Strategies

PART C: Compensation strategies	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Rarely	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
Sometimes	3	10.0	10.0	30.0
Usually	16	53.3	53.3	83.3
Always	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In Table 10, that is compensation strategies, 16 out of 30 participants' choice was

"usually", which is 53.3 percent of all the participants.

Table.11
Frequency of Use for Part D: Metacognitive Strategies

PART D: Metacognitive strategies	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
rarely	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
sometimes	13	43.3	43.3	66.7
usually	7	23.3	23.3	90.0
always	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

For part D, Table 11, the choice "sometimes" enjoys the highest frequency, i.e. 13 out of 30

students, and accordingly the highest percentage, 43.3 percent.

Table.12
Frequency of Use for Part E: Affective Strategies

Part E : Affective strategies	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
Rarely	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
Sometimes	5	16.7	16.7	36.7
Usually	17	56.7	56.7	93.3
Always	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

For affective strategies, that is part E, the choice "usually" in Table 12 emerged as the most frequently

used one. 17 out of 30, i.e. 56.7 percent of participants said that they "usually" used the strategies of this part.

Table.13
Frequency of use for part F: Social strategies

Part F : Social strategies	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Rarely	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
sometimes	18	60.0	60.0	80.0
Usually	4	13.3	13.3	93.3
Always	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In Table 13 "Sometimes" was the choice with the highest frequency i.e. 18 in part F of the SILL with 60 percent.

Table 14 shows the chi-square test results for each part of the SILL questionnaire. If the significance is higher than 0.01, then it can be claimed that the result is due to chance factors.

But according to Table 14, since the significance levels are less than 0.01, we can say that chance does not have any role in the observed results. It also reveals that the different kinds of strategies are not of the same importance. The most important kind of strategy is memory strategies.

Table 14
Chi-square test for SILL

Parts	Memory strategies	Cognitive strategies	Compensation strategies	Metacognitive strategies	Affective strategies	Social Strategies
Chi-Square	30.000 ^a	26.333 ^a	24.000 ^a	21.667 ^a	29.667 ^a	18.667 ^a
Df	4	4	4	4	4	4
Sig.	.000	.003	.005	.040	.002	.006

On the basis of the chi-square test result, and also Friedman test result, which was done to rank the different strategies used by successful learners in order of their importance, the strategies reported by the participants as used more frequently, shown in Table 14, are as follows:

1. Memory strategies
2. Affective strategies
3. Cognitive strategies
4. Compensation strategies
5. Social strategies
6. Metacognitive strategies

Table 15
Friedman Test

SILL	Mean Rank
Part A: memory strategies	2.27
PART B: cognitive strategies	3.72
PART C: compensation strategies	3.88
PARTD: metacognitive strategies	4.62
PART E: affective strategies	2.55
PART F: social strategies	3.97

Table15 shows the mean ranks for each part of the SILL. These ranks confirm those obtained by chi-square test because in both tests, it is revealed that the memory strategies are the

most important strategies used by successful learners. Again, chi-square test is run for the whole SILL questionnaire, and level of significance of .025 confirms that the results are not due to chance.

GLL as the second questionnaire has seven parts. Table 16 shows chi-square, degree of freedom, and significance for each part of the GLL.

The observed significances, which are all less

than 0.01, prove that the results are not by chance factors, and the chi-square tests show that all seven parts are not of equal value and importance.

Table 16
Chi-square test for GLL

parts	The good language Learner finds a style of learning that suits his/her	Good language learners are actively involved in the language learning process	Good language learners try to figure out how the Language works	Good language Know that language is used to communicate	Good language Learners are like good detectives	Good language Learners learn to think in the language.	Good language learners try to overcome their feelings of frustration and lack of confidence.
Chi-Square	8.667 ^a	6.667 ^a	8.667 ^a	6.000 ^a	13.000 ^a	11.667 ^a	7.333 ^a
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Sig.	.008	.025	.008	.037	.007	.005	.015

Looking at the chi-square test result in Table 16, and Friedman ranking test result in Table 17, which give the mean ranks, we can diagnose the following ranking for the seven parts of the GLL.

1- Good language learners are like good detectives.

2- Good language learners learn to think in the language.

3- Good language learners try to figure out how

the Language works.

4- Good language learners find a style of learning that suits him/her.

5- Good language learners try to overcome their feelings of frustration and lack of confidence.

6- Good language learners are actively involved in the language learning process.

7- Good language learners know that language is used to communicate.

Table 17
Friedman Test

	Mean Rank
The good language learner finds a style of learning that suits his/her	3.68
Good language learners are actively involved in the language learning process.	4.52
Good language learners try to figure out how the Language works.	4.03
Good language learners know that language is used to communicate	4.52
Good language learners are like good detectives.	3.38
Good language learners learn to think in the language.	3.40
Good language learners try to overcome their feelings of frustration and lack of confidence.	4.47

Again chi-square test for the whole GLL questionnaire was run and the level of significance of .031 confirms that the results got by the test are not by chance.

Now that the most frequently used strategies of the successful learners are determined, less successful learners are divided into two groups: control group which does not receive any treatment and experimental group which receives treatment. The latter group is taught the strategies of the successful group for 15 sessions of 90 minutes. At the end of these 15 sessions, less successful group is again interviewed twice, and the scores of posttest are compared with pretest

scores to see if there was any significant and meaningful difference between the two performances.

Table 18
POSTTEST 1 Experimental

score	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
5	6	30.0	30.0	30.0
6	10	50.0	50.0	80.0
7	4	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table 19
POSTTEST2 Experimental

Mark	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
5	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
6	12	60.0	60.0	70.0
7	4	20.0	20.0	90.0
8	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table 20
POSTTEST1 Control

mark	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	6	30.0	30.0	30.0
4	8	40.0	40.0	70.0
5	6	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table 21
POSTTEST2 Control

mark	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	5	25.0	25.0	25.0
4	7	35.0	35.0	60.0
5	7	35.0	35.0	95.0
6	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table 23
t- Test for Experimental & Control Groups

group	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Experiment	54.275	19	.010	6.10000	5.8648	6.3352
Control	38.543	19	.700	4.10000	-3.8774	4.3226

Conclusion

The first fact revealed in this study was that successful learners used most of the learning strategies with relatively high frequencies. This finding can be somehow self-evident, since a successful learner is successful because he uses most strategies frequently, and if less successful learners knew this fact, they would become more successful. A learning strategy is "an extremely powerful learning tool" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1985, p.43), and these strategies have, naturally, empowered the successful learners in their learning endeavor. Also, since successful

Table 22 shows the mean, standard deviation, and standard error of measurement for the two groups. It can be seen that the experimental group's mean is higher than the control group's 6.1 v.s.4.1.

Table 22
One-Sample Statistics

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experiment	20	6.1000	.50262	.11239
Control	20	4.1000	.47573	.10638

The t-test, which is used to show the effect of a variable, is done. Since in Table 23, the significance for the experimental group is 0.010, it can be claimed that the treatment was meaningful and effective for this group. But for the control group, the significance which is more than 0.01, the results can be got by chance. In addition, a second look at Table 23 reveals that the mean difference for the experimental group is more than that for the control group, showing a greater difference of mean. What can be understood from this difference of means is the effectiveness of strategy instruction on the unsuccessful learners' speaking ability. So, the second null hypothesis of this study is rejected and a directional claim can be made about the effectiveness of strategy instruction.

Language learners may have had more exposure to and contact with the foreign language, they have got familiar with different strategies and their usefulness in learning other languages through Experience.

Regarding the six categories of strategies, i.e. memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social ones, the most frequently used strategies were the memory strategies followed by the affective ones, and the least frequently used ones were the metacognitive and social strategies. A justifiable explanation for this pattern of strategy use can be the kind of beliefs

held by teachers, on the one hand, and students, on the other hand. Students' strategy use has been found to be consistent with the beliefs they hold about the process of learning a second or foreign language (Abraham & Vann, 1987). Also, as Kalaja (1995) believes, students' strategy usage reflects their underlying beliefs about how languages are learned. English teachers may be blamed for this, since the English teachers are responsible for teaching these learning strategies to students. So, it shows how important it is to get teachers familiar with learning strategies.

The present study's findings can also be attributed to its participants and to the setting. If a different sample had been used, different results might have been obtained. This can easily be seen in the different findings of different researches carried out in different countries and with different participants.

Apart from statistical findings and using introspections, we may relate the memory strategies which has the highest frequency of use in this study, and the social strategies, being at the bottom, to this point that Iranian students may be more memory-oriented in their learning, and besides, are less sociable and avoid social involvement. Here, the education system or culture, which is deeply rooted in students' subconscious, may be responsible. If this is true, it cannot be altered overnight and needs long-term programming. Finally, it was shown that teaching successful learners' strategies to less successful ones had a significant effect on their speaking ability. It can easily be explained that this is because of the strategies' absence from textbooks and the learners' unawareness of them. That's why once these strategies are taught to students, and the learners get to know and use them, they become more successful learners.

The findings of the present study, though scant, can have important implications. To begin with, the fact that strategy instruction does have an effect on learners' speaking improvement shows that more attention should be paid to learning strategies in Iran's education system, where they seem to be neglected. This can be even more important in language institutes where the primary aim is to bring up students with effective oral skills. The cognitive process that accompanies strategy learning and practice raises students' awareness of developing their strategic competence described by Wenden (2001) as "general knowledge about what strategies are, specific knowledge about when and how to use

them, and their effectiveness" (p. 36). Since teachers are key factors in every instructional program, teacher training programs should include courses to familiarize teachers with different aspects of strategy training and assessment. Moreover, when the issue of nationality and culture is considered, teachers should get familiar with national features and cultural needs of the learners. As Williams and Burden (1997) put it, "The successful teacher may not be one who merely provides specific learner training tasks, but rather, one who is aware of the strategy implications of every language learning task that they give." (p.165). Likewise, material developers should include learning strategies in their materials. Taking the effect of culture on strategy use, the selection and incorporation of activities and tasks that target certain strategies seems integral in developing every instructional material.

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