

On Iranian EFL Teachers' Language Learning Strategies, Teaching Strategies, and Qualifications

Mona Khabiri

Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch, Iran

Sepideh Jazebi

PhD Candidate of Applied Linguistics, Islamic Azad University Science & Research Branch, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Different factors determine language teachers' degree of success in their teaching practices. Among these factors, teachers' own learning experience can play a pivotal role since it affects teachers' attitudes toward aspects of the knowledge they are to teach. Educators and researchers may have paid less attention to an indispensable component of teachers' learning experience: learning strategies, which is the focus of this study. This research aimed at finding out whether Iranian EFL teachers use their own learning strategies to teach English. Furthermore, the study investigated whether teachers' qualifications had any significant effect on their use of language learning strategies and teaching strategies. The data was obtained from two questionnaires, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and the Strategy Inventory for Language Teaching (SILT). The findings suggested that there was a significant relationship between the teachers' learning and teaching strategies and that teachers' use of language learning strategies could significantly predict their employment of teaching strategies. Investigating the effect of teachers' qualification on their strategy use revealed that more-qualified teachers outperformed the less-qualified ones in their use of learning and teaching strategies.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, language teaching strategies, qualified teachers, strategy instruction

Introduction

Teaching and learning are two inseparable components of the same process. Language teachers pave the way for the learners in many different ways and the effective approaches they adopt are very much context-dependent. However, different scholars have found some general points about effective

language teaching. Weinstein and Mayer (2001) believe that successful teaching requires sensitivity to two types of instructional goals and skills. Firstly, goals concerning the products of learning, which focus on what learners should know or be able to do as a result of learning, and secondly, goals concerning the processes of learning, which focus on techniques and strategies learners can use to accomplish learning, that is, on teaching how to learn.

Ellis, Worthington, and Larkin (1992) suggest 10 effective teaching principles from which 'teaching strategically' can be mentioned. Strategic instruction enables learners to become more independent. Effective strategy instruction includes the critical features of scaffolding (i.e., planning, monitoring, and evaluating), promotes the active participation of learners in their own learning, and its long-term goal is the students' mastery of effective and efficient strategies for maximal learning. They finally add that teachers should also be able to distinguish and apply the effective strategies in their instructions. They maintain that the critical features of effective strategies are:

- 1) A strategy must be useful in contributing to the learners' attempts in solving a major problem in the existing context, facing similar demands across contexts, and making generalizations across contexts.
- 2) A strategy should have a strategic process which induces that it should include meticulously sequenced steps that lead to a specific observable outcome in an affordable span of time, and promote the use of cognitive and metacognitive processes and suitable skills.

Furthermore, Merrifield (1996) believes that teachers and learners need to sensitize themselves to a wide variety of successful strategies for language learning. However, Hismanoglu (2000) believes that using the same good language learning strategies does not turn the bad learners into successful ones, since other factors such as teachers' interest and willingness to devote additional time to the instruction and the ability to promote a sustainable level of student motivation may also play a crucial role in their degree of success (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

It is generally assumed that teachers will teach effectively if they understand how language is learned (Brown, 2000). For that reason, the importance of language learning experiences and strategies in language learning and teaching is highlighted by many scholars (Lessard-Clouston, 1997; Morzano, Morzano, & Pickering, 2003; Oxford, 1990). Consequently, teachers need to reflect on their own positive and negative experiences in L2/FL learning. In order to do so, they should distinguish between their own

teaching strategies and learning strategies. In other words, they should think about themselves in two different roles – as a language teacher and as a language learner.

Language Learning Strategies

Scholars have presented a number of definitions for language learning strategies. Weinstein and Mayer (2001) define learning strategies as behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning and are intended to influence the learners' encoding process. Wenden (1987a) considers learning strategies as any sets of operations, steps, plans, and routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information. Likewise, Cohen (2010) names language learning strategies as language learner strategies and defines it as "thoughts and actions, consciously selected by learners, to assist them in learning and using language in general, and in the completion of specific language tasks" (p. 682).

Oxford (1990) also summarizes that learning strategies are whatever EFL students do to improve their own learning. She emphasizes that strategies are especially significant for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement and, therefore, necessary for developing communicative competence. Appropriate learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence. She introduces 12 key features of language learning strategies which are as follows:

Language learning strategies contribute to the main goal which is communicative competence, allow learners to become more self-directed, expand the role of the teacher, are problem-oriented, are specific actions taken by the learner, involve many aspects of the learner not just the cognitive, support learning both directly and indirectly, are not always observable, are often conscious, can be taught, are flexible, and are influenced by a variety of factors.

Second language researchers have spent countless hours trying to define and systematize the wide array of possible language learning strategies. Oxford (2003) believes that the existence of these distinct strategy typologies indicates a major problem in the research area of L2 learning strategies, that is, "lack of a coherent, well accepted system for describing these strategies" (p. 4). To offer a solution to this problem, Oxford (2002) categorizes these strategy systems as follows:

- a. Systems related to behaviors of successful language learners
- b. Systems based on psychological functions such as cognitive, metacognitive and affective
- c. Linguistically based strategy systems dealing with inferencing language monitoring: formal rule practicing and functional practicing
- d. Systems based on particular language skills, such as oral production, reading comprehension or writing
- e. Systems based on different types (styles) of learners.

On the other hand, Chamot (2004) states that, "Comprehensive classification schemes of learner strategies have been developed to describe the information derived from descriptive studies that seek to chart the subtle permutation and often imprecise definition of learners' self-reported strategies" (p. 16). Earlier studies (e.g., Rubin, 1975) used their own observations to describe language learning strategies, relied on categories derived from research in first language contexts (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), or developed a comprehensive list of learning strategies derived from many sources (e.g., Oxford, 1990). In the past few years, researchers have tried to identify and categorize learning strategies based on data-driven approaches like for example using think-aloud protocols (Chamot, 2004). The aforementioned researchers' classifications are presented in what follows.

Rubin's (1987) classification of language learning strategies includes: learning strategies (cognitive learning strategies and metacognitive learning strategies which contribute directly to the development of the language system constructed by the learner), communication strategies, and social strategies. On the other hand, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classified learning strategies as metacognitive, cognitive, and social or affective strategies.

However, the strategy system presented by Oxford (1990) differs in several ways from earlier attempts to classify strategies. It is more detailed and comprehensive; it is more systematic in linking individual strategies, as well as strategy groups, with each of the four language skills; and it uses less terminology. According to this classification, strategies are divided into two major classes: direct and indirect.

Direct strategies directly involve the target language and require mental processing of the language. They include memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensatory strategies. Indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

The results of Hsiao and Oxford's (2002) study indicate that Oxford's six-factor strategy taxonomy is the most consistent with the learners' strategy use.

Successful Language Learning Strategies

Regarding the successful learners' strategies, Oxford and Crookall (1989) summarize six strategies as keys to learners' success: 1) finding a set of learning preferences and selecting language situations that allow those preferences to be used; 2) becoming actively involved in the language learning process; 3) developing an awareness of language both as a formal system of rules and as a means of communication; 4) constantly extending and revising individual understandings of the target language system; 5) gradually developing the new language into a reference system and learning to think in it; and 6) addressing the affective demands of language learning.

Furthermore, Oxford (2002) states that skilled L2 learners select strategies that work well together and that are tailored to the language task requirements. For these learners, cognitive and metacognitive strategies often go together. Green and Oxford (1995) noticed that about a third of the individual strategies on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were used more frequently by more successful learners. It is impressive that almost all of these strategies involved active use of the target language, with a strong emphasis on practice in authentic situations. Furthermore, according to Green and Oxford, they were used in combination with an array of what they name bedrock strategies, which contribute significantly to the learning process of the more successful learners, although not sufficient to move the less successful learners to higher levels of proficiency.

However, Cohen (2010) believes that, "There is no one model of a good language learner" (p. 683), and good learners apply different types of strategies, especially the metacognitive ones, in different ways.

Teaching Strategies

Many scholars have identified characteristics that typify successful teaching-learning. In addition to the use of learning strategies by learners, features of effective teaching have been identified by researchers to contribute to the learning of the learners. Morzano et al. (2003) organize three major roles that

are performed by an effective teacher among which making wise choices about the most effective instructional strategies to employ can be mentioned. That is to say that effective teachers have a spectrum of instructional strategies at their disposal. However, they choose the most appropriate ones taking into consideration the facets of the specific learning context (Hismangolu, 2000; Merrifield, 1996).

In the same line, Rubin (1987) introduces two important roles for teachers: to provide a context which assists the learners to identify the strategies that work best for them and to suggest alternative strategies to them. They add that intervention by the teacher could help less able students benefit from the strategies used by more able students, and even the more able students could be provided with opportunities to refine and add to their learning strategies so that they become as efficient as possible.

With respect to the issue of strategy instruction, there is the question of who is the more effective teacher, Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) or non-NESTs. Medgyes (2001) asserts that non-NESTs can provide a better learner model, teach language learning strategies more effectively, supply more information about the language learning, better anticipate and prevent language difficulties, be more sensitive to their students, and finally benefit from their ability to use the learners' mother tongue. Medgyes further maintains that such teachers are supposed to be conscious strategy users, thus able to tell which strategies have worked for them and which have not. Their ability consists in imparting their own learning experiences as well as providing assistance for students to discover other strategies that should work specifically for them. Nevertheless, he concludes that from a general point of view, both groups of teachers serve equally useful purposes in their own ways.

Wenden (1987b) summarizes the guidelines for teachers who wish to provide students with more systematic training in learning how to learn. From among the points he mentions, informing the students of the value and the significance of the strategies teachers train them to use, providing training in both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and determining how to integrate learner training with language training, range and specificity, autonomy of application, and learners' need should be taken into account. Lessard-Clouston (1997) in suggesting a three-step approach to implementing Language Learning Strategies (LLS) training in the classroom maintains that,

Reflect and encourage learner reflection. On a basic level, teachers should reflect on their own positive and negative experiences in L2/FL learning. Beyond contemplating one's own

language learning, it is also essential to reflect on one's LLS training and teaching in the classroom. In addition to the teacher's own reflections, it is crucial to encourage learner reflection, both during and after the LLS training in the class or course. Interviews, portfolios, simple self-evaluation forms, and questionnaires are a few examples of various ways to encourage learner reflection on language learning. (p. 8)

Although EFL teachers have experienced the process of language learning as successful language learners, each apply certain types of LLS, the choice of which is influenced by many different factors. There is a possibility that EFL teachers use their own LLS subconsciously to teach the language. Since learners have different needs, they require different learning strategies. As a result, the learners' and teachers' strategies might not be in harmony with each other. In this case, language learning faces some problems. To solve this problem, teachers should become aware of their own teaching strategies and attempt to adapt and expand them based on their learners' needs. Taking this problem into consideration, the present study aimed at finding out whether Iranian EFL teachers use their own learning strategies to teach English. Therefore, the following research question was posed:

Q1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' language learning strategies and their teaching strategies?

Moreover, in order to find out about the possible impacts of teachers' qualification on teachers' language learning strategies and language teaching strategies, the following two questions were also posed:

Q2. Is there any significant difference between more-qualified and less-qualified teachers in terms of the mean scores of the reported language learning strategies?

Q3. Is there any significant difference between more-qualified and less-qualified teachers in terms of the mean scores of the reported language teaching strategies?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 133 Iranian EFL teachers. They were chosen randomly from 15 different language schools which are located in

Tehran and were asked to fill out two questionnaires (SILL and SILT, as described in the 'instrumentation' section below) in succession with an interval of at least two weeks. Before the administration of the questionnaires, all the participants of the study received a short period of instruction about language learning strategies as well as how to fill out SILL and SILT. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed. However, due to the nature of surveys, a number of participants did not bring them back. Consequently, 133 participants filled out SILL and among these teachers, 113 completed SILT.

A background questionnaire was also given to the participants to obtain the demographic information. Both male and female teachers participated in the survey and the number of females exceeded the number of males. The participants varied in age from 20 to 60; however, the majority was between 20 and 30. Based on the data obtained from the background questionnaire, the EFL teachers were split into two categories: more-qualified and less-qualified teachers. In the present study, more-qualified teachers were those who a) had majored in applied linguistics (including TEFL, literature, and translation) or linguistics, b) had more than four years of teaching experience, and c) taught the intermediate or the advanced levels. Less-qualified teachers were those who did not have one or more of these features.

A considerable number of the participants included EFL teachers who had a BA degree in TEFL, had 1-3 years of teaching experience, and taught adult learners at the intermediate level. The detailed statistical information is demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Distribution of teachers by field of study, teaching experience, and teaching level

	Field of Study		Teaching Level			Teaching Experience		Qualification	
	Relevant	Irrelevant	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced	< 4 years	≥ 4 years	More-qualified	Less-qualified
SILL	97	31	30	59	44	53	80	100	33
SILT	77	23	24	51	38	43	70	88	25

Note has to be taken that the teaching levels mentioned in Table 1 is based on the classification of the language schools. This classification was based on the third edition of "Interchange" as follows: elementary, the levels at which either Intro or Book One of Interchange is taught; intermediate, the levels at which either Book Two or Book Three of Interchange is taught; advanced, the levels at which Passages One and Passages Two are taught. Classes for TOEFL and IELTS preparation also lie in this category.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in the process of data collection were a background questionnaire, SILL, and SILT. The background questionnaire was designed to collect information about EFL teachers' age, gender, field of study, teaching experience, and teaching level.

The second instrument was SILL (Version 7.0, reprinted in Oxford, 1990) which includes 50 items and a choice of five Likert-scale responses for each strategy ranging from 1 (Never or almost never true of me) to 5 (Always or almost always true of me). The items are organized according to strategy groups using factor analysis. It includes six subscales: 1) memory strategies (9 items), 2) cognitive strategies (14 items), 3) compensation strategies (6 items), 4) metacognitive strategies (9 items), 5) affective strategies (6 items), and 6) social strategies (6 items). The overall average obtained on SILL indicates how often the learner tends to use learning strategies in general, while averages for each part of the SILL indicate which strategy groups the learner tends to use most frequently. SILL was employed in this study since it is the most widely used strategy scale and provides researchers with a considerable amount of published reliability, and validity data (for exhaustive details, see Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995) and it systematically represents all kinds of strategies viewed as important to language learning. In this study, SILL had a reliability of 0.867 with 50 items which was computed by Cronbach's alpha formula, and a grand mean of 3.41.

Another instrument was required to assess the EFL teachers' teaching strategies, that is, the learning strategies that the teachers emphasize while teaching. Therefore, SILL was transformed into a teaching strategy inventory by the researchers and under the supervision of two other researchers (one an associate professor and one an assistant professor of applied linguistics), maintaining the same number of items and subdivisions of SILL. The new inventory was called SILT and included 50 items with a five-point Likert-scale. Few sample items are presented hereunder:

- a) In my teaching, I make relationships between what my students already know and the new things they learn in English. (Memory strategy)
- b) I teach the meaning of new words to my students by dividing the words into parts that they understand. (Cognitive strategy)
- c) I make my students read English without looking up every new word. (Compensation strategy)
- d) I guide my students to find out how to be a better learner of English. (Metacognitive strategy)
- e) I ask my students to write down their feelings in a language learning diary. (Affective strategy)
- f) I ask students to correct each other when they talk. (Social strategy)

The reliability of the newly-developed questionnaire was estimated through Cronbach's alpha. The researchers also took some steps to investigate the validity of this questionnaire which will be explained in the 'results' section.

Procedure

The data were collected over a span of approximately three months from 15 different English language schools in Tehran. The teachers were assured that the results would be kept confidential and received a short period of instruction about language learning strategies as well as how to fill out SILL and SILT. The two main questionnaires were given with an interval of at least two weeks to reduce the memory effect. The teachers' average scores for the six subcategories along with their overall average scores were computed.

Descriptive statistics was used to compute the mean of the reported frequency of use of the learning and teaching strategies and to examine the normality of distribution of the sample scores. Inferential statistics was also used to find answers to the posed questions of the research.

Results

Reliability and Validity of SILT

As the first step, the reliability and validity of SILT that was developed for this study had to be checked. The results indicated that SILT had a reliability of

0.893 with 50 items which was computed by Cronbach's alpha formula, and a grand mean of 3.67.

In order to check the validity of SILT, two statistical methods were used. First, as a criterion-related evidence for construct validity of SILT, correlation was run between the SILT average score, indicating the mean score of teaching strategy use, and teachers' qualification (as operationally defined in this study – see 'participants' section) as the dependent (predicted) variable.

This statistical procedure has often been used to gather criterion-related evidence for construct validity of SILL (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995) by taking the average score on SILL as independent variable and students' average scores on a language proficiency test as the predicted/dependent variable. However, since in this study, teacher's qualification was not an interval variable, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was used.

Table 2 demonstrates the results of the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation. As demonstrated in Table 2, the Spearman rho came out to be 0.63 and significant at 0.05 level ($p = 0.02 < 0.05$).

The R square which is the effect size and is usually described as a measure of how much of the variance in one variable is accounted for by the other variable came out to be 0.399, meaning that almost 40% of the variance in teachers' qualification was accounted by the teaching strategies as measured by SILT. According to Cohen (cited in Larson-Hall, 2010, p. 162), R square of 25% and more accounts for a large part of the variance.

Table 2 – Validating SILT through correlation between SILT and teacher's qualification

			SILT Average Score
Spearman's rho	Qualification	Correlation	.632*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023
		N	113
		R ²	.399

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Second, the Factor Analysis using Principal Axis Factoring and Varimax Rotation were used as another a posteriori evidence for the validity of SILT. Table 3 below demonstrates the results of the Factor analysis.

As demonstrated in Table 3, the results of the conducted Factor Analysis explained 44% of the variance in SILT scores. Six factors were confirmed to exist in the underlying structure of SILT using confirmatory Factor Analysis. These factors correspond to the six strategy groups in SILT, that is, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Therefore, this result provided another evidence for the validity of SILT.

Table 3 – The results of the factor analysis (SILT) – Principal axis factoring

Factor	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.043	18.085	18.085	8.437	16.875	16.875	3.645	7.291	7.291
2	3.717	7.434	25.519	3.105	6.210	23.085	3.481	6.962	14.253
3	2.611	5.223	30.742	2.003	4.007	27.092	3.361	6.723	20.976
4	2.538	5.077	35.819	1.914	3.829	30.921	2.687	5.374	26.350
5	2.230	4.459	40.279	1.617	3.235	34.155	2.613	5.226	31.576
6	1.863	3.725	44.004	1.221	2.442	36.598	2.511	5.022	36.598
7	1.712	3.425	47.429						
8	1.611	3.221	50.650						
9	1.472	2.944	53.594						
10	1.421	2.842	56.436						
11	1.289	2.577	59.013						
12	1.244	2.488	61.501						
13	1.232	2.465	63.966						
14	1.122	2.243	66.209						
15	1.080	2.160	68.369						
16	1.024	2.048	70.418						
17	.981	1.961	72.379						
18	.929	1.858	74.237						
19	.888	1.776	76.014						
20	.846	1.692	77.706						
21	.814	1.627	79.333						
22	.751	1.502	80.835						
23	.714	1.428	82.263						
24	.663	1.327	83.590						
25	.637	1.274	84.864						
26	.619	1.239	86.103						
27	.597	1.193	87.296						
28	.553	1.107	88.403						
29	.516	1.032	89.435						
30	.464	.928	90.363						
31	.428	.855	91.218						
32	.400	.799	92.017						
33	.389	.779	92.796						
34	.382	.764	93.560						
35	.361	.721	94.281						
36	.353	.705	94.986						
37	.313	.626	95.612						
38	.306	.612	96.224						
39	.259	.518	96.742						
40	.228	.456	97.198						
41	.210	.419	97.618						
42	.203	.406	98.023						
43	.168	.336	98.359						
44	.159	.317	98.676						
45	.157	.314	98.990						
46	.130	.261	99.251						
47	.123	.245	99.496						
48	.095	.190	99.686						
49	.085	.169	99.855						
50	.072	.145	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Relationship between Teachers' Learning and Teaching Strategies

In order to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' language learning strategies and their teaching strategies, a Pearson correlation and a regression analysis were run using SILL average scores as the predictor variable and SILT average scores as the predicted variable. The aim was to investigate whether teacher's learning strategies as measured by SILL could predict their teaching strategies as measured by SILT or not. However, prior to running the correlation and regression analysis, the normality of the SILL and SILT distributions were checked and the skewness ratios came out to be -1.66 and -1.24 (see Table 4 below) for the SILL and SILT distributions, respectively, and within the acceptable range (the kurtosis ratios were also in the acceptable range for both distributions). Table 4 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for SILT and SILL distributions.

Table 4 – Descriptive statistics for SILL and SILT distributions

	Mean	Std. Error	Skewness	Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Error of Kurtosis
SILL	3.41	.036	-.348	.210	.643	.417
SILT	3.67	.041	-.281	.227	-.405	.451

Table 5 reports the result of the correlation analysis and as demonstrated, $r = 0.41$ came out to be significant ($p = 0.0005$, 2-tailed) at 0.05 level.

Table 5 – Validating SILT through correlation between SILT and teacher's qualification

		SILT Average Score
SILL Average Score	Pearson Correlation	.411*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	113

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Then, the regression analysis was carried out. Table 6 reports the method and variables in the regression analysis and Table 7 presents the regression model summary.

Table 6 – Regression analysis – SILL and SILT

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SILL average score		Enter

1. All request variables entered.
2. Dependent variable: SILT average score.

Table 7 – Regression model summary (SILL and SILT)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1.	.411(a)	.169	.161	.3958

a. Predictors: (Constant), SILL average score.

As it is demonstrated in Table 8 below, the Beta coefficient (also the correlation coefficient reported in Table 7 above) came out to be 0.411 which was significant at the 0.05 level ($t = 4.75$, $df = 111$, $p = 0.0005 < 0.05$, 2-tailed). Thus, there was a significant positive correlation between SILL and SILT average scores and the regression analysis indicated that the teachers' language learning strategies can be used to predict their performance on SILT (i.e., their teaching strategies).

Moreover, the SILL average score accounted for 17% of the variation in SILT average score (R square = 0.17). According to Cohen (cited in Larson-Hall, 2010), R square of 0.09 and above (lower than 0.25) is a medium effect size.

Table 8 – Coefficients (a)

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1.	(Constant)	2.253	.302		7.471	.000
	SILL Average Score	.415	.087	.411	4.745	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SILT Average Score.

Effect of Teachers' Qualification on their Strategy Employment

In order to find an answer to the second research question, that is, whether there was a significant difference between more-qualified and less-qualified

teachers in terms of their language learning strategy use, a *t*-test had to be run to compare the average score on SILL between the more-qualified and less-qualified teachers. As Table 9 demonstrates, the distribution of the average score on SILL was normal for the less qualified teachers (skewness ratio = 1.02, kurtosis ratio = -0.62) but not normal for the more qualified teachers (skewness ratio = -2.91, kurtosis ratio = 3.18). Therefore, a Mann-Whitney test had to be run instead of a *t*-test.

Table 9 – Descriptive statistics for SILL mean by teachers' qualification

Qualification	Mean	Std. Error	Skewness	Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Error of Kurtosis
More-qualified	3.453	.0441	-.702	.241	1.521	.478
Less-qualified	3.280	.0545	.416	.409	-.496	.798

The results of the mean ranks of the more- and less-qualified teachers are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 – SILL mean ranks for more-qualified and less-qualified teachers

	Qualification	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SILL average Score	More-qualified	71.93	7192.50
	Less-qualified	52.08	1718.50

As demonstrated by Table 10, the mean rank of more-qualified teachers on SILL came out to be higher than that of the less-qualified teachers (71.93 compared to 52.08). Table 11 shows that this difference in the SILL mean rank was significant ($U = 1157.5$, $N_1 = 100$, $N_2 = 33$, $p = 0.01$, 2-tailed). As a result, it was confirmed that the teachers' qualifications affected their language learning strategy use.

Table 11 – Mann-Whitney test for comparing SILL rank scores between more- and less-qualified teachers

Test Statistics (a)

	SILL Average Score
Mann-Whitney U	1157.500
Wilcoxon W	1718.500
Z	-2.566
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.010

a. Grouping variable: Qualification.

Regarding the impact of teachers' qualification on their use of teaching strategies, a *t*-test was needed to compare the SILT average score of the more-qualified and less-qualified teachers. In order to do so, the descriptive statistics was required to verify the normality of the sample. Table 12 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for the SILT mean score for more-qualified and less-qualified teacher.

Table 12 – Descriptive statistics for SILT mean by teachers' qualification

Qualifications	Mean	Std. Error	Skewness	Error of skewness	Kurtosis	Error of Kurtosis
More-qualified	3.724	.046	-.283	.257	-.425	.508
Less-qualified	3.497	.08	-.548	.464	-.676	.902

As shown in Table 12, the two distributions of SILT scores were normal (for more-qualified teachers: Skewness ratio = -1.10, Kurtosis ratio = -0.84; for less-qualified teachers: Skewness ratio = -1.18, Kurtosis ratio = -0.75), and thus, the precondition for running the *t*-test existed. The results of the *t*-test are shown in Table 13.

Table 13 – *t*-test for comparing SILT mean score between more-qualified and less-qualified teachers

Qualification	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
More-qualified	88	3.724	2.372	111	.019
Less-qualified	25	3.497			

As demonstrated in Table 13, the result of the *t*-test ($t = 2.37$, $df = 111$, $p = 0.019$, 2-tailed) confirmed that the teachers' qualification significantly affected their language teaching strategy use.

The comparison between the means (for more-qualified mean of 3.72, for less-qualified mean of 3.5) revealed that more-qualified teachers surpassed the less-qualified ones in their use of teaching strategies. This meant that there was a significant difference between less-qualified and more-qualified Iranian EFL teachers in terms of their mean scores of the reported language teaching strategies.

Discussion and Conclusion

To summarize the findings of this study and discuss the relevant studies and supporting evidence, the three research questions are taken into account.

The first research question was answered by finding a significant relationship between the EFL teachers' language learning and teaching strategies and thus, the relevant null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that the more frequently a teacher makes use of learning strategies, the more frequently s/he employs teaching strategies. Therefore, language learning strategies, as a fundamental component of teachers' learning experiences, can be used to predict their choices of language teaching strategies in their teaching practices.

To elaborate on this relationship, it can be mentioned that all the EFL teachers have gone through the process of language learning themselves, and they have become proficient enough to teach the language. As a result, they can be considered as successful language learners themselves. Since the employment of specific types of learning strategies has led the teachers to the success of language learning, the teachers might also attempt to teach them either consciously or subconsciously to facilitate the process of language learning for the learners.

Moreover, since most of the teachers' majors in this study were somehow related to language and language teaching, they were familiar with different types of learning strategies. In addition to being educated in the relevant fields, they usually take part in TTC (Teacher Training Courses) before starting their job as a language teacher.

These classes could have also provided the teachers with the knowledge of learning strategies. It can thus be concluded that EFL teachers are aware of different types of strategies but employ only certain types of them in their teaching practices.

The second research question which asked about the significant difference between more- and less-qualified teachers in terms of their language learning strategy use was answered as well. The statistical analyses indicated that more-qualified teachers outperformed the less-qualified ones in the use of LLS and thus, the related null hypothesis was rejected.

As it was mentioned earlier, three pivotal factors operationally determined the teachers' qualification in this study, namely field of study,

years of experience, and the level at which they taught. The following studies on learners' strategies from the literature explain the effect of these factors on learning strategy use and are in accordance with the findings of this study on learning and teaching strategy use.

- 1) Experience: According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989), students who have been studying the language for at least four or five years used strategies far more often than did less experienced language learners. Therefore, when a person's experience of language learning increases, s/he uses learning strategies more frequently.
- 2) Course level: O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Kupper (1985) report that beginning and intermediate high school ESL students used the cognitive strategies far more regularly than the metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, Oxford and Crookall (1989) report more strategy use by higher level students.
- 3) Field of study: Oxford and Nyikos (1989) have come to the conclusion that people with different career interests seemed to choose different strategies. According to Ehrman and Oxford (1989), professional language trainers reported greater use of language learning strategies. Taking the learners' majors into consideration, Peacock and Ho (2003) state that students majoring in English reported the highest overall frequency of strategy use, followed by primary education, then business, math, science, engineering, and building students. The lowest overall strategy use was reported by computing students. Students majoring in English reported a much higher use of three cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies.

The above-mentioned research studies confirm the results of this study, and as it is crystal clear, the combination of these three factors enabled the more-qualified teachers to outperform the less-qualified ones in their use of learning strategies in this study.

Taking the third research question into account, it was confirmed that the teachers' qualifications significantly affected their language teaching strategy use and more-qualified teachers made use of a larger number and a wider variety of strategies in comparison with less-qualified ones and consequently the researchers were able to reject the related null hypothesis.

The following discussions support the positive effect of teachers' knowledge of the subject matter (field of study), experience, and the teaching level (elementary or advanced) on their teaching practices. The discussion is made because in this study, qualification was operationally defined based on

these factors and thus, the teachers were divided into the two categories of more- and less-qualified based on them.

According to Rashtchi and Keyvanfar (2007), knowledge of the subject matter plays a pivotal role for a language teacher. Therefore, the teachers' field of study can be considered as an influential factor in their teaching strategy use. Since more-qualified teachers' field of study was related to language and language teaching, they were quite aware of the wide range of teaching strategies and employed them more frequently in their teaching practices.

Teaching experience is another influential factor. There are certain teaching principles that can be achieved only inside the classroom environment. Through experience, a teacher learns how to deal with different learners coming from different backgrounds and expectations. Therefore, more-qualified teachers were familiar with different teaching contexts and their related teaching strategies to a great extent. Hence, they were more experienced in employing various types of teaching strategies. This discussion can be a possible reason to explain why they revealed significantly higher use of teaching strategies in comparison with less-qualified ones.

The students' cognitive learning process can be a possible rationale for the more frequent use of teaching strategies by teachers who teach at higher proficiency levels. According to Mclaughlin (1987), second language learning is viewed as the acquisition of a complex cognitive skill. At the early stages of language learning, learners' processing is in a focal or controlled mode which is defined as giving notice to something in particular, for instance, a language form.

Peripheral processing, which refers to things that we give only incidental notice to, would also be beneficial, for example practicing language for genuinely meaningful purposes. As learners proceed to higher levels, their learning process becomes more automatized. Automatic processing is the simultaneous management of a multitude of pieces of information.

Focal processing which is used at the elementary level requires a very limited number of teaching strategies, however, teachers demand various types of teaching strategies to pave the way for the learner's automatic processing when they teach learners at higher levels of proficiency.

Learners' self-consciousness can be another possible reason. At higher levels, learners become more self-conscious; they pay more attention to their

learning process, and also monitor their own learning. As a result, teachers employ teaching strategies more frequently for learners at these levels.

Finally, based on the findings of this study, teachers have to become aware of their own strategies and how flexible they are in order to better implement strategy instruction. Albeit this research was not comprehensive, it was conducted to both answer and raise questions in the realm of EFL teachers' language learning and teaching strategies. Thus, the following suggestions are recommended for further studies.

More studies should be carried out to investigate the effectiveness of EFL teachers' self-awareness of their own teaching strategies on their practices. Moreover, other Teaching Strategy Inventories can be designed and compared with SILT. Observational studies can investigate the strategies qualified and successful teachers implement in their classes.

Taking the teachers' beliefs into account, interested researchers can investigate the EFL teachers' beliefs in strategy instruction and the relation between their beliefs and their performance on SILL and SILT. As a final suggestion, it can be mentioned that NEST and non-NEST teachers might have different sets of language learning and teaching strategies. Finding these sets of strategies would be beneficial to facilitate the learning process for various types of learners.

Received on January 15, 2010

Accepted on March 5, 2010

The Authors

Mona Khabiri is Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch and Director of the Journal of English Language Studies (JELS). She mainly teaches language testing, research methodology, seminar in TEFL issues, and teaching language skills at the graduate level and her main areas of research interest include teacher education, critical thinking, learner autonomy, and task-based language teaching and learning. She has published in national academic journals and presented in several national and international seminars.

monakhabiri@yahoo.com

Sepideh Jazebi is a PhD candidate at Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. She got her BS in General Biology and then her MA in TEFL. She has been teaching for 14 years including nine years at the Indian School and some language schools in Tehran and four years of academic instruction at different institutions where she has taught contrastive analysis, language teaching

methodology, and language testing. She has presented papers at international conferences and is particularly interested in research in language learning strategies and scaffolding.

sepeedeh_jazebi@yahoo.com

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Appendix

Strategy Inventory for Language Teaching (SILT) Based on SILL Version 7.0 by Oxford (1989)

Directions

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING is a modified version of SILL (R. Oxford, 1989) and is for teachers of English as a Foreign Language. You will find statements about teaching English to your students. Please read each statement. On the separate worksheet, write the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells HOW TRUE THE STATEMENT IS.

1. Never or almost never true of me.
2. Usually not true of me.
3. Somewhat true of me.
4. Usually true of me.
5. Always or almost always true of me.

NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME means that the statement is very rarely true of me.

USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true less than half the time.

SOMEWHAT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you about half the time.

USUALLY TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true more than half the time.

ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you almost always.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Put your answers on the separate worksheet. Please make no marks on the items. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete.

EXAMPLE

1. Never or almost never true of me.
2. Usually not true of me.
3. Somewhat true of me.
4. Usually true of me.
5. Always or almost always true of me.

Read the item, and choose a response (1 through 5 as above), and write it in the space after the item.

I actively seek out opportunities to talk with native speakers of English.

_____.
You have just completed the example item. Answer the rest of the items on the worksheet.

Strategy Inventory for Language Teaching

1. Never or almost never true of me.

2. Usually not true of me.
 3. Somewhat true of me.
 4. Usually true of me.
 5. Always or almost always true of me.
- (Write answers on worksheet)

Please fill out this form as a TEACHER

Part A

1. In my teaching I make relationships between what my students already know and the new things they learn in English.
2. I encourage my students to use new English words in a sentence or I use them in a sentence so that the students can remember them.
3. By writing a new word on the board, I ask the students to connect the sound of the new word and an image or picture of the word to help them learn and remember the word.
4. I ask the students to make a mental picture of a sentence in which the new English word might be used.
5. I practice and emphasize the rhythm to help students remember new English words.
6. I use flash cards to make students remember new English words.
7. I physically act out the new English words for the students.
8. I review previous English lessons in the class before the new ones.
9. I ask the students to remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part B

10. I make the students write the new English words several times or I write them several times on the board.
11. I draw students' attention to native pronunciation and assist them to talk like native English speakers.
12. I allocate some of my class time to students to practice the sounds of English.
13. I make the students use the English words they learn or know in different ways in the class or I use them in different ways myself.
14. I always start class conversations and discussions in English and encourage the students to start conversation in English.
15. I show English movies in the class or ask the students to watch English TV shows or English movies outside the class.
16. I assign my students to read for pleasure.
17. I provide my students with notes, messages, letters or reports in English and make them practice.
18. I teach my students to first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) and then go back and read it carefully.
19. I ask my students to look for words in their own language that are similar to new words in English.
20. I help my students to find patterns in English.

21. I teach the meaning of new words to my students by dividing the words into parts that they understand.
22. I never translate word for word for my students in the class and I ask them not to do so.
23. As a classroom task, I ask my students to make summaries of information that they hear or read in English.

Part C

24. I ask my students to make guesses to understand unfamiliar English words.
25. I teach my students to use gestures as a strategy when they can't think of a word during a conversation in English.
26. I tell my students to make up new words if they do not know the right words in English.
27. I make the students read English without looking up every new word.
28. I ask my students to guess what the other person will say next when listening to English tapes or videos.
29. I teach my students that when they can't think of an English word, they should use a word or phrase with the same meaning.

Part D

30. I encourage my students find as many ways as they can to use their English in the class.
31. I guide my students to notice their English mistakes and use that information to help them do better.
32. I make my students pay attention when I speak English or play English tapes for them.
33. I guide my students to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I ask my students to plan their schedule so that they will have enough time to study English.
35. I assign my students to talk to each other in English even outside the class or look for people they can talk to in English.
36. I assign my students to read as much as possible in English.
37. I set clear goals for improving my students' English skill.
38. I ask my students to think about their progress in learning English.

Part E

39. I try to make my students relaxed whenever they feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage my students to speak English even when they are afraid of making mistakes.
41. I give my students a reward or treat when they do well in English.
42. I guide my students to monitor and notice their nervousness when studying or using English.
43. I ask my students to write down their feelings in a language learning diary.

44. I encourage my students to talk to me about how they feel when they are learning English.

Part F

45. I tell my students to ask the other person to slow down or ask the teacher for repeating the tape if they are not able to follow or understand what is said in English.
46. I ask students to correct each other when they talk.
47. I make students practice English with each other.
48. I make the students ask for help from me or other students.
49. I make my students ask their questions in English.
50. I try to make my students learn about the culture of English speakers.

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