

**LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY PREFERENCE AMONG EFL STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE OF BASIC EDUCATION IN KUWAIT****Amel Mohammed Al-Adwani**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of this study is first to identify language-learning strategies used by students learning English language in the college of Basic Education in Kuwait. It further intends to explore the relationship between learning strategies and the learners' language achievement. It will investigate into the combinations of strategies that are associated with language achievement and differentiate between successful and less successful learning strategies. Secondly, the study will develop an understanding of what strategies contribute to language achievement and how certain variables (gender, age, marital status, travelling abroad) affect the use of learning strategies. Thereby the study's findings will contribute to pedagogical achievement. The knowledge of the relationships between these variables can help teachers discern the various elements needed to achieve success in learning the English language. In order to examine English language learning strategies used by students in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, a set of English learning standardised questionnaire - the Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning ESL/ EFL (SILL) Version 7.0 (Oxford, 1990) - will be adopted. The researcher in this study reflects the desire to develop means that will allow and enable learners to express a fuller, more active and participatory role in their language learning problems. In addition, it will provide empirical evidence of the connection between language learning strategies, language achievement, and other individual variables. This study will reveal extensive information that will contribute to the field of teaching and learning in the classroom in an EFL program. The pragmatic implication of studying these strategies is that they can be taught to learners and thus can modify EFL learners' progress.*

**KEYWORDS:** Language Learning Strategy (LLS), Teaching English as foreign Language (EFL), Applied linguistics(AL), Language learning acquisition (ALA), Kuwait higher Education, Gender differences, College students and EFL learners.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Increasingly the world over Language Learning Strategies (LLS) are acquiring greater relevance in to the teaching and learning of languages. It has therefore become a field in which newer research is being conducted. The study of this discipline would require a multi-level area of focus from researchers. In the last decades, researchers in the field of learning and teaching have shifted their focus from the language teaching methodology to the language learner characteristics and to the variables that affect a good language learner (Farajolahy & Nimrvvari, 2014 & Light Bown & Spada, 2006, Risueno Martinez & et al, 2016). It is suggested that understanding learning strategies is imperative to meet the needs of students towards delivery and approaches. Indeed, it can help educators in identifying appropriate delivery methods and encourage ways in which to enhance critical thinking among learners (Concepcion, 2015). This individualized focus has resulted in an increasing number of studies investigating how differences between learners determine language achievement. These

differences may include gender, aptitude, and motivation, learning styles and learning beliefs. At the same time, researchers have focused on a new field of research in language learning strategies that involves the study of how learners internalize language processes. Language learning strategies that help learners to improve their language competence have played a crucial role in language learning; this field has become one of the most fertile areas in second language acquisition (Macintyre, 1994). LLS have been considered one of the most popular aspects that affect language learning and teaching.

Some studies consider language learning strategies as behaviour or actions consciously used by learners to enhance learning (Cohen, 1990, 1998; Ellis, 1994). Oxford (1990) further expands the definition of language learning strategies as “specific action taken by the learner to make the learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situation” (p.8).

Despite earlier studies that have investigated LLS in many countries, there are few studies that shed light on the use of the LLS by Kuwaiti students in the College of Basic Education who are studying English courses, the effect on their proficiency level, or on the learner LLSs and the learner variables like gender, academic major, and marital status.

In the case of Kuwait it has been found that there are recurring complaints of low academic levels in university and higher education institutions and the cumulative weakness of students' abilities to learn English as a foreign language. In particular, the failure of the graduates' English language abilities to meet their future career needs have been repeatedly emphasised (Al-Mutawa & Al-Dabbous, 1997, Dashti & et al, 2014, El-Dib, 2004, Al-Darwish, 2015, Alkaras, 2015, Alrabah & et al, 2015).

We consider that this area has not been investigated enough. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to twofold: i) to explore the different language learning strategies that are being used by those students of the College of Basic Education, who attend intensive language courses in the College's language centre and their language proficiency; and ii) to explore the effect of LLSs on the learners' variables when using these strategies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical background**

Learning strategies are associated with cognitive theory which was developed from experimental studies of memory, perception, attention, and artificial intelligence in an attempt to examine the human thinking process in a way that replicates the mental process of computers (Carlile & Jordan, 2005). The cognitive model views learning as an active and dynamic process where learners choose from received information, encode it to long term memory, and retrieve it when required (Chamot, Barnhard, El-Dinary, & Robbins, 1999).

"The family of learning strategies is a large one, when theories and researchers from various disciplines talk about". (Gu, 2012) Generally, literature on learning strategies can be divided into four categories: First, the earliest research (Rubin 1975; Stern 1975) which was initiated by the “good language learner” studies, where the characteristics of a successful learner were identified, thus providing insights in how to improve language learning.

Second, the earlier work which also focused on classifying and categorizing learning strategies, such as (eg. Skehan, 1989), Oxford,1990), concentrating frameworks and compiling

inventories of learning strategies, that learners were observed to be using or reported to be using.

The third category deals with learner autonomy (e.g. Cohen & Apeh, 1980; Oxford, 1989). Strategy training teaches learners to foster and display desires to think for themselves. According to Thang (2009), the most important concern in the training for such autonomous skills is that participants display desires and initiatives to think for themselves, and assist participants to design conscious choice in their learning.

The fourth category investigates the factors that influence a learner's choice of strategies (e.g., Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Kaylani, 1996). These inquiries focus on whether the variation is systematically related to certain variables in learning a foreign or a second language.

As we seek to make the language classroom an effective milieu for learning, it has become increasingly apparent, as stated by Brown (1994) that "teaching learners how to learn is crucial and continues stressing... Teachers' can benefit from understanding what makes learners successful and unsuccessful and establish in the classroom a milieu for the realization of successful strategies" (p. 124).

On the other hand, Bialystok, E. (1985) encouraged teachers to establish learners' knowledge in how to be a successful learner by saying: "...our efforts to teach students some " technical know-how about, and how to tackle learning a language are well advised (p. 256).

Unlike success in first language acquisition, success in learning a second or foreign language is considerably more varied. Spearheaded by Rubin (1975) and others (Oxford, 1990; Stern, 1975), there has been extensive research into language learning strategies to investigate successful and less successful learner behaviours in the west in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Approximately about thirty years have passed since researchers began studying LLS . During these three decades, many researchers have attempted to define LLS, classify LLS, and then find the relationship between learners' personal factors (proficiency, gender, personality, anxiety level, etc.) and their LLS choices.

Based on the assumption that learning strategies are teachable, most studies on learning strategies training (e.g. Cohen & Apeh, 1980; Oxford et al., 1990), focus on how to help poor language learners to use combination of learning strategies that enable them to take responsibility to improve their own learning. Unfortunately, as far as this researcher's knowledge goes, there has been no previous studies, which focus on LLS preference among Kuwaiti learners of EFL in general, or amongst learners at the College of Basic Education (CBE) level in particular.

Since the early 1980s, language pedagogy has shifted its emphasis to student- centred classroom learning. Since this time, learners have become the central figures in language classrooms where learning tasks have been conceptualized and approached from the learners' own point of view (Rubin, 1987).

*Language learning strategies* according to Brown (1994) is the learners process to tackle , store and retrieve the language message or input from others. Moreover, he differentiates between learner's styles and learning strategies where he characterizes *learning styles* as general characteristics that differentiate one individual from another.

Along with this trend, during the last decades there has been growing interest in the characteristics of learners. This individualized focus has resulted in an increasing number of studies that investigate how differences among learners influence language achievement. These differences include gender, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, and learning beliefs. At the same time, researchers have focused on a new field of research in LLS that involves how learners internalize language processes. Strategies that help learners to improve their language competence have played a crucial role in language learning; this field has become one of the most fertile areas in second language acquisition (Maclinyre, 1994, Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Although there is little consensus on the definition of learning strategies, a growing literature on a broad number of learning strategies has appeared. Language learning strategies have been seen as “techniques, tactics, potentially conscious plans, consciously employed operations, learning skills, basic skills, functional skills, cognitive abilities, language reprocessing strategies, problem-solving procedures” (Wenden, 1987, p. 7), as well as mental processes, and both observable and unobservable behaviours (Ellis, 1994). Each researcher has chosen one specific concept to focus on.

However, these studies have mainly been carried out in ESL language programs in English speaking countries and in university settings like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, for learners who were studying English as a second language and so forth. It is important to replicate language learning strategy studies in different cultural contexts in order to avoid “the dangers of an ethnocentric bias regarding the definition of good language learning strategies” (Wharton, 1997, p. 204).

As a result, other researchers in the countries of the Far East, like China (Young's, 1987; Wong's, 1988, Lui, 2005) Japan ( Tanaka, 2002) , Taiwan ( Chang, 2004; Wu , 2003) have begun studying learners of English as a foreign language in their own environment with indirect contact to the target language culture and living environments. This has later occurred in other countries, like in Iran (Farajolahi & Nimvari, 2014), Spain ( Martinez & et al 2016), UAE ( Al Khatib, 2013), Saudi Arabia (Al-Otaibi, 2004), and earlier in Kuwait (El-Dib, 2004).

Taking Kuwait as an example, it has been observed that there are recurring complaints of low academic levels in university and higher education institutions and the cumulative weakness of students' abilities to learn English as a foreign language. In particular, the failure of the graduates' English language abilities to meet their future career needs have been repeatedly emphasised (Al-Mutawa & Al-Dabbous, 1997, Dashti, 2015, El Dib, 2004, Al-Darwish, 2016).

A study by Dashti & Salama ( 2013), who investigated the EFL preparation program in the College of Basic Education in PAAET, Kuwait found that the preparation year at the English Department. did not witness major changes to meet the real needs of the prospective EFL teachers in Kuwait. A recent qualitative study by Al Darwish (2017), who investigated the opinions and teaching practice of twelve first grade English teachers, found that "*certain communicative techniques were seen by many English teachers contributing to slow academic progress and motivational problems among Elementary EFL learners, especially when the non - native speaking teachers modelled English mistakes*".

Another study by Al-Mutawa (1986) asked Kuwait University students, who were studying to become English teachers in public and private schools, to rate their proficiency in the major language skills. Only 11% thought that their speaking ability was good. In understanding the

class lectures, approximately 75% of the respondents felt that they were either average or poor in understanding; and only 24% of the respondents reported that they had good writing skills.

In a study, Al-Adwani (2005), who investigated students' difficulties in learning English in the college of Basic Education in Kuwait, stated that:

“The students in the College of Basic Education are considered to be high achievers in terms of their GPA in secondary school and the final grades of their specialist areas in the CBE. However, the findings show that students reported difficulties in most areas in learning English” (p.152).

Due to the competitive nature of the Kuwaiti school system that makes the college Bachelor certificate quite valuable, passing the compulsory English courses is viewed as a great asset to their future success at the college level and to the outer society. Under this highly examination-oriented college system, and in order to overcome the student's cumulative weakness in learning the English language courses, there is an urgent need to investigate student's language learning strategies in the CBE context.

Therefore, the current study will provide language teachers in Kuwait with a better understanding of students' learning actions and techniques. The findings will serve as guidelines that will enable educators to determine effective strategies that will have great potential for improving student learning and motivation.

### **Research Objective**

The present study focuses on the EFL learning environment in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait. The main aim of this study is to investigate such strategies so as to gain insights into the cognitive, social, and affective processes involved in language learning, and through this help students who are having difficulties become better language learners (Chamot, 1987). Research into LLS is important because of the following reasons.

For one, they are readily teachable (Oxford and Nyiko's, 1989); next, there are a number of successful strategy training programmes, (e.g. Ehrman & Oxford, 1990), (Nunan, 1996); and third, in addition Cohen (1998) provides very comprehensive instructions for implementing strategy training.

An alternative to direct training is to embed strategies in teaching tasks and material. Therefore, the first objective of this study was to identify language learning strategies used by a specific population in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, and then to explore the relationship of learning strategies to language achievement.

It has investigated the combinations of strategies that are associated with language achievement, and differentiated between successful and less successful learning strategies.

Second, the study will develop an understanding of the kinds of strategies that contribute to language achievement and how certain variables (gender, age, and marital status) determine the use of learning strategies. It will also contribute to pedagogical achievement. The knowledge of the relationships between these variables can help teachers discern the various elements needed to achieve success in learning the English language. That will enable teachers and educators make decisions in learning strategy diagnosis, student counselling, and language teacher training. In short, in order to address these objectives, several questions had to be

addressed in the current study to understand the learning strategies preferred by Kuwaitis in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait.

### **Definition of Language Learning Strategies**

There is not a single taxonomy of learning strategies; most proposals are not very different and have the same aspects in common. But perhaps, the most acknowledged and much referenced taxonomy is that of Oxford's (1990). "Her classification is considered the most detailed and systematic and superior to other ones" (Hasioa & Oxford, cited in Chamot, 2004, p. 7). Oxford considers two main types of language strategies, direct and indirect, which are further divided into six broad categories (Oxford, 1990, p. 17):

#### **Direct strategies:**

1. Memory strategies (creating mental linkage, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, employing actions).
2. Cognitive strategies (practicing, analysing and reasoning).
3. Compensation strategies (guessing, overcoming communication problems).

#### **Indirect strategies**

1. Metacognitive strategies (centering, planning, and evaluating the learning).
2. Affective Strategies (controlling feeling and emotions).
3. Social strategies (interacting with others).

### **Research questions**

In order to examine language learning strategies used by students in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, a set of Strategy Inventory for English learning (SILL) Oxford (1990) questionnaire that include questions regarding strategy usage by learners was used. The individual backgrounds of the learners were also included and considered within the scope of this to locate the study within the Kuwaiti EFL setting.

The questionnaires focussed mainly on the following:

- 1) *What type of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) do Kuwaitis in the College of Basic Education use, and to what degree?*
- 2) *What is the relationship between strategy use and language proficiency?*
- 3) *Do background variables, such as gender, academic major, and marital status play any role in student's all Learning Strategy categories?*

### **METHODOLOGY**

The current study used a self-report survey methodology to examine the EFL learner strategies preference among students in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait

### **The study Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning ESL/ EFL Version 7.0 (Oxford, 1990). The SILL is a structured self-reported questionnaire that includes five-Likert- type scale items that range from 1 (Never or almost never true of me), the lowest degree in the measurement of the variables, to 5 (Always or almost always true of me), the highest degree.

This study adopted SILL inventory scale and was translated into Arabic language by the researcher. The order of the questions in the instrument was the same in each questionnaire.

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Questionnaire has been used among 8,000 learners in studies across the world. Oxford and Eharman (1995), report that SILL's reliability, using Cronbach's alpha, is ordinarily in the range of the 0, 90s. Concurrent validity supported by the learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), is reported between 0, 20 and 0.50 (Weinstein, Plamer& Schulte, 1987).

The original English and the translated Arabic versions of the English language learning questionnaire were reviewed by a number of bilingual educators. A pilot study was conducted in order to revise the items in the translated questionnaire, to determine the anticipated length of the time to administer the survey, and check the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the SILL scale was 0.81. The Cronbach alpha coefficient assesses the degree of homogeneity of the items within the scale and indicates the extent to which the scale is internally consistent.

### **The study sample**

The total sample of the study was 427 students (161 male and 266 female). They were selected randomly from two campuses. Due to gender segregation policy in all PAAET institutes, as well as in the CBE - College of Basic Education - two groups were selected from each male and female campus. It is a general characteristic of the population in Kuwait that female teachers outnumber male teachers (Al-Mutawa, 1997). Indeed, female students are attracted to the CBE because culturally, the teaching profession is perceived to be suitable for women because women will be studying in a single sex education institution, not a co-educational one. On the other hand, male students are not attracted to the CBE, because of the generally low salaries for teachers, when compared to other professions such as the military or business sectors. Such factors may influence gender ratio.

The majority of those surveyed were single (75.4%), while 23 % were married. Only 1.6 % were divorced. The majority of those surveyed (52.5%) was under 20 years old or less, while 36.1 % was between the ages of 21 to 25 years old. Only 3.3% were over 30 years old. For their academic year, 13.1% of the students were in their first year in the college, while 13 % were in their second year. The sample majority were in their third and fourth years in college. (See Table 1)

The researcher obtained prior approval from the English language department in order to gain access to these general English courses in the two (male/ female) campuses.

**Table 1 Description of the Study Sample**

Variable	Type	Frequencies	%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>37.7</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>62.3</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>75.4</b>
	<b>Married</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Divorced</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>18 to 20</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>52.5</b>
	<b>21 to 25</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>36.1</b>
	<b>26 to 30</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8.2</b>
	<b>31 and more</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3.03</b>
<b>Academic year</b>	<b>2015 -2016</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>13.1</b>
	<b>2014- 2015</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>13.1</b>
	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>41</b>
	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>27.9</b>
	<b>Missing</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4.9</b>

### Tactical Procedures

To answer the research questions the researcher used the following statistical procedures:

- Descriptive statistics: including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. This data was used to describe the learners' responses to the SILL, and the background information of the participants.
- T-test: to compare mean differences between the Six Strategy Categories to answer the first research question: What type of Language Learning Strategies do CBE students use, and to what degree?
- ANOVA Analysis: (using one-way ANOVA) performed to compare the study variables with demographic features.
- Correlation coefficients: (Socio-demographic variables and students learning strategies) to answer the third research question: What is the relationship between strategy use and individual background variables?
- MANOVA analysis: used to identify any significant differences in the use of the six categories among the four proficiency levels of the students in order to answer the second research question: What is the relationship between strategy use and language proficiency?

### Results of the Survey

**After concluding the survey, we found the following results for each research question:**

#### Research question #1:

**What type of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) do Kuwaitis in the College of Basic Education use, and to what degree?**



Table (2) shows the frequencies of strategy used (means, and standard deviations). As indicated by Oxford & Burry-stock (1995), where a mean score of all samples is in the range of 5 to 3.5 on a SILL, it means a high frequency use of the strategies, while 3.4 to 2.5 reflect median use. Those whose scored 2.4 and less indicated lower strategies' used by the study sample. It was clear in Table (2) that the participants use learning strategies in a "sometime use" situation. The mean of overall strategies usage was modest (M- 2.65, SD. 66.) Furthermore, memory strategy was the most frequent category used as a strategy, (M. 2.97, SD. 77). Compensation strategy (M. 2.69 SD. 89) was the second most frequent category of strategies used. Then followed the Meta-cognitive strategy (M 2.61, SD. 75), Cognitive strategy ( M. 2.59, SD. 75), and Affective strategy ( M. 2.57, SD. 77). The least frequently used strategy was Social strategy (M. 2.55, SD. 70).

**Table 2: Descending rank order of learning strategies used by students in learning English as a foreign language.**

Used Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Memory strategy	2.95	.77	
Compensation strategy	2.69	.89	
Meta-cognitive strategy	2.61	.75	
Cognitive strategy	2.59	.75	
Affective strategy	2.55	.77	
Social strategy	2.57	.70	

## Research question #2

### What is the relationship between strategy use and language proficiency?

In order to examine the relationship between strategy use and language proficiency, a MANOVA was used to identify any significant differences in the use of six-strategy categories among the two proficiency levels. For example, level .99 was considered as a low proficiency level, while level .161 was considered as a high proficiency level. Table (3) shows significant statistical differences in all six strategy categories as the following reflect:

In Memory strategy, level 161 students have had a mean score of (3.1) compared with students from level "99" (2.55); (  $F=36.70$ ,  $P<.0001$ ); while, in Compensation strategy, students from level "161" obtained mean average of (3.0) compared with the mean of those in level "99" (2.4); (  $F=36.08$ ,  $P<.0001$ ). In the Meta-cognitive strategy, the mean score of students in level "161" was (2.82) compared with students in level "99" (2.4); (  $F=29.60$ ,  $P<.0001$ ). Cognitive strategy also showed significant mean differences between the two means. Level "161" mean score (2.88) was compared with the mean of level "99" (2.27); (  $F=22.8$ ,  $P<.0001$ ). Affective strategy, also showed a similar statistical mean difference between level "161" (3.09) and level "99" (2.25); (  $F=19.60$ ,  $P<.0001$ ). Finally, Social strategy indicated the same mean differences (2.72) for "162 level and a mean of (2.25) for students from level "99"; (  $F=18.20$ ,  $P<.0001$ ).

**Table 3 Mean Summary of the MANOVA for the Effect of Proficiency levels on Strategy Used.**

Used Strategy	Level 99		Level 161		Sign-Level	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	P
Memory strategy	2.55	.68	3.10	.65	36.7	.000
Compensation strategy	2.47	.91	3.0	.80	36.1	.000
Meta-cognitive strategy	2.41	.74	2.82	.69	29.6	.000
Cognitive strategy	2.27	.65	2.88	.67	22.8	.000
Affective strategy	2.27	.74	3.09	.72	19.6	.000
Social strategy	2.25	.69	2.72	.62	18.2	.000

It was clear by looking at table (3) that the frequency of strategies used by students who were in the 161 levels and above were always higher than those of the participants in the 99 level in the six strategies categories of the SILL.

### Research # 3

#### 3) Do background variables, such as gender, marital status, and academic major play any role in students all Learning Strategy categories?

Tables 4 to 6 explain the mean differences between strategy use as per the students' gender, marital status, and their academic major. In table (4) the result did not report any mean differences between male and female students in their learning strategies. However, only in one category of learning strategy - the Social strategy did female students show significant statistical mean (2.72) differences compared with means of male students (2.25).

**Table (4) Means and Standard Deviations of the all Strategy Category Use by Gender:**

Used Strategy	Male		Female		F	P	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Memory strategy	2.55	.68	3.10	.65	.31	.86	N.S
Compensation strategy	2.47	.91	3.0	.80	.89	.32	N.S
Meta-cognitive strategy	2.41	.74	2.82	.69	.245	.59	N.S
Cognitive strategies	2.27	.65	2.88	.67	2.91	.88	N.S
Affective strategy	2.27	.74	3.09	.72	.03	.89	N.S
Social strategy	2.25	.69	2.27	.69	6.83		.009*

\* Sig = 0.05

\*\* Sig = 0.001

Table (5) indicates that there were statistical mean differences based upon student's marital status in their general learning strategy. In addition, married students showed higher means in learning strategy (178.5) compared with singles (172.4) and divorced (173), with a significant level of .05.

Furthermore, the researcher undertook additional work to compare the students' marital status for each learning strategy. Indeed, statistically significant differences were reported for the married students in all strategies accept the Meta-cognitive strategy, which reported no differences between the students in terms of their marital status (P = .133).

**Table (5) List of the Means and Standard Deviations strategy used by Marital Status**

Used Strategy	Married		Single		Divorced		F	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Learning Strategy	178.5	19	172.4	22	168	0000	3.3	.036
Memory strategy	29	4.9	27.5	5.5	19	0000	12.1	.000
Compensation strategy	22.5	2.2	20.9	3.8	25		19.8	.000
Meta-cognitive strategy	35.4	35.4	34.1	35	50.0	0000	12.02	.133
Cognitive strategy	49.9	7.4	45.8	8.1	50.0	0000	10.5	.000
Affective strategy	21.5	3.1	19.8	4	18	0000	9.3	.000
Social strategy	20	5.1	24.1	6.7	18	0000	16.1	.000

Finally, Table (6) shows the mean differences of the strategies used by the students according to their majors. It was clear that students whose major were Humanities have indicated a higher mean score in all areas of the used learning strategies with a significant level of (P.001). While, students whose major were Science scored second, then Librarian major were third. (See Table.6).

**Table (6) list of the Means and Standard Deviations strategy used by Major:**

Used Strategy	Humanities		Science		Liberian		F	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Memory strategy	28.4	6.0	26.2	2.3	25.0	3.7	11.69	.000
Compensation strategy	21.7	3.4	20.4	3.5	21.3	3.6	6.11	.002
Meta-cognitive strategy	35.4	5.1	31.8	5.7	31.5	4.8	20.72	.000
Cognitive strategy	47.9	7.5	42.8	9.0	45	8.9	12	.000
Affective strategy	20.4	4.0	19.3	3.4	19.4	2.9	3.33	.036
Social strategy	22.5	5.2	26.0	9.4	23.0	8.5	7.46	.001

On the other hand, there were a significant mean differences based upon the student's majors. For example, students whose major were humanities used variety of strategies (176.6), compared with those whose major were either Science (166.7) or Library Science (164.2) at a significant level of (.000). This means that there were no significant mean based upon gender and the student's learning strategies. But, there were significant differences based upon both marital status and student majors

## DISCUSSION

Adults' educators should be aware that, when educational experience matches student's learning strategies, achievement can greatly improve (Griggs, 2000). So, researchers have been gathering data on language learning strategies for some time and the approaches for doing so

are numerous (Oxford, 1996). To discuss the results of this study, with regards to a body of existing literature, the findings of this study will be interpreted with illustration from the socio-cultural context of Kuwait. The themes that emerged from the data in this study, will enable us to situate the findings in the context of the sample, thus offering possible explanation for what requires further research. While some of the findings were predicted based on previous research, there were some unexpected and interesting results produced by this study.

The mean of overall strategies use was modest and consistent with other studies conducted on samples from different cultures and background. Rahimy and Shams (2012) reported that Iranian students used least Meta-cognitive and Social strategies in their learning EFL. According to Politzer & McGroarty (1985), who conducted study on an Asian sample, Asian ESL/EFL students preferred strategies that involve rote memorizing and language rules. Yang (1992) who studied Taiwanese college students enrolled in EFL/ESL courses, reported that Taiwanese college students favoured Meta-cognitive planning strategy. However, the most and least favoured was Memory strategy. One explanation in order to justify this result is that the current study sample consisted of average students who may not be sophisticated language learners, as compared with other samples. Another explanation for this finding is that the teaching methods in the Language programme in the CBE emphasis on teaching for students to pass the exam rather than teaching to communicate and use the language in real life situations. (Al-Edwani, 2005).

A central finding in the current study is that the proficiency level was related highly to the use of multiple strategies in learning English, which means that successful language learners are those who utilize a wide range of key language learning strategies (Rahimy, R & Shams, K, 2012, Cohen, 1998) This finding was consistent with previous studies (Green& Oxford,1995; Al khatib, 2013; Wharton, 1997& Park, 1997; Embi, Long & Hamza, 2001; Farajolahi& Nimvari, 2014). For example, Green & Oxford (1995) examined 374 university students in Puerto Rico. They found that there was greater use of learning strategies among successful learners than among less successful ones.

Another finding which is useful to discuss in this part is the social demographic variables: (gender, marital status, and major) and its relation to learning strategies. Although the study found that there was no significant difference between male and female students in strategies' use, still female students showed higher means in all six strategies (but not statistically significant), except in Social strategy category. This finding is inconsistent with that of those (Larsen-Freman and Long, 1991; Lui, 2005; Graham, 1997& Kaylani, 1996, El-Dib, 2004), who reported in their studies that female learners of English used significantly wider range of language learning strategies more frequently than their male counter-parts (Lui, 2005). However, female students used Social strategy significantly more than male students. This result concurs with other studies conducted on learners of English in the Middle East. For example, Kaylani (1996), studied 255 EFL students amongst Jordanian high school seniors. She found that successful females were found to use the strategies taught to them by their teachers more frequently than male students did. She justified such findings that

*"female students seek social approval more than male students and therefore follow the teacher's advice on how to study as a way of gaining teacher's approval" ( p.86).*

This explanation is well situated to the Kuwaiti context where social approval is important to a woman's status in Kuwait, where women are socialized to obey the authority of those older

than them, who could be either parents, older brothers or teachers. Also it is consistent with (El-Dib, 2004), who investigated the relationship between culture and students' learning strategies in Kuwait.

Another major finding reported was that there were statistical mean differences based upon a student's marital status in their general learning strategy. Married students reported more frequent usage of strategies than single or divorce students. One explanation for this finding is that married students reflected learner autonomy and self-direction to their educational goals more than single or divorced students did. This finding is consistent with studies like The Research of Fontaine (1996; Dixon's, 1992), where they indicated in both studies that educational attainment is a predictor of an older adult's propensity to participate in a self-directed learning activity.

Another variable revealed in this study is the specialisation of students and its impact on language learning strategies use. It has been reported that students with humanities major are more frequent users of learning strategies than those with Science and Librarian majors. This result is consistent with a study on academic major and gender by Gu. (2002), who found that Chinese Science students who are studying EFL course slightly outperformed (though insignificantly) arts students in vocabulary size, but arts students significantly outperformed science students on the general proficiency test. Strategy differences were also found between arts and science majors, but differences on most strategy categories were less clear-cut than were those between male and female participants. The current researcher attributed such differences to cultural factors. Cohen cited in "Alkaylani (1996):

*" Culture has been cited as an important variable in learning strategy use because the culture of a student is, in part, made of prior formal and informal educational experience " (p. 79)*

Asian students may have been exposed to different teaching methods, unlike Kuwaiti students in higher institutes where the traditional method of rote learning and memorizing is the norm in regular classes. Even in Science major competitive learning and individualism in learning tasks is vital to pass the courses.

## CONCLUSION

### Implications for language teaching and learning

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamont, 1990; Cohen, 1998; El-Dib, 2004; Alhaisoni, 2012; Martez, & et al 2016) . It underscores the fact that successful language learners are those who have utilized a wide range of key language learning strategies. The academic implications of the findings can be summarized as follows:

1. One pedagogical implication is that less successful learners can be assisted to improve their language efficiency. The central argument of this study is not about what students are leaning, but how they are learning. Graham (1997) argued that: "Only a few are able students are likely to develop their own learning strategies that are appropriate to the given task and effectively implemented" (p. 169). This study found that effective learners are those who are more likely to use multi-learning strategies to comprehend the texts,

balancing strategies such as inferring from the context and looking closely at the meaning to decode the item. On the other hand, weaker learners relied heavily on inferring because of limited ability in word-recognition and identifying the syntactic role of items. Yet one of the most vital components of success in EFL classroom is the ability to direct one's own learning, involving self-analysis of one's strengths and weaknesses in learning behaviour, and the adoption of suitable learning strategies to deal with language learning problems. Anstorn (1999) noted that "the goal of teaching learning strategies is to facilitate learners to become more independent learners with the dexterity and wisdom to use strategies appropriately in a variety of context". (Para 2).

2. "The study of learning strategies is of potential value to language teachers" (Ellis, 1997, p.78). One important finding of the current study is the implication that teachers realize and accept the importance of learning strategies to weave it into their daily teaching routines. Moreover, the Ministry of Education in Kuwait and in-service courses should include the strategy instructions within the programme for new and in-service teachers. Hopefully, strategy instructions help students to self-directed learning in the on-going evaluation of the methods they have employed, and help them to use the most appropriate strategies for different learning tasks.
3. EFL teachers could also facilitate regular strategy sharing sessions among students, especially with those who are successful learners. This technique would provide learners with opportunities to explore strategies that may be effective for particular learning tasks.
4. Above all, this study has illustrated the pressing need for the CBE teachers to actively help learners take more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging greater reflection about learning strategies and incorporating learning strategies instruction into the syllabus.

In conclusion, we may sum up by the evocative quote from Norman (1980) who stated: that "*It is strange that we expected students to learn, yet seldom teach them anything about learning*" (p.267). It is this access to the learning process that educators must provide rather than assume that all learners discover automatically for themselves.. This is the central message that this study endeavours to convey.

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