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An Exploration into a Significant Difference in the EFL Language Learning Strategy and EFL Students' Academic Achievement at Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was an exploration into a significant difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL students' academic achievement at Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School. Co relational research design was employed. The data were collected through semi-structured interview and questionnaires a. Four grade eleven EFL teachers of the Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School were selected as a participant of the study using convenience sampling technique. Among 838 students, 270 students were selected simple random sampling technique using Slovene's sample size determination formula: (i.e. $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$). The Interview data were tape recorded and transcribed into textual form and the questionnaire data were analyzed via frequency, percentage and mean value form. The study also disclosed that there was not any significant difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student's academic achievements. Last, the study revealed that factors that affect EFL student's language learning strategies and academic achievements were: teacher, student, and facility related factors that can affect teaching or learning EFL student's learning strategy and their academic achievements. Based on the findings, the recommendations were made: the concerned bodies should fulfill the facility related challenges that can affect language learning strategies and academic achievements, and the student and teacher related factors should mitigate through well-built mobilization.

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Academic achievement, EFL learning strategies and Significant difference

Introduction

Research studies on language learning strategies put more emphasis on identifying strategic behaviors and characteristics of "the good language learner", while more recent studies have tried to illuminate taxonomies of language learning strategies and classify strategies, which are employed by language learners in the process of language learning. Besides, by conducting numerous

studies, researchers have discovered that there is an association between the use and choice of learning strategies and different variables like learning contexts, learner characteristics and learning experiences, language proficiency, or cultural and educational backgrounds (Oxford, 2003; Khamkhien, 2010; Hong, 2006; Deneme, 2008; Fuping, 2006).

The findings have concluded that the employment of language learning strategies facilitate and improve language learning and assist language learner in different ways. It is also found that a direct correlation exists between language proficiency and language learning achievement (Griffiths, 2003; Yang, 2007; Ya-Ling, 2008). Learning strategies are oriented towards the main goal of communicative competence, allow learners to get more self-directed, and support learning (Oxford, 1990).

In this regard, language instructors need to incorporate language-learning strategies into their teaching methods and approaches, train the students to apply the appropriate strategy for a specific purpose or a specific skill area, and encourage them to use the strategies as frequently as possible. Students can learn to use language-learning strategies to improve their language skills. Therefore, the study was intended to explore significant differences in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL students' academic achievement at Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School.

Statement of the problem

Learning styles has been defined as a consistent way of functioning that reflects the underlying causes of learning behavior (Keefe, 1987). Learning style is both a characteristic which indicates how a student learns and likes to learn, as well as instructional strategy informing the cognition, context and content of learning. Previous studies have reported that students' learning performance could be improved if proper learning style dimensions could be taken into consideration when developing any learning or instructional process (Graf *et al.*, 2010).

However, most Ethiopian high school teachers may have not established how learners learn languages, predominantly English. As the researcher long year experience, the current low achievement in English is evident that learners have not yet learned how to learn or discovered their favored learning strategies for different learning material or content in English Language subject. In addition, teachers have not understood the diversity of their learners in a typical classroom, and they keep on embracing the same traditional teaching styles in every context. In consequence, students become bored and inattentive in class, do poorly on tests, get discouraged about the subject, the curriculum, and themselves, and in some worse cases drop out of school. Teachers confronted by poor grades, unresponsive or hostile

learners, poor attendance and dropouts, know something is not working they may become overly critical of their students (making things even worse) or begin to wonder if they are in the right profession.

Materials and Methods

Research design

Burns and Grove (2003) define a research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study. Parahoo (1997), Polit *et al.*, (2001) and Creswell, (2009) also stated that a research design is research process and a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analyzed, as well as it answers the research questions. The choice of research design depends on the objectives of research in order to be able to answer the research questions (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, to conduct this study, the researcher employed co relational research design. Because, co relational design is a technique which helps researcher to establish a relationship between two closely connected variables. Two different groups are required to conduct this research design method.

Research setting

The study was carried out in Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School. The school is located in South, Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State, Wolaita Zone, Damot Gale Woreda.

The sources of data

To achieve the objective of the study, data were collected from two sources, primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data were teachers and students of the school and the secondary sources of data were written documents.

Sample size and sampling technique

The researcher used four EFL teachers among eight by using convenience-sampling technique because they were convenience for the researcher. On the other hand, among 838 students, the researcher selected 270 students through simple random sampling technique using Slovene's sample size determination formula:

(I.e. $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$ Where: $n =$ is sample size

$N = \text{total population} (e) = 0.05$ or allowance of random error.

$$838 \times 0.0025 = 2.095 + 1 = 3.095 = 838 / 3.095 = 270$$

Therefore, 270 students were selected for filling the questionnaire. For interview the entire teachers who teach English were interviewed. Both total teachers and their students were observed during teaching and learning process in EFL classroom.

Instruments for data collection

The data for this study were gathered through, questionnaire and interview. The researcher used interview for EFL teachers of Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School and questionnaire for EFL students of the School.

Methods of data analysis

The data gathered through semi-structured interview and questionnaires were analyzed differently using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. For example, data obtained from interview were transcribed and transformed into textual data. The transcribed data read again and again in order to have a full understanding of the themes which fits the objectives of the study. Then, the interview data was substantiated by questionnaire.

Regarding the data collected via questionnaire, first the questionnaires were checked for consistency and complete. The complete and consistent questionnaires was coded and filled in to SPSS. Then, different statistical analysis such as frequency and percentage were applied to SPSS data. The result of statistical analysis was presented in the table form. Finally, it was used to validate and substantiate the interview data.

Pilot testing and results

Before the actual data collection process, the questionnaire was developed to collect the data that help to achieve the objectives of the study. In line with this, the tools were pilot tested in order to check the clarity of questions to the respondents. It is also intended to check the appropriateness and relevance of the instruments to achieve the purposes of this research. The researcher disseminated pilot test questionnaire questions for non sampled school (Boditi Secondary and Preparatory School). Four questions were not clear for EFL students of the Boditi Secondary and Preparatory School when

they were filling questions. Then, the researcher took it as an input and the instruments were pilot tested and get improved. Based on the results of the pilot study, necessary changes and modifications were made on the tools of data collection and finally, the tools were used to collect data for the main study.

Results and Discussions

As stated in the previous sections, the main objective of this study was an exploration into significant differences in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student's academic achievements in Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School. To achieve these objectives, data was gathered from teachers and students of Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory school via questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. The data assembled through close-ended items of the questionnaire, interview and classroom observation was analyzed quantitatively. The data gathered through interview and open ended questionnaire was analyzed qualitatively or verbatim and data gathered via close ended interview and questionnaire were analyzed using quantitative method of data analysis.

Significant differences in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student's academic achievements

As depicted table 1 item 1, 25% of EFL students of the Gacheno Secondary and preparatory School students strongly disagreed with English language learning is not associated with proficiency of English language. Therefore, the result of respondents' questionnaire disclosed that majority of EFL students of the school strongly disagreed upon English language learning is not associated with proficiency of English language. Henceforth, majority of the EFL students of the school believed that English language learning is associated with proficiency of language.

As depicted table 1 item 2, 44% of EFL students of the Gacheno Secondary and preparatory School students disagreed with EFL learning strategy and academic achievement different from one another. This implies that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement are not different from one another which means learning strategy and academic achievements are inter related each other.

As shown in the table 1 item 3, 39% of the EFL students of the school strongly disagreed upon EFL academic achievement is not the result of EFL learning strategies.

Accordingly, EFL academic achievement is the result of EFL learning strategies. Therefore, one can deduce that effective EFL learning strategies hubs into good academic achievement results.

As displayed table 1 item 4, 38% of the EFL students of the Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School strongly disagreed upon learning strategies doesn't focus on academic achievement. This implies that learning strategies centers on academic achievements of EFL students.

As depicted table 1 item5, 34% of the EFL students of the School strongly disagreed that it is obvious that EFL language learning strategies doesn't contribute academic success and failures of EFL students. This point out that EFL language learning strategies does contribute academic success and failures of EFL students.

As portrayed table 1 item 6, 44% of the EFL students of the school strongly disagreed that it is obvious that EFL language learning strategies mismatch with academic achievements of the students. This implies that EFL language learning strategies doesn't mismatch with academic achievements of the students.

As depicted table 1 item 7, 36% of the EFL students of the school strongly disagreed upon the ideas of it doesn't matter EFL learning strategies suits or not to promote academic achievement of the students. This indicates that learning strategies of the EFL class context promotes academic achievements.

Teachers Interview Results on a significant differences between EFL learning strategy and EFL students academic achievement

With regards to item 1, teachers of the school asked to reply whether or not do they believe that English language learning is not associated with proficiency of English language. In rejoinder to this, all interviewed teachers (T1, T2, T3, and T4) said no and they believed that English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language.

In item 2 (see appendix), four teachers of Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School were asked to reply whether or not do they believe that learning strategy affects your student's academic achievement. In reply to this, all of (four of EFL teachers of the school) believed that learning strategy affects student's academic achievements in any aspects. This implies that learning

strategies positively or negatively affects student's academic achievements.

With regards to item 3, EFL teachers were asked to reply whether or not do they believe that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement different from one another. In response to this, all the interviewed teachers were replied that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement is not different from one another. EFL learning strategy and academic achievement is interchangeable idea said T1 in his response. Thus, the above data hubs that EFL learning strategy is not different from the other.

In item 4 (see appendix), four teachers of Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School were asked to reply whether or not do they believe that EFL academic achievement is not the result of EFL learning strategies. With regard to this, all of the interviewed teachers were said that EFL academic achievement is the result of EFL learning strategies. This implies that learning strategies hubs into poor or good academic results. Therefore, one can infer that EFL academic achievement is the result of EFL learning strategies.

In item 5, EFL teachers were asked to reply whether or not do they believe that EFL language learning strategies doesn't contribute academic success and failures of students. In retort to this, all the interviewed teachers were believed that EFL language learning strategies does contribute academic success or failures of students. The above data indicates that learning strategies can negative or positive contribution on academic achievements.

With regards to item 6, EFL teachers were asked to reply whether or not do they believe that it doesn't matter EFL learning strategies whether or not suits to promote academic achievement of the students. In reply to this, all of the interviewed teachers of school (T1, T2, T3 and T4) were believed that it does matter that EFL learning strategies whether or not suits to promote academic achievement of the students. They said that if learning strategy does not suit, it would cause failures in academic success of EFL students in their academic progress. This implies that learning strategy is mandatory for academic success or failures.

In inference to 4.1 and 4.2 students' questionnaires response and teacher's interviews results data on items related to a significant difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student's academic achievements. The following discussion was made based on the questionnaires and interview results: majority of

EFL students and teachers of the Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School believed that there is no any a significant difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student’s academic achievements. This indicates that EFL language learning strategies and EFL student’s academic achievements are inter-related each other rather than one different from the other. Thus, EFL language learning strategy has negative or positive impact on academic achievements of the EFL students. Consequently, we can deduce that there is no any a significant difference between language learning strategy and academic achievements.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was conducted to disclose an exploration into significant differences in the EFL language learning

strategy and EFL student’s academic achievements in Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School. To answer the above stated basic research questions, semi structured interviews and questionnaires were used. The tools were used to collect data from English Language teachers and students of Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School.

The data gathered through the above instruments were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The interview data was analyzed using qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data. The questionnaire data were analyzed using frequencies, percentage and qualitative description of the responses. Based on the analyses of the collected data, the following summary, conclusions, and recommendations were made. Hence, this chapter intended to enlist the summary of the major findings, conclusion and recommendation.

Table.1 Students questionnaire response on any difference between in the EFL Language Learning Strategy and Student’s Academic Achievements

No	Items	Responses											
		SD		D		UD		A		SA		Total	Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	English language learning is not associated with proficiency of English language.	70	25	40	14	50	18	60	22	50	18	270	100
2	EFL learning strategy and academic achievement different from one another.	20	7	120	44	30	11	50	18	50	18	270	100
3	EFL academic achievement is not the result of EFL learning strategies.	105	39	62	23	-	-	35	13	67	25	270	100
4	EFL learning strategies doesn’t focus on academic achievement.	103	38	55	20	58	21	53	20	59	22	270	100
5	It is obvious that EFL language learning strategies doesn’t contribute academic success and failures of students.	90	34	50	19	-	-	70	25	60	22	270	100
6	It is obvious that EFL language learning strategies mismatch with academic achievements of the students.	110	44	40	15	-	-	60	22	50	19	270	100
7	It doesn’t matter EFL learning strategies suits or not to promote academic achievement of the students.	96	36	64	24	-	-	58	22	52	19	270	100

Summary of the major findings

The study disclosed that there is no any a significant difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student’s academic achievements. This indicates that EFL language learning strategies and EFL student’s

academic achievements are steady each other rather than one different from the other.

Conclusions

Next, students’ questionnaires response and teacher’s interviews results data on items related to a significant

difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student's academic achievements. The following discussion was made based on the questionnaires and interview results: majority of EFL students and teachers of the Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School believed that there is no any a significant difference in the EFL language learning strategy and EFL student's academic achievements. This indicates that EFL language learning strategies and EFL student's academic achievements are inter-related each other rather than one different from the other. Thus, EFL language learning strategy has negative or positive impact on academic achievements of the EFL students. Consequently, we can deduce that there is no any a significant difference between language learning strategy and academic achievements.

Recommendations

The study showed that the majority of the EFL teachers and students of the Gacheno Secondary and Preparatory School have believed that there is a significant relationship between EFL language learning strategies and academic achievements of the students. Thus, the success or failure of academic achievement based upon the result of poor or good language learning strategies so the concerned bodies including Damot Gale Woreda education office, the school, the Zone education department, students, teachers, school principals, NGOS and other stakeholders should give due attention for EFL learning strategies to promote academic achievements of the EFL students.

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