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**English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated
By the Students of Azad University, District 5:
A Gender-oriented Study**

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English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated By the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

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Abstract

Different learners resort to different strategies on approaching each learning situation, and bring with them the experiences they might have previously had. This variation is identified to stem from factors such as attitude, motivation, age, personality, academic major, and gender.

Investigation of the effect of the last one on the type and frequency of English vocabulary learning strategies manipulated by learners of the fifth district of Azad University has been the aim of the work in hand.

For this purpose, the branches in Arak, Khomein, Hamedan, Malayer, Borojerd and Doroud were chosen to have their students collectively fill out the 300 SILL questionnaires distributed. Here, no other criterion except gender was put on the participants.

The returned 180 and 114 questionnaires of respectively males and females were analyzed to result in the corresponding means of 2.81 and 2.80 on a scale of one to five, and the common standard deviation of 2.70; thus, showing no significant mean difference to the point of nullification of the related hypothesis.

The other hypotheses claiming variation between genders concerning the six categories of vocabulary learning strategies were also nullified through t-test formula applied at $\alpha=0.05$. Only six strategies out of fifty proved to significantly distinguish males and females. The overall mean of 2.80 reveals a medium index of strategy employment, and reminds educationalists the careful instruction of vocabulary learning strategies in English classes.

Key words: Vocabulary, Learning strategy, Gender, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Introduction

It has been customary in the literature of TEFL to provide teachers with the specific techniques to be used when instructing their learners in class. Within the teacher-training centers and the other affiliated corners instructors and the stakeholders have been always

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

busy thinking of developing and introducing new techniques for teaching different aspects of language carefully scrutinized and fine-tuned with both macro- and micro-level considerations observed. Here the basic proposition has been, as often, helping teachers facilitate and foster learners' acquisition of the input systematically provided either by the curriculum designers or through the teachers' intuition; thus, having the teachers equipped with a bunch of techniques formally prescribed under the superordinate term of method/methods.

An apparent feature of all methods of language teaching is that they impose a framework within which all learners are thought of as sharing the same abilities and capabilities stable at least for a period of time and to be activated at any time demanded by the teacher. The result of such a naïve nightmare has been the marginalization of learners in the complicated course of teaching-learning continuum, and the decisions about learners specifically on the ways learners are to receive and acquire the points being made in absentia. Learners' dissatisfaction with the training procedure, lack of motivation to pursue the objectives, being indifferent towards the opportunities provided, irrespectiveness for peers, experiencing failure and discouragement, and leaving the arena of education and instruction are some of the unwelcome offspring of such impersonal methodological systems.

Bringing learners to the fore and finding out what they bring to the learning situation with the aim of tracing the procedure they naturally follow in acquiring linguistic elements, and identifying the ways they are much more willing to learn and subsequently show off their intaken points, is a solution put forward only decades ago to give learners their abated share.

As a result, the existing techniques and methodologies gained the new color of learner-friendliness and current learner-oriented approaches developed incorporating learners' characteristics and their featured learning qualities.

On Defining “Good Language Learners” and Strategies

The heralding point of this revolutionary stage was the attempt to describe “good language learners” in terms of personal characteristics, styles and strategies (Rubin, 1975; Stern 1975). It was assumed that once the way successful learners acquire mastery in a language is known it can be hopefully ascribed to other situations and cases of language learning to provide the prospective learners with a true model. In later decades, the point was diligently pursued to come up with the comprehensive researches encompassing specific learning strategies finely processed and classified (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) to provide a theory of language learning and use strategies (Dörnyei and Skehan, 2003).

The identified strategies, far from being haphazardly developed by trial-and-error and specifically intuition, are reached at by the careful observation and analysis of groups of learners learning and using different versions of language in various situations, and then having the findings proof-worked via manipulating other data-collection techniques like self-reports through interviews, written diaries and journals, think-aloud protocols, and

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

strategy inventories presented in the form of questionnaires (to be elaborated on in the next chapter).

Every one or a combination of these techniques can be successfully made use of in discovering the learners' strategies in learning and using any aspect of language, here in this research the lexical items –vocabulary of English as a second/foreign language, for the purpose of better instruction in shade of appropriate coursebook development and classroom procedures.

The Vocabulary Component

The vocabulary component of English as a second/foreign language invites learners to activate their previously-formed schema and resort to their prefabricated patterns of vocabulary learning and use. In this process, they conjure their personalized styles and strategies up to come over the multivariate nature of lexical items and their internalization. As subconscious the approach is, learners surely do not know what makes them experience the moments of achievement or failure. Here the explicit knowledge of proper strategies, and the way toward their improvement appear to inevitably help learners gain psycholinguistic satisfaction; hence, asking for teachers' consciousness-raising behavior and injecting of new strategies into the classroom atmosphere. However, it doesn't mean to devaluate the useful pre-specified vocabulary teaching techniques referred to at the beginning of this chapter; optimistically, it means to improve the quality of teaching and learning by assigning part of the process to the learners and having them comfortably endeavor shouldering their share of learning responsibility.

Review of Literature

Different learners resort to different strategies on approaching each learning situation and bring with them the experiences they might have previously had. This will form the base of their learning and teachers' teaching; as it is based on this proposition that teachers endeavor instructing the learners. At the same time, they are expected to develop new skills to cope with the new situations. This will put the burden on teachers to provide learners with the appropriate needed set of techniques for learning and using language. So, it seems justifiable to not only pay attention to the product part of language learning phenomenon but also to the complicated nature of the process underlying all acts of learning.

Successful language learners are unanimously agreed to be normally aware of the processes underlying their own learning, and frequently use appropriate, varied and spotted learning strategies to control their own learning (Jones, F., A. Palincsar, D. Ogle, and E. Carr 1987; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Rubin and Thompson, 1982).

Rubin and Thompson, for instance, characterize successful language learners as naturally exhibiting fourteen distinguishing linguistic behaviors strategically. To help the other learners take the true path, most of the research in the area of language learning strategies has focused on the identification, description and classification of useful strategies (Rubin, 1987; Cohen, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991).

A Comprehensive Description of Language Learning Strategies

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

Among all, the most comprehensive description of language learning strategies is presented in Oxford (1990, p. 9) enumerating twelve basic indispensable features strategies naturally possess. There, learning strategies are characterized as:

1. Contributing to the main goal, communicative competence
2. Allowing learners to become more self-directed
3. Expanding the role of teachers
4. Being problem oriented
5. Being specific actions taken by the learner
6. Involving many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive
7. Supporting learning both directly and indirectly
8. Not being always observable
9. Being often conscious
10. Being teachable
11. Being flexible
12. Being influenced by a variety of factors

These features being available to the researchers in the field have made them think of the ways best revealing the aforesaid points.

Solutions

Some of the solutions are self-reports through interviews, written diaries and journals, think-aloud protocols, and strategy inventories presented in the form of a questionnaire. From among all the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection on learning strategies manipulation of learners questionnaires are the ones highly employed to yield consistent and relatively unified results.

The works conducted by Yeon (2002) on writing strategies, Kudo (1999) on L2 vocabulary learning strategies, Shmais (2003) on Palestinians' language learning strategy use, Shannon (2005) on EFL students' use of learning strategies, Tyers (2001) on language learning strategies used by Japanese learners of English, and Margolis (2001) on compensation strategies of Korent college students all benefit from this data collection instrument.

In some other cases where different instruments are used again questionnaires are employed to increase the credibility of the results. The content of the questionnaires is initially determined through careful observation of good language learners and holding sessions of interview, keeping records of their language learning behavior along with some other means like think-aloud protocols. However, after identification of strategies taxonomies are developed to universally represent those characteristics that language learners possess and are expected to acquire in the learning/teaching situation.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars (Wenden and Rubin

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

1987; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanaraes, Russo, and Kupper 1985; Oxford 1990; Stern 1992; Ellis 1994, etc.) either based on their own intuitions or in harmony with the factors neurologically, psychomotoristically, cognitively, affectively and socially distinguishing language learners at any stage of development. However, most of these attempts to classify language learning strategies reflect more or less the same categorizations of language learning strategies without any radical changes.

According to Rubin, there are three types of strategies used by learners that contribute directly or indirectly to language learning. These are so called learning strategies, communication strategies, and social strategies. Learning strategies boast the two main types of cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies which both directly help the development of the language system constructed by the learner.

In his definition cognitive learning strategies refer to the steps or operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Metacognitive strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. Communication strategies are less directly related to language learning since their focus is on the process of participating in a conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intends. Social strategies involve those activities which afford learners opportunities to be exposed to and practice their knowledge. Although these strategies provide exposure to the target language, they contribute indirectly to learning since they do not lead directly to the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language (Wenden and Rubin, 1987).

Direct and Indirect Strategies

Oxford (1990) sees the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence. She divides language learning strategies into two main classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into six groups. In her system, metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning; affective strategies are concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, and social strategies lead to increased interaction with the target language. Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, memory strategies are those used for storage of information, and compensation strategies help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication. Oxford's taxonomy of language learning strategies appears like this:

- Direct Strategies
 - I. Memory
 - A. Creating mental linkages
 - B. Applying images and sounds
 - C. Reviewing well
 - D. Employing action
 - II. Cognitive
 - A. Practicing
 - B. Receiving and sending messages strategies
 - C. Analyzing and reasoning
 - D. Creating structure for input and output
 - III. Compensation strategies
 - A. Guessing intelligently
 - B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
- Indirect Strategies
 - I. Metacognitive Strategies
 - A. Centering your learning

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

- B. Arranging and planning your learning
 - C. Evaluating your learning
 - II. Affective Strategies
 - A. Lowering your anxiety
 - B. Encouraging yourself
 - C. Taking your emotional temperature
 - III. Social Strategies
 - A. Asking questions
 - B. Cooperating with others
 - C. Empathizing with others
- (Oxford 1990, p. 17)

O'Malley *et al.* (1985) divide language learning strategies into three main subcategories namely including metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socioaffective strategies. In this taxonomy metacognitive strategies denoting an executive function are characterized to require planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed.

Among the main metacognitive strategies, it is possible to include advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, and self-evaluation.

The second category encompassing cognitive strategies is more limited to specific learning tasks and involves more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. Repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer and inferencing are among the most important cognitive strategies. Socioaffective strategies forming the third major category are related with social-mediating activity and transacting with others. Cooperation and question for clarification are the main socioaffective strategies.

According to Stern (1992), language learning strategies are classified into five main categories. These are enumerated to involve management and planning strategies, cognitive strategies, communicative-experiential strategies, interpersonal strategies, and affective strategies. Management and planning type of strategies are related with the learner's intention to direct his/her own learning. A learner can take charge of the development of one's program when he/she is helped by a teacher whose role is that of an adviser and resource person.

The second category introduces cognitive strategies that are defined as steps or operations used in learning or problem solving and require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Communicative-experiential strategies exemplified by circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrase, or asking for repetition and explanation are techniques used by learners so as to keep a conversation going. The purpose of using these techniques is to avoid interrupting the flow of communication. The other category, i.e. interpersonal strategies, invites learners to monitor their own development and evaluate their own performance. Affective strategies of the last category deal with the feelings and emotions afflicting learners when they encounter new unexperienced situations.

Variables Influencing Learning Strategies

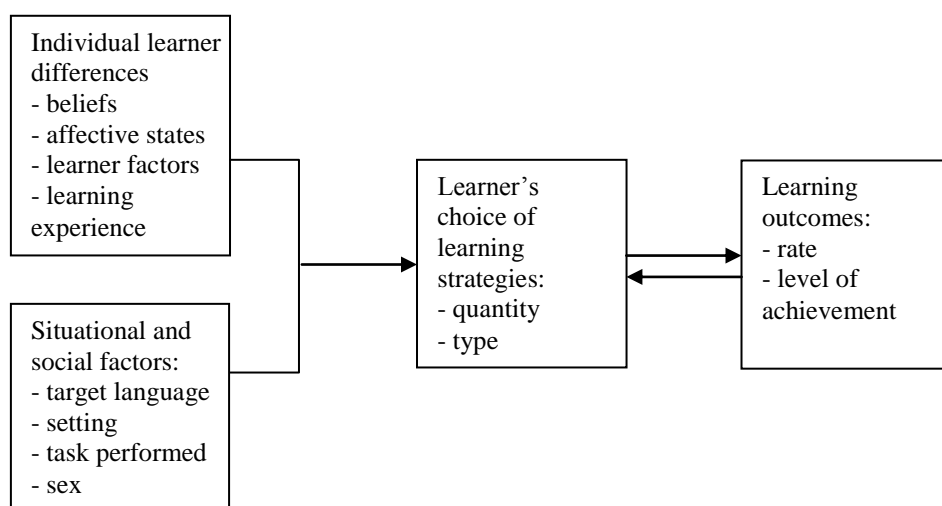
Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

Learning strategies as stated somewhere earlier have been found to be influenced by other variables including attitude, motivation, age, personality, culture, brain hemisphere dominance, career orientation, academic major, gender, general learning style, national origin, aptitude, proficiency in the language, perceived proficiency, and task requirements. According to the model of L2 acquisition provided by Rod Ellis (1994), individual learner differences (beliefs, affective states, general factors, and previous learning experiences) together with various situational factors (the target language being studied, whether the setting is formal or informal, the nature of the instruction, and the specific tasks learners are asked to perform) determine the learners' choice of learning strategies. These then influence two aspects of acquisition and the ultimate level of achievement. The success that learners experience and their level of second language proficiency are also again said to affect the choice of strategies.



The relationship between individual learner differences, situational factors, learning strategies, and learning outcomes. In Ellis 1994:530.

Attitude and Motivation

Learners are found to be different in terms of attitudes, affective states and general factors. The scarcity of research on affective states reveals a great deal of difficulty perhaps in choosing an appropriate medium for data collection or the instability of the learners' affective reactions toward certain learning situation.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

As for the attitude, learners' beliefs about the nature of language, importance of learning and using language, and the type and the amount of practice in English have been studied for their influence on the learners' choice and manipulation of language learning and use strategies. Wenden (1987) is reported to have found that learners who emphasize the importance of learning tend to use cognitive strategies to better understand and remember specific items of language, while those prioritizing use of language employ few learning but more use/communication strategies; besides, learners stressing personal factors to manifest no distinct pattern of strategy use.

Ellis mentions that young children, as age is concerned, have been observed to employ strategies in task-specific manner, while older children and adults make use of generalized strategies, which they employ more flexibly. Young children's strategies are often simple, while maturer learners' strategies are more complex and sophisticated. The differences are taken to explain why older children and adults generally learn faster initially than young learners specially items in vocabulary and grammar. Learners' higher level of intelligence and aptitude helps them well talk about the strategies they use. The possibility of a strong relationship existing between the individual's use of learning strategies and the individual's learning style has been claimed by Oxford (1989) to be later investigated and proved by Willing (1987).

Highly motivated learners are believed by Ellis (1994) to use more strategies relating to formal practice, functional practice, general study, and conversation/input elicitation than poorly motivated learners; the choice of strategy is also affected by the learners' type of motivation. In fact, learners' goals are likely to determine strategy use.. The same idea is found true about the relationship between personality types and strategy choice, and between the learners' personal backgrounds and strategy use. Ehrman (1990) reports the professional linguists' using more strategies more frequently than untrained instructors and students. Chamot and M. Impink-Hernandez (1988) working on a project conclude that novice high school learners of the intended foreign language are likely to panic when realizing they lack procedural skills to for solving a language problem, whereas expert learners (those previously studying another foreign language) approach tasks calmly and are able to employ the strategies developed elsewhere.

Context of Situation

Situationally, learning some languages is suggested to result in greater strategy use than learning others. Chamot (1987) introduces the learners of Russian as a foreign language utilizing greater number of strategies than those learning Spanish under the same condition.

Politzer (1983) shows that the students of Spanish use fewer strategies than those of French and German. The formality of the learning situation is also identified to contribute to the learners' choice and realization of learning strategies. Studies of classroom learners suggest that social strategies are rare. Chamot and Impink-Hernandez (1988), for example, note that their classroom learners mention social and affective strategies infrequently, the only exception being 'questioning for clarification'. They think that the adult-student

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

interview situation may have inhibited the occurrence of strategies such as 'co-operation' and 'self-talk'; patterns of classroom interaction bring about variable patterns of strategy use.

Gender Effects

Green and Oxford (1995, p. 265) in their study which relates strategy use to gender and L2 proficiency level report higher levels of strategy use by women than by men, at the university level; and claim that only some items showed significant variation with both gender and proficiency level. The research by Khalil (2005) also ends in gender having a main effect on overall strategy use, but its effect on the use of each of the six categories of strategies and individual strategies being variable. Identifying the role of gender in strategy use Oxford (1994) writes females are found to report "greater overall strategy use than males in many studies (although sometimes males surpassed females in the use of a particular strategy".

Exploring gender effect on adult foreign language learning strategies, Tercanliogulu (2004) finds significant gender differences favoring males. The work by Oxford (1988) studying sex differences in use of language learning strategies ends with the females appearing to use a wider range of strategies than do males and their resort to social strategies than male. Among the findings of Catalán's (2003) research examining sex differences in L2 vocabulary learning strategies is the females higher percentage of total strategy usage than the males; a point doubtfully ascribed to either different perception of vocabulary learning behaviors or different patterns of vocabulary strategy usage for males and females.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

In relation to vocabulary learning strategies, Sanaoui (1995) has reported that there are two approaches to vocabulary learning among students: a systematic approach and an unsystematic approach.

In systematic approach, learners are more organized and independent, use extensive records of lexical items and review words more often. In unsystematic approach learners are dependent on the course, use minimal or no records of lexical items, and review words, little or not at all. Coady (1997), arguing on the importance of context in vocabulary learning, recommends the use of vocabulary learning strategy instruction approach to enhance lexical acquisition:

The proponents of this approach also believe that context is the major source of vocabulary learning but they express some significant reservations about how well students can deal with context on their own. As a result, there is considerable emphasis on teaching specific learning strategies to students so that they can effectively learn from context. (Coady 1997, p. 276)

Husltijn (1997) claims that the teaching of vocabulary learning strategies specially at the intermediate and advanced level by the use of key word strategy would bring significant results. He adds "modern foreign language pedagogy stresses the importance of teaching

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

students appropriate learning and studying strategies". (p. 127)

Vocabulary Learning Strategy Inventory

The identification of vocabulary learning strategies specifically was made possible through the works by Stoffer (1995) and Schmitt (1997). Stoffer developed a questionnaire which contained 53 items designed to measure specifically vocabulary learning strategies. This vocabulary learning strategy inventory (VOLSI) and the SILL were concurrently administered to the university students showing a high degree of reliability. Stoffer demonstrated that the 53 items on the VOLSI clustered into nine categories by factor analysis as follows:-

1. Strategies involving authentic language use
2. Strategies used for self- motivation
3. Strategies used to organize words
4. Strategies used to create mental linkages
5. Memory strategies
6. Strategies involving creative activities
7. Strategies involving physical action
8. Strategies used to overcome anxiety
9. Auditory strategies

Other Strategies

The other taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies developed by Schmitt includes those strategies learners use to determine the meaning of new words when they first encounter and those used to consolidate meanings when they encounter words again; the former providing determination and social strategies and the latter social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Determination strategies are used when discovering the new words meaning by oneself; social strategies are used to understand a word by asking others; memory strategies are approaches which relate new materials to existing knowledge; cognitive strategies are used to manipulate or transmit target language on the part of learners; and metacognitive strategies are used to consciously overview the learning process and to make decisions about planning, monitoring, or evaluating the best ways to study.

In summary, the notion of learning strategies was born in two fields that have developed it independently; cognitive psychology and SLA. The former tried to analyze the strategies that experts employ and then train novices to use them as well. The latter preferred to describe the kinds of strategies that are used. Furthermore, a number of researchers have attempted to systematize strategies of nonnative speakers, using questionnaires such as SILL that classify various kinds of strategies into categories of memory, cognitive, compensatory, mnemonic, affective and social strategies. It has proved to be reliable and valid as some studies have shown by collecting data from people such as university students.

Statement of the Problem

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

Despite all the developments in the field of language learning and teaching and hence the specified point of vocabulary acquisition as part of English for general or specific purpose courses, and the achievements in the art of material designing around the world and the emergence of new trends, such significant facets have been traditionally dealt with and prematurely left out in the educational atmosphere of this country.

The course books developed are to the greater extent propagating structural and alternatively content-based approaches to course design – both of the types focused on no more than language forms; if topics are used to separate lessons they are also in service of structure. In these approaches the terms form and structure are taken to connote as usual in the related literature the inclusion of both grammar and lexicon of language. (Brown, 2007)

The lexical items included in the classroom materials are chosen based on their frequency of occurrence, difficulty level, degree of learners' familiarity and use, social/categorical importance or other experimented criteria. In all cases, no effective selective role has been assigned to the priorities and preferences of learners themselves. Presentation of the items and the way they are supposed to get acquired are addressee-irrelevant.

Impact of Omissions

These neglects and many other inefficiencies raise the issues of developing materials of qualities needed and the incorporation of vocabulary items requested; those items need to be presented in such a way that the appropriate existing and prospective strategies toward the learning and manipulation of lexical items are strengthened and introduced. The works done and elaborated on, the ideas and insights gained from learners themselves, teachers, course designers, and graduates help finding a way out of this problem.

So, it is assumed that the incorporation of learner-centered principles and an integrative syllabus considering the strategies manipulated and needed by learners according to their genders in their learning and using English vocabulary is the remedy to be experienced. Whether the English learners of different sexes use the same or varied vocabulary learning strategies and their degree of manipulation of such strategies in relation to gender form the core of the questions raised and the hypotheses generated.

Research Hypotheses

To achieve the purpose of the study, the effect of gender on English vocabulary learning strategies manipulated by the district-five students of Azad University, the present study verifies the following hypotheses:

H₁: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of memory strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

H₂: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of cognitive strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

H₃: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of compensatory strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

H₄: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of mnemonic strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

H₅: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of affective strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

H₆: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of social strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

H₇: There is a meaningful distinction between the boy and girl students' application of strategies to the vocabulary learning situations.

Significance of the Study

This study is firstly aimed at unveiling the strategies learners of English manipulate in the process of acquiring the vocabulary component of this second language. Then, a distinction is to be made between the type and frequency of the strategies learners of each sex group (male and female) categorically resort to in learning and using lexical items of English.

Later, some guidelines to the development of learner-friendly materials are introduced emphasizing the primarily decided goal of learner-centeredness.

Considering learners' vocabulary learning strategies is a salient step toward developing materials and designing classroom procedures appealing, alluring and motivating. Customarily, language teachers of now rack the brain of our university students with describing the many linguistic forms and strange obsolete terminologies embedded within the reading sections of more than two pages long and a total lesson of about fifteen pages and more; Even the type of language used to address learners is rich in words and word combinations that are irrelevant to context, gender and needs.

Moreover, the appropriate techniques to match the specific methods of learners' approaching the lexical items are evaded. Passages worked out based on traditional grammar methods and audiolingualistic exercises (not tasks!), for instance, add enough flavor to the atmosphere to escape the learners.

Design and Procedures

As gender was considered to function as the pivotal independent variable in this study the questionnaires were circulated among learners of both sexes. Six bundles of fifty handouts were assigned to each specified branch of Azad University in its fifth district to be responded to by randomly selected participants without focusing on a specific course of study or other characteristic features. The learners' responses to each item in the SILL questionnaire were weighed and considered as factors illuminating learners' degree of

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

strategy use within and across their gender groups; the results being incorporated into the instructional programs.

Participants

To identify the basic vocabulary learning strategies learners of English as a second language manipulate in acquiring the complicated system of this language at an academic level, and to find out whether their degree of utilization and verity of choice differ across genders, branches of Azad University located in its fifth district where decided upon to provide the population affiliated to this study.

As this district is geographically wide to enclose the Markazi, Hamedan and Lorestan provinces within which nearly all cities and suburban areas merit the inclusion of a branch only some branches were chosen merely for their accessibility and ease of sample selection, and instrument application. Six branches, namely Arak, Khomein, Hamedan, Malayer, Borojerd and Doroud were finally voted for to take their share of having some of the students voluntarily and irrespective of their courses of study participate in the study.

Totally 300 members equally coming from the specified branches were given handouts of strategy inventory for English vocabulary learning, a modified version of Oxford's comprehensive SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) to check. They were asked to mark one of the slots (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that required their confession about how true the statement was in terms of what they did when learning a new language. For the purpose of distinguishing the specific strategies among different genders the questionnaires were impartially distributed to yield the data needed. Separately, 114 females and 180 males coparticipate in the survey with six other handouts not returned.

Instrumentation

For the fulfillment of the research objective a self-report type of questionnaire of SILL, as explained above, was developed as a modified, hence validated, version of Oxford's (1990). This instrument included the two well-known categories of strategies namely direct and indirect, or cognitive and metacognitive, along with their specified subcategories. Direct strategies directly affecting learning process of students involve memory, cognitive and compensation ones, while the second type i.e. indirect strategies involves mnemonic, affective and social ones.

First, learners were supposed to mark the responses (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) to express the degree to which each statement was true of them. Here, by marking 1 the learner shows that the specified statement is never or almost never true of him/her; 2 generally not true of him/her; 3 somewhat true of the learner; 4 generally true; and 5 always or almost always true of him/her.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

Male and female students' responses reflecting the amount of their application of six categories of vocabulary learning strategies were tabulated and mathematicized to have

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

their average performance concerning means and standard deviations compared at the levels of item, section and general use. *T-test* formula was applied for a discrimination to be made between the results found for the components just mentioned. Here the confidence interval for difference between means was put on the approximate value of 95.0% with $\alpha = 0.05$. The basic assumptions of *t-test* were successfully met on finding the one to five distribution of scores nearly normal and the square of SDs, i.e. variances, specifically equal. (This equality is partly due to the nearly equal sample sizes)

To save the space, some tables and graphs specifically those of individual items are avoided to the benefit of the followings.

Table below provides means and standard deviations of participants' manipulation of individual vocabulary learning strategies put into gender and then collective categories. Here, for instance, male participants are shown to stand on the point 2.23 along the one-to-five scale of never to always employment of strategy number 10, *saying or writing the new word several times*, while this standing is 4.15 for females; the overall manipulation of strategy number 10 is 3.59 on the same scale.

| Strategy | Item | Male | | Female | | Male & Female | |
|------------------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> |
| Memory | 1 | 3.33 | 1.18 | 3.38 | 1.19 | 3.28 | 1.26 |
| | 2 | 2.60 | 1.22 | 2.47 | 1.17 | 2.55 | 1.19 |
| | 3 | 3.23 | 0.97 | 2.57 | 1.12 | 2.97 | 1.07 |
| | 4 | 2.93 | 1.25 | 2.42 | 1.30 | 2.73 | 1.28 |
| | 5 | 2.20 | 1.24 | 1.87 | 1.08 | 2.04 | 1.19 |
| | 6 | 2.76 | 1.50 | 2.47 | 1.46 | 2.65 | 1.48 |
| | 7 | 2.93 | 1.38 | 2.15 | 1.03 | 2.63 | 1.30 |
| | 8 | 3.30 | 1.20 | 3.68 | 1.37 | 3.45 | 1.27 |
| | 9 | 3.20 | 1.18 | 4.10 | 1.24 | 3.55 | 1.27 |
| Cognitive | 10 | 2.23 | 1.45 | 4.15 | 0.89 | 3.59 | 1.38 |
| | 11 | 2.50 | 1.04 | 2.68 | 1.29 | 2.57 | 1.14 |
| | 12 | 2.86 | 1.25 | 3.10 | 0.93 | 2.96 | 1.36 |
| | 13 | 2.90 | 1.18 | 2.57 | 1.26 | 2.77 | 1.21 |
| | 14 | 2.90 | 1.34 | 2.57 | 1.26 | 2.77 | 1.31 |
| | 15 | 3.20 | 1.44 | 2.63 | 1.30 | 2.98 | 1.40 |
| | 16 | 3.00 | 1.41 | 2.94 | 1.26 | 2.98 | 1.35 |
| | 17 | 2.63 | 1.21 | 2.63 | 1.57 | 2.63 | 1.35 |
| | 18 | 3.36 | 1.29 | 3.68 | 0.94 | 3.49 | 1.17 |
| | 19 | 3.33 | 1.32 | 3.00 | 1.00 | 3.20 | 1.20 |
| | 20 | 2.53 | 1.10 | 2.63 | 1.21 | 2.57 | 1.14 |
| | 21 | 2.83 | 1.08 | 2.94 | 1.26 | 2.88 | 1.15 |
| | 22 | 2.73 | 1.17 | 2.73 | 1.14 | 2.73 | 1.15 |
| | 23 | 3.20 | 1.15 | 2.73 | 1.14 | 3.02 | 1.16 |
| mp ens ato | 24 | 2.86 | 1.19 | 2.73 | 1.19 | 2.82 | 1.18 |
| | 25 | 2.70 | 1.26 | 2.73 | 1.44 | 2.71 | 1.32 |

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 26 | 2.86 | 1.43 | 2.63 | 1.11 | 2.77 | 1.31 |
| | 27 | 3.10 | 1.29 | 2.68 | 1.45 | 2.94 | 1.36 |
| | 28 | 2.93 | 1.08 | 3.10 | 1.10 | 3.00 | 1.08 |
| | 29 | 3.10 | 1.29 | 3.10 | 1.19 | 3.10 | 1.24 |
| Mnemonic | 30 | 2.56 | 1.16 | 2.78 | 1.35 | 2.65 | 1.23 |
| | 31 | 2.90 | 0.95 | 3.00 | 1.24 | 2.94 | 1.07 |
| | 32 | 3.10 | 1.35 | 3.40 | 1.12 | 3.26 | 1.27 |
| | 33 | 3.23 | 1.50 | 3.40 | 1.12 | 3.16 | 1.36 |
| | 34 | 2.66 | 1.32 | 3.05 | 1.22 | 2.82 | 1.28 |
| | 35 | 2.83 | 1.20 | 2.47 | 1.21 | 2.69 | 1.21 |
| | 36 | 2.60 | 1.32 | 2.84 | 1.11 | 2.69 | 1.24 |
| | 37 | 3.06 | 1.22 | 2.63 | 1.30 | 2.90 | 1.26 |
| | 38 | 2.80 | 1.44 | 2.80 | 1.41 | 2.84 | 1.42 |
| Affective | 39 | 2.93 | 1.31 | 2.84 | 1.30 | 2.90 | 1.29 |
| | 40 | 2.66 | 1.24 | 2.94 | 1.17 | 2.77 | 1.21 |
| | 41 | 2.46 | 1.19 | 3.31 | 1.10 | 2.41 | 1.15 |
| | 42 | 2.50 | 1.10 | 2.47 | 1.44 | 2.49 | 1.19 |
| | 43 | 2.23 | 1.40 | 1.78 | 1.08 | 2.06 | 1.29 |
| | 44 | 2.56 | 1.33 | 1.94 | 0.97 | 2.32 | 1.23 |
| Social | 45 | 3.13 | 1.35 | 3.05 | 1.17 | 3.10 | 1.27 |
| | 46 | 3.50 | 1.04 | 2.68 | 1.05 | 3.20 | 1.19 |
| | 47 | 2.46 | 1.27 | 2.52 | 1.21 | 2.49 | 1.24 |
| | 48 | 2.76 | 1.40 | 2.68 | 1.33 | 2.73 | 1.36 |
| | 49 | 2.76 | 1.13 | 3.36 | 1.06 | 3.00 | 1.13 |
| | 50 | 2.70 | 1.44 | 2.52 | 1.17 | 2.63 | 1.33 |

Except for the strategies number 3, 7, 9, 10, 41 and 46 for which there is a significant difference between the performance of male and female students, the other strategies are somehow equally resorted to by learners. Of these six strategies three belong to the memory category of learning strategies.

Connecting the sound of a new English word with an image or picture as a way toward better acquisition and remembering of vocabulary items is an opportunity relatively highly available to males than femaleless.

Practicing with flashcards for the same purpose is again much more tangible to males than females as the former can easily manage having and readily working with the cards, sometimes likened to specific manly hobbies and entertainments. Despite these two privileges for male students, they are not as careful as their female counterparts in

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

remembering the exact location of the items they have in mind on the face of the paper or the board they have come across.

This is to say that although females are not in the habit of using audio and visual devices together or practicing with flashcards or similar teaching aids, they focus their attention on the things they are confronted with at any moment or physical situation.

Moreover, the frequency with which the learners repeat a specific lexical item verbally and non-verbally also differs across genders to the point of females applying this technique much more frequently; the difference between means is 0.90 to the benefit of female students. Self-rewarding –giving oneself a reward or treat when doing well in English– is a strategy largely favored by females than males with the mean difference of 0.85 on the scale of one to five. This shows that the formers are much more sensitive to reward anticipation after some degrees of development. So, this is a good opportunity for program administrators to devote some occasions for recreation.

The significance of the difference of means for the strategy number 46 –a social vocabulary learning strategy dealing with the capacity of asking others to correct one's production– confirms that in comparison with female English learners male students find themselves at ease on having the others monitor their application of lexical items.

On the other hand, the fact of 0.82 difference points to the direction of females believing in their being accurate, not willing to let others correct what they say in the second language, thus fossilizing many erroneous points to result in misuse of words, frequent use of specific words lacking variety, and inability to cooperate with higher level interlocutors.

After all these explanations it must be emphasized that all the hypotheses of this project are nullified by the results of the t-tests not showing significant amounts of difference between the means and the standard deviations of learners' manipulation of vocabulary learning strategies categorically and totally by gender. In all cases the directions specified for the hypotheses are rejected.

The means of the participants' degree of manipulating total vocabulary learning strategies and the corresponding standard deviations are shown in the following table along with their gender-specific statistics.

| Male | | Female | | Male & Female | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> |
| 2.80 | 1.27 | 2.81 | 1.27 | 2.80 | 1.27 |

As clear, the total mean of learners' degree of strategy application in learning English vocabulary is 2.80 which reminds the necessity of strategy instruction in language classes. The equality of means for males and females primarily reveals that language learning, specifically its vocabulary, is not affected by gender as far as the strategy manipulation is concerned. Besides the indices 2.80 and 2.81, speak of a great distance between what is available and what is expected; both genders are equally deprived of knowing strategies thus a fault with the curriculum in practice.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

The next table provides data concerning the six categories of strategies in the form of means and standard deviations of male and female students' applying vocabulary learning strategies. Here, one can find cognitive strategies being manipulated by average nearly at the same rate to result in the participants' total mean of 2.94 with the constant variation of 1.25.

| | Male | | Female | | Male & Female | |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> |
| Memory | 2.94 | 1.27 | 2.76 | 2.41 | 2.87 | 1.33 |
| Cognitive | 2.95 | 1.26 | 2.93 | 1.24 | 2.94 | 1.25 |
| Compensatory | 2.94 | 1.23 | 2.83 | 1.24 | 2.90 | 1.24 |
| Mnemonic | 2.90 | 1.25 | 2.91 | 1.24 | 2.90 | 1.25 |
| Affective | 2.57 | 1.25 | 2.40 | 1.24 | 2.50 | 1.25 |
| Social | 2.90 | 1.29 | 2.80 | 1.18 | 2.86 | 1.25 |

When the strategies are categorically treated, the mean and standard deviations do not appear to harshly diverge from the central point. This can be viewed in Table 4; and Charts 2 and 3 appropriately demonstrate the points. The average use of vocabulary learning strategies by male and female students will be 2.94 and 2.76 for memory strategies respectively ascribed to males and females; 2.95 and 2.93 for cognitive strategies; 2.94 and 2.83 for compensatory strategies; 2.90 and 2.91 for mnemonic strategies; 2.51 and 2.57 for affective strategies; and 2.90 and 2.80 for social strategies. Data reveal equal application of different categories of strategies inter and intra genders-oriented distributions. Moreover, investigating the relationship and the significance of means across categories of vocabulary learning strategies leads to the nullification of any significant difference.

Concluding Remarks

This is not a new conclusion; however it illustrates the inconsistency and inconclusiveness of empirical results emphasized by Gu (2002) and Chamot (2004). "Studies which examined the relationship between sex and strategy use have come to mixed conclusions", Griffiths (2004, p.12) states. Ehrman and Oxford (1990) also fail to discover any evidence of differing language learning strategy use across gender.

There have been other researches on the same topic and with the unique beliefs and hypotheses coming to the same point. In the study by Lee Shinwoong (2007) with one of its objectives being "to examine if there is any gender difference in the use of strategy" he concludes that "no gender effect was found on the pattern and frequency of strategy use".

Nada Salem (2006) investigating the role of motivation, gender and language leaning strategies in EFL proficiency accomplishes the idea of gender not showing any significant role in overall use of language learning strategies although males and fameless differing in their use of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies in favor of females.

It should be emphasized here that gender is only one of a large number of factors identified

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

to affect learners' choice of language learning strategies while acquiring a second language.

Motivation, cultural background, attitudes and beliefs, type of task, age and L2 stage, learning style, tolerance of ambiguity, brain hemisphere dominance, career orientation, and academic major are among such factors we need to consider. As a result, the discrepancies across different researches on the role of gender in vocabulary learning strategies are all justified on observing all the other much more critical elements as cultural background, attitudes and beliefs, and academic major that are situationally different.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

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Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

This form of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement and write the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells **HOW TRUE THE STATEMENT IS ABOUT YOU**.

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

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There is no right or wrong answers to these

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University, District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

statements. This questionnaire usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let the teacher know immediately.

Part A

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | I use rhymes to remember new English words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | I use flashcards to remember new English words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | I physically act out new English words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | I review English lessons often. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Part B

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. | I say or write new English words several times. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | I try to talk like native English speakers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | I practice the sounds of English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | I use the English words I know in different ways. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | I start conversations in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | I read for pleasure in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. | I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | I try to find patterns in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. | I try not to translate word for word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. | I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Part C

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24. | To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. | When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. | I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

- English.
27. I read English without looking-up every new word. 1 2 3 4 5
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English. 1 2 3 4 5
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing. 1 2 3 4 5

Part D

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English. 1 2 3 4 5
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better 1 2 3 4 5
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English. 1 2 3 4 5
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English. 1 2 3 4 5
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English. 1 2 3 4 5
35. I look for people I can talk to in English. 1 2 3 4 5
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English. 1 2 3 4 5
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills. 1 2 3 4 5
38. I think about my progress in learning English. 1 2 3 4 5

Part E

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English. 1 2 3 4 5
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake. 1 2 3 4 5
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English. 1 2 3 4 5
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English. 1 2 3 4 5
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy. 1 2 3 4 5
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English. 1 2 3 4 5

Part F

45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again. 1 2 3 4 5
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk. 1 2 3 4 5
47. I practice English with other students. 1 2 3 4 5
48. I ask for help from English speakers. 1 2 3 4 5
49. I ask questions in English. 1 2 3 4 5
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers. 1 2 3 4 5

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Davood Madani, Ph.D. and Fetemeh Azizmohammadi, Ph.D.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Manipulated by the Students of Azad University,
District 5: A Gender-oriented Study

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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