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An Investigation into a Significant Relationship between EFL Learning Strategy and EFL Academic Achievement in the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School of Wolaita Zone

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Abstract

The main study of this paper is an investigation into a significant relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL academic achievement in the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School. Co relational research design was employed. The data were collected through semi-structured interview and questionnaires. Four grade eleven EFL teachers of the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School were selected as a participant of the study using convenience sampling technique. Students were selected the sample 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 disclosed that there is a significant a relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements. Finally, 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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Keywords

A significant relationship, EFL learning strategy, Academic achievement

Introduction

The findings in the area of language learning strategies have repeatedly demonstrated that the use of language learning strategies leads to better proficiency or achievement in mastering the target language (Lee, 2003; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Rahimi *et al.*, 2008; Griffiths, 2003; Hong, 2006; Oxford, 1993). O'Malley *et al.*, (1985) clearly highlighted the importance of learning strategies by defining them as "any set of operations or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information" (p.23). In a study

(O'Malley *et al.*, 1985), it has been found that successful language learners have reported to use more and wider range of learning strategies than less-successful students.

The same conclusion has been reached in another study (Green and Oxford, 1995) in which language learning strategies of all kinds were used more frequently by more proficient students. In a different study (Griffiths, 2003), a strong positive correlation between learning strategy use and language proficiency has been discovered. The findings revealed that advanced language learners have reported to employ learning strategies more frequently

than elementary students. In this regard, language instructors should take their students learning strategies into considerations and try to recognize and identify students' learning strategies in order to support less successful student to achieve success and master the target language. Teachers can identify these strategies through observations, language diaries, questionnaires, interviews and so on. By doing so, teachers will be able to assist language learners to recognize and appreciate the power of language learning strategies in the process of second or foreign language learning. Through learning strategies, teachers can also help the students to maintain their motivation, autonomy, and confidence and keep on going and try to accomplish the goal of learning the target language.

Problem statement

The results of previous research studies have demonstrated that many factors affect the choice learning strategies. Those factors might include degree of awareness, age, sex, nationality, learning style, personality traits, motivation, learning context, and language proficiency (Zare and Nooreen, 2011; Khamkhien, 2010; Rahimi, *et al.*, 2008; Chamot, 2004; Griffiths, 2003; Hong-Nam and Leavell, 2007; Green and Oxford, 1995; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989). Studies have shown significant gender differences between males and female language learners in which females have demonstrated to use more and wider range of strategies than males (Zare, 2010; Lee, 2003; Green, and Oxford, 1995; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989).

Moreover, many research studies have explored the relationship between learning strategies and learners' proficiency in which the findings have indicated that more proficient language learners use a greater variety and often a greater number of learning strategies (Rahimi *et al.*, 2008; Griffiths, 2003; Lee, 2003; Anderson, 2005; Bruen, 2001; Green and Oxford, 1995; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Ehrman, and Oxford, 1989). Motivation is another influential variable which has been widely examined with respect to its relationship with learning strategies. Findings have demonstrated that learners with high motivation use a significantly greater range of learning strategies than less motivated students (Oxford, 1990; McIntyre and Noels, 1996; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989).

Purpose of the study

To explore a significant relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL academic achievement in the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School.

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 correlational research design. Because, correlational 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. There is no assumption while evaluating a relationship between two different variables and statistical analysis techniques are used to calculate the relationship between them. To correlate between English languages learning strategy with students' academic achievement it is better to use correlational design. Bearing this importance in mind and the researcher employed correlational research design.

Research setting

The study was carried out in Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School. The school is located in South, Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State, Wolaita Zone, Sodo City Administration. This school is located in the capital city of Wolaita Zone. It is found 315 km away from Addis Ababa in the Southern direction. Currently, it has 418 male and 420 female grade 11 students and there were eight teachers who teach these students. Besides, the school has one (1) director and three (3) vice directors; two guidance and counseling principals and eleven (13) administrative workers.

Sample size and sampling technique

The researcher was used four EFL teachers among eight by using convenience sampling technique because they were convenient for the researcher. On the other hand, among 838 students, the researcher was selected the sample using Slovic'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.

Instruments for data collection

The data for this study were gathered through, questionnaire and interview. Besides, 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. 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.

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.

Results and Discussion

Analysis, interpretations and discussions of results

As depicted table 1 item 1, 25% of EFL students of the Bogale Walelu Secondary and preparatory School students agreed with English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language. Besides, 18% of respondents strongly agreed up on

English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language. Therefore, the result of respondents' questionnaire disclosed that 43% agreed upon English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language including strongly agree and agree score points. Henceforth, majority of the EFL students of the school reflections focus on English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language teaching approach.

As displayed table 1 item 2, 45% of EFL students disagreed Language learning is direct replica of academic performance. This implies that 45% of students of Bogale Walelu secondary and Preparatory school disagreed with Language learning is direct replica of academic performance. Accordingly, 45 % of EFL students were negatively conceiving that Language learning is direct replica of academic performance. Therefore, based on their response one can say that Language learning is mismatch with academic performance.

As depicted in the above table 1 item 3, 39% of the EFL students of Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School agreed upon the success or failure of academic achievement is focusing on teaching learning strategy. This implies that majority of the students were conceiving the success or failure of academic achievement is focusing on teaching learning strategy. Henceforth, the success or failure of academic achievement is based up on teaching learning strategy of the English language.

As displayed table 1 item 4, 38% of the EFL students of Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School agreed upon there is a strong relationship between language learning strategy and academic achievement. Besides, 22% of the EFL students of the school strongly agreed up on there is a strong relationship between language learning strategy and academic achievement. Therefore, most of the EFL students of the school replied that there is a strong relationship between language learning strategy and academic achievement. This implies that the success or failure of academic achievement which focus on language learning strategy.

As depicted in table 1 item 5, 34% of EFL students of Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory school responded that they were strongly agreed that academic achievement depends up on teacher's approach of teaching English as foreign language. Therefore, the questionnaire data disclosed that 34% of EFL students

were strongly agreed up on academic achievement depends up on teacher's approach of teaching English as foreign language. This implies that poor or good in academic achievement which hubs on teaching approach of EFL teachers. Thus, one can infer that academic achievement of individual students in the EFL class context can be depends up on teaching approach of teachers in the teaching English as foreign language context.

As displayed table 1 item 6, 44% of EFL students of the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School students were strongly disagreed with they don't believe that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement are related one each other. This infers that majority of EFL students were positively conceived that they believed that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement are related one another. Therefore, one can infer that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement are related each other based up on their effect.

As depicted table 1 item 7, 36% of the EFL students were responded that they were strongly agreed that they believe EFL learning strategy contributes academic achievements of the EFL learners. This infers that 36% of EFL students were positively conceived whether EFL learning strategy contributes academic achievements of the EFL learners or not. As a consequence, EFL learning strategy contributes academic achievements of learners in their academic progress.

As displayed table 1 item 8, 35% of EFL students were reported that they were strongly agreed that they believed EFL learning strategies promotes academic performance of the learners. This implies that majority of EFL students strongly agreed up on that EFL learning strategies promotes academic performance of the learners. This implies that their academic performance triumph based up on their EFL learning strategies. Thus, one can infer that the realization of good academic performance hubs on their learning strategies.

As depicted table 1 item 9, 56% of EFL students of the school strongly believed that language learning methods can provide favorable upbringing in teaching-learning process. The result of the questionnaire data disclosed that language learning methods can provide favorable upbringing in teaching-learning process of EFL students. This indicates that poor language learning methods bring unfavorable teaching learning settings in EFL classroom. Thus, one can infer that language teaching method is

blue print for teaching learning process in the EFL classroom context.

As depicted table 1 item 10, 38% of EFL students of the school strongly disagreed up on that they believed on learning strategies and assessment are directly related with one another. This implies that majority of the EFL students of the school had negative perception towards learning strategies and assessment.

As displayed table 1 item 11, 25% of EFL students of the school agreed up on that they believed language learning strategy affects student's performance when they are taking their assessment. The questionnaire data disclosed that language learning strategy affects EFL student's performance when they were taking their assessment. Therefore, one can infer that language learning strategies either negatively or positively affects student's assessment in their academic achievement.

Teachers interview results on a significant relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL students academic achievement

The EFL teachers of the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School were interviewed to reply whether or not a significant relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL students' academic achievement. In response to these variables the following discussions and results of data were put on show below:

With regards to item 1 (see appendix), teachers of the school were interviewed to reply whether or not do they believe that English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language. With rejoinder to this, T1, T2 and T4 replied almost all in the same logic English language learning is directly or indirectly related with proficiency of English language if it was implemented effectively. On the other hand, T3 believed that English language learning strategy is not associated with proficiency of English language. Based on the above data one can infer that English language learning strategy is associated with proficiency of English language.

In item 2 (see appendix), EFL teachers were asked to retort do they believe that language learning is direct copy of academic performance or not. With regard to this, T3 believed that language learning is not direct copy of academic performance and he further said that EFL language learning method and language learning are different from one another so language learning is not

direct copy of academic achievement. On the other hand, T1, T2 and T4 replied that EFL language learning and academic achievement are two sides of one coin. Furthermore, they responded that language learning strategy without academic success is futile.

In item 3(see appendix), EFL teachers of the Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School asked to riposte whether or not they believe that the success or

failure of academic achievement is focusing on teaching –learning strategy of the EFL context. In response to this, all teachers of the school (T1, T2, T3 and T4) were believed that the success or failure of academic achievement is focusing on teaching-learning strategy of the EFL class context. Therefore, one can deduce that the success or failure of academic achievement is the corner stone for teaching learning strategy of the EFL classroom context.

Table.1 A significant relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL academic achievement

No	Items	Responses											
		SD		D		UD		A		SA		Total	Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	English language learning is associated with proficiency of English language	60	22	40	14	50	18	70	25	50	18	270	100
2	Language learning is direct replica of academic performance	20	7	120	44	30	11	50	18	50	18	270	100
3	The success or failure of academic achievement is focusing on teaching learning strategy.	35	13	62	23	-	-	105	39	67	25	270	100
4	There is a strong relationship between language learning strategy and academic achievement.	53	20	55	20	58	21	103	38	59	22	270	100
5	Academic achievement depends up on teacher’s approach of teaching English as foreign language.	60	22	50	19	-	-	70	25	90	34	270	100
6	I don’t believe that EFL learning strategy and academic achievement related each other.	110	44	40	15	-	-	60	22	50	19	270	100
7	I believe EFL learning strategy contributes academic achievements of the EFL learners.	52	19	64	24	-	-	58	22	96	36	270	100
8	It is believed that EFL learning strategies promotes academic performance of the learners.	50	19	72	27	-	-	50	19	98	35	270	100
9	It is believed that language learning methods can provide favorable upbringing in teaching-learning process.	32	12	58	21	-	-	150	56	30	12	270	100
10	Learning strategies and assessment are directly related with one another.	103	38	55	20	58	21	53	20	59	22	270	100
11	It is believed that language learning strategy affects student’s performance when they are taking their assessment.	60	22	40	14	50	18	70	25	50	18	270	100

Key: SA-(Strongly Agree) =5 A - (Agree) =4 U - (Undecided) =3 D - (Disagree) = 2 SD - (Disagree) = 1

With regards to item 4 (see appendix), teachers of the school were interviewed to reply whether or not do they believe that is there a strong relationship between

language learning strategy and academic achievement. In rejoinder to this, all EFL teachers of Bogale Walelu Secondary and Preparatory School believed that there is

a strong relationship between language learning strategy and academic achievement. They added further ideas on it that language learning strategy is blue print for academic achievement of all EFL students. Besides, poor language learning strategy leads into poor in academic achievement and effective language learning strategy results into good in academic achievement. Therefore, language learning strategy and academic achievement have a strong relationship between one another.

In item 5 (see appendix), EFL teachers of the school asked to reply whether they believe that academic achievement depends up on teacher's approach of teaching English as foreign language or not. In riposte to this, all teachers of the school believed that academic achievement depends up on teacher's approach of teaching English as foreign language. And they said that academic achievement is the end product of teacher's approach of teaching English as a foreign language. Based on the above data one can deduce that academic achievement depends up on teacher's approach of teaching English as foreign language.

With regards to item 6 (see appendix), teachers of the school asked to reply whether or not they believe that EFL learning strategy contributes academic achievements of the EFL learners. In reply to this, almost all teachers of the school were believed that EFL learning strategy contributes academic achievements of the EFL learners. They also argued that without effective learning strategy we couldn't think that the existence of good academic achievements of the learners. Thus, learning strategy contributes academic achievements of the EFL learners in any aspects.

In item 7 (see appendix), EFL teachers of the school asked to reply in their own experience is there any significant relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements of their students. With regard to this, all teachers of the school (T1, T2, T3 and T4) replied that there is a significant relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements of the EFL students. They also said that their success or failure depends up on their learning strategies and academic achievements. Therefore, we can infer that there is a strong or a significant relationship between EFL language learning strategies and academic achievements of the students.

In deduction to students' questionnaires response and teacher's interviews results data on items related to a significant relationship between EFL learning strategy

and EFL academic achievement: majority of EFL students and teachers are positively perceived on a relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL academic achievement. The data divulged that there is a significant a relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements. This implies that a poor learning strategy escorts that in low academic achievements. Accordingly, language learning strategies leads into the failure or success of EFL student's academic achievements in their academic progress. Thus, language learning strategies and academic achievement is one presupposes another which means there is a significant a relationship between language learning strategies and academic achievements of the EFL students.

Summary, conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

Summary of the major findings

A significant a relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements

The study divulged that there is a significant a relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements. This infers that learning strategies have negative or positive impact on academic achievements of the EFL learners.

First, students' questionnaires response and teacher's interviews results data on items related to a significant relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL academic achievement: majority of EFL students and teachers are positively perceived on a relationship between EFL learning strategy and EFL academic achievement. The data divulged that there is a significant a relationship between EFL learning strategies and academic achievements. This implies that a poor learning strategy escorts that in low academic achievements. Accordingly, language learning strategies leads into the failure or success of EFL student's academic achievements in their academic progress. Thus, language learning strategies and academic achievement is one presupposes another which means there is a significant a relationship between language learning strategies and academic achievements of the EFL students.

The study showed that the majority of the EFL teachers and students of the Bogale Walelu 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 Sodo town 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 learners.

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