UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND COURSE OF STUDY ON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' USE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

THERESA OWUSU

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BY

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A thesis presented to the Department of Arts Education of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Education, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Arts Education (English Language).

AUGUST, 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is a true reflection of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: …… Date: ……

Name: Theresa Owusu

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature: …… Date: ……

Name: Dr. Wincharles Coker

ABSTRACT

Language learning strategies are pivotal in the acquisition and development of any language proficiency. Research has shown that individuals employ various strategies such as cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies, to enhance their language learning process. However, the influence of gender and course of study on learners' use of language learning strategies remains a largely unexplored area in the field of second language acquisition. Yet, gender and course of study have been recognised as significant factors in language learning, with studies suggesting that males and females may differ in their approaches to language learning. To find out the influence of gender and course of study on students' choice of strategies, this study employed a cross-sectional survey design to study 265 final-year students. The questionnaire data collected were presented, using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, and inferential statistics were employed for the data analysis. The study revealed ten most frequently used strategies based on the responses on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Results indicated variations in strategy use between genders and among students and their courses of study. Female students were found to utilise memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies more frequently than male students. However, despite these gender differences, no significant variation was observed in the choice of strategies based on the students' course of study. To enhance language learning outcomes, it is recommended that educators integrate explicit instruction on diverse learning strategies into educational plans and curricula.

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DEDICATION

To my dear husband, Mr. Silas Cudjoe, and Children Marilyn and Kevan

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Studies on learners' acquisition of a second language in Second Language Education (SLE) have primarily focused on the learning process and environmental factors. While attention has been given to the content of language acquisition, less emphasis has been placed on understanding how students actually learn the English language. This chapter discusses the significance of language learning strategies in acquiring language proficiency and highlights the influence of gender and course of study on learners' strategies. The research aims to provide valuable insights into factors shaping language learning behaviours and contribute to the development of more tailored language learning curricula. More light is thrown on the problem, purpose, research questions, limitations, etc. in this chapter.

Background to the Study

In today's globalised world, the need for a lingua franca capable of facilitating global communication is evident due to the convergence of diverse cultures. The English language, serving as a lingua franca, transcends national boundaries, serving as a conduit for communication between nations. Consequently, English has assumed the status of a language integrated into educational curricula worldwide. The acquisition of a second language, however, poses considerable challenges for learners, as they grapple with unfamiliar linguistic structures and cultural distinctions. Beyond mere rote memorization of vocabulary, learners engage in the study of grammatical intricacies, cultural variances, and socio-linguistic dynamics (Afdal & Hamzah, 2019).

One such method that has been proven to contribute to learner-directed learning is the language learning strategy (LLS). Language learning strategies are “purposeful mental actions used by a learner to regulate his or her second or foreign language learning” (Oxford, 2018; p.81). This suggests that a successful language learner is the one who is able to identify specific ways of learning in order to achieve desirable outcomes. As a result, learning places a greater emphasis on students than teachers. The concept of language learning strategies can be traced back to the 1970s, when researchers such as Rubin and Stern started investigating the cognitive processes involved in language learning. They suggested that language learners adopt various strategies to facilitate the acquisition and development of language skills. Various frameworks and models have been proposed to categorise and analyse language learning strategies.

The well-known model presented by Oxford (1990), which classifies strategies into two categories: direct and indirect strategies. The direct strategy is sub-categorised into cognitive, memory, and compensation strategies, while the indirect strategy is sub-categorised into metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. Ellis (1994) also lists some examples under these categories. He talks about "cognitive strategies," which have to do with how students learn language (for example, ‘I practice using new words in different ways’), "metacognitive strategies," which deal with how students manage the learning process (for example, ‘I try to figure out how to learn English better’), and "social strategies," which have to do with learning by interacting with others (for example, ‘I try to work on my English with my friends’).

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of using these language-learning strategies. For example, Chamot and O'Malley (1994) and Oxford, (2018) found that learners who used a combination of cognitive and metacognitive strategies achieved higher gains in language proficiency compared to those who did not employ such strategies. However, it is important to note that language learning strategies are not fixed for all learners. Individuals have different learning styles, preferences, and needs, and therefore, strategies for learning must be tailored to suit each learner (Mercer & Dornyei, 2020). This also shows that individuals may have certain preferences when choosing language learning strategies. These strategies can vary from learner to learner and depend on various factors. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence learners' choice of language learning strategies can help teachers enhance language instruction and support learners in their language learning journey.

One significant factor influencing learners' choice of language learning strategy is gender. Gender has been found to play a role in students' use of learning strategies. Research studies have shown that males and females tend to differ in their preferences for certain learning strategies. For example, many studies have demonstrated that females are more likely than males to engage in deep-level processing strategies, such as elaboration and organisation, which involve actively connecting new information to their prior knowledge in a meaningful way. On the other hand, males have been found to employ more surface-level processing strategies, such as memorization, that focus on the mere repetition of information without much consideration for its deeper

meaning (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Green & Oxford, 1995; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Lee & Oh, 2001; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995).

In a study conducted by Kaylani (1996), there were notable differences between male and female students in terms of the extent to which they used strategies. The researcher discovered that female students exhibited a higher frequency of using memory, cognitive, compensatory, and affective strategies compared to male students. However, previous studies have indicated that there is no significant difference in language learning strategy (LLS) preferences between male and female language learners (Aydogan & Akbarov, 2014; Rahimi, Abdolmehdi, & Shahrzad, 2008). The researchers discovered that female learners exhibit similar frequencies of using strategies as their male counterparts when studying English. In essence, while women are often recognised as exceptional language learners, it is important to acknowledge that within the realm of second language acquisition, both genders, male and female, have equal potential to excel as language learners.

Razak and Babikkoi (2013) discuss gender differences in language learning in Nigeria, a neighbouring country of Ghana. The study indicates that societal factors such as gender expectations and cultural norms can have an impact on language learning outcomes, often favouring females who may have more opportunities to learn and use languages outside of formal education settings.

In the context of Ghanaian education, research by Amua-Sekyi, Nti, and Atiah (2015) on the reading strategies of students found that while female students reported higher overall use of the three strategy categories compared to their male counterparts, there was no significant gender disparity in the

application of problem-solving strategies among teacher trainees. Both male and female trainees indicated a preference for problem-solving strategies, followed by support strategies and global strategies. This suggests that gender does not influence the usage patterns of these strategies. Despite the mixed results in literature regarding gender differences in reading strategy use (Wu, 2005; Poole, 2005; Phakiti, 2003; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001; Young & Oxford, 1997), findings that do show significant differences typically indicate that females use reading strategies more frequently. Consequently, this study aligns with the general observation of gender differences in reading strategy utilisation.

Another factor that can influence students' use of learning strategies is their courses of study. Different academic disciplines may require different types of learning strategies to be successful (Mayer, 2004). For example, students studying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects may often rely on analytical and problem-solving strategies, while students in arts and humanities fields may focus more on critical thinking and interpretation strategies. Therefore, students' course of study can shape their learning strategies as they adapt to the specific requirements and demands of their discipline. For example, research conducted by Zhang, Dai and Wang, (2020) showed that learners who were studying a language for traveling or holiday purposes were more motivated by practical everyday language skills, whereas learners studying a language for academic purposes were more focused on reading and writing skills for academic texts. Similarly, learners studying for examination purposes focus on more grammar exercises and written practice (Fitria, 2023)

However, studies have shown that language learning strategies are highly individualistic and depend on learners' preferences, goals, cognitive styles and motivation (Dörnyei, 2006; Oxford, 1990). Hence, it is difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between a program of study and the learners' use of language learning strategies, given the wide diversity in language teaching practices worldwide. Further research should continue exploring these influential factors to provide valuable insights into the language learning process.

Many investigations tend to neglect the cultural influences that shape the strategic behaviours of language learners. Wharton (2000) argues that it is ineffective to generalise the strategic approaches employed by English language learners of one ethnic background and apply them universally to other ethnic groups' learning curricula. Wharton asserts that a detailed examination of the strategies utilised by language learners is essential for a thorough comprehension of language acquisition strategies. Further research into learners' strategy use is crucial for educators to fully understand and effectively support their students in achieving success. This issue is particularly pertinent in the context of English language education in countries such as Ghana.

In Ghana, competence in the English language is highly valued, particularly when one is a fluent speaker. Since Ghana has so many indigenous languages, deciding which one to use as the national language has always been a challenge (Owu-Ewie, 2007). The English language has become an essential means of communication between ethnic groups who do not speak the same language and a medium of communication with the rest of the world (Afful, 2007). As a result, English is considered the official language of Ghana. In

several areas of language use in Ghana, English has become the language of choice (Anyidoho, 2018). It is the language of law, religion, the media, politics, government, trade, and education. Apart from its exclusive use as the official language, the importance of English in Ghana's educational system cannot be overstated.

The value of English is recognised in the national English language curriculum, which places strong emphasis on learning the language (Syllabus for SHS English, 2010). For that reason, English is made the medium of instruction in Ghanaian schools beyond primary three as part of Ghana's language policy. Senior high school students in Ghana are considered to have previously studied English from Basic 3 as required by the language-in-education policy. At this level, students are expected to have devised efficient methods for dealing with the challenges associated with the use of English and to deal with the amount of information in their learning environment. Despite their academic performance, most students are startled by the role that the English language plays in their field of study, and many of the students' reports have little experience using the language extensively at the secondary level (Kpornu, 2019).

This seems to suggest that there are still a number of difficulties that are encountered in the teaching and learning of English, which is a contributing factor leading to the declining level of English in Ghana (Lawyer &Thomas, 2020). These difficulties include the introduction of educational language policies, student attitudes towards the learning of English, teacher quality, and a teacher-centred approach to teaching. The conventional teacher-centred approach to learning is a situation where more control over learning is placed in

the hands of the teacher in classrooms where the teacher focuses more on what to teach than student learning. Because the teacher-centred approach to teaching is focused on the teacher selecting what students need to learn and how they should learn it, getting to know the learner and how he processes knowledge is seen as secondary (Brown, 2003). However, research has shown that the input of the teacher does not always result in the output of the students (Macaro, 2006). This means that the success of the students does not always depend on how much content material they have at their disposal; how they process this information through learning is equally important. For this reason, students in Ghana need to be motivated to take charge of their own learning (Griffiths, 2003) by planning their own strategies to help them become proficient in the target language.

Therefore, probing further into the strategies senior high school students in Ghana use to learn English will assist learners in acquiring insight into the "metacognitive, cognitive, social, and emotional processes involved in language learning" (Chamot, 2005; p. 112). Even though some of these strategies, such as finding meanings of words, doing presentations, taking short notes, and forming sentences with new vocabulary, are being incorporated into the English syllabus, it seems that some of these strategies are frequently overlooked by teachers as they concentrate more on providing students with content.

Undoubtedly, students may already be using strategies that they are not even aware of. In alignment with Chamot's (2005) assertion that less proficient language learners can acquire new strategies to enhance their abilities, it is imperative for educators to impart these strategies to students, empowering them to take ownership of their learning processes. Even though research across

various domains, such as psychology and education, consistently suggests that cognitive processes are similar between males and females (Hyde, 2005), other studies revealed that the way males learn a second language is quite different from that of female students. In a similar way, the learners' courses of study are said to also influence the way they learn a second language.

Given this context, the researcher aimed to investigate the impact of gender and academic discipline on students' utilisation of language learning strategies at Edinaman Senior High School in the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirim (KEEA) Municipality. This particular municipality was selected due to its ethnically diverse student population, varied socio-economic backgrounds, and a range of academic proficiencies, ensuring the study's results could be extrapolated to a broader demographic. Edinaman Senior High School was chosen specifically because, historically, it was classified among the top-tier "A" schools in Ghana. However, a decline in student performance led to its reclassification as a "B" school in 2016, setting it apart from other senior high schools in the area.

Statement of the Problem

In Ghana, senior high school students are considered to have previously studied English throughout their primary schooling. However, there are still a lot of problems with the instruction and acquisition of English, which is one reason the performance of Ghanaian students in the English language keeps declining (Lawyer & Thomas, 2020). According to the (2020) Chief Examiners' reports obtained from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), most candidates failed to write full-length essays, which is evidence that a lot of students who fared poorly in recent years lacked the necessary English

competency. This is proven by the fact that these students were unable to effectively express themselves in the language, and the majority of candidates did not write full-length essays (Chief Examiner's Report, 2020). Thus, the examiner evaluates poor academic performance of students as falling below an expected standard.

WAEC grading system for senior high schools in Ghana is in the order of Excellent (A1) 75%-100%, Very Good (B2) 70%74%, Good (B3) 65%-69%, Credit (C4) 60%-64%, Credit (C5) 55%-59%, Credit (C6) 50%-54%, Pass (D7) 45%-49%, Pass (E8) 40%-44% and Fail (F9) 0%-39%. The performance of students at Edinaman SHS in the English language has not been encouraging. A closer look at students' WASSCE results from the year 2016, which was the year the school moved from a category A to B to the year 2021 revealed the academic performance scores of students in English Language with corresponding percentages of 42%, 45%, 37%, 34%, 55% and 53% respectively. From the analysis, there was an increase in the academic performance scores from 42% to 45% in 2016 and 2017 respectively. However, there was a decline in performance scores from 37% to 34% in 2018 and 2019 respectively. There was an increase in performance scores of 55% in 2020. With respect to WAEC grading, the average percentage of 44.3% represents a grade D which is pass in students' academic performance in English. Therefore, the academic performance in English at Edinaman SHS was considered to be low. This insight about students' performance led me to probe into the English learning strategies students at Edinaman SHS have adopted and to identify some of the factors that influence their choice of a particular English language learning strategy.

Moreover, research by Brown, Peterson and Yao (2016) and Patel (2021) has highlighted the influence of academic discipline or course of study on students' language learning experiences. Brown's study found that students majoring in STEM fields may perceive English language learning as less relevant or prioritise other subjects, potentially impacting their language proficiency development. Conversely, Patel's research revealed that students enrolled in humanities or language-focused courses demonstrate greater enthusiasm and dedication towards English language learning, viewing it as essential for academic and professional success.

Despite the recognition of gender differences as influential in language learning outcomes (Dornyei, 2006), the specific impact of gender on the choice and application of language learning strategies among ESL students in Ghanaian high schools remains inadequately investigated. Although numerous studies have examined language learning strategies in the realm of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language, there is a lack of research focusing on the usage of these strategies in Ghana and the factors influencing their selection (Agor, 2014; Amua Sekyi, Nti, & Atiah, 2015). For instance, Agor (2014) conducted action research at the primary school level in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, exploring the relationship between learning approaches and language achievement. The findings revealed that successful language learners employ a variety of strategies that distinguish them from less successful learners. Furthermore, Amua-Sekyi et al. (2015) investigated college students' reading comprehension strategies in the Central Region of Ghana and discovered that both male and female students used the reading comprehension strategies discussed in their study.

The body of research on English language learning strategies in Ghana reveals significant gaps concerning the geographical scope and educational backgrounds of the studies conducted. A crucial issue to investigate is whether there are discernible differences in academic outcomes between male and female senior high school students in Ghana's Central Region. This study seeks to examine the intricate relationships between gender, academic discipline, and language learning strategies within second language classrooms. The goal is to understand how gender and the chosen course of study influence the learning strategies employed by students.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to examine how gender and academic discipline affect the language learning strategies employed by students at Edinaman Senior High School. By delving into the intricate relationships between gender, academic discipline, and language learning behaviours within second language classrooms, the study seeks to offer significant insights into pedagogical approaches that can be customised to meet the varied needs and preferences of senior high school students.

Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. The language learning strategies students frequently use to improve their language skills at Edinaman Senior High School?
2. The differences in students' use of learning strategies based on their gender.
3. The differences in students' course of study and their use of learning strategies.

Research Questions

1. What language learning strategies do students frequently use to improve their language skills at Edinaman Senior High School?
2. What are the differences in the use of language learning strategies by male and female students?
3. What are the differences between students' courses of study and their use of English learning strategies?

Significance of the Study

This research is relevant in a number of ways. It provides insight into the theoretical basis for language learning (Griffiths, 2004). This study is significant because it explains how students can become autonomous learners by employing learning strategies when learning a second language. Students will benefit from the study since they will be expected to be more engaged and self-directed in their learning.

From the cognitive viewpoint of language learning, according to Griffiths (2004), it is believed that language learning strategies can be learned and are teachable. This idea of learnability and teachability will inspire educational stakeholders to develop relevant educational resources for educators to use in the classroom to facilitate students' learning. The results of the analysis of the data will offer practical suggestions, which will go a long way in helping them construct curriculum and teaching methods for classroom instruction and learning. The current research is noteworthy because it seeks to raise recognition among major stakeholders, educate instructors on how to develop efficient practices in the classroom, and design an educational programme that can effectively accommodate multiple learning strategies while

also allowing students to develop an awareness of their own preferred methods of instruction.

Practically, teachers can help students learn the English language by raising their knowledge of various strategies as well as by instructing and motivating them to apply the strategies that best suit their own learning preferences. Cohen (1998) argued that increasing students' awareness of a variety of different strategies that they deliberately choose will facilitate language acquisition.

Methodologically, the quantitative approaches used in this study provide rich information and in-depth insight into understanding how learners learn a second language. The study will provide future researchers with needed information and guidelines for choosing an appropriate research methodology.

Delimitation

The study focused on examining language learning strategies students employ in learning English, with gender and course of study as the variables that can influence learners' choice of strategies. Senior high school students were the primary focus of the study. At the high school, students have formally or officially been introduced to the study of English as a second language; thus, students have significant knowledge of the English language, and finding out from them the learning strategies they have adopted did not create much problem for both the researcher and the students involved in the study. Out of the three senior high schools in the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) Municipality, Edinaman Senior High School was selected for the study. The researcher was particularly interested in this school because of the recent decline in its ranking from a category A school to a category B school.

Organisation of the Study

The study begins with Chapter 1, which gives background information on the study. It defines the situation on the ground and what the study intends to achieve. The literature review part is found in Chapter 2. It discussed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided the study, as well as past literature on the subject. The methodology part is included in Chapter 3. The study paradigm, population, sample and sampling methodology, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures were all covered in this chapter. The data acquired to address the research questions was analysed and discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the results of the data analysis and discussion, as well as drawing conclusions and making recommendations for future research. This chapter ends with a general conclusion to the research.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter introduced the research study and provided an overview of its purpose, significance, and objectives. It began by presenting the research topic and its relevance in the field. The chapter then outlined the main research problem that the study aimed to address. Research questions and hypotheses guiding the study were also introduced. Additionally, the chapter discussed the significance of the study and its potential contributions to the field.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of relevant literature that forms the foundation of the study. It covers various themes, including the theoretical framework, specifically the cognitive theory of language learning and literacy theories in language learning. The conceptual review encompasses definitions of language learning strategies, classifications, debates surrounding these strategies, and factors influencing learners' choices of language learning strategies. Additionally, it outlines the conceptual framework and provides an empirical review, culminating in a summary of the chapter.

Theoretical Review

Cognitive Theory of Language Learning

This study focusses on a theoretical framework positing that language acquisition is a cognitive endeavour necessitating intentional mental engagement. Cognitive psychologists, who study the mechanisms of thought and learning, view learners as actively engaged in constructing meaning. An illustrative example is Piaget's (1952) cognitive theory, which underscores the importance of cognitive processes in language learning. Piaget proposed that language acquisition arises from the interplay between cognitive development and linguistic input.

One of the key aspects of the cognitive theory is the concept of input processing. According to this theory, learners process and interpret the linguistic input they receive through different cognitive processes. This processing involves the analysis of the linguistic features, organization of the information,

and the construction of meaningful representations in the mind. The learner's existing knowledge and cognitive resources play a crucial role in this process, as they guide the interpretation and understanding of the new language input. This suggests that by using their cognitive processes, students are able to take a conscientious and proactive role in their own learning through the implementation of various language learning strategies. Hence this theory was chosen since it has a direct bearing on second language acquisition.

Griffiths and Oxford (2014) proposed that individual social and emotional factors primarily influence the cognitive process of language acquisition. They argued that the term "language learning" encompasses the absorption of information, its subsequent processing, and the application of this knowledge (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014, p. 4). This means that attention plays a crucial role in language learning by determining the information that learners attend to and processing that information before they act upon it. This attentional focus influences the construction of mental representations and the encoding of new language information into memory. Language learning strategies, such as selective attention, can help learners to direct their attention to relevant linguistic input and filter out irrelevant information. For example, learners may choose to focus on key words or phrases in a listening task to enhance their comprehension. Learners can come up with rules, learn from their mistakes, develop interlanguage skills, as they move from one language to another, and make connections based on what they already know. They can also do metacognition, which is a higher form of thinking that means they can organize, plan, and manage their learning processes, like keeping track of, evaluating, and fixing their language output.

In addition, Mclaughlin as cited in (Griffiths & Parr, 2001) proposed an information-processing theory of language acquisition which holds that learners can assimilate linguistic rules by systematically considering and practicing them. In this view, learning a language is more than just a matter of memorizing rules for constructing sentences and memorizing words for use in translation, as advocated by proponents of the grammar translation method, and more than just the acquisition of a set of mechanical habits through the application of the principles of stimulus, response, and reinforcement, as advocated by behaviorists. Cognitive psychologists on the other hand are interested in the way the human mind thinks and learns, and they view the learner as an individual directly involved in the formation of meaning. This is in contrast to the grammar-translation, audiolingual, and Krashen's ideas, which may be helpful in explaining the evolution of language. The idea behind this stance is that learners take "an active role in the process" (Rubin, 1987, p.17) by adopting a wide range of cognitive strategies to deal with the linguistic patterns of the foreign language including the taking in, processing, and application of knowledge. Oxford (1990) discusses various language learning strategies that learners employ, such as metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, self-evaluation), cognitive strategies (e.g., note-taking, summarizing), and social strategies (e.g., asking for clarification, seeking opportunities for language practice). Oxford argues that these strategies play a crucial role in language learning and can be taught and enhanced by teachers.

Another study is Cohen (2014), which explores the relationship between cognitive strategies and successful language learning. He proposes a categorisation of language learning strategies, including memory-related

strategies (e.g., repetition, organisation), cognitive strategies (e.g., inferencing, summarizing), compensatory strategies (e.g., guessing words from context), social strategies (e.g., asking for help), and affective strategies (e.g., practicing in a non-threatening environment). Cohen suggests that learners who are aware of and proficient in using these strategies are more likely to become successful language learners. Again, the concept of learning strategies, which students may employ to facilitate the learning process, was developed as a result of this cognitive perspective on language acquisition, which allowed for the prospect of learners making conscious attempts to regulate their own learning. From this viewpoint, students are seen as capable of contributing positively to the learning process rather than as mechanical translators, passive recipients of behaviourist patterns, or communicative beings capable of only limited monitoring of their own language learning.

From the discussion, it seems that learning a second language is a complicated phenomenon, and there are various valid perspectives on the topic, as indicated by the scholars discussed in this section. The problem arises when a person asserts that his or her viewpoint is the only valid one. Notwithstanding these differences in ideas, it is clear from the discussion that a lot of cognitive activities come into play as one begins to identify ways to become a better learner of a target language. The cognitive theory of language learning emphasises the central role of cognitive processes in language acquisition, while language learning strategies are techniques employed by learners to enhance these cognitive processes and facilitate effective language acquisition. Both the cognitive theory and language learning strategies draw attention to the importance of attention, memory, and problem-solving in language learning.

The relationship between these two concepts is supported by studies that have shown the positive effects of using language learning strategies on language proficiency.

Literacy Theories and Language Learning Strategies

The concept of literacy has evolved significantly, with varying interpretations across different contexts. Traditionally, people understood literacy as the ability to read and write. However, historically, the focus on literacy education has been concentrated on instructing individuals in reading and writing in a standardised version of the national language, a process often referred to as literacy instruction (Cazden et al., 1996). This understanding of literacy portrays literacy as being separated from the people and environments in which it develops. The focus of this discussion will be on autonomous and ideological theories of literacy in education by Street (1984).

The autonomous model of literacy studies primarily focuses on the cognitive and individual aspects of literacy. It posits that literacy is primarily a set of skills and competencies that individuals acquire through formal education. According to this model, literacy is seen as a neutral and transferable tool that enables individuals to access information, express themselves, and engage in critical thinking. It emphasizes the importance of mastering reading, writing, and comprehension abilities, often measured through standardized tests. The autonomous literacy model places more emphasis on sets of rules that governs how schools should operate. It deals with lists of specific skills that need to be acquired in formal education. The application of standardised and formulaic methods to address multifaceted and varied social issues has been grounded in a broad spectrum of scientific research. However, this approach has

led to a significantly limited perspective on literacy skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Botzakis, Burns, & Hall, 2014). This autonomous theory stresses on language teachers to go by these standards to help students to succeed. As part of Street's criticism on autonomous model, he says that the standardized measures associated with this model is problematic as learners' competencies are measured based on these standards. Learners who fail to pass these standardized tests are considered failures even though they may know more than their tests reveal about them and also their failure may lie in the fact that they have not been "taught how to weave the knowledge they acquire into coherent patterns" (Carter, 2006; p.95).

Street also argues that the autonomous model of literacy fails to recognize the diverse literacy practices that exist in different cultural and sociopolitical contexts. He critiques the autonomous model for its focus on the individual and cognitive aspects of literacy, neglecting the sociocultural factors that shapes literate practices in everyday life. The disadvantage here is that students who do not belong to the same sociocultural context of the second language being studied might have learning difficulties which makes the autonomous theory of literacy problematic as it disassociates learning the target language from culture and context.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, language learning strategies in this model focus on individual learners taking control of their own language learning process. The individual makes efforts to acquire literacy skills independently. Learners can apply strategies such as setting goals, self-monitoring their progress, and using self-reflection to improve their language learning skills. Other strategies include techniques such as memorization, repetition, note-

taking. Street acknowledges the importance of these strategies in developing individual competence and control over language. Situating language learning strategies within the autonomous model involves recognizing the different strategies learners employ to navigate the language learning process independently.

However, new literacies studies (Barton et.al 2012; Gee 1996; Street 1984) view literacy as not only the ability to read and write but also see language and literacy studies as something that occur naturally in life by considering the social and cultural settings of learners. Recent observations underscore the importance of implementing pedagogical approaches that are both attuned to and appreciative of students' cultural contexts. This strategy is essential for facilitating literacy development among students from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing their potential for academic achievement. Researchers today have focused on definitions of literacy that consider context as well as the kinds of literacies that people actually require to function in today's society. For instance, an alternative to the autonomous model is Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy which links literacy to social institutions and cultural context. Street, asserts that in the ideological model, language is not solely an individual acquisition but also a means of social and cultural expression. It recognizes that literacy is not simply a set of skills, but rather a social practice influenced by power dynamics, ideologies, and cultural norms. According to this model, literacy is closely tied to social structures and serves as a means of asserting dominance or challenging existing power relations. Street argues that literacy practices are deeply embedded within specific sociocultural contexts and are not easily transferable across different settings.

This is because the approaches people take to reading and writing are themselves influenced by ideas about identity, knowing, and existence. This leads to the idea that literacy is ingrained in social practices, such as literacy of a specific job market or school setting, then the results of learning that specific literacy will depend on those specific settings. This will help learners not to see school as a waste since many learners are unable to utilize the experiences or what they learn at school freely or apply them in their daily life. Situating language learning strategies within the ideological model requires examining the social and cultural influences that impact language use and learning. These influences include power dynamics, identities, ideologies, and linguistic landscapes. For example, language learning strategies can be influenced by ideologies such as English as a global language, which may privilege certain language learning strategies over others. Learners may prioritize strategies that align with dominant ideologies, such as learning vocabulary related to technological advancements or global business. Additionally, language learning strategies can also be shaped by societal power dynamics, such as the influence of education systems or the availability of resources for language learning.

It is clear from this assertion that because literacy is ingrained in the social practices, many students who learn second languages usually have various reasons for learning that particular language and for that matter, will choose learning strategies that will help them to become competent in that area. For example, a student with a particular future job in mind will focus more on certain aspects of the English language in order to achieve the language demand for that particular job. This will also mean that students will employ strategies that are associated with the skills they want to acquire for them to be able to fit

into that specific job market. Again, the social and cultural context of literacy should impress upon curriculum developers to consider the social and cultural diversity students bring on board in the school when designing curricula. This is because learners address speaking, reading and writing within their own cultural context (Wearmouth, 2017). Teachers therefore need to create opportunities to serve as mediators between learners and their sociocultural context.

The link between literacy and cognition is also brought to bear as Glynn, Wearmouth and Berryman (2005) posit that the social and cognitive development of particularly language and literacy are mutually beneficial and interwoven, and that both rely on the existence of facilitators during interactions between the individual and the environment. Nonetheless, once a student has reached a certain degree of literacy competence, literacy abilities themselves mediate cognitive development. The mediation between both literacy and cognitive development, can be thought of as being engaged in social practice. According to Smith, Monaghan and Huettig, (2014), literacy has important cognitive effects that extend well beyond how written words and sentences are processed. This shows that there are numerous impacts of cognition on literacy. Policymakers must be made aware of the profound effects that literacy has on the brain; otherwise, there is a significant risk that educational policies and pedagogical support will be ineffective or even misguided.

Conceptual Review of Conceptual Issues

The way teachers teach and how students learn a second language have changed a lot over the years. This is because researchers have tried to get a better understanding of what second language learning entails. This means that

efficient language teaching must work with, rather than against, the natural way that people learn languages. Language learners are becoming more interested in how to learn a new language because of the push to make learning more learner-centred. Researchers have tried to figure out what makes people good at learning a new language and how to learn a new language (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). However, strategy studies on how people learn and use L2 are not organized in the same way. Readers are often left wondering about their meanings and how they can use them to understand second or foreign language education because they have different interpretations of what they mean (Cohen, 2014; Gu, 1996). A lot of words are used to describe how people learn second languages and what strategies they use, as many people also do not agree on what some of these explanations mean (Cohen, 2014; Gu, 1996). Some of these concepts will be explained in the following sections by looking at relevant literature, which should help clear things up.

Definitions of Language Learning Strategy

Numerous scholars have described language learning strategies in a variety of ways. Cohen (2003) characterised these strategies as the deliberate attitudes that learners adopt to facilitate understanding of a second language, distinguishing it from their native language. Acik, as referenced in Biyikl (2021), described them as methods, actions, and beliefs employed by language learners to simplify the language acquisition process. Oxford took this a step further, defining language learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

However, an examination of the literature reveals that there are four important traits that may be found in this definition, according to Griffiths (2020; p. 608). These are: one, strategies are “active” because they are what students "do." Two, it is the learners who choose the strategy to use. Language learning strategies are characterised by their goal-orientated and intentional nature. Fundamentally, learners employ these strategies to attain linguistic proficiency. Consequently, integrating these core components provides a concise definition of language learning strategies as 'the activities selected by learners with the purpose of acquiring a new language' (Griffiths, 2020, p. 608). According to the aforementioned definitions, learning strategies are acts that students consciously take, at least during the initial learning phases, to facilitate their language learning and grow into more capable and autonomous learners. These definitions also assume that teachers can encourage such efforts on the part of students by offering guidance on how to approach their assignments.

Concept of Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Various systems exist for classifying language learning strategies, each employing distinct criteria (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990a; Rubin, 1981). Theoretical perspectives on the nature of second language (L2) learning strategies underpin these classification systems. This study examined Oxford's (1990a) taxonomy of language learning strategies. This taxonomy is notable for its structured approach that links specific strategies and their groupings to the four primary language skills. Oxford (1990a) divides strategies into two main types: direct and indirect. Direct strategies involve the explicit use of the target language, while indirect strategies support and manage the process of language

acquisition (Oxford, 1990). Oxford's framework further subdivides direct learning strategies into three distinct categories: memory strategies, which rely on techniques such as organising information, establishing connections, and reviewing material. Early in the language learning process, one typically employs these memory strategies. For example, one might use new vocabulary in sentences to aid in retention (Oxford, 1990, p. 294).

Two, cognitive strategies that are essential for language acquisition. These strategies include repeating words, analysing expressions, and summarising what one has learned (Oxford, 1990). An example of a cognitive strategy is "I attempt to speak like proficient English speakers." (Oxford, 1990, p. 295). In addition, cognitive strategies consist of practicing, receiving, analysing, reasoning, and planning input and output. Each of these sets employs a distinct method of operation or strategy. Three, compensation strategies, such as guessing a word, are to compensate for a dearth of grammar and vocabulary. An example of a compensation strategy is "I guess figuring out a new English word." (Oxford, 1990, p. 295). It includes making intelligent guesses while listening and reading, as well as finding different ways to speak and write better. These strategies help learners use the language by bridging knowledge gaps and communicating authentically, so that they become more proficient in what they already know.

Oxford's classification of indirect learning strategies encompasses metacognitive, affective, and social approaches. People commonly employ these strategies to enhance and manage the process of language acquisition. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to oversee their own educational journey by planning and assessing their progress as they engage in speaking and

writing in a new language. For instance, learners might actively seek or create opportunities to practice the language, such as by participating in clubs, engaging in spelling competitions, or entering writing contests. A specific metacognitive strategy could involve reading text without looking up every unfamiliar word. On the other hand, affective strategies aim to enhance learners' self-assurance and persistence, fostering their independence in acquiring the target language.

Anxiety can be alleviated by engaging in activities such as laughing at one's own errors. An example is "Whenever I am nervous about using English, I try to calm down." Social strategies help learners interact with others. When students are in groups, they may benefit from each other as they engage in more discourse. One typical example of this strategy suggests that the speaker repeat or slow down when talking. Although there is some disagreement on how to classify language learning strategies, it is generally recognised that these strategies promote students' competency and, most significantly, self-awareness (Briggs, 2009).

Controversies in Language Learning Strategies

There are still other dimensions of variation in strategies about which there are still controversies, such as the distinctions between strategies and styles, between strategies and skills, the matter of consciousness, and the interaction between language learning strategies and other types of strategies such as communication and compensation strategies. These dimensions of variation are allowed, provided they are explained and conceptually justified (Oxford, 2018). McDonough (1995) explains why there are so many controversies in relation to learning strategies. In the context of studies on

strategies for acquiring a second language, he notes that scholars have not yet established agreement regarding what constitutes a learning strategy and that it is still hard to figure out and categorise how people learn languages.

The definition and distinction of second language learning strategies remain contentious, with significant debate surrounding their precise nature and differentiation from other learner behaviors. There is considerable uncertainty about what defines a specific strategy and how strategies relate. Additionally, misunderstandings about the terms “learning style” and “learning strategy” contribute to ongoing challenges in their description and classification. Wenden (1991, pp. 36-37) characterises ‘learning styles’ as the learner's consistent and enduring approach to perceiving, interacting with, and responding to the learning environment, contrasting this with strategies, which are seen as adaptable. Reid (1998, p. ix) further distinguishes learning styles as “internally based traits” and learning strategies as “external abilities” that students employ to enhance their learning. These definitions highlight the distinction between learning styles and strategies, illustrating their interconnectedness in relation to the learner's process of acquiring knowledge. Additionally, there is ongoing debate about whether learning strategies operate consciously or unconsciously.

Chamot (1987, p. 71) conceptualises learning strategies as ‘techniques, approaches, or deliberate acts,’ suggesting their conscious use. Similarly, Cohen (1996, p. 6) emphasises that consciousness is a fundamental element of learning strategies, integrating the notion of intentionality into his definition. Despite Oxford (1990) suggesting the purposeful application of strategies, her definition does not explicitly address the role of consciousness in the same manner as Cohen's.On the other hand, O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 52) acknowledge

that although people initially use strategies with awareness, they can eventually execute them "without the person's awareness," implying a shift towards unconscious use over time. The ongoing debate underscores the intricacy of characterizing language learning strategies (LLS), especially when considering the impact of factors like the learning task and environment on the conscious or unconscious employment of these strategies (Oxford & Cohen, 1992). As a result, despite varying perspectives, this study will define language learning strategies as intentional actions chosen by learners to improve their language skills.

Factors Accounting for Learners Choice of Language Learning Strategies

The choice of language learning strategies can vary from learner to learner and depends on various factors. Understanding the factors that influence learners' choice of language learning strategies can allow teachers to improve language instruction and support learners in their language learning journey. Gender and course of study are some of the factors that could affect how students choose to learn a new language. Findings from these studies can help people learn a new language more quickly and effectively.

The Influence of Gender on Learners' Choice of Learning Strategies

Research has consistently demonstrated the existence of gender differences in language learning strategies. It is worth noting that these differences arise from socio-cultural factors rather than innate abilities. Several studies have indicated that females tend to employ more strategies compared to males, focusing primarily on learner autonomy, social interaction, and the use of effective resources (Oxford, 2016). In contrast, males tend to favour a more direct approach, utilising less strategic planning and often exhibiting a higher

risk tolerance in their language learning. One possible explanation for gender differences in learning strategies could be attributed to societal expectations and stereotypes. From an early age, girls are often encouraged to be more collaborative, detail-oriented, and focused on understanding the material deeply. Boys, on the other hand, may be encouraged to be more independent, competitive, and focused on achieving results. These societal expectations and gender norms can influence the learning strategies of students.

Apart from the choice of learning strategies being influenced by stereotypes and social expectations, the choice of language learning strategies also differs across genders due to their distinct preferences for certain methods. Learners have different perceptual preferences when it comes to receiving and processing information. Some learners may prefer audial input, while others prefer visual or kinesthetic input. Research has shown that learners tend to choose strategies that align with their preferred learning style to enhance their learning experience (Oxford, 1990). For example, visual learners might rely on strategies such as using flashcards or mind maps, while audial learners might benefit from strategies like listening to podcasts or audio recordings.

Ehrman and Oxford (1995) analysed various strategic preferences in language learners and found that females place greater importance on additional language practice through reading, writing, and overall engagement with the language, while males tend to prefer more communication-focused strategies such as speaking with native speakers or joining conversation groups. However, other studies have shown that females tend to favour collaborative and communicative strategies, while males tend to employ more competitive and independent learning approaches (Mahmud & Nur, 2018; Radwan, 2014;

Rosnayawati & Kaswan, 2016). These differences in strategy use may be influenced by societal expectations regarding the role of communication skills in female-dominated domains, such as relationships and caregiving, as well as competition-seeking behaviours to encourage them to do more in a male-dominated environment.

Conversely, males may excel when utilising competitive and independent strategies, enabling them to focus on specific language aspects and individual goals. These studies prove that language learning strategies can vary from person to person, as everyone has their own unique learning style and preferences. Hence the influence of gender in choosing learning strategies. By catering for learners' individual learning styles, teachers can help learners select strategies that align with their preferences, leading to more effective language learning. Gender differences in language learning are not solely attributed to strategic preferences, but also to the levels of self-regulation and self-efficacy employed by learners. Self-regulation has been defined as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals" (Erdoğan, 2018, p. 1478). This definition includes the ability to regulate one's own learning process, including setting goals, monitoring progress, and making as many adjustments as possible.

Cook and Sittler (2008) state that females exhibit higher levels of self-regulation due to their tendency to be proactive and organised, leading to more effective language study routines. On the other hand, males tend to be more relaxed about their language learning approaches, often relying on their natural ability to communicate effectively. This means that when it comes to language learning strategy choice, individuals with strong self-regulation skills are more

likely to select and utilise effective strategies. They are able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in language learning and adjust their strategies accordingly. They can also set specific language learning goals and track their progress, which allows them to select strategies that are aligned with these goals.

In the context of language learning strategy choice, self-efficacy plays a crucial role. Students with high self-efficacy in language learning are more likely to be motivated to explore a variety of strategies and persist in their language learning efforts. They are confident in their ability to learn a new language and believe that their efforts will lead to successful outcomes. These individuals are more likely to choose and apply strategies that are challenging yet within their capabilities, as they believe they can achieve their desired language learning goals.

In his 1999 exploration of social cognitive theory, Bandura identified self-efficacy as a pivotal factor influencing human behaviour and performance. When it comes to learning a second language, self-efficacy significantly affects learners' motivation, effort, persistence, and overall success. In applied linguistics, the impact of gender on learners' self-efficacy in selecting language learning strategies has been a prominent area of investigation. Research has focused on whether there are differences based on gender in learners' confidence regarding their capacity to choose and implement effective language learning strategies. For instance, a study by Kahraman and Yilmaz (2018) investigated the connection between gender and self-efficacy beliefs concerning language learning strategies among university students in Turkey.

The results of this research revealed that female students exhibited greater self-efficacy in both choosing and applying language learning strategies than their male peers. In relation to language learning strategies, Al-Qahtani, Ibrahim, Elgzar, El Sayed, and Essa (2021) investigated gender differences in self-efficacy among Saudi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Their findings demonstrated that female learners had significantly higher levels of self-efficacy than male learners when selecting and employing these strategies.

In contrast, Hsiao and Tang (2015) conducted a study exploring the impact of gender on Taiwanese students' self-efficacy beliefs and their use of strategies in English learning. Their results indicated that gender did not have a notable effect on learners' self-efficacy in selecting language learning strategies. Notably, female students often place greater emphasis on positive attitudes and exhibit higher motivation towards acquiring a second or foreign language compared to their male counterparts. This observation aligns with existing research in educational psychology (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Oxford, 1993; Sung & Padilla, 1998). Additionally, the past twenty years have seen a considerable body of research investigating the relationship between gender and language learning strategies (Bacon, 1992; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Green & Oxford, 1995; Lee, 2001; Peacock & Ho, 2003).

The findings from research on language learning strategies among different genders often present a mixed picture. While some studies indicate that female students employ distinct language learning strategies compared to their male counterparts, other investigations report the contrary. For instance, Bacon and Finnemann (1990) conducted a study involving 938 university students learning Spanish using a 109-item questionnaire. Their analysis revealed that

gender influenced both beliefs and strategies related to language learning. Specifically, the study found that female students exhibited greater motivation and utilised a wider range of strategies than their male peers. Furthermore, among the various strategies examined, female students predominantly employed compensation strategies.

Green and Oxford (1995) conducted a study involving 374 Hispanic students from the University of Puerto Rico to investigate their language acquisition strategies. Their findings indicated that female students employed fourteen distinct strategies, whereas their male counterparts utilised only one. Furthermore, a significant proportion of female students frequently utilised memory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. This suggests a divergence in the methods adopted by males and females in language learning. The study implies that gender might influence learners' self-efficacy in using language learning strategies, though these effects may differ across various contexts, cultures, and languages. Further research is essential to develop a more nuanced understanding of how gender impacts self-efficacy in language learning strategies.

The Influence of Course of Study on Learners' Choice of Learning Strategies

Another factor that can influence students' use of learning strategies is their courses of study. It provides a framework and structure for learning, setting goals, and guiding the teaching and learning process. When learners are engaged in a formal language learning programme, they often have specific goals and objectives that they need to achieve. These goals can influence which strategies they choose to employ. Oxford (1990) says if the programme of study places a

strong emphasis on grammar and vocabulary, learners may be more likely to use strategies such as memorization, flashcards, and grammar exercises to build their language skills. On the other hand, programmes that focus on communicative language teaching may encourage learners to use strategies that prioritise oral communication and interaction.

Again, if a student's goal is to excel academically in a target language, they may prioritise strategies that promote reading and writing proficiency, such as extensive reading or writing practice. Learners who aim to achieve a certain level of proficiency for professional reasons might prefer strategies that emphasise vocabulary acquisition and specialised language usage. This also means that learners' goals can influence their motivation and willingness to persist in using specific strategies. When learners believe that a particular strategy is beneficial for reaching their goals, they are more likely to commit time and effort to employing that strategy consistently.

Similarly, language learning strategies may be tailored to the available audiovisual materials. Courses using video or audio recordings can promote strategies such as listening comprehension practice, watching conversations or dialogues, and mimicking pronunciation patterns. Additionally, some courses may provide access to online platforms or language learning apps, offering interactive exercises, vocabulary practice, and online tutoring services. In such cases, learners may be more inclined to incorporate technology into their language learning strategies.

Chamot and O'Malley (1987) mention that the programme of study can also influence learners' choice of strategies in terms of the resources and materials available to them. This is because different courses or programmes

may have specific requirements, objectives, or teaching methodologies, which often define the resources and materials used in the learning process. Different courses may have specific textbooks, workbooks, audiovisual materials, and online resources that learners are required to use. Courses that primarily rely on specific textbooks may encourage learners to follow the lesson sequence and utilise the textbook exercises and activities. This was discovered when comparing overall and individual strategies.

Politzer and McGroarty (1985) found that students who studied engineering or science were more likely to avoid strategies that were good for learning English as a second language than students who studied social science or the humanities were more likely to use. That is not what Gu (2002) found. He found that while there were differences in strategies between students who studied art and science, academic majors didn't play a big role in how they used language learning strategies. Even though the outcomes of this research were different, they all revealed that there was a link between study programmes and how people learned languages.

These students are more likely to employ strategies for learning a language and to choose strategies that promote independence and practical application in their practice. Based on these results, it appears that some students may benefit more from particular approaches to language study than others. Because the use of the right language learning strategies is thought to help people learn languages, more research needs to be done on this topic. However, it is important to remember that these influences are not fixed, and individuals have the capacity to develop and adapt their learning strategies over time. By creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, educators can

empower students to explore and utilise a wide range of learning strategies without constraining them to the courses they study in school.

Conceptual Framework

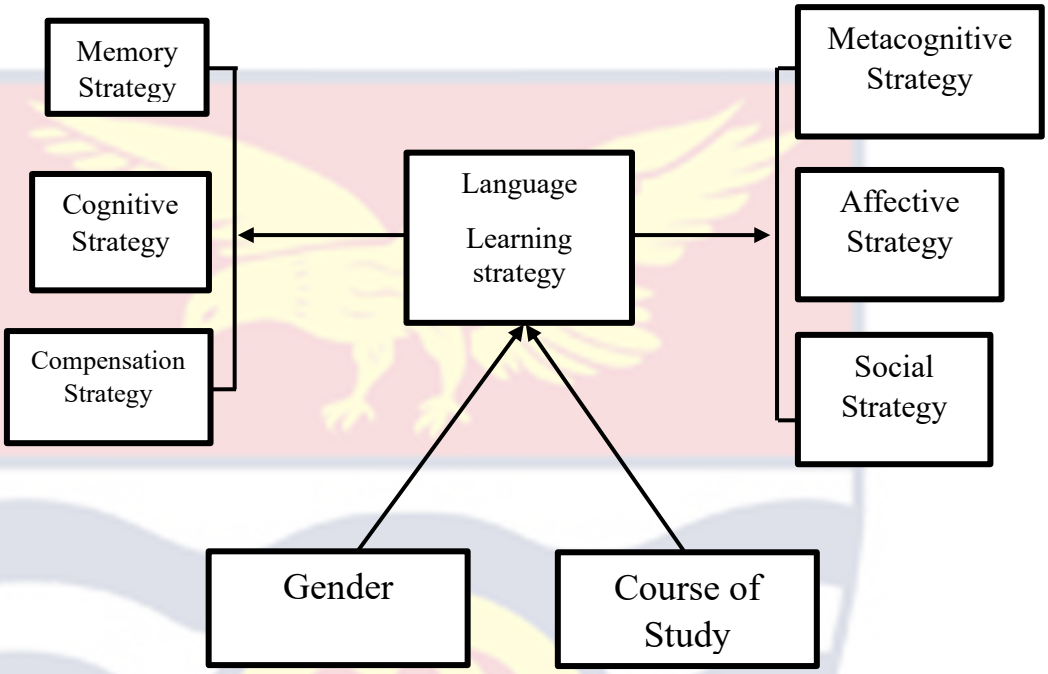

Figure 1: An Adapted Framework of Language Learning Strategies

Source: (Lavasani & Faryadres, 2011). A Model for Adult Learners.

Figure 1 describes the framework for this study. It is adapted from the Lavasani and Faryadres (2011) model of how adults learn to speak a new language. They found that adults need to be taught about the meaning of the process and not so much about the content. Oxford (1994) says that people's beliefs and theories can also be useful when they choose language learning strategies. On the other hand, people who have negative ideas and beliefs can make it hard for people to use strategies well. It also shows that adults and more advanced learners are more likely to use language learning strategies than younger and less skilled learners. There were a lot of variables in the model that were used to figure out how adult learners learn. These variables included things like their motivation and gender, the way they think about things like beliefs

and theories, and the types of paper work that they use for learning, as well as their age and second language level and their tolerance for ambiguity. This study changed the model so that andragogy knowledge and the needs of adult learners were not included because they are both important to adult learning. Some of the things that affect which strategy to use, like age, cultural background, attitude, and beliefs, were not looked at in this study because they were not important enough. In place of these, the study added the area of specialisation and gender as factors for strategy choice, and the items in the L2 strategy section were not looked at since they were irrelevant to the study.

Empirical Review

This section is based on previous studies on language learning strategies, which are related to this study. In testing the hypothesis that students who were taught language-learner strategies would achieve higher levels of success in English than their nontrained peers, Agor (2014) conducted an experimental study in Ghana, which was made up of 58 pupils in the experimental group who got the intervention and 57 pupils in the group assigned to receive no treatment. Both groups had the same English teacher and were composed of pupils with varying levels of English proficiency. The linguistic abilities of the two classes were evaluated at the start of the academic year using separate tests. Both groups of pupils were given a writing task designed to encourage the use of specific strategies, such as language switching, decoding, regression, and conferencing, which were afterwards observed in both classroom settings (Agor, 2014). The experimental class was told that pupils who get straight As in English had employed learner strategies to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, which stimulated their interest and motivation to try the strategies

themselves. The intervention, which comprised of explicit training in language-learner strategies, was then presented to the experimental class. During the first term, pupils in the control group received traditional instruction, whereas those in the experimental group received strategies-based instruction. They watched videotapes of learner methods in action and participated in think-aloud discussions about the rationale for their own use.

Table 2 displays the pupils' newly acquired skills to name the specific strategies they employed when completing a variety of assignments throughout the first term.

Table 1: Language Skills and Corresponding Learner Strategies

Language Skill	Learner Strategies
Listening	Guessing, seeking clarification, paraphrasing, confirmation
Speaking	Making direct appeal, avoidance, fillers, monitoring audience's comprehension, paraphrasing
Reading	Monitoring, deriving meaning from context
Writing	Conferencing, grouping, explaining, summarizing, peer review

Both the experimental and control groups took the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at the end of the second term. Among the experimental group, fifty-five students achieved a Grade One in English, while two students attained a Grade Two. In contrast, the control group had fourteen students earning a grade one, twenty-nine receiving a grade two, thirteen awarded a grade three, and two given a grade four. Ultimately, ninety-six percent (96%) of the experimental group, which had undergone targeted training in language-learning strategies, achieved a Grade One in English. In contrast, only twenty-four percent (24%) of the control group achieved Grade One. Additionally, fifty percent (50%) of the control group attained a Grade Two, with the remaining students receiving Grades Three or lower. Conversely, only 3.5% of the experimental group received a Grade Two or lower. The headmistress noted that these BECE results in English were the most outstanding since the school's establishment in 1993.

According to the researcher, one of the essential factors that distinguish successful language learners from less successful ones has to do with "learners' repertoire of strategies" (Agor, 2014, p. 184). As a result, the study indicated

that pupils who receive training in language-learner strategies outperform pupils who do not receive the training. However, according to the data, it is realised that some of the strategies the pupils acquired after the experiment, like conferencing, peer review, and summarising, are not properly emphasised in classroom instructional settings, and for that matter, pupils may find it difficult to apply these strategies. This shows that some of these strategies that aid the pupils in mastering their language skills are not emphasised in the English language curriculum. Much of what is learned in the English language curriculum is solely theories relating to the language, and learning is purely memorization of facts for the sake of examination.

In a 2014 study, Uslu, Sahin, and Odemis investigated language-learning strategies through correlation and regression analyses and reached comparable conclusions. Uslu, Sahin, and Odemis conducted their research, "The Effect of Language Learning Strategies on Academic Achievement," at a vocational college in Izmir, Turkey, during the 2014–2015 academic year. The study involved a random selection of 267 out of 733 students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language. The Oxford (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learners was utilised to evaluate the students' application of language-learning strategies, and these results were contrasted with the students' midterm exam scores. The inventory covers six broad categories of strategies: memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between the use of memory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies and academic performance. Overall, the study identified a strong and beneficial relationship between strategy use and academic success. Specifically, four of the strategies showed a

significant positive impact on achievement, while two had a positive but less impactful effect. Consequently, the researchers suggested that by providing and reinforcing effective language-learning strategies, educators could enhance students' performance, increase their awareness of the learning process, and foster independence, given that learners employ diverse strategies.

Griffiths and Parr (2001) conducted an investigation into the application of language learning strategy theory in practice, focussing on the perspectives of both learners and educators. The study aimed to address two primary questions: What are the most commonly used language learning strategies among non-native English speakers? And how do teachers' perceptions of their students' use of these strategies align with their' self-reported experiences? Participants included a diverse age range from 14 to 64, each with different motivations for learning English, such as professional advancement or personal growthOxford (1990) developed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a tool that 569 students from various language learning institutions across New Zealand completed for the research. The Inventory for Language Learning Strategies (ILLS), created by the researcher, was completed by the teachers. By ranking the six categories of strategy types according to how frequently their pupils used them, teachers were asked to assess their students' performance using the instrument designed specifically for them. It was discovered that while teachers thought their pupils employed memory strategies the most, students claimed to use them the least.

In contrast, teachers ranked social strategies third, whereas students identified them as their second most utilised category. Student reports indicated a median frequency of employing compensation and cognitive strategies, with

affective strategies ranking slightly above memory strategies. On the other hand, teachers prioritised memory strategies highest, followed in order by cognitive, social, metacognitive, compensatory, and affective strategies. This study underscores the necessity for educators to more closely examine the discrepancy between their perceptions and students' actual use of learning strategies. Addressing these differences is crucial for enhancing teaching practices by incorporating strategies that students may not be familiar with or may find challenging to implement.

In their 2020 study, Melvina and Wirza investigated the predominant language learning strategies employed by eleventh-grade senior high school students in Indonesia, with a particular focus on how these strategies vary based on students' academic major and gender. The study involved 186 participants, divided into 86 students from natural sciences and 100 from social sciences, with an additional breakdown of 74 male and 112 female students. To gather data, the researchers utilised SIIL version 7.0, derived from Oxford's 1990 framework.

This instrument consisted of a questionnaire with fifty-eight items that addressed various learning strategies, rated on a scale from “never or almost never true of me” to “always or almost always true of me.” Data analysis employed independent sample t-tests and descriptive statistics to examine differences across demographic variables such as gender and field of study. The findings indicated that Indonesian senior high school students generally use medium levels of language learning strategies, with metacognitive strategies being the most prevalent, followed by affective, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Students used social and memory strategies less frequently. The

study revealed significant differences in strategy use between students in the natural and social sciences, but no notable differences between male and female students. These results recommend training both teachers and students on language learning strategies to enhance English proficiency and improve learning outcomes.

Thus, these studies reveal that language learning strategies have positive effects on second language acquisition. From these studies, it was revealed that students' performance is better when they employ strategies to carry out specific tasks than when they do not employ such strategies. The studies indicate that students are aware of some of the strategies being discussed in this study but are not aware of their importance. The study by Griffiths and Parr (2001) shows that teachers have to take on the responsibility of helping their students identify these strategies and also assist them in applying the strategies to help them succeed with the target language. This is necessary because, as the study by Melvina and Wirza (2020) revealed, students have certain preferences when it comes to using strategies. Gender and area of specialisation are such factors that can affect students' choice of strategy. If they are guided to choose the right strategies, it will go a long way towards helping them take charge of their own learning.

Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 2 explores various techniques for language learning strategies and examines how gender and course of study influence students' choice of learning strategies. The chapter also delves into Piaget's (1952) cognitive theory of language learning and Street's (1984) literacy theory, which provide frameworks for understanding the context in which language learning strategies are employed. The study has examined taxonomical notions of language learning strategies as well as other concepts relevant to the research topic. Additional empirical reviews are discussed to substantiate the findings. Overall, the literature review places the study within a framework that assists readers in understanding the context of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches utilised in the research to ensure the acquisition of valid and reliable data. Initially, it introduces the research paradigm that aligns with the study's objectives. Subsequently, it details the research methodology implemented throughout the study. The chapter is organised into several subsections that cover the research design, the research site, the target population, sampling strategies, the research instruments, and their validity and reliability. Additionally, it describes the procedures for data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter addresses the research limitations and provides a summary of the key points discussed.

Research Paradigm

A research paradigm refers to a framework or perspective that shapes research design, data collection methods, and analysis (Babbie, 2021). By choosing a research paradigm, researchers determine the lens through which they perceive reality as well as the means of obtaining valid knowledge. These paradigms act as foundational frameworks and guide researchers in making informed decisions throughout their study. This study was guided by the positivist paradigm of research, which supports the use of quantitative research methods. Positivists believe that numbers and statistical analysis can provide an objective and precise understanding of reality. Hence, researchers typically formulate hypothesis-driven research questions, collect quantitative data, and analyse it using statistical methods. The results are then presented in a scientific

manner, with an emphasis on objectivity and generalizability (Jonker & Pennink 2010).

Detractors contend that the positivist method is not without its constraints. They argue that by exclusively emphasizing objective metrics, it fails to acknowledge the subjective encounters and significance that individuals assign to their acts. This criticism is particularly relevant in the social sciences, where human behaviour is influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors (Eyisi, 2016). Despite these criticisms, the positivist approach continues to be influential in various fields of research. Its emphasis on empirical evidence and objective data has proven to be useful in generating reliable and valid knowledge. The application of quantitative methods has facilitated the study of large populations and the identification of patterns and trends. Moreover, the positivist approach has contributed to the development of theories and models that have guided scientific research and informed practical applications in fields such as medicine, psychology, and economics. The philosophical stance of the researcher was to combine deductive logic with a precise empirical study of the impact of gender and course of study on English language learning strategies among students.

Research Design

A research design serves as the foundational framework for conducting research (Dawson, 2002). For this study, a cross-sectional descriptive survey was selected as the research design. This choice was made due to its efficacy in gathering relevant data and examining correlations between variables such as gender, academic program, and language learning strategies among students at Edinaman Senior High School in the KEEA Municipality, Central Region of

Ghana. A notable benefit of employing a cross-sectional survey design is its capacity to amass data from a broad sample at a single moment.

This design enables researchers to obtain a representative picture of a population, making it easier to generalise findings and make inferences about the overall population (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Jeanne, 2011). Additionally, the data collection process is relatively straightforward, making it a cost-effective and time-efficient approach. While cross-sectional survey design offers several advantages, researchers must also consider its limitations. One major drawback is its inability to establish causal relationships. Since data is collected at a single point in time, it is difficult to determine the temporal sequence of variables.

In addition, the cross-sectional survey design significantly depends on self-reported data, which can be influenced by biases such as social desirability and recollection errors. Participants may provide inaccurate or incomplete information, leading to potential measurement errors (Blattman, Jamison, Koroknay-Palicz, Rodrigues, & Sheridan, 2016). Because of these limitations, researchers should employ strategies like anonymity and confidentiality to mitigate these biases and encourage honest responses. The study employed a quantitative method in order to analyse the data using descriptive statistics.

Research Site

The study was conducted at Edinaman Senior High School in the Komenda Edina Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) Municipality. The municipality covers an area of 452.5 square kilometers. The 2010 PHC revealed a total population of 144,705. This means it has 6% of the population of the Central Region. Percentage-wise, 52% of 144, 705 are females, and 48% are males. KEEA

consists of six zonal councils, fifty-four (54) electoral areas, and eleven (11) sub-committees. Also, it has four traditional areas, namely Komenda, Edina, Eguafo, and Abrem. Each of them has its own paramount chief. The municipality is headed by a Municipal Chief Executive who was appointed by the President of the Republic of Ghana. The municipal capital is Elmina. The municipality has 300 schools. They include basic schools, senior high schools, and tertiary institutions. Specifically, there are three senior high schools in the municipality. They are Edinaman Senior High School, Komenda Senior High Technical School, and Eguafo-Abrem Senior High School. Komenda Teacher Training College and Nduom School of Business and Technology are the only tertiary institutions within the municipality. The remaining 295 are basic schools.

Population

Neuman (2007) defines population as the sampled unit, its geographical location, and its temporary borders. The total population of students in the school was 2837, made up of 1,528 males and 1,309 females. According to Neuman (2007), the target population is the group of people from whom the researcher desires to draw conclusions and generalisations once the research study is over. It comprised 750 form-three students of Edinaman Senior High School in KEEA Municipality. Out of this, 435 were males and 315 were females.

Form 3 students were chosen because they were readily available during the time of data collection. They have also been introduced to teaching and learning English for almost three years in the school and, as a result, have a solid grasp

of the English language and may have established their own learning strategies at this point.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

A sample size refers to the number of participants included in the study. Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005) posit that in order for a sample to be considered representative in a research study, it is necessary for it to accurately reflect a substantial portion of the overall population. This implies that by examining each of the characteristics of a sample, one can draw particular inferences about the characteristics of the larger group from which it is derived. The sample size of the study was determined by a prior calculation required to meet specified limit for the accessible population of 750. The selection of a sample size was based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size. They revealed that for a population of 750, a sample size of 254 is appropriate to represent the population. With the target population of 750, it was considered appropriate to increase the sample size to 265, where the additional 11 respondents catered for data that may be lost during data collection.

The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the students from the various courses of study in the school. This is a method of sampling that involves dividing the population into subgroups, or strata, based on certain characteristics or variables (Kothari, 1990). The size of each subgroup is determined proportionately by its representation in the population. This is done to ensure that each subgroup has an equal opportunity to be included in the sample, which accurately represents the population. Proportionate stratified random sampling is often used when there are significant differences or variations within the population, and researchers want

to ensure that these differences are well-represented in the sample (Israel, 1992). By incorporating stratification and proportional representation, this sampling technique helps to reduce sampling bias and increase the reliability and generalizability of the results.

All the form three students in the selected school were grouped according to their courses of study. This yielded five strata, namely: General Arts students, Business students, Visual Arts students, Home Economic students and General Science students. In determining the sample size for each group, the sizes of the samples from the different strata are kept proportional to the sizes of the strata in the population used. The number of elements that were selected from each course of study is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of sample size of form three students based on course of study

Course of Study	Student Population	Students Sampled
General Arts Students	320	113
Business Students	60	21
Visual Arts Students	90	32
Home Economics Students	150	53
General Science Students	130	46
Total	**750**	**265**

(Source: Field Data, 2022)

Again, systematic sampling technique was used in selecting participants from the target population. It involves selecting every nth member of the population to be included in the study, where n is a predetermined constant. By selecting every nth individual, researchers can obtain a sample that is random and representative, and accurately reflect the characteristics of the population. This technique also ensures that the results are valid and reliable. To select 265 participants from the population for the study, the researcher first calculated the sampling interval by dividing the total population size by the desired sample size, which is $\mathbf{750/265 \approx 3}$. With a starting point of 1, every 3rd person in the class was included in the sample. This method was used in selecting students from the various courses offered in the school.

Research Instrument

Researchers define an instrument in research methodology as a mechanism or tool they use to assess specific variables or elements of interest during the data gathering phase (Neuman, 2016). For this study, a questionnaire was selected as the research instrument. The fact that students could independently complete the questionnaire influenced this choice, making it a practical option. Additionally, the questionnaire is a cost-effective and time-efficient method compared to other data collection approaches. Given the research design implemented, the questionnaire was deemed suitable. It is organised into two distinct sections: A and B.

Section A: This section collects biographical data such as age, gender, and purpose of studying English. This is important because a better understanding of the participants' learning behaviour may be gained by looking into their backgrounds.

Section B: This contains the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The SILL by Oxford (1990) was the main tool used in the study. This self-report questionnaire was chosen as the main instrument because it is the most recognised strategy inventory for language learning and can be used to survey a huge number of people in a way that would be nearly impossible to do with any other method, resulting in a very comprehensive picture of language learning strategy use. Furthermore, questionnaires provide a relatively objective platform for launching subsequent explorations because the data are "amenable to quantification" (Nunan & Swan, 1992, p. 143) and less dependent on the researcher's judgement than other research methodologies. The strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) consisted of 50 items in six parts (A, B, C, D, E, and F). In each part, the various strategies for learning English were discussed. These strategies include memory strategies, which consisted of 9 items for part A; cognitive strategies, which consisted of 14 items for part B; compensation strategies, which consisted of 6 items for part C; metacognitive strategies, which consisted of 9 items for part D; affective strategies, which consisted of 6 items for part E; and social strategies, which consisted of 6 items for part F. Each statement was assessed on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = (never or almost never true of me); 2 = (rarely true of me); 3 = (somehow true of me); 4 = (usually not true of me); and 5 = (always or almost true of me).

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

According to Dambudzo (2009), validity pertains to the degree to which a research instrument fulfils its intended purpose. To ensure the questionnaire's content validity, it was aligned with the study's objectives and research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) emphasise the importance of

expert evaluation to assess the representativeness of the instrument's items. Accordingly, the questionnaire was reviewed by my supervisor to evaluate its content and construct validity, focussing on the clarity of the questions and their relevance to the study. Additionally, we crafted the questionnaire to ensure construct validity by facilitating straightforward responses from participants, thereby verifying their comprehension of the survey items.

Conversely, reliability concerns the consistency of the data obtained (Dambudzo, 2009). It ensures that repeated use of the questionnaire would yield comparable results. The instrument's reliability was assessed through a pilot test, and Cronbach's alpha was used to measure both the overall and sub-dimension reliability. For the items associated with research question one, which included Q4 through Q34, a Cronbach's alpha value of.838 was achieved. For research question two, encompassing items Q35 through Q53, the Cronbach's alpha value was.763. These reliability coefficients indicated that the instrument was very reliable (Grey, 2004), hence none of the items were deleted.

Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire

To validate the internal consistency of the instrument utilised in this study, a pilot test was conducted with 50 students. Although Attamimi and Al-Tamimi (2014) suggest a minimum pilot test sample size of 10, a sample of 50 was chosen to minimise error margins and enhance representativeness. These participants were drawn from a senior high school in the Cape Coast Municipality, selected due to their comparable characteristics to the broader study population. This approach facilitated the identification and rectification of any ambiguities present in the instrument's statements.

Data Collection Procedures

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast and consent from the researcher's supervisors, data collection commenced promptly. Upon arrival at the school, the researcher first introduced herself to the headmaster and provided a copy of the introductory letter from the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Cape Coast. She then offered a concise overview of the visit's objectives. Subsequently, the researcher established the required communication with the headmaster to secure permission for administering the questionnaire. The researcher informed the headmaster about the research's aims and objectives.

The researcher also contacted the English teachers whose lesson periods were used to administer the questionnaire to seek their permission. A discussion was held with the teachers and the headmaster in order to agree on a suitable time to administer the questionnaire. The teachers agreed that the researcher should use one period of their lessons within the week to administer the questionnaire. After consulting with the headmaster and English instructors, we gathered a group of chosen participants to inform them about the study's objectives. They were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous, and the significance of providing honest feedback was highlighted. After this orientation, the researcher personally handed out the questionnaires. Many participants were not prepared to respond immediately, so the researcher granted them several days to complete the questionnaires. To maximise the response rate, the researcher conducted follow-up visits to collect completed questionnaires from those who had not been able to submit them

during the initial distribution. In the end, the researcher successfully collected all 265 distributed questionnaires, ensuring a 100% return rate.

Data Analysis Procedures

The initial stage of data processing involved a meticulous review and revision to verify its completeness for subsequent analysis. A cleaning process identified and corrected potential errors, such as missing entries or other inaccuracies, in the data. Following this, the data was subjected to coding, analysed, and summarised quantitatively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were employed to characterise the respondents' biographical information. The analysis was structured around the research questions guiding the study.

Research question one investigated the predominant language learning strategies employed by students at Edinaman Senior High School to enhance their language proficiency, with the frequency and percentage distributions used to evaluate the data. For research question two, we applied an independent sample t-test to examine gender-based differences in the utilisation of learning strategies. Finally, research question three utilised a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to explore the relationships between students' fields of study and their use of learning strategies.

Ethical Considerations

In Leavy's (2017) framework, ethical research practices encompass principles and protocols designed to safeguard the participants' welfare, rights, and well-being. Key ethical concerns include ensuring participant privacy, securing voluntary involvement, preventing harm, and maintaining anonymity

and confidentiality. It is crucial that both students and educators have their privacy respected throughout the research process. Accordingly, participants' privacy was meticulously protected, and no individual was included in the study without their informed consent.

Voluntary participation is a central ethical consideration, particularly in studies involving time-consuming tasks like questionnaire completion. To address this, the researcher clarified the study's aims and importance, allowing participants to make informed decisions about their involvement.

Furthermore, ethical guidelines mandate that research should not inflict any form of harm—physical, psychological, or emotional—on participants, regardless of their voluntary involvement. Babbie and Mouton (2006) emphasise that researchers must avoid placing individuals in potentially harmful situations as a result of their participation. The study's questions, designed to offer multiple options and allow respondents to choose answers that best suited their circumstances, mitigated potential harm.

The overarching ethical aim is to protect the respondents' well-being, interests, and identities. Consequently, the researcher employed anonymity and confidentiality measures, including the non-disclosure of participants' identities, to maintain privacy. The researcher assured participants that their responses would remain confidential. The researcher collected data from appropriate participants, thoroughly analysed it, and reported it with proper citations, adhering to the referencing standards of the University of Cape Coast.

Limitations of the Study

Like any other study conducted, this study had some limitations. The instrument used for this study was a self-report questionnaire; therefore,

responses from students may not reflect the real situation on the ground. This could affect the validity and reliability of the study. However, the researcher explained points for clarification and assured respondents of confidentiality and anonymity, requiring them to be as truthful as possible when responding to the questionnaire. Again, the researcher was uncertain about the times for vacations and re-opening dates for the school due to the track system.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presents an explanation of the research methods that were used for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents from various courses of study at the selected school. The chapter also covered the feasibility of the research design, the population, limitations, ethical issues, and the outcome of the pilot study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

The study sought to find out the influence of gender and course of study on Edinaman Senior High School students use of language learning strategies. The study specifically centred on the language learning strategies students at Edinaman Senior High School most frequently use to improve their language skills in English, the difference in students' choice of learning strategies based on their gender, and the significant difference between students' courses of study and their choice of learning strategies. This chapter presents the results of the analyses and discusses the findings of the study. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, computation of means, standard deviations, independent sample t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance.

Demographics of Respondents

Data were obtained from 265 students from Edinaman Senior High School in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality. The first part of the analysis was based on the biographical data of the students involved in the study. These include gender and the purpose of studying English language.

Table 3 presents the gender of the participants involved in the study.

Table 3: Distribution of Participants by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	127	47.9
Female	138	52.1
Total	**265**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2022)

The data in Table 3 shows that 127 (49.7%) of the participants are males, while 138 (52.1%) are females. It could therefore be concluded that the majority of the study participants were female.

Table 4 presents the purpose of studying English language.

Table 4: Distribution of Participants by Purpose of Studying English Language

Student's purpose of studying English language	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Job	22	8.3
Immigration	9	3.4
Further studies	185	69.8
Travel	49	18.5
Total	**265**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2022)

From Table 4, it was observed that 22 (8.3%) of the students said they study English to be able to get easy access to job opportunities. They see English as the finest way to win themselves well-paying jobs. It was also recorded that 9 (3.4%) study English for immigration purposes. Astonishingly, 185 (69.8%) of the respondents indicated that they study English to be able to further their education. Thus, they learn the English language due to academic reasons. Here, they are in the majority as the study of the course is for academic reasons. Lastly, 49 (18.5%) of the respondents indicated that they learn the English language to help them travel. It could therefore be concluded that the majority of the study participants study English in order to further their education.

Research Question One

"What language learning strategies do students frequently use to improve their language skills at Edinaman Senior High School?" Descriptive statistics of English learning strategy use were computed in order to answer the first research question. Based on Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate students' responses. Green and Oxford (1995) proposed a frequency range with which language learning strategies are employed as a way to interpret the descriptive statistics of language learning strategy usage: (a) if more than 50% of the participants responded with 4 or 5 for the strategy use, it would be concluded that it was a frequent use in the overall strategy use; (b) if more than 20% to 49% of the participants responded with 4 or 5 for the strategy use, it would show a moderate use in the overall strategy use; (c) if fewer than 20% of the participants responded with 4 or 5, it would be an infrequent use in the overall strategy use. The students selected their most preferred views to specify their thoughts on each item on a scale of: 1 = never or almost never true of me; 2 = rarely true of me; 3 = somehow true of me; 4 = usually true of me; and 5 = always or almost always true of me. The results are presented in tables 5 and 6. Frequencies and percentages of direct language learning strategies (memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and compensation strategy) are presented in Table 5, while the indirect language learning strategies (metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and social strategy) are presented in Table 6.

Table 5: Direct Language Learning Strategies Students in Edinaman Senior High School use to Improve their Language Skills in English (n=265)

Strategy	NT (%)	RT(%)	ST(%)	UT(%)	AT(%)
Memory Strategy					
I make comparisons between what I know already and what I learn in English.	47(17.7%)	36(13.6%)	57(21.5%)	65(24.5%)	60(22.6%)
I remember new words when I use them in sentences.	4(5.3%)	7(21.5%)	52(19.6%)	64(24.2%)	78(29.4%)
To remember a new English word, I link its sound to a picture of the word.	40(15.1%)	48(18.1%)	58(21.9%)	65(24.5%)	54(20.4%)
I remember a new word by picturing a situation where the word could be used.	34(12.8%)	44(16.6%)	40(15.1%)	71(26.8%)	76(28.7%)
I remember new words by using rhymes	59(23.3%)	59(23.3%)	65(24.5%)	42(15.8%)	40(15.1%)
I use flashcards to learn new words in English	107(40.2%)	83(31.3%)	32(12.1%)	23(8.7%)	20(7.5%)
I enact new words in English.	49(18.5%)	64(24.2%)	54(20.4%)	59(22.3%)	39(14.7%)
I often review my English lessons.	26(9.8%)	47(17.7%)	63(23.8%)	71(26.8%)	58(21.9%)
I recall new words or phrases by remembering where I first saw them.	43(16.2%)	36(13.6%)	54(20.4%)	69(26.0%)	63(23.8%)

Cognitive Strategy					
I say or write new words more than a few times.	30(11.3%)	39(14.7%)	61(23.0%)	61(23.0%)	74(27.9%)
I try to speak English like a native speaker.	29(10.9%)	59(22.3%)	49(18.5%)	72(27.2%)	56(21.1%)
I practice pronouncing English sounds.	20(7.5%)	52(19.6%)	59(19.6%)	69(26.0%)	65(24.5%)
I practice using new words in different ways.	16(6.0%)	35(13.2%)	43(16.2%)	82(30.9%)	89(33.6%)
I talk to people in English.	19(7.2%)	29(10.9%)	37(14.0%)	75(28.3%)	105(39.6%)
I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or I watch movies spoken in English.	17(6.4%)	26(9.8%)	34(12.8%)	47(17.7%)	141(53.2%)
I enjoy reading in English.	24(9.1%)	38(14.3%)	59(22.3%)	58(21.9%)	86(32.5%)
I write notes, send messages and letters in English.	4(1.5%)	24(9.1%)	31(11.7%)	76(28.7%)	130(49.1%)
I first skim read a passage in English and carefully read again.	28(10.6%)	35(13.2%)	59(22.3%)	52(19.6%)	91(34.3%)
I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	43(16.2%)	48(18.1%)	70(26.4%)	46(17.4%)	58(21.9%)
I try to find patterns in English.	33(12.5%)	62(23.4%)	86(32.5%)	61(23.0%)	23(8.7%)
I figure out what an English word means by breaking it down into parts I can understand.	33(12.5%)	48(18.1%)	57(21.5%)	60(22.6%)	67(25.3%)
I try not to interpret meanings verbatim.	57(21.5%)	48(18.1%)	45(17.0%)	66(24.9%)	49(18.5%)
I summarize what I read or hear in English.	28(10.6%)	26(9.8%)	46(17.4%)	79(29.8%)	86(32.5%)
Compensation Strategy					
I make guesses to figure out English words I don't know.	29(10.9%)	36(13.6%)	44(16.6%)	62(23.4%)	94(35.5%)

I use hand gestures when I can't think of the right English word.	35(13.2%)	43(16.2%)	53(20.0%)	51(19.2%)	83(31.3%)
If I don't know the right English words, I make them up.	30(11.3%)	48(18.1%)	59(22.3%)	57(21.5%)	71(26.8%)
I read without checking out the meaning of every word.	54(20.4%)	67(25.3%)	62(23.4%)	48(18.1%)	34(12.8%)
I make guesses to find out exactly what the other person will say in English.	36(13.6%)	47(17.7%)	43(16.2%)	79(29.8%)	60(22.6%)
If I cannot think of an English word, I substitute a phrase or a word that means exactly the same.	21(7.9%)	36(13.6%)	37(14.0%)	59(22.3%)	112(42.3%)

Source: Field Data (2022)

Key: NT=Never or almost never true of me; RT= Rarely true of me; ST= Somehow true of me; UT= Usually true of me; AT= Always or almost always true of me

Table 6: Indirect Strategies Employed by Students to Study English Language in Edinaman SHS (n=265)

Strategy	NT(%)	RT(%)	ST(%)	UT(%)	AT(%)
Metacognitive Strategy					
I try to use English as much as possible.	25(9.4%)	10(3.8%)	44(16.6%)	79(29.8%)	107(40.4%)
I pay attention to the mistakes I make in English and utilize that information to assist me do better.	10(3.8%)	23(8.7)	27(10.2%)	81(30.6%)	124(46.8%)
When a person is speaking English, I pay attention.	16(6.0%)	14(5.3%)	34(12.8%)	45(17.0%)	155(58.5%)
I strive to figure out how to learn English better.	22(8.3%)	30(11.3%)	41(15.5%)	61(23.0%)	111(41.9%)
I organize my activities so that I will get enough time to learn English.	44(16.6%)	59(23.3%)	60(22.6%)	55(20.8%)	47(17.7%)
I try to find individuals I can speak to in English.	20(7.5%)	33(12.5%)	75(28.3%)	58(21.9%)	79(29.8%)
I look for chances to read as much English as I can.	13(4.9%)	20(7.5%)	61(23.0%)	72(27.2%)	99(37.4%)
I know exactly what I want to do to improve my English skills.	30(11.3%)	20(7.5%)	39(14.7%)	60(22.6%)	116(43.8%)
I think about how well I am doing at learning English.	49(18.5%)	63(23.8%)	51(19.2%)	32(12.1%)	70(26.4%)
Affective Strategy					
Whenever I am nervous about using English, I try to calm down.	63(23.8%)	49(18.5%)	32(12.1%)	51(19.2%)	70(26.4%)
Even when I am scared of making a mistake, I push myself to speak English	24(9.1%)	31(11.7%)	31(11.7%)	55(20.8%)	124(46.8%)

When I do well in English, I give myself a treat or a reward.	60(22.6%)	31(11.7%)	46(17.4%)	68(25.7%)	60(22.6%)
When I am studying or using English, I can tell if I am tense or nervous.	52(19.6%)	41(15.5%)	76(28.7%)	61(23.0%)	35(13.2%)
I keep a language learning diary where I write down how I feel.	80(30.2%)	30(11.3%)	49(18.5%)	47(17.7%)	58(21.9%)
When I am learning English, I tell someone else how I feel.	79(29.8%)	59(19.6%)	50(18.9%)	38(14.3%)	39(14.7%)
Social Strategy					
If I don't understand what someone is saying in English, I ask for clarification.	20(7.5%)	8(3.0%)	47(17.7%)	71(26.8%)	119(44.9%)
When I speak English, I ask people who speak English to correct me.	30(11.3%)	50(18.9%)	46(17.4%)	71(26.8%)	68(25.7%)
I seek help from people who speak English.	42(15.8%)	41(15.5%)	45(17.0%)	57(21.5%)	80(30.2%)
I ask for help from English speakers.					
I use English to ask questions.	28(10.6%)	21(7.9%)	46(17.4%)	58(21.9%)	112(42.2%)
I try to learn about the culture of people who speak English.	56(21.1%)	55(20.8%)	36(13.6%)	69(26.0)	49(18.5%)

Source: Field Data (2022)

Key: NT=Never or almost never true of me; RT= Rarely true of me; ST= Somehow true of me; UT= Usually true of me; AT= Always or almost always true of me.

Table 7 presents the ten most frequently used English language learning strategies by students at Edinaman SHS to improve their English language learning skills, extracted from tables 5 and 6.

Table 7: Ten Most Frequently Used Strategies: Frequencies and Percentages

Rank	Item	Strategy	N	%
1	MET36	I pay attention when someone is speaking English	155	58.5
2	COG19	I watch TV shows and movies spoken in English	141	53.2
3	COG21	I write notes, send messages and letters in English	130	49.1
4	MET35	I pay attention to the mistakes I make in English and utilize that information to assist me do better	124	46.8
5	AFF44	Even when I am scared of making a mistake, I push myself to speak English	124	46.8
6	SOC49	If I don't understand what someone is saying, I ask for clarification	119	44.9
7	MET42	I think about how well am doing in English	116	43.8
8	SOC53	I use English to ask questions	112	42.3
9	COM33	If I cannot think of an English word, I substitute a phrase or a word that means exactly the same	112	42.3
10	MET37	I strive to figure out how to learn English better	111	41.9

Note: *MEM = Memory strategy; COG = Cognitive strategy; COM =Compensation strategy; MET = Metacognitive strategy; AFF = Affective strategy; SOC = Social strategy*

Table 7 indicates the ten most frequently used strategies based on the responses on the SILL questionnaire. One metacognitive and one cognitive strategy (items 36 and 19) showed a high (that is, above 50% of the total respondent) range of use of strategies: *I pay attention when someone is speaking English* (58.5%) and *I watch TV shows and movies spoken in English* (53.2%).

As a moderate (that is, between 40% and 50%) use of strategies, three metacognitive strategies, one cognitive strategy, one affective strategy, two social strategies, and one compensation strategy (items 21, 35, 44, 49, 42, 53, 33, and 37) were also included among the ten most frequently used strategies. *I write notes, send messages, and write letters in English* (cognitive strategy; 49.1%); *I pay attention to the mistakes I make in English and utilise that information to help me do better* (metacognitive strategy; 46.8%); *Even when I am scared of making a mistake, I push myself to speak English* (affective strategy; 46.9%); *If I don't understand what someone is saying, I ask for clarification* (social strategy; 44.9%); *I think about how well I am doing in English* (metacognitive strategy; 43.8%); *I use English to ask questions* (social strategy; 42.3%); *If I cannot think of an English word, I substitute a phrase or a word that means exactly the same* (compensation strategy; 42.3%); *I strive to figure out how to learn English better* (metacognitive strategy; 41.9%).

Table 8 indicates ten English language learning strategies that are used the least by students at Edinaman SHS to enhance their English language learning skills. The data is extracted from tables 5 and 6.

Table 8: Ten Least Used Strategies: Frequencies and Percentages

Rank	Item	Strategy	N	%
50th	MEM9	I use flashcards to learn new words English	20	7.5
49th	COG23	I always look for trends in English	23	8.7
48th	COM30	I read without checking the meaning of every word	34	12.8
47th	AFF45	When I am studying or using English, I can tell if I am tense or nervous	35	13.2
46th	AFF47	When I am learning English, I tell someone else how I feel	39	14.7
45th	MEM10	I enact new words in English	39	14.7
44th	MEM8	I remember new English words by using rhymes	40	15.1
43rd	MET37	I plan my schedule so that I will have enough time to study English	47	17.7
42nd	COG25	I try not to interpret meaning verbatim	49	18.5
41st	MEM6	To remember a new English word, I link its sound to a picture of the word	54	20.4

Note: *MEM = Memory strategy; COG = Cognitive strategy; COM =Compensation strategy; MET = Metacognitive strategy; AFF = Affective strategy; SOC = Social strategy*

The 10 least frequently used strategies are reported in Table 8. Strategy items 9, 23, 30, 45, 47, 10, 8, 37, 25 and 6 were the least used strategies; four memory strategies (items 9, 10, 8 and 6), two affective strategies (items 45 and 47), one metacognitive strategy (item 37), one compensation strategy (item 30), and two cognitive strategies (items 23 and 25); *I use flashcards to remember new English words* (memory strategy: 7.5%); *I always look for trends in English* (cognitive strategy; 8.7%); *I read without checking the meaning of every word* (compensation strategy; 12.8%); *When I am studying or using English, I can*

tell if I am tense or nervous (affective strategy; 13.2%). *When I am learning English, I tell someone else how I feel* (affective strategy; 14.7%), and *I enact new words in English* (memory strategy; 14.7%). *I remember new English words by using rhymes* (memory strategy; 15.1%); *I plan my schedule so that I will have enough time to study English* (metacognitive strategy; 17.7%); *I try not to interpret meaning verbatim* (cognitive strategy; 18.5%); and *to remember a new English word, I link its sound to a picture of the word* (memory strategy; 20.4%).

In the study, metacognitive strategies showed up as the most frequently used strategy: *I pay attention to the mistakes I make in English and utilise that information to help me do better,* and *I think about how well I am doing in English.* Metacognitive strategies play a role in a learner's decision-making process when it comes to language learning. Specifically, these strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learner's language learning progress. Metacognitive strategies play a crucial role in English language learning by helping students develop self-awareness and establish language learning objectives. These strategies involve selecting appropriate language learning tasks, locating relevant English learning materials and resources, making informed decisions about which strategies to employ, and evaluating their progress in language acquisition. Oxford (1990) highlighted that metacognitive strategies help learners overcome the challenges associated with learning unfamiliar grammatical structures, unknown vocabulary, perplexing writing systems, and seemingly unconventional instructional methods (p. 136).

On the other hand, it was revealed in the study that memory strategy is the least favourite or the least used strategy. Among memory strategies, the least preferred strategy was *using flashcards to remember new English words* (7.5%). Memory strategies such as *I enact new words in English* (14.7%) and *I remember new English words by using rhymes* (15.1%) were also least preferred.

However, the findings of the study did not corroborate the research conducted by Politzer and McGroarty (1985) regarding the utilisation of language learning strategies. The researchers proposed that memory strategies are the preferred strategy among students and observed that these students tend to prioritise memory strategies over social strategies. One possible reason why the memory strategies were least favoured in this research is that Edinaman students do not employ the memory strategies in learning English. Riazi and Rahimi (2005) elucidated that the memory strategies employed in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning by Oxford diverge from the memorization techniques utilised by students in the process of learning English. Summarising the findings of research question one in line with the reviewed literature, Griffiths and Parr (2001) discovered that while teachers thought their students employed memory strategies the most, students claimed to use them the least.

In contrast, teachers placed social strategies third, even though students said they utilised them second. Students reported utilising compensation and cognitive strategies in the median frequency range, but affective strategies came just one rank higher than memory strategies. Memory strategy was ranked first in the teachers' rankings, followed by cognitive, social, metacognitive, compensatory, and emotional strategies, in that order. This study highlighted

the necessity for teachers to pay greater attention to how their students employ techniques in the classroom by highlighting the significant differences between how students and teachers perceive language learning strategies. This will go a long way towards helping teachers improve their methods of teaching by including in their instruction strategies that students are not familiar with or find difficult to apply.

The study by Melvina and Wirza (2020) found that, in general, second-year students of senior high schools in Indonesia are medium strategy users. The most frequently used strategy is metacognitive, followed by affective, cognitive, and compensation strategies. The least frequently used strategies are social and memory strategies. Similar findings were reached for this study, as metacognitive strategy was ranked first. This indicates that students have the ability to employ their own learning strategies to manage their own learning.

Research Question Two

"What are the differences in the use of language learning strategies by male and female students? This research question examined differences in the use of English learning strategies between male and female students at Edinaman Senior High School.

Table 9 presents the results of the descriptive statistics on the difference in students use of English language learning strategies combined based on gender.

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of students use learning strategies by gender

Gender	Mean	SD
Male (n = 127)	166.35	26.39
Female (n = 138)	173.52	27.07

Table 10: Independent Samples t-Tests of Students use of learning Strategies by Gender

	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
-2.18	263	.030*	-7.161	3.289	-13.64	-.68

* $p < .05$

Independent sample t-test statistics were used to examine the differences in the use of English learning strategies between male and female students. The results from Table 10 indicates that there was a significant difference in use of English learning strategies as a whole by male and female students, t (263) = -2.18, p = .03; with males scoring significantly lower (M = 166.35, SD = 26.39) than females (M = 173.52, SD = 27.07) in the use of learning strategy.

Table 11: Independent Sample t-Tests of the Six Categories of English Language Learning Strategy by Gender

	Male (n =127)		Female (n = 138)			
Strategy	M	SD	M	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Memory	17.56	4.59	18.82	3.60	-2.50	.013*
Compensation	21.25	4.87	21.99	4.57	-1. 28	.203
Cognitive	19.91	4.93	20.42	4.51	-0.87	.383
Metacognitive	22.26	6.35	22.49	5.53	-0.32	.750
Affective	18.16	4.82	18.97	5.12	-1.33	.185
Social	20.63	5.10	21.69	5.09	-1.69	.092

* $p < .05$

In the use of the individual six-category learning strategies, there were no significant differences between male and female students except for the memory strategy, which shows a statistically significant difference in terms of its usage by gender, as indicated in the results from Table 11. Memory strategies were summarised: t (263) = -2.50, p =.013; compensation strategies, t (263) = -.1.28, p =.203; cognitive strategies, t (263) = -.87, p =.383; metacognitive strategies, t (263) = -.32, p =.750; affective strategies, t (263) = -1.33, p =.185; and social strategies, t (263) = - 1.69, p =.096. As seen in Table 11, both male and female learners use metacognitive strategies most and use memory strategies least.

In addition, Table 11 figures show that female students use memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more frequently than male students when the mean use of each category of English learning strategies of males is compared to that of females. The research revealed that there were significant differences in the strategies used by male and female learners. It can be concluded that gender differences do have a significant effect on language learning strategies. The strategies used by male and female students at Edinaman Senior High School were not all that similar, and the variable of gender was the crucial element in affecting language learning strategies.

Finding differences in strategy use between male and female students was consistent with the research conducted by Cook and Sittler (2008), which states that females exhibit higher levels of self-regulation due to their tendency to be proactive and organised, leading to more effective language study routines.

On the other hand, males tend to be more relaxed about their language learning approaches, often relying on their natural ability to communicate effectively.

Kaylani's (1996) study also affirms that there were notable differences between male and female students in terms of the extent to which they used strategies. The research discovered that female students exhibited a higher frequency of using memory, cognitive, compensatory, and affective strategies compared to male students. Similarly, Al-Qahtani, Ibrahim, Elgzar, El Sayed, & Essa's (2021) study also shows that female learners had significantly higher self-efficacy beliefs compared to male learners when it came to selecting and utilising language learning strategies.

These differences in strategy use may be influenced by societal expectations regarding the role of communication skills in female-dominated domains, such as relationships and caregiving, as well as competition-seeking behaviours to encourage them to do more in a male-dominated environment. The current study shows that language learning strategies can vary from person to person, as everyone has their own unique learning style and preferences.

Research Question Three

"What are the differences between students' courses of study and their use of English learning strategies?" This research question three investigated differences in the use of English learning strategies and students' course of study at Edinaman Senior High School.

This research question sought to find out the difference between students' courses of study (General Science, General Arts, Visual Arts, Business, and Home Economics) and students' use of English language learning strategies at Edinaman Senior High School. A one-way ANOVA was performed

to determine differences in the use of language learning strategies among students from various courses of study. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Descriptive statistics of various courses of study and students' use of the English language learning strategies

Course of Study	N	Me	Std. Deviation
Business	21	153.14	22.92
Visual Arts	32	153.97	29.02
General Science	46	186.71	18.15
General Arts	113	175.18	24.14
Home Economics	53	161.19	27.97

The inspection of the mean scores for the results of the one-way ANOVA in table 12 indicated that the science group reported the highest use of English learning strategy (M = 186.71, SD = 18.15), followed by the arts group (M = 175.18, SD = 24.14) and with business groups reporting the least use of English learning strategies (M = 153.14, SD = 22.92).

Table 13: One-way ANOVA on differences between students' courses of study and use of English language learning strategies.

	Uses of Strategies				
	Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	34189.051	4	8547.26	14.12	.000*
Within Groups	157417.440	260	605.45		

* $p < .001$

A one-way ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences between students' courses of study and use of English language learning strategies, $F\ (4, 260) = 14.12$, $p < .001$ level of significance, as depicted in Table 13.

Before we could identify where the significant differences occur among the courses of study in their use of English language learning strategies, a post hoc test using Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) multiple comparisons test was conducted. Table 14 presents the results of all possible comparisons between means of courses of study and students' use of English language learning strategies.

Table 14: LSD multiple comparisons between means of courses of study in their use of English language learning strategies

(I) Courses of Study	(J) Courses of Study	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig
Business	Visual Arts	-.83	.905
	G. Science	-33.57*	.000
	G. Arts	-22.03*	.000
	Home Economics	-8.05	.206
Visual Art	Business	.83	.905
	G. Science	-32.75*	.000
	G. Arts	-21.21*	.000
	Home Economics	-7.22	.191
G. Science	Business	33.57*	.000
	Visual Arts	32.75*	.000
	G. Arts	11.54*	.008
	Home Economics	25.53*	.000
G. Arts	Business	22.03*	.000
	Visual Arts	21.21*	.000
	G. Science	-11.54*	.008
	Home Economics	13.99*	.001
Home Economics	Business	8.05	.206
	Visual Arts	7.22	.191
	G. Science	-25.53*	.000
	G. Arts	-13.99*	.001

. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The LSD comparisons revealed that two of the five means were significantly different from the others. As shown in Table 14, a statistically significant difference was detected among students at different courses of study

in the use of the six categories of language learning strategies as a whole. It was surprising that there was a statistically significant difference among students of Science classes and Arts classes, Science and Business, Science and Visual Arts, Science and Home Economics, Arts and Business, Arts and Visual Arts, and finally Arts and Home Economics at the p <.05 level of significance in the use of English learning strategies. There was no differences among Business, Visual Arts, and Home Economics in the use of English learning strategies at Edinaman Senior High School.

This was in line with a study conducted by Chamot and O'Malley (1987) as reviewed in the literature, which found that the programme of study can also influence learners' choice of strategies in terms of the resources and materials available to them. The study continued to highlight that different courses or programmes may have specific requirements, objectives, or teaching methodologies, which often define the resources and materials used in the learning process. Different courses may have specific textbooks, workbooks, audiovisual materials, and online resources that learners are required to use. Courses that primarily rely on specific textbooks may encourage learners to follow the lesson sequence and utilise the textbook exercises and activities. This can influence their strategy to focus on reading and writing skills and use the textbook as the main resource for grammar and vocabulary learning.

Rao (2005) revealed that students in the social science programme made much more use of overall and individual strategies as compared to those in the science programme. This was discovered by comparing the overall and individual strategies of learners. He compared the responses of students majoring in social science and science to the items on the SILL (Strategy

Inventory for Language Learning) that received the highest votes. Contrary to the findings of this study, Gu (2002) found that while there were differences in strategies between students who studied art and science, academic majors didn't play a big role in how they used language learning strategies. Even though the outcomes of this research were different, they all revealed that there was a link between study programmes and how people learned languages. These students are more likely to employ strategies for learning a language or choose strategies that promote independence and practical application in their practice. Based on these results, it appears that some students may benefit more from particular approaches to language study than others.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The final chapter of the thesis provides a general summary of the study, highlighting the key findings as well as the conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. The recommendations were made based on the key findings and major conclusions from the study.

Summary of the Study

In Ghana, there are lots of problems with the instruction and acquisition of English, which is one reason why the level of English of the students in Ghana is falling (Lawyer & Thomas, 2020). However, despite the controversies surrounding learners' use of language learning strategies, this study was based on the idea that language learning strategies could be "an extremely powerful learning tool" (O'Malley et al., 1985, p. 43) to help second language learners become more competent in the acquisition of the target language. It was hoped that the study's findings would help learners become more aware of the different strategies they can use and that these findings would also help them come up with useful strategies to add to their own collections. The study is also based on basic ideas from the theory of language learning strategies, which say that students can be involved in their own learning by using strategies, that these strategies can be learned, and that it is possible to help students learn by making them more aware of the process and giving them chances to practice and get feedback.

The study also highlighted factors such as gender and students' course of study that have a great influence on how students' use learning strategies. These factors are important to look at since how each individual learns can be very different. As a result, different learners may use different strategies. Hence, the goal of this study was to find out how gender and course of study influence how Edinaman Senior High School students use strategies to learn the English language. The questions below guided the study:

1. What language learning strategies do students frequently use to improve their language skills at Edinaman Senior High School?
2. What are the differences in the use of language learning strategies by male and female students?
3. What are the differences between students' courses of study and their use of English learning strategies?

In order to find answers to the research questions formulated to guide the study, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the relevant data. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The instrument was administered to 265 students. As a result, 265 students who completed and returned the questionnaire were good for inclusion in the analysis. The 265 participants, comprised of 127 males and 138 females. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test and ANOVA) were employed for the data analysis. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the students from the various courses of study in the school.

Key Findings

The main findings that emerged from the study are as follows:

1. The study revealed ten most frequently used strategies based on the responses on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. The findings indicate that the learning strategy that is mostly used is metacognitive, followed by cognitive, affective, social, and compensation strategies. Memory strategy was not included as one of the most frequently used strategies since the study revealed that memory strategy was the least used strategy.
2. The study found that there was a significant difference in the use of English learning strategies as a whole by male and female students, t (263) = -2.18, p =.03; male students use learning strategies (M = 166.35, SD = 26.39) and female students use learning strategies (M = 173.52, SD = 27.07). The study also found a 95% confidence interval for the difference in means between male and female learners' strategy use, which was quite moderate, ranging from -13.64 to -.68.
3. The study found that female students use memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more frequently than male students when the mean use of each category of English learning strategies of males was compared to that of females.
4. The study revealed that there were no differences between students' course of study and use of English language learning strategies in general

5. The result of the study indicated that there is a statistically significant difference among students at different courses of study in the use of the six categories of language learning strategies.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, several conclusions were drawn. It can be concluded that language learning strategies play a vital role in developing learner competence in the acquisition of English. Students use both direct and indirect strategies in their attempt to learn English. In using strategies to help them learn English better, they employ metacognitive strategies such as *paying attention when someone is speaking English, paying attention to the mistakes I make in English, and utilising that information to help me do better.* Followed by cognitive strategies such as *watching TV shows and movies spoken in English*, *writing notes, sending messages, and writing letters in English.* Students also use affective strategies such as, *Even when I am scared of making a mistake, I push myself to speak English.* Social strategies such as *If I don't understand what someone is saying, I ask for clarification,* and *I use English to ask questions.* Compensation strategies such as *If I cannot think of an English word, I substitute a phrase or a word that means exactly the same* were also used by students. The study also concluded that students in Ghana do not use memory strategies such as *flashcards to remember new English words* and *enact new words in English.* A closer look at the data revealed that different student groups may employ different patterns of language learning strategies.

Again, the study concluded that female students use memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more frequently than male students when the mean use of each category of English learning

strategies of males was compared to that of females. Moreover, the study concluded that there was a significant difference in the use of English learning strategies as a whole by male and female students and that gender differences did influence strategy use among students. A possible explanation for gender differences in learning strategies could be attributed to societal expectations, stereotypes, and learner preferences.

Finally, the study concluded that there is a statistically significant difference among students at different courses of study in the use of the six categories of language learning strategies. However, the strategies that Science and Arts students use are quite different from the rest of the other courses of study in the school. This could be because these students were more serious with their language learning and, for that matter, employed different strategies quite often.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

It was recommended that strategy-based teaching be very helpful to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. This makes students more responsible for learning English and gives them more freedom to learn both in and out of school. Ghana Education Service (GES) should put in measures for students to develop themselves using the strategies language learning, as the students will be able to achieve their goals of becoming perfect in their chosen profession.

The study discovered that the students don't use flashcards to remember new English words. This may be a result of the absence or shortage of the flashcards. Therefore, it was recommended that the Ministry of Education make

provision for flashcards that will help ease the memorization of terms and words.

Explicit instruction of language learning strategies should be incorporated into lesson plans, course syllabi, and curricula in order to raise students' conscious awareness of learning strategies. Self-report questionnaires such as the one used for this study should be made available in English language test books for students to use for practice sections. It will also serve as a reference point to help students develop their own learning strategies.

Teachers need to become more aware of the potential usefulness of strategies relating to the use of resources such as newspapers, TV, radio, and movies, which are so easy to incorporate into classroom activities. The Ghana Education Service should organise in-service training for teachers and train them to pay greater attention to how their students employ strategies in the classroom by highlighting the significant differences between how students and teachers perceive language learning strategies. This will go a long way towards helping teachers improve their methods of teaching by including in their instructions strategies that students are not familiar with or find difficult to apply.

Areas for Further Research

The study involved only students; therefore, future studies may involve teachers to find out the views they hold concerning the use of English language strategies that maximise good academic performance in order to make the study rich with a lot of information.

Again, the study used questionnaire data only. It was suggested that future studies make use of the observation guide, which allows the researcher to observe the unfolding of phenomena as compared to using a questionnaire, in order to provide the subjects with the freedom to express their opinion rather than being restricted to items provided on the questionnaire.

This study centred only on Edinaman Senior High School. It can also be replicated in other regions to discover how best these strategies are used in those regions and how students react to the strategies. However, other studies can investigate how language learning strategies are used by both senior high school and junior high school students. Another person can conduct a study to look at some of the challenges that students encounter when using the investigated strategies and request measures to better those challenges.

Gender and course of study are not the only factors that can influence learners' use of a particular strategy. Other studies can look at factors such as motivation, age, and environment and how they influence learners' use of learning strategies and add to the few existing studies on learner strategies in Ghana.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF HHUMANITY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear student,

How do you go about learning English? Do you make a note of every new word you see? Do you work on improving your language skills every day? To help you improve your listening skills, do you listen to the radio every day? The following is a list of ways to learn a new language: Please tell us how you learn best. If you would fill out this questionnaire, it will help us find out more about how you learn best. In this way, we hope we can better meet your needs. Could you please answer the following questions so we can get a clearer understanding of how you use learning strategies?

SECTION A: BIO DATA

1. Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]

2. Course of study_____

3. What is your purpose for studying English? (For example, job, education, travel)

DIRECTIONS FOR SECTIONS B AND C

Please take a look at each sentence below and then answer the questions that best describes you. Do not say what you think. It doesn't matter if you're right or wrong. The following are statements that you are to decide carefully to choose from. Kindly write your answers to each question on the line next to the number of the statement.

SECTION B: DIRECT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY SHS STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

1. Never or almost never true of me.
2. Rarely true of me.
3. Somehow true of me.
4. Usually true of me.
5. Always or almost always true of me

PART A (Memory Strategies)

_____4. I make comparisons between what I know already and what I learn in English.

5. I remember new words when I use them in sentences.

_____6. To remember a new English word, I link its sound to a picture of the word.

_____7. I remember a new word by picturing a situation where the word could be used.

_____8. I remember new words by using rhymes.

_____9. I use flashcards to learn new words in English.

_____10. I enact new words in English.

_____11. I often review my English lessons.

_____12. I recall new words or phrases by remembering where I first saw them.

PART B (Cognitive Strategies)

_____13. I say or write new words more than a few times.

_____14. I try to speak English like a native speaker.

_____15. I practice pronouncing English sounds.

_____16. I practice using new words in different ways.

_____17. I talk to people in English.

_____18. I watch TV shows and movies that are spoken in English.

_____19. I enjoy reading in English.

_____20. I write notes, send messages, and letters in English.

_____21. I first skim read a passage in English and carefully read again.

_____22. I search for words in my native language that are like new English words.

_____23. I always look for trends in English.

_____24. I figure out what an English word means by breaking it down into parts I can understand.

_____25. I try not to interpret meanings verbatim.

_____26. I summarize what I read or hear in English.

PART C (**Compensation Strategy**)

_____ 27. I make guesses to figure out English words I don't know.

_____28. I use hand gestures when I can't really think of the right English word.

_____29. If I don't know the right English words, I make them up.

_____30. I read without checking out the meaning of every word.

_____31 I make a guess to find out exactly what the other individual will say in English.

_____32. If I cannot think of an English word, I substitute a phrase or a word that means exactly the same.

SECTION C: INDIRECT STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY STUDENTS TO STUDY ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. Never or almost never true of me.

2. Rarely true of me.

3. Somehow true of me.

4. Usually, true me.

5. Always or almost always true of me

PART D (Metacognitive Strategies)

_____33. I try to use English as much as possible.

_____34. I pay attention to the mistakes I make in English and utilize that information to assist me do better.

_____35. When a person is speaking English, I pay attention.

_____36. I strive to figure out how to learn English better.

_____37. I organize my activities so that I'll get enough time to learn English.

_____38. I try to find individuals I can speak to in English.

_____39. I look for chances to read as much English as I can.

_____40. I know exactly what I want to do to improve my English skills.

_____41. I think about how well I am doing at learning English.

PART E (Affective Strategies)

_____42. Whenever I am nervous about using English, I try to calm down.

_____43. Even when I am scared of making a mistake, I push myself to speak English.

_____44. When I do well in English, I give myself a treat or a reward.

_____45. When I am studying or using English, I can tell if I am tense or nervous.

_____46. I keep a language learning diary where I write down how I feel.

_____47. When I am learning English, I tell someone else how I feel.

PART F (Social Strategies)

_____48. If I don't understand what someone is saying in English, I ask for clarification.

_____49. When I speak English, I ask people who speak English to correct

_____50. I work on my English with other students.

_____51. I seek help from people who speak English.

_____52. I use English to ask questions.

_____53. I try to learn about the culture of people who speak English.