

Language Learning Strategies and English Proficiency of Chinese University Students

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between language learning strategy (LLS) preferences and English proficiency among Chinese university students. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and an institutional version (ITP) of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) were administered to 168 third-year English majors. Multiple regression analysis revealed that SILL strategies accounted for only 4% of the variation in ITP-TOEFL score. Results of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated no significant differences between males and females on eight measures of learning strategy preferences and proficiency. Findings suggest a need for further research examining other factors that may account for variation in proficiency among Chinese learners. The authors recommend a closer examination of the relationship between learning strategies and proficiency, and the possible interplay of learner autonomy, across diverse cultural settings.*

Introduction

Language teachers and researchers have long observed that some learners acquire English as a second or foreign language more quickly and effectively than others (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Vance, 1999). The nature of this marked discrepancy among learners has captured the attention of practitioners and researchers worldwide. Over the past four decades, researchers have identified a number of cognitive, affective, and sociocultural factors as significantly contributing to this variation in second language acquisition (SLA) (Brown, 2000). From this body of research, language learning strategies (LLSs) consistently have emerged as a particularly significant variable.

LLSs are defined as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Stated another way, learning strategies are "measures that students can take to promote their own learning success" (Franklin, Hodge, & Sasscer, 1997, p. 24).

Although other scholars within the field of SLA have conceptualized and classified learning strategies in a variety of ways, Oxford (1990) developed the most comprehensive model to date.

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