Language Learning Strategy (LLS) Use among Senior Secondary School Students in Enugu Education Zone

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Abstract - The study of Language Learning Strategy (LLS) Use among Senior Secondary School Students was carried out with the intention of finding out if there is presence of meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies and whether the students use those mentioned strategies in the classroom. The study employed survey design. The multi stage techniques were used to select the samples that were used for the study. The schools were located in the urban and rural areas of Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The sample was 40% of the total population that was 680 students, 502female students and 178male students from selected schools in the zone. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The results of the study showed that the more the students use LLS, the more proficient they are in the English Language. The students use LLS in high extent, and there is significant difference between students in urban areas and students in rural areas in the use of LLS. Teachers should endeavor to create student-centered classroom in which the teacher gives the students frequent opportunities to practice and regularly assists them to develop the skills. Government should organize retraining programmes like conferences, seminars and workshops to develop in the teacher's knowledge of Language Learning Strategy (LLS).

Index Terms - Affective, Language, Learning, Strategy, Meta-cognition and Social

INTRODUCTION:

The teaching of the English Language in Nigeria schools and colleges is organized around the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are regarded as passive or unproductive skills, while speaking and writing are seen as active or productive skills. But despite all efforts made to teach these skills, the Nigerian students' level of language proficiency is still below expectation. From almost all the West African Examination council (WAEC) Chief Examiners' Reports of students' performances in West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), the overall performance of students is poor. Available literature from the Test Development and Research Division (TRDRD) or WAEC on students' performance in the

English Language indicates that although the English Language papers are usually within the experience level of candidates, the performance of students has continued to be poor.

The WAEC Chief Examiners Reports [8] confirm that students performance in the English Language is below expectation. Issues highlighted in the reports include students' ignorance in the manipulation of grammatical structures, language convention and organization of ideas. Students displayed wrong sentence construction, lack of understanding of rules of agreement of verb and subject, wrong amalgamation of words, errors in plural formations, ignorance of verbs and noun forms of certain words. They also exhibited poor spelling, improper punctuation and immature vocabulary.

The report went further dwelt extensively on the poor writing skills of candidates, describing them as substandard and naïve. There are other problems associated with cognitive and motor skills as well as poor adherence to sensitive grammar rules. The poor end result of candidates after six years of post primary school exposure to English, both as a language of instruction and as a school subject, is a clear indication of serious cumulative inadequacies of language performance through which the candidates passed.

One of the most important concerns of education over the years is to ensure that each child makes the best of his/her abilities from the school subjects studied. Students that achieved below the level which is expected of them have attracted attention. This is because academic achievement has been of great interest to teachers, educationists and the generality of the society, the general performance of students continues to decline yearly, especially in the English Language.

Language Learning Strategy (LLS) as an instructional model was developed to meet the academic needs of students learning English as a second language (ESL). LLS grew out of research that was conducted by Charmot and O'Malley in the early 1980's. It is based on the assumption that active learners are better learners and that language learning strategies can transfer to and different tasks. As an off shoot of the cognitive theory, the LLS model posits that learning is an active dynamic process in which learners are fully engaged and information is selected from the environment and retained when it is important to the learner..

Although the efficacy of LLS to language instruction in developed nations is quite pronounced, as studies [1], show the impact of instructional integration of the memory, cognitive, compensation, meta-cognitive, affective and social model on students' proficiency in the English Language among students in developing countries such as Nigeria is not known and is worth exploring. These six study areas were grouped into two as direct strategy and indirect strategy; this is according to [4]. He maintained that memory, cognitive and compensation are grouped under direct while meta cognitive, affective and social model are grouped under indirect strategy which the researcher dimed appropriate for the study. In the strength of this work, the researcher determines the indirect learning strategy in language studies.

Meta-cognition as a concept has been defined severally by many psychologists, in general meta-cognition as simply "thinking about thinking". Meta-cognitive strategy take care for learning, monitor one's own comprehension and production and evaluate how well one has achieved a learning objective. According to [1] meta cognitive strategy is similar to executive processes that enable one to anticipate or plan a task, determine how successfully the plan is being executed and then evaluate the success of the learning outcomes.

 The foregoing confirms the fact that a number of meta-cognitive skills are needed by any learner who desires to become proficient or a good learner. These meta-cognitive skills are mostly self regulatory. Self regulation of language refers to self initiated thoughts, feelings, and actions that learners use to attain various literary goals including improving their language skills as well as enhancing the quality of the language they create which leads to proficiency.

Social/Affective language strategies provide for interacting with another person in order to assist learning as in co-operative learning, asking questions for clarification and using affective control to assist learning tasks. Social/Affective strategies are particularly important in second language acquisition as noted by [1] because language is heavily involved in co-operation and asking questions for clarification. Social/Affective strategies include students' questioning for clarification, asking a teacher for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation and or examples. Another aspect of social/affective strategies include students

seeking cooperation, working with one or peers to obtain feedback, pool information or model a language activity.

It is evident that the combination of meta-cognitive, social and affective strategies as enshrined in Language Learning Strategies (LLS) can provide teachers and learners with a powerful array of techniques that can be used to assist learning. It is important to note that LLS make possible a holistic modeling technique to teaching of language by providing integrative attention to these indirect strategies which are the three aspects of students learning. The main educational goals of inculcating these strategies as incorporated in LLS according to [1] are encouraging autonomy in language learners, increase learner proficiency, increasing learner abilities and preparing learners to successfully solve language problems.

Wang [6] reported in a study of the use of L_1 during L_2 tasks and how L_1 use is affected by the nature of the task and level of L_2 proficiency. The subjects were 16 Chinese EFL learners. They were asked to compose aloud (Metacognitive activity) on two tasks narration and argumentation. Analysis of their think aloud protocols revealed the proportions of L_1 and L_2 used by the students during the different composing activities which constituted the task. Findings showed that students were likely to rely on L_1 when they were managing their process, generating and organizing ideas, but more likely to rely on L_2 when undertaking task, examining and task generating activities.

HU [2] conducted a study in which he sought to ascertain whether L_2 writes recourse to L_1 during writing. His subjects were 15 Mainland Chinese graduates in science and engineering. Result showed that if the task was complex, students tended to use L_1 for thinking. The study also showed that if the L_2 proficiency was not high enough, students tended to use their L_1. The conclusion was that, it is not unreasonable for L_2 students whose L_2 is not developed to think in their L_1 and so use translation to generate content for writing and also to keep writing going.

Uwazurike [5], conducted a study which examined the relationship between mastery goals, performance goals, meta cognition and academic success. The study adopted a descriptive and an analytical survey involving 179 undergraduates 187 females, 92 males)

of the Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. The instruments used in the study were the Meta cogntive Awareness Inventory (MAI) and a Goal Inventory (GI). Findings from the study showed that meta cognition is related to academic success and students with good meta cognition have good GPAs. Mastery goals influence GPAs through meta cognition as students with mastery goals may have superior meta cognitive skills and strategies that they use to master information.

WAEC Chief Examiners' report [7] confirmed that secondary school students require language learning strategy (LLS) for optimum performance in the English language. In order to address these problems, the WAEC, NECO, JAMB and institutions of higher learning made the English language a compulsory subject for a candidate who want to sat for any of these examination body or enter a higher institution of learning.

Specifically, the study was to;

1. The extent of meta-cognitive Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students.

2. The extent of affective Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students.

3. The extent of social Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students.

To achieve this objective, three research question and one null hypothesis guided the study.

1. What is the extent of meta-cognitive Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students?

2. What is the extent of affective Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students?

3. What is the extent of social Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students.

Hypothesis

H0₁   There is no significant difference between male and female students in their extent of indirect language learning strategy use among senior secondary school students.

Method

The design of the study was a survey research design. The area of the study was Enugu Education Zone while the population of the study was 1,657 senior secondary school (III) students. The sample was drawn through a multi-stage technique. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 40% of the students. A total of 680 SS III students were finally selected 472 were students from urban area while 208 were students from rural area. This study used nineteen items structured modified Likert type questionnaire. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to take decision for the purpose of answering the research questions and hypothesis. The questionnaire has four point responses of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent which were given weights of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts from University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and the reliability was determined by the test re-test procedure and application of Crombach Alpha to determine an index of 0.81. T-test was used to test the single null hypothesis. Any item with mean score 2.50 and above is regarded as high extent on the other hand items below 2.50 were regarded as low extent. The null hypothesis will be rejected if the t-critical is greater than the t-calculated or the other way round.

Research Question 1

What is the extent of Meta-cognitive Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students?

Table 1:

Mean Response of the Students on Extent of meta-cognitive Language Learning Strategy use n = 680

S/N	Item Statement	$\overline{x}$	SD	Decision
1	I try to find as many ways as I can to use the English Language.	3.20	0.88	High extent.
2	I try to find out how to be a better learner of the English Language.	2.82	0.76	High extent
3	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study the English Language.	2.57	0.82	High extent
4	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	2.03	0.75	Low extent
5	I think about my progress in learning the English Language.	2.62	0.77	High extent
6	I plan in advance to attend to specific aspects of the English Language input.	3.02	0.91	High extent
7	I rehearse linguistic components necessary to carry out an upcoming language task.	2.65	0.71	High extent
	Grand Mean	2.70	0.80	High extent

Data on table 1 show a grand mean of 2.70 which shows that the respondents agree that the use of meta-cognitive language learning strategy by Senior Secondary Students are at a high extent.

Research Question 2

What is the extent of affective Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students?

Table 2

Mean Response of the Students on Extent of affective Language Learning Strategy use n = 680

S/N	Item Statement	$\overline{x}$	SD	Decision
8	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using the English Language.	2.45	0.78	High extent
9	I give myself a reward when I do well in the English Language.	2.91	0.82	High extent
10	I notice if I am nervous when I am studying or using the English Language.	3.01	0.81	High extent
11	I write down my feelings in a language diary.	2.34	0.91	High extent
12	I correct my speech for accuracy in pronunciation.	2.52	0.76	High extent
13	I correct my speech for accuracy in grammar.	2.50	0.80	High extent
	Grand Mean	**2.62**	**0.81**	High extent

In Table2 above the respondents agree with a mean score of 2.62 that the affective language learning strategy use among the senior secondary school students are on the high extent.

Research Question 3

What is the extent of social Language Learning Strategy use among senior secondary school students?

Table 3

Mean Response of the Students on Extent of social Language Learning Strategy use n = 680

S/N	Item Statement	$\overline{x}$	SD	Decision
14	I work with other students to model a language activity.	2.62	0.71	High extent
15	I work with other students to obtain feedback in the English Language.	2.56	0.92	High extent
16	I work with other students for pool information in the English Language.	2.01	0.87	Low extent
17	I ask the English Language teacher to give examples when teaching.	2.45	0.67	Low extent
18	I ask the English Language teacher for repetition.	2.52	0.81	Low extent

19	I ask the English Language teacher for explanation.	3.00	0.78	High extent
	Grand Mean	**2.52**	**0.79**	High extent

Table 3 by indication, shows a high extent use of social language learning strategy by the senior secondary school students. The grand mean as determined in the table is 2.52.

Table 4

T-test table on male and female students responses on the extent of indirect language learning strategy use among senior secondary school students.

S/N	Item Statement	$\overline{x}$	SD	$\overline{x}$	SD
		Female = 502		**Male= 178**	
1	I try to find as many ways as I can to use the English Language.	2.54	0.62	2.32	0.-72
2	I try to find out how to be a better learner of the English Language.	2.81	0.63	2.89	0.72
3	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study the English Language.	2.4	0.81	2.31	0.61
4	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	2.12	0.61	2.35	0.89
5	I think about my progress in learning the English Language.	3.02	0.66	2.21	0.87
6	I plan in advance to attend to specific aspects of the English Language input.	2.67	0.71	2.87	0.81
7	I rehearse linguistic components necessary to carry out an upcoming language task.	2.51	0.67	2.41	0.87
8	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using the English Language.	2.67	0.62	2.63	0.98
9	I give myself a reward when I do well in the English Language.	3.12	0.63	2.89	0.89
10	I notice if I am nervous when I am studying or using the English Language.	3.01	0.61	2.34	0.88
11	I write down my feelings in a language diary.	2.56	0.62	2.78	0.87
12	I correct my speech for accuracy in pronunciation.	2.67	0.58	2.31	0.81
13	I correct my speech for accuracy in grammar.	2.91	0.65	2.43	0.91
14	I work with other students to model a language activity.	2.55	0.72	2.54	0.87
15	I work with other students to obtain feedback in the English Language.	2.87	0.61	2.83	0.87
16	I work with other students for pool information in the English Language.	2.56	0.72	2.31	0.83

17	I ask the English Language teacher to give examples when teaching.	2.66	0.66	2.45	0.89
18	I ask the English Language teacher for repetition.	2.51	0.61	2.89	0.81
19	I ask the English Language teacher for explanation.	2.50	0.55	2.74	0.84
	Grand mean	2.66	0.65	2.55	0.84

Table 5

	$\overline{x}$	SD	n	Degree of freedom	Standard error	t-cal	t-crit
Female	2.66	0.65	502	678	-0.19	1.589	1.282
Male	2.55	0.84	178				

From Table 5 above, the Null Hypothesis is rejected because the t-cal is greater than t-critical. This shows that there is significant difference between the respondents in the urban and in the rural areas.

 Decision

The analysis in tables 1, 2 and 3 show that students agree in high extent use of meta-cognitive, affective and social language learning strategies respectively. The findings of this study are not in agreement with the confirmation of Chief WAEC Examiners report between [7]. The report shows that m*ost of the students are naïve and ignorance in the manipulation of grammatical structure, language convention and organization of ideas. The report maintained that students have problems associated with cognitive and motor skills as well as poor adherence to sensitive grammatical rules. By implication,* when students use LLS they tend to be more proficient in the English language. This finding is consistent with some of the previous research findings such as the study by [9] and [4], which further indicate that learner with higher proficiency across cultures use a wider variety of language learning strategy always than less proficient learners do. It implies that the students should be motivated to learn English through the use of LLS that will enable them to interact freely with one another in the classroom.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions emerged:

That language learning strategy use has influence on the proficiency of the senior secondary school students. That the secondary school students agree in high extent use of meta-cognitive, affective and social. There is significant difference between students in urban areas and students in rural areas of the zone in use of meta-cognitive, affective and social. Teachers should endeavour to create student-centered classroom in which the teacher gives the students frequent opportunities to practice and regularly assist them to develop the skills.

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