

## Identifying Language Learning Strategies (LLS) For Speaking Skill: A Study among Year 5 English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners

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### Abstract

Speaking skill is be one of the crucial skills that should be mastered by learners in order to be proficient in English language and to be able to orally convey information to the listeners in the most effective manner. The language learners are in constant search of finding an effective ways to sharpen their speaking skill. There are many ways the learners adept to enhance their speaking skill. Language Learning Strategies (LLS) is one of the ways that are widely being used by language learners. Therefore, the objectives of this research were to investigate the effectiveness of (LLS) employed by learners in improving speaking skill and also to investigate the most and least preferred LLS by year 5 ESL learners. For the purpose of this study, 60 Year 5 ESL learners were chosen from an urban primary school. Quantitative approach was employed in this study and the instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire. The data were analysed descriptively to obtain percentage and mean score. The findings revealed that memory strategy as the most preferred strategy whereas metacognitive strategy as the least preferred strategy among the primary ESL learners. The findings also indicated that the LLS are effective in enhancing speaking skill. These findings will be useful for researchers who are keen in studying the effectiveness of LLS on improving speaking skill among learners.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Strategies (LLS), Speaking Skill, Primary ESL Learners, Urban Primary.

### Introduction

At the present moment, English language is known as the most dominant language worldwide and also recognized as the world's lingua franca (Suzina, 2021). In Malaysia, English is being taught as a second language and it is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary school due to the burgeoning demand for this language globally widespread (Khalijah et al.,

2019). This is evident through the initiative taken by the Ministry of Education when Common European Framework of References (CEFR) was introduced with the goals to enhance every learner's English proficiency and also to benchmark our learners against international standards (Khair & Shah, 2021). However, it is proven through several studies (Farah et al., 2018, Aziz et al., 2021 & Nur et al., 2019) that it is still a struggle for the pupils to master the second language effectively

There are four macro skills in the English language which are listening, speaking, reading and writing that should be acquired by the ESL learners to be proficient in the language. Owing to the fact that these four skills are intertwined, lack of competency in any one skill will have a direct effect on other skills as well (Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021). Furthermore, these four skills are assessed based on the descriptors set in CEFR to determine if the learners are proficient in the language (North & Piccardo, 2019). Among the four skills, acquisition of speaking skill has always been a big challenge for the learners and this skill substantially outweighs other skills as it takes place frequently both in formal and informal context. Siva (2021) stated that the majority of Malaysian students are facing difficulties in speaking in English fluently. This fact can be substantiated as Kashinathan and Aziz (2021) broached the same statement in their article by stating that learners' lack of competency in the targeted language exhibit poor speaking performance which eventually this has become an issue that should be dwell on.

A good language learner will always strive to find approaches, methods, techniques or strategies that will help them in optimising their language learning process effectively. In a further note, good language learners are acquainted with their own learning preferences and explore the language learning strategies to discover the one apt to improvise their language learning process. One of the ways that good language learners have adopted to enhance their speaking skill in the English language is Language Learning Strategies (LLS). LLS is a learning method which is consciously chosen by the learners in order to enhance their learning of a second or even foreign language through the process of retention, recall and also application of information on that particular language. According to John et al (2021), LLS can be classified into two categories which are direct and also indirect strategies. Direct strategies refer to memory-related, cognitive and compensation while indirect strategies refer to metacognitive, affective and also social. A lot of research has been done to investigate the effectiveness of LLS among adult learners but the number of studies done on the primary ESL learners are still limited. Hence, this study aims to identify the LLS used by the primary year 5 ESL learners to enhance speaking skill and also to investigate the most and least preferred LLS by year 5 learners in improving their speaking skill.

The significance of this study is to shed some light on the effectiveness of using various LLS to enhance speaking skills among the primary ESL learners. This paper also will aid the language learners to explore the various language learning strategies that are effective and apt for their learning. The finding of the study also will serve as a guidance for the teachers who are wishing to integrate LLS in their classrooms. Finally, given the demand for the English language in our modern times, it is crucial to research on the strategies used by learners to develop their English language, especially to enhance their speaking skill.

### **Research Question**

This research intends to answer the following questions

1. Which LLS is used mostly by the year 5 ESL pupils to improve their speaking skill?
2. Which LLS is used least by the year 5 ESL pupils to improve their speaking skill?

## 2. Are LLS effective in enhancing the year 5 ESL pupils' speaking skill?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Learning Strategies**

Learning and acquiring knowledge becomes a crucial part in order to understand and comprehend how things function (De Felice et al., 2022). Thus, humans are required to study everything in order to comprehend since they do not know everything when they are born. For instance, not everyone can comprehend English, yet some non-native speakers are quite proficient in using it. This applies not only in learning the English language but to other languages as well. Hence, throughout the learning process, it's possible to notice that some people may swiftly and effectively learn everything. In order to accomplish the primary goal of learning, each learning process necessitates the adaptation of a method or strategy (Liu et al., 2020). The most crucial part of learning is how and what are the strategies used by a learner in order for the learner to acquire knowledge (Lederberg et al., 2019). Nevertheless, when acquiring a language, humans use a variety of diverse ways to learn.

As a result, several studies seek to understand how learners approach learning, what factors influence learning success, and why some individuals are more adept at learning than others. So what precisely does the word "learning strategies" mean? Learning strategies are the many procedures that students employ to make meaning of their learning (Forbes & Fisher, 2018). It may be simpler to define learning strategy as learning skills, problem-solving skills, thinking skills, or, in other words, the ways that students use to consume, store, and retrieve information during the learning process. Learning strategies also, as defined by Oxford (2003), are particular acts made by the learner to make learning simpler, self-directed, more pleasant, successful, and transferrable to other settings. Overall, in order to learn something more effectively, learners employ learning strategies which enable the learners not only to have meaningful learning but also to have a positive outcome in learning (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020).

#### **Concept of Language Learning Strategies**

The study of language learning strategies has greatly increased due to the vital roles of these strategies that help learners learn a language effectively. Furthermore, much research in the field of learning a second or foreign language was employed to understand how learners process new information and what sorts of tactics they employ to comprehend, acquire, or recall the information (Aminatun & Oktaviani, 2019). For instance, Oxford (2012) noted that certain students succeed in the classroom better than others though the same educational exposure is given in a classroom. Hence, the significance of comprehending the definition of language learning strategy is vital in order for us to understand the principle of learning strategies.

LLS is a language learning behaviour where learners master and take control of acquiring a second or foreign language (Yuldashevna, 2019). On the other hand, Brown (2002) describes language learning strategies as actions that language learners use to assist language learning. Furthermore, cognitive theory, where it focuses on students' strategic understanding of language learning, and emotional perspective, such as students' motivation, attitude, etc may all be included when defining language learning methods (Oga-Baldwin, 2019). According to Wenden (1998), these three principles such as language learning behaviour, cognitive theory and emotional perspective of learners are put out as ways to enhance language acquisition. In conclusion, it can be inferred that LLS are a range of strategies, techniques,

methods and approaches that are used by language learners with the aim to enhance their language acquisition.

### **Typology of Language Learning Strategies**

Based on O'Malley and Chamot (as cited in Thomas & Janosy, 2020), LLS are categorised under six types which are metacognitive, cognitive, social, affective, compensation and memory. These categories were crucial to learners to plan and to reflect on their learning process by monitoring their own understanding and assessing the results of their own learning. Metacognitive strategies refers to a method in language learning that plans and reflects on the learning process while it occurs, keeping track of one's output or comprehension, and assessing learning once an activity is finished (Teng et al., 2021). Whereas, cognitive learning procedures are more restricted to certain learning tasks and entail more direct manipulation of the learning material itself (Safran, 2019). There are certain cognitive strategies such as repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note-taking, deduction, recombination, imaging, auditory representation, key words, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, and inferencing to help learners with their learning (Ayedoun et al., 2019).

Next, social strategies are connected to interpersonal interactions. The primary social strategies include collaboration to look for opportunities to be exposed to a setting where practice is available (Chamot & Harris, 2019). The fourth strategy, compensation strategy is about overcoming information gaps that hinder the learners from acquiring and producing the target language (John, et al., 2021). According to Chanderan & Hashim (2022), affective strategy is to help the learners to regulate their emotions and feelings related to their learning by lowering their anxiety level, taking note of emotional temperature, self rewarding and boost motivations toward learning the target language. Last but not least, memory strategy is related to creating mental linkages, integrating images and sounds, reviewing well and employing bodily movements in the process of language acquisition (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). These are the main six categories of LLS that are utilised in language learning.

These strategies are crucial since language acquisition is a social habit that needs constant interaction with others. It offers language learners a variety of ways to accomplish activities like reading, writing, listening and speaking when faced with language learning challenges (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). The implementation of an effective language learning strategy enables language learners to be competent to be a successful learner (Wang et al., 2018)

### **LLS in Improving Speaking Strategies**

Khairul and Putri (2022) defined speaking as an interactive process that uses knowledge acquisition, retrieval, and processing to create meaning. Zakaria (2018) stated that speaking is considered a crucial language ability as language learners. Speaking promotes communication proficiency, reading comprehension, and writing ability (Sun et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Fendji et al. (2021), it was revealed that the most frequent problems students encounter to speak include limited vocabulary to convey a message, challenging grammatical structures, improper pronunciation and intonation, a lack of opportunities to speak English, and lack of confidence (Ahmed, 2018). Children develop their speaking abilities in accordance with their environment if correct exposure and strategies are used during their learning process. Hence, by using the appropriate LLS, English language learners will be able to enhance their language skills. Lingga et al. (2020) also asserted that LLS will improve students' speaking abilities and their overall communicative success. Besides, learners who

are competent, confident and organised are significantly impacted by LLS (Mei & Masoumeh, 2017). Through different learning strategies, students can learn and practice in a second-language that will help them improve their speaking skills.

Over the years, many scholars have investigated the effectiveness of LLS in improving speaking skill among language learners. A study carried out by Zakaria et al., (2018) , to identify LLS used by secondary school students showed that the respondents agreed that integrating strategies were the most productive and effective strategies which enhanced their speaking ability. Similarly, another study conducted by Amjusfa et al., (2021) shows that the higher achieving students who employed all of the LLS in learning obtained high scores in the speaking test compared to students who did not use LLS. In another study by Marlin et al., (2021), the result indicated that LLS does have a significant influence and importance to scaffold the students in developing their speaking skill. Therefore, it can be concluded from the persistent result from all three studies that LLS does have a positive impact on acquisition of speaking skill.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative research design, specifically a survey research design. Quantitative method is defined as a method to obtain accurate and reliable measurements that allow a statistical analysis by Queiros (2017). Quantitative research design was selected precisely as it was most apt to be employed in this study to achieve the research objectives: to determine the most and least preferred language learning strategies and to investigate the effectiveness of using LLS to enhance speaking skill among the year 5 ESL learners.

### **Research Instrument**

In this study, a Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire was used to collect data on the participants' use of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) to enhance speaking skill. The SILL questionnaire is a widely used instrument for measuring language learning strategies. It was designed to assess the extent to which individuals use different types of strategies to learn a language. The questionnaire used in this study is a modified version of the (SILL) questionnaire from Bessai (2018) who adapted it from the original Oxford's SLL (Oxford, 1990).

The questionnaire is divided in two main sections where the first section is the demographic profile of the respondent whereas the second section is to collect data regarding the research questions of this study. The second part of the survey questionnaire is divided into six parts as shown in Table 1 where each of which focuses on a different aspect of language learning strategies. The total number of items/statements for the six sections are 51 where the number of items for each section varies. The items in this questionnaire were modified to suit current trends in technology and relevant with the respondents lifestyle. Apart from that, an additional new section known as Part G consisting of only one binary question was added in this section for the purpose of this study to investigate the effectiveness of SLL in enhancing the speaking skill among the respondents.

Meanwhile, as shown in Table 2: Likert Scale Description for the Questionnaire Item, the scales are aided by scale from 1 to 3 to evaluate participants' responses to each statement provided. Names of the pupils were excluded from the questionnaire to respect their privacy.

Table

*Description of section 2 of questionnaire*

Learning Strategies		SECTIONS
Direct Strategy	Memory	A
	Cognitive	B
	Compensation	C
Indirect Strategy	Metacognitive	D
	Affective	E
	Social	F
Effectiveness of LLS		G

Table 2. 3

*Point Likert Scale Description*

Scale	Description
1	Often used
2	Sometimes Used
3	Never Used

### Population and Sampling

As subjects of observation and analysis, research participants play an essential part in a study (Nair et al., 2021). A total of 60 year 5 pupils from a Setapak, Kuala Lumpur, urban primary school were chosen for this study. These students have a range of abilities and were chosen intentionally to provide a more full, comprehensive picture of how students of various proficiency levels use LLS to communicate. These students came from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. It appears that the sample was diverse in terms of race, with participants representing Malay, Indian, Chinese, and other ethnic backgrounds. In terms of gender, the sample included both male and female. In school, these students study English as a second language. The demographic profile of the respondents is as shown in table 3.

Table 3

*Demographic profile of the respondents*

No	Item	N (%)	
1	Gender	Male	25
		Female	35
2	Race	Malay	49
		Indian	6
		Chinese	3
		Others	2
3	Primary	Five	60 (100%)

**Data Analysis Procedure**

For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics was utilised in this study to summarise the data acquired from the samples and provide an overview of the language learning strategies employed by the year 5 ESL learners. Based on the data collected, the researchers calculated the frequency, mean and percentage for each of the strategies. During the data collection, the researchers were directly involved with their samples. The printed surveys were personally distributed and assisted by the researchers. The researchers explained the goal of the survey to the respondents before they began answering the questions. The researchers and participants went over each question together to verify that the participants had a clear understanding of each question in the questionnaire. The researchers guided them throughout the whole process of completing the survey. This was done to avoid any loopholes and to prevent students from answering questions at random only to get the surveys completed.

**Findings & Discussion**

In this section, the findings of the survey will be discussed thoroughly by answering the three research questions of this study. The data obtained from the study were analysed descriptively to find the mean and percentage for each of the sections in the questionnaire as tabulated in table 4.

The collected data was used to determine the most used and the least used LLS among the year 5 pupils. For the most used strategy, the results were taken from the total percentage of scale 1 and 2 because it shows that the respondents have used the strategy at least once to improve speaking skill. Then, the strategies were ranked according to the accumulated percentage obtained from combining scale 1 and 2 as shown in table 5.

Table 4

*Descriptive analysis of utilisation of LLS among year 5 ESL pupils*

Language Learning Strategies (LLS)		Mean Score	Percentage (%)
Direct Strategies	Memory	2.80	81
	Cognitive	2.44	67
	Compensation	1.90	37
Indirect Strategies	Metacognitive	1.52	30
	Affective	2.07	50
	Social	2.63	74

Table 5

*Classification of LLS used by year 5 pupils (Ranked from most to least)*

Rank	LLS	Percentage (%)
1	Memory strategy	81
2	Social strategy	74
3	Cognitive strategy	67
4	Affective strategy	54
5	Compensation strategy	39
6	Metacognitive strategy	30

**Research question 1 : What is the most frequently used LLS used by the year 5 ESL pupils to improve their speaking skill?**

Based on the result as shown in table 5, the most used language learning strategies among the respondents is memory strategy with a percentage of 81%. The second most preferred language learning strategy is social strategy with a rate of 74% followed by cognitive strategy (67%) , affective strategy (54%), compensation strategy (39%) and metacognitive strategy (30%). The result indicates that the respondents prefer to use memory strategies the most. Among the 9 questions that were listed in the memory strategy (Part A) section, Q3 (I listen to songs in (Youtube, Spotify, etc.. to learn English ) and Q6 (I watch English movies, Vlog, Tiktok videos and documentaries to learn English) have the highest mean of 2.6 and 2.4 respectively. This implies that the respondents prefer to use images and sounds to learn and remember new vocabulary that they learn. According to Kumar et al (2022), usage of vibrant pictures and exciting songs would increase pupils' attention, boost memory retention



and create meaningful learning experience for the children. This could be one of the reasons why the majority of the respondents chose memory strategy as the most preferred strategy to improve their speaking skill.

**Research question 2: *What is the least preferred LLS used by the year 5 ESL pupils to improve their speaking skills?***

The result of the survey also revealed the least preferred language learning strategies by the respondents to improve their speaking skill by using the data obtained from the overall percentage of each strategy used by the respondents. According to the result, it is revealed that the least preferred language learning strategies by the respondents is metacognitive strategy with a percentage of only 30%. The result portrays that metacognitive strategy isn't used frequently by the respondents when it comes to improving their speaking skills. On the other hand, the affective strategy with 35% is second least preferred language learning strategies followed by the compensation strategy with 40% is third ranked of least preferred strategy by the respondents of the study.

Metacognitive strategy is all about independent learning where the learners have autonomy in navigating their learning experience based on their own needs and preferences. As this result of this study indicates that metacognitive strategy is the least preferred strategy among the respondent, it can be interpreted that the learners might still need scaffolding from the teachers to assist them in their learning. Apart from that, it could be because the learners still lack awareness and are unfamiliar with the application of this strategy as this strategy requires the learners to be in charge of their own learning.

**Research question 3 : *Are LLS effective in enhancing the year 5 ESL learners' speaking skill?***

The data from Part G were collected and analysed thoroughly to answer this research question. In this part, the respondents were asked if the language learning strategies were effective to improve their speaking skill. As it was a binary question, there was only "Yes" or "No" as an option to choose. As shown in table 6, 89% of the respondents chose "Yes" as an answer to the question which indicates that the majority of the respondents find LLS to be very effective in enhancing their speaking skill. Only 11% of the respondents chose "No" as an answer. Thus, it can be confidently conveyed that LLS is effective to enhance speaking skill among the primary year 5 pupils. With that, all the three research questions of this study are successfully answered and the goals of the study are achieved.

Table 6

*Result of Part G*

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
<b>Q51. Do you find LLS effective in improving your speaking skill?</b>	89	11

**Implications and Conclusion**

The findings of this study has a number of implications for ESL instruction in Malaysian primary school education. As the results showed, the majority of the respondents in this study agreed that LLS have a positive impact on their acquisition of English language, specifically their speaking skill. Thus, it is evident that the primary school pupils have a good perception

on the use of LLS to enhance English language proficiency. The pupils should be given more exposure, opportunities and scaffolding to employ more LLS in their process of learning the language as it will help them to optimise their learning. As asserted by Alhaysony (2017), greater LLS use may improve students' motivation and help them to improve their language learning.

On the other hand, teachers also have to alter their teaching instruction by reviewing their teaching methods, overall classroom style and individual preferences to provide learners with more opportunities to utilise a broad range of strategies that are available to them. Besides, teachers should give the learners the autonomy to choose their most apt LLS which will enable the learners to take responsibility for their own learning. It is to encourage more learners centred learning in the classroom. In a nutshell, use of LLS in ESL acquisition does have many positive impacts on the pupils as well as the teachers as proven through this study. The learners regardless of their gender and age should make use of the great opportunity to improve their speaking skill by employing LLS in their learning whereas the teachers should enhance their teaching practice by incorporating LLS in their ESL classrooms to optimise teaching and learning process excellently.

In a nutshell, LLS provides a variety of strategies and options for the language learners to adept and optimise their language learning experience. The language learners should take advantage of the various language learning strategies available and thrive in learning the language successfully.

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