Factors Affecting the Language Learning Strategies of Japanese University Students

Glenn D. Gagne & Marissa M. Oda

Abstract

This study examines the use of language learning strategies (LLS) by Japanese university students. More specifically, it uses the results of the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) survey (Oxford, 1989) to observe how usage is influenced by different variables including academic department and academic year. The study aims to shed light on why some Japanese students succeed while others fail to achieve the goal of communicative competence and it hopes to provide an impetus for teachers to realize the value of LLS training and include such training in their curricula.

Key words: language learning strategies (LLS), Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), communicative competence, Japanese university students

Background of the Study: The Problem

In the white paper Japanese Government Policies in Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) wrote that "it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English, which has become a common international language, in order for living in the 21st century" and announced

the development of a "strategic plan to cultivate 'Japanese With English Abilities'". The Ministry defined "English Abilities" for upper secondary school graduates as "the ability to hold normal conversations on everyday topics as well as a similar level of reading, writing and listening (English-language ability of graduates should be the second grade or pre-second grade of the STEP Test, on average)."
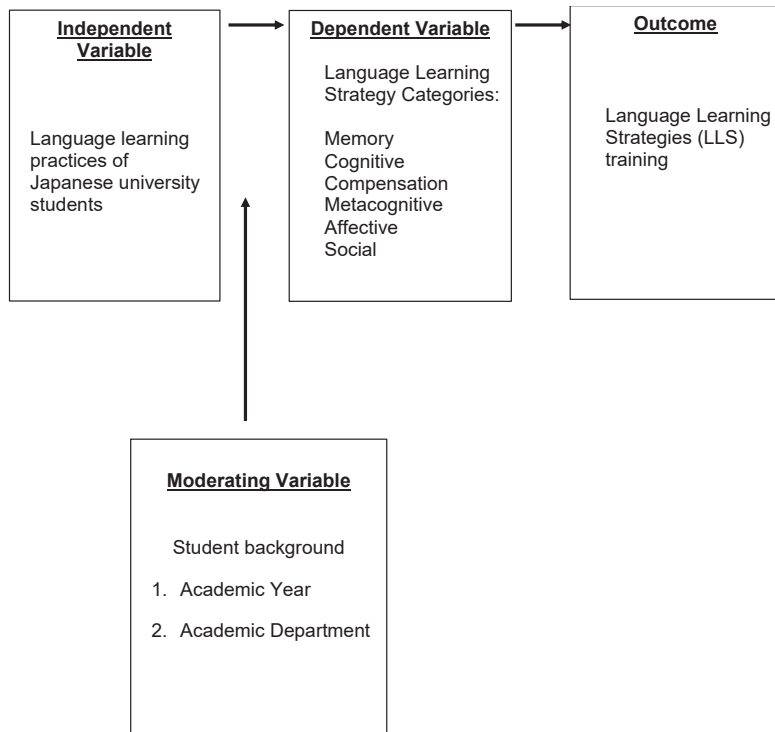
There is general agreement among language learning and teaching theorists and practitioners as to the efficacy of using learning strategies in language education (Oxford, 1990a, Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Brown, 2000; and Nunan, 2009). Therefore, as one means of helping achieve this goal, this paper looks at: 1) how learners currently use language learning strategies (LLS) in their quest for communicative competence and 2) areas where they could improve their use of LLS.

Furthermore, this research examines variables that influence the use of language learning strategies by Japanese students from selected departments at a private university in Japan. Specifically, it attempts to analyze the following points:

1. The frequency with which Japanese university students use language learning strategies along the following categories:
   a. memory strategies
   b. cognitive strategies
   c. compensation strategies
   d. metacognitive strategies
   e. affective strategies
   f. social strategies

2. Significant differences in language learning strategy use when students are
   grouped according to:

   a. academic year

   b. academic department

The figure below shows the learner variables that will be considered in
determining the choice and frequency of language learning strategy use of
Japanese university students.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Outcome
Language learning practices of Japanese university students	Language Learning Strategy Categories: Memory Cognitive Compensation Metacognitive Affective Social	Language Learning Strategies (LLS) training

Moderating Variable

Student background

1. Academic Year

2. Academic Department

The independent variable is the language learning practices of students.
The dependent variables are the six categories of language learning strategies

fostered by Rebecca Oxford specifically: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The moderating variables are the two learner characteristics: academic year and academic department. An intended outcome in the future is the inclusion of language learning strategies (LLS) training in the curricula.

Literature Review

A Learner-focused Approach

Many early theories, methods, and approaches in second language education focused on how to teach the language (Griffiths, 2003) or on how learning is affected by the actions of the teacher; i.e., how teachers teach. However, in the 1960s, there was a paradigm shift in second language education and research. It can be characterized as a move from the teacher-centered approach to the learner-centered approach in language learning and teaching. The learner-centered approach recognized that learners have their individual differences in needs, interests, language goals, and intellectual capacities. This approach focused on the learner and his or her attitude to learning.

In 1972, Selinker (in Larsen, Freeman, and Long, 1991) stated, "a theory of second language learning that does not provide a central place for individual differences among learners cannot be acceptable." Interest in the qualities of a successful and unsuccessful language learner emerged and research focused on "how learners learned" a language. Furthermore, research on the qualities of a "good language learner" notably by Naiman, Frohlich, and Todesco in 1975, Stern in 1975, and Rubin in 1975, looked at how learning is affected by strategies initiated by the learner (Littlewood, 2004).

Communicative Competence and Language Learning Strategies

Language learning and teaching theorists and practitioners agree that the use of learning strategies is one factor in explaining the differential success among second language learners (Oxford, 1990a; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Brown, 2000; and Nunan, 2009). Furthermore, O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo and Kupper (In Yang, 2007) argued that identifying the learning strategies of good language learners and teaching them to less proficient learners could facilitate the development of second language skills. Rebecca Oxford (1990) also stressed the importance of learning strategies for two reasons. First, strategies are "tools for active, self-directed involvement which is essential for developing communicative competence." Second, language learners with appropriate learning strategies have greater confidence and learn more effectively. Likewise, Nunan (2009) asserted that awareness of these strategies is also important in language learning because if the learner is conscious of the processes that learning involves, then learning will be more effective.

Researchers on language learning strategies (LLS) have discovered that successful second language learners use a variety of learning strategies and use them frequently. The most important finding among LLS investigations was that the use of appropriate language learning strategies leads to improved proficiency or achievement in overall or specific skill areas. It also leads to greater self-confidence in many instances (Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Chamot and Kupper, 1989; Oxford and Crookall, 1989; Cohen, 1990; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1993; Oxford et al., 1993).

According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), there are many factors that could potentially influence a learner's choice of language learning strategies. In 1994, Ellis presented a table comparing the work of various LLS researchers which showed that language proficiency, language background, age, and

personal background affect the choice of strategy.

Definition of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

In general, the term strategy is used to refer to "some form of activity, mental or behavioral, that may occur at a specific stage in the overall process of learning and communicating" (Ellis, 1994). The term "learning strategies" is more specific. The definition that has been adopted by leading experts in LLS such as O'Malley, Chamot and Oxford comes from the work of Rigney (1978). Learning strategies are "operations or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information."

As this research focused specifically on language learners, the authors used Rebecca Oxford's definition of language learning strategies as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task, used by students to enhance their own learning." (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992, p. 63) This was chosen because it is the most structured and lends to better data analysis.

Classification of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Oxford (1990) proposed six categories of language learning strategies which were divided into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are those which directly involve the target language such as reviewing and practicing (i.e., memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies). Indirect strategies are those which provide indirect support for language learning such as planning, cooperating and seeking opportunities (i.e., metacognitive, affective, and social strategies).

(A) Direct Strategies

  (1) <u>Memory strategies</u> relate to how students remember language.

  (2) <u>Cognitive strategies</u> are how students acquire knowledge about language.

  (3) <u>Compensation strategies</u> enable students to make up for limited knowledge.

(B) Indirect Strategies

  (4) <u>Metacognitive strategies</u> explain how students manage the learning process.

  (5) <u>Affective strategies</u> relate to students' feelings.

  (6) <u>Social strategies</u> involve learning by interaction with others.

These six classifications underlie the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), a questionnaire instrument designed by Oxford in 1990 for research in the area of learning strategy.

The Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL)

In 1989, Rebecca Oxford developed the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) to fulfill the need for a standardized tool that could be used for strategy assessment. To date, it is considered the most well-structured and most comprehensively written questionnaire (Ellis, 1994, 1999, 2006; Cohen & Scott, 1996; Brown, 2001; Nunan, 2009). The two versions of the SILL used in 40 to 50 major studies are the version for speakers of other languages learning English (EFL/ESL version) and the version for speakers of English learning a new language. The SILL has been translated to various languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Turkish, and Spanish, and continues to be the tool used by many researchers to assess the strategy use of language learners

(Oxford, 1990 and 1994).

Methods and Procedures

This section describes the population of the study, data gathering tool and procedure, and the treatment of the data.

Population of the study

A total of 61 students participated in the survey. They came from four different academic departments at a private university in Japan and were in either their first or third year. [Department of Dentistry: 16 (26.23%), Department of Law: 7 (11.48%), Department of Global English: 14 (22.95%), Department of Pharmacy: 24 (39.34%)] All of the classes were required "core" courses. In two classes, the students did not have volition (choice) in taking the course. They were assigned based on their student numbers. One was a first-year English conversation class in a Dentistry department. The other was a third-year course on Practical Pharmacy English. In the other two courses, the students had some volition. One was a first-year seminar for law department students. They were given choices between a variety of theme-based seminars and chose an English-based seminar with a foreign teacher. The other was a third-year writing class in an English department, where students had obviously chosen to study English, if not that specific course.

Data Gathering Tool and Procedure

An adopted two-part self-report survey questionnaire was used, which students were requested to complete using Google Forms. The survey was posted on the course page on MS Teams and students were allowed to do it at

their own pace over a period of approximately two weeks. The students were informed that the survey was voluntary and that it would have no effect on their grades.

The first part of the survey was composed of statements from version 7.0 of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for speakers of other languages learning English (EFL/ESL version) created by Rebecca Oxford in 1989. It was in both English and Japanese so that all students, regardless of their English skill level, would be able to understand the questions. In the second part, there were four additional questions regarding students' background, asking about their academic department, academic year, how important learning English was to them, and their English test scores.

The SILL is composed of 50 items that the learners respond to using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never or almost never true of me) to 5 (always or almost always true of me). The SILL items are divided into six sub-categories of learning strategies namely; memory (9 items), cognitive (14 items), compensation (6 items), metacognitive (9 items), affective (6 items), and social (6 items).

According to Ellis (1994), the SILL does not need to undergo a validity and reliability test since it has been used in major studies and has been found to be comprehensive. Oxford (1996) states that the reliability and validity have been proven to be high. Independent raters discovered that the content validity of the SILL is 0.99, and the internal consistency reliability of the SILL is 0.94, based on a sample size of 505, and 0.92, based on a sample size of 315 (Yang, 2007). Purdue University tested the reliability on a 1,200-person sample and arrived at 0.94.

Analytical Treatment of the Data

The data gathered from the questionnaire was treated using descriptive

and inferential statistics. Weighted mean was used to determine the extent of use of language learning strategies along memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, and was also utilized to rank these strategies.

The means for the frequency of strategy use according to learner variables was interpreted using the five-point Likert scale below with the descriptive interpretations by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) where the range of 3.50 to 5.00 was considered as high use, the range of 2.50 to 3.49 as medium use, and the range of 1.00 to 2.49 as low use. The following scale of interpretation was used:

VALUE	RANGE	EQUIVALENCE	DESCRIPTION
5	4.50 – 5.00	High use	Always or almost always used
4	3.50 – 4.49	High use	Usually used
3	2.50 – 3.49	Medium use	Sometimes used
2	1.50 – 2.49	Low use	Generally not used
1	1.00 – 1.49	Low use	Never or almost never used

Independent-sample T-test was used to determine the difference in the extent of use of the learning strategies when the respondents were grouped according to academic department and academic year. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the language learning strategies of the students according to their academic department and academic level. ANOVA is the most frequently used procedure to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of more than two groups (Fraenkel and Wellen, 2006). All statistical tests were conducted at 0.05 level of significance.

Results for the Entire Group Population

Overall Strategy Use by Category

Table 1 reveals that memory and compensation strategies are the two most frequently used categories of learning strategies (3.13), followed closely by metacognitive strategies (3.00). The least frequently used category is affective strategies (2.76), then cognitive strategies (2.94), and social strategies (2.98). Overall, the respondents use language learning strategies moderately (2.99).

Table 1. Language Learning Strategy Use by Category

LEARNING STRATEGIES	MEAN OF OVERALL STRATEGY USE	INTERPRETATION	RANK
Memory	3.13	Medium use	**1**
Cognitive	2.94	Medium use	5
Compensation	3.13	Medium use	**1**
Metacognitive	3.00	Medium use	3
Affective	2.76	Medium use	6
Social	2.98	Medium use	4
OVERALL	**2.99**	**Medium use**	

These results are similar to other research that looked into the language learning strategies of university students. Chang, Yang, and Watanabe (In Yang, 2007) also found that university students most frequently used compensation strategies over other strategies. Kato (2005, p.255) found that university students most frequently used strategies she grouped into metacognitive-affective strategy and memory-compensation strategy. These were followed by social strategy, cognitive strategy, and what she has termed as entrance-exam-measured strategy. Kato described the distinctive features of what she termed "memory-compensation strategies" as grouping, imagery, rhyming, moving physically, and reviewing in a structured way in combination with guessing meaning from context and using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning.

Use of Memory Strategies

Table 2 shows that, out of the nine memory strategies, two are highly used, five are moderately used, and two are slightly used. The most commonly used strategies were "I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English" with a mean of 3.69, and "I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word" with a mean of 3.66. The least frequently used memory strategies are "I use flashcards to remember new English words" with a mean of 2.46 and "I physically act out new English words" with a mean of 2.30.

Table 2. Use of Various Memory Strategies

Memory Strategies	Mean	Interpretation
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	3.69	High use
2. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	3.66	High use
3. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.38	Medium use
4. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	3.30	Medium use
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.	3.23	Medium use
6. I review English lessons often.	3.23	Medium use
7. I use new English words in a sentence so that I can remember them.	2.93	Medium use
8. I use flashcards to remember new English words.	2.46	Low use
9. I physically act out new English words.	2.30	Low use
Grand Mean	**3.13**	**Medium use**

According to Takeuchi (2003), good Japanese language learners share similar strategies with ESL learners. However, some strategies Japanese university students use are unique to the Japanese EFL context. He found that they use memory strategies related to internalizing the linguistic system. For example, students make word lists and practice saying these words in sentences many times. They also try to guess the meaning of new words and check the dictionary later to confirm the meaning. Kato further explains that they have to

spend time memorizing, pattern-practicing, and using these patterns in practical situation. Thus, it is not a surprise that Japanese students use memory strategies frequently.

Use of Cognitive Strategies

Table 3 indicates that out of the 14 cognitive strategies, two are highly used, ten are moderately used, and two are slightly used. The two most frequently used cognitive strategies are "I try not to translate word for word" (3.62) and "I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English" (3.54). The least frequently used cognitive strategies are "I write notes, messages, letters or reports in English" (1.75) and "I read for pleasure in English" (1.72).

Table 3. Use of Various Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive Strategies	Mean	Interpretation
1. I try not to translate word for word.	3.62	High use
2. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	3.54	High use
3. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.41	Medium use
4. I try to talk like native English speakers.	3.36	Medium use
5. I try to find patterns in English.	3.34	Medium use
6. I say or write new English words several times.	3.20	Medium use
7. I practice the sounds of English.	3.16	Medium use
8. I use the English words I know in different ways.	3.08	Medium use
9. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	2.95	Medium use
10. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to the movies spoken in English.	2.79	Medium use
11. I first skim-read an English passage (read over the passage quickly), then go back and read carefully.	2.74	Medium use
12. I start conversations in English.	2.54	Medium use
13. I write notes, messages, letters or reports in English.	1.75	Low use
14. I read for pleasure in English.	1.72	Low use
Grand Mean	**2.94**	**Medium use**

These findings are similar to Lee and Chan's (2003) research on ESL learners

in Singapore wherein only 60% of learners read more than the textbooks prescribed by their teachers because reading for pleasure is not a popular pastime for them. However, the most frequently used cognitive strategy is "I try not to translate word for word" with a mean of 3.62 is contradictory to the result of Khuwaileh and Shoumali (In Deneme, 2010) that ESL learners, particularly Arab learners, usually think and prepare their ideas in their native language and then translate them into English. In his research on language learners, Takeuchi (2003) observed that Japanese students tend to avoid translating. In reading, they read at a fast rate and guess the meaning of new words. In speaking, they practice sentence patterns aloud, and imitate and shadow correct pronunciation.

Use of Compensation Strategies

Table 4 shows that amongst the language learning strategies, there are no low-use compensation strategies for the students surveyed. Out of the six strategies, one is highly used, and five are moderately used.

Table 4. Use of Various Compensation Strategies

Compensation Strategies	Mean	Interpretation
1. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	3.64	High use
2. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	3.36	Medium use
3. I read English without looking up every new word.	3.25	Medium use
4. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	2.95	Medium use
5. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	2.84	Medium use
6. To understand unfamiliar English words I make guesses.	2.72	Medium use
Grand Mean	**3.13**	**Medium use**

Bremner (1999) explains that compensation strategies are frequently used in language learning environments like the classroom because learners experience temporary communication breakdowns due to their limited knowledge in vocabulary and grammar.

According to Oxford (1990), "less adept language learners often panic, tune out, or grab the dog-eared dictionary and try to look up every unfamiliar word – harmful responses which impede progress toward proficiency." However, the most frequently used compensation strategy for Japanese university students is "If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or a phrase that means the same thing" with a mean of 3.64. This means the students are coping with the challenges of learning inside the classroom, whether it be virtual or traditional classrooms.

Use of Metacognitive Strategies

Table 5 reveals that the most frequently used metacognitive strategy is "I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better" (3.70) and the least frequently used strategies are "I look for people I can talk to in English" (2.49) and "I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English" (2.39). Out of the nine strategies, one is highly used, six are moderately used, and two are slightly used.

Table 5. Use of Various Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies	Mean	Interpretation
1. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	3.70	High use
2. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	3.41	Medium use
3. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	3.25	Medium use
4. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	3.07	Medium use
5. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	3.00	Medium use
6. I plan my schedule so that I will have enough time to study English.	2.92	Medium use
7. I think about my progress in learning English.	2.74	Medium use
8. I look for people I can talk to in English.	2.49	Low use
9. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	2.39	Low use
Grand Mean	**3.00**	**Medium use**

With its rank of third out of the six categories, we can see that it is an

important tool for students, that can be expanded on. Previous research conducted by Gass (1988) revealed that ESL learners value metacognitive strategies because these strategies help students facilitate comparisons between their first language and second language, as well as encourage them to monitor and assess their learning.

Use of Affective Strategies

Table 6 shows that out of the six affective strategies, one is highly used, four are moderately used, and one is slightly used. The most frequently used strategy is "I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English" with a mean of 3.51.

Table 6. Use of Various Affective Strategies

Affective Strategies	Mean	Interpretation
1. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	3.51	High use
2. I think about my progress in learning English.	2.90	Medium use
3. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	2.89	Medium use
4. I give myself a reward or a treat when I do well in English.	2.85	Medium use
5. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	2.56	Medium use
6. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	1.85	Low use
Grand Mean	**2.76**	**Medium use**

Of all six group categories, affective strategies were the least frequently used by Japanese university students. Oxford (1990) stated that the infrequent use of affective strategies might reflect student's perception that language learning relates to internal intellectual abilities rather than external factors. Thus, many learners are unaware of the power of affective strategies. Takeuchi and Wakamoto (2001, p. 30) confirmed in their research on Japanese EFL college learners, that a group of strategies they coined "communication management strategies" which are mostly affective strategies, were generally not often used.

They discovered that these affective strategies were "culturally unfamiliar" and regarded as not important by learners because "they have never been taught or demonstrated in the classroom that these strategies were useful or effective". Takeuchi and Wakamoto also introduced the concept of "untapped strategies" or strategies that are generally not used by Japanese EFL university students. One of those categories of strategies mentioned by them was affective strategies, "I write down my feelings in a language learning diary". This study also shows that it is the least frequently used affective strategy by Japanese university students, with a mean of only 1.85.

Use of Social Strategies

Table 7 indicates that there are no social strategies that are either highly used or slightly used. It is interesting to note that the most frequently used strategy was "I practice English with other students" (3.11), even though at the time of the survey, Covid-19 restrictions were in effect, hampering the implementation of traditional classes and promoting the use of virtual classrooms.

Table 7. Use of Various Social Strategies

Social Strategies	Mean	Interpretation
1. I practice English with other students.	3.11	Medium use
2. I ask for help from English speakers.	3.10	Medium use
3. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	3.08	Medium use
4. I ask questions in English.	3.07	Medium use
5. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	3.02	Medium use
6. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	2.52	Medium use
Grand Mean	**2.98**	**Medium use**

According to Yang (1996), learners prefer social strategies because of unlimited exposure to computer, multimedia, and networking technologies, which allows them to engage with foreign cultures and get more English input.

The pandemic has seen an increase in the availability of free content through websites like YouTube; social networking sites like Facebook or Instagram; smartphone apps like TikTok; or paid streaming services like Netflix.

Comparative Results by Moderating Variables

Comparison by Academic Year: First-year vs Third-year Students

Table 8 shows that, when grouped according to year, the p-values show <u>no statistically significant difference</u> between the first and third-year students in the overall use of language learning strategies (0.063), nor of the specific strategies; memory (0.169), cognitive (0.215), compensation (0.155), metacognitive (0.210), affective (0.177) strategies.

Table 8. Language Learning Strategies According to Academic Year

Language Learning Strategies	First Year (Law & Dentistry)		Third Year (Pharmacy & Global English)		p-value
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	
Memory	3.29	Medium use	3.03	Medium use	0.169
Cognitive	3.10	Medium use	2.85	Medium use	0.215
Compensation	3.33	Medium use	3.00	Medium use	0.155
Metacognitive	3.17	Medium use	2.89	Medium use	0.210
Affective	2.91	Medium use	2.67	Medium use	0.177
Social	3.33	Medium use	2.77	Medium use	0.015*
OVERALL	**3.19**	**Medium use**	**2.87**	**Medium use**	**0.063**

*Significant at 0.05 level

This finding is congruent to Watanabe's (1990) research on first and second-year Japanese university students in which he discovered that there was no significant effect on strategy use, based on years of studying at university. He hypothesized "college education did not seem to be successful in encouraging

the students to employ a wider range of strategies".

While both first and third-year students used all strategies moderately, it is interesting to note that the significant difference in the use of social strategies (0.015) between first-year and third-year students. The reason for this may be, as we will see later in Table 9, the large difference in the means of the Dentistry students and the Pharmacy students.

Comparison by Academic Department

Table 9, indicates that when the students are grouped according to department, there is statistically significant difference in the use of all language learning strategies: memory (0.010), cognitive (0.024), compensation (0.001), metacognitive (0.009), affective (0.008), and social (0.001).

The first year Dentistry students have the highest extent of use of language learning strategies (3.45). In addition, they also have the highest extent of use of memory (3.54), cognitive (3.34), compensation (3.69), metacognitive (3.45), and social (3.64) strategies. The third year Global English students have the highest extent of use of affective strategies (3.08). The third year Pharmacy students have the lowest extent of use of affective (2.42) and social (2.49) strategies. The first year Law students have the lowest extent of use of memory (2.71), cognitive (2.53), compensation (2.50), and metacognitive (2.56) strategies.

Table 9. Language Learning Strategies according to Academic Department

Language Learning Strategies	First Year Law		First Year Dentistry		Third Year Pharmacy		Third Year Global English		p-value
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	
Memory	2.71	Medium Use	**3.54**	High Use	3.05	Medium Use	3.01	Medium Use	0.010*
Cognitive	2.53	Medium Use	**3.34**	Medium Use	2.73	Medium Use	3.06	Medium Use	0.024*
Compensation	2.50	Medium Use	**3.69**	High Use	2.94	Medium Use	3.11	Medium Use	0.001*
Metacognitive	2.56	Medium Use	**3.45**	Medium Use	2.68	Medium Use	3.26	Medium Use	0.009*
Affective	2.69	Medium Use	3.01	Medium Use	2.42	Low Use	**3.08**	Medium Use	0.008*
Social	2.64	Medium Use	**3.64**	High Use	2.49	Low Use	3.25	Medium Use	0.001*
OVERALL	**2.60**	**Medium Use**	**3.45**	**Medium Use**	**2.72**	**Medium Use**	**3.13**	**Medium Use**	**0.001***

*Significant at 0.05 level

These findings of significant difference agree with Fewell's research (2010), on Japanese university students who were Business and English majors, in which he discovered a distinct difference in the learners' goals. On one hand, most English majors see the need for language study in preparation for a lifelong English related career. On the other hand, most Business majors were only interested in passing the course because it was an academic requirement for graduation. Fewell's research findings could explain why overall, Global English students (3.13) have higher extent of use of language learning strategies when compared to Pharmacy students (2.72). However, a comparison of the results between the Law students and the Dentistry students seems to be in contrast to Fewell's findings. Overall, the Dentistry students (3.45) have a higher extent of use of the language learning strategies compared to the Law students (2.60). This might be because like the Global English students, Dentistry students may see the necessity of using English in their careers in an increasingly multicultural society. On the other hand, one would think Law students should also be driven by the same reality, given they are also likely to face the prospect of working with multicultural clients. Perhaps this difference is connected to perceptions or expectations of the possibility of needing to use English.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study tried to learn more about the extent of use of language learning strategies by Japanese university students and ventured to discover if there were differences in language learning strategy use when students were grouped according to academic year or academic department. It was concluded that Japanese university students use language learning strategies to varying extents. However, overall, they use strategies moderately. Academic department is a factor that can contribute to the frequency of use of language learning strategies.

The Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) offers a valuable opportunity to determine how students learn and to help teachers have a concrete idea of appropriate teaching methods, approaches, materials, and tasks to use. Furthermore, after administering the SILL, language teachers can help learners by making them aware of the new learning strategies through explicit demonstration, discussion, use, and evaluation of a variety if not all learning strategies.

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