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MEASURING THE COST AND BENEFIT OF LEARNING ENGLISH AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN KURDISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to measure the cost and benefit of learning English as a second language in private universities in Kurdistan region. For this purpose, 100 students from different departments of Cihan University were participated in this study. Both English language and accounting sources have been used by researchers to prepare an academic framework for this study.

The questionnaire was designed by the researchers then analyzed by fuzzy logic. The common objective is to assess the feasibility of learning English language in private universities.

Finally, the researchers concluded that there is a significant difference between the dimensions of learning style and language learning strategies of learning English as a second language..

INTRODUCTION

The measuring of cost and benefit of learning English is one of the most important points to develop the learning process in any university using English as second or foreign language. the main factors that help determine how the students learn a second or foreign language are language learning styles and strategies .

LEARNING STYLES

Many researchers cited 9 major style dimensions relevant to second language learning, although many more style aspects might also prove to be influential. In this paper the researcher discusses four dimensions of learning style that are likely to be among those most strongly associated with second language learning[1]:

- sensory preferences
- personality types
- desired degree of generality
- biological differences.

Learning styles are not dichotomous (black or white, present or absent). Learning styles generally operate on a continuum or on multiple, intersecting continua. For example, a person might be more extraverted than introverted, or more closure-oriented than open, or equally visual and auditory but with lesser kinesthetic and tactile involvement. Few if any people could be classified as having all or nothing in any of these categories[2].

1. Sensory Preferences: Sensory preferences can be broken down into four main areas: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (movement-oriented), and tactile (touch-oriented). Sensory preferences refer to the physical, perceptual learning channels with which the student is the most comfortable. Visual students like to read and obtain a great deal from visual stimulation. For them, lectures, conversations, and oral directions without any visual backup can be very confusing. In contrast, auditory students are comfortable without visual input and therefore enjoy and profit from unembellished lectures, conversations, and oral directions. They are excited by classroom interactions in role-plays and similar activities. They sometimes, however, have difficulty with written work. Kinesthetic and tactile students like lots of movement and enjoy working with tangible objects, collages, and flashcards. Sitting at a desk for very long is not for them; they prefer to have frequent breaks and move around the room.

The students varied significantly in their sensory preferences, with people from certain cultures differentially favoring the three different modalities for learning[3]. Students from Asian cultures, for instance, were often highly visual, with Koreans being the most visual. Many studies found that Hispanic learners were frequently auditory. Reid discovered that Japanese are very non auditory. The students from a variety of cultures were tactile and kinesthetic in their sensory preferences[3], [4].

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2. Personality Types: Another style aspect that is important for second language education is that of personality type, which consists of four strands[5]:
 - extraverted vs. introverted
 - intuitive-random vs. sensing-sequential
 - thinking vs. feeling
 - closure-oriented/judging vs. open/perceiving

Many Scholars found a number of significant relationships between personality type and second language proficiency in native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages[2].

3. Desired Degree of Generality: This strand contrasts the learner who focuses on the main idea or big picture with the learner who concentrates on details. Global or holistic students like socially interactive, communicative events in which they can emphasize the main idea and avoid analysis of grammatical minutiae. They are comfortable even when not having all the information, and they feel free to guess from the context. Analytic students tend to concentrate on grammatical details and often avoid more free-flowing communicative activities. Because of their concern for precision, analytic learners typically do not take the risks necessary for guessing from the context unless they are fairly sure of the accuracy of their guesses. The global student and the analytic student have much to learn from each other[6]. A balance between generality and specificity is very useful for second language learning.
4. Biological Differences : Differences in second language learning style can also be related to biological factors, such as biorhythms, sustenance, and location. Biorhythms reveal the times of day when students feel good and perform their best. Some second language learners are morning people, while others do not want to start learning until the afternoon, and still others are creatures of the evening , happily “pulling an all-nighter” when necessary. Sustenance refers to the need for food or drink while learning. Quite a number of second language learners do not feel comfortable learning without a candy bar, a cup of coffee, or a soda in hand, but others are distracted from study by food and drink. Location involves the nature of the environment: temperature, lighting, sound, and even the firmness of the chairs[7]. Second language students differ widely with regard to these environmental factors. The biological aspects of second language learning style are often forgotten, but vigilant teachers can often make accommodations and compromises when needed.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

As seen earlier, second language learning strategies are specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own second language learning. The word strategy comes from the ancient Greek word *strategia*, which means steps or actions taken for the purpose of winning a war. The war like meaning of *strategia* has fortunately fallen away, but the control and goal directedness remain in the modern version of the word[8]. A given strategy is neither good nor bad; it is essentially neutral until the context of its use is thoroughly considered. What makes a strategy positive and helpful for a given learner? A strategy is useful if the following conditions are present:

- the strategy relates well to the L2 task and
- the strategy fits the particular student’s learning style preferences to one degree or another
- the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies.

Strategies that fulfill these conditions “make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”[8]. Learning strategies can also enable students to become more independent, autonomous, lifelong learners[9], [10]. Yet students are not always aware of the power of consciously using second language learning strategies for making learning quicker and more effective[11]. Skilled teachers help their students develop an awareness of learning strategies and enable them to use a wider range of appropriate strategies.

MAIN CATEGORIES OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

Six major groups of second language learning strategies have been identified[8]. Alternative taxonomies have been offered by many researchers. Cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing



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structures and sounds formally. Cognitive strategies were significantly related to second language proficiency in studies[12] ,[13]. Meta cognitive strategies (e.g. identify in gone's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an second language task, gathering and organizing materials, arranging a study space and a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy) are employed for managing the learning process overall. Among native English speakers learning foreign languages, some researchers found that meta cognitive strategies had "a significant, positive, direct effect on cognitive strategy use, providing clear evidence that meta cognitive strategy use has an executive function over cognitive strategy use in task completion"[14]. Studies of English as second language learners in various countries (e.g., in South Africa, and in Turkey) uncovered evidence that meta cognitive strategies are often strong predictors of second language proficiency. Memory-related strategies help learners link one second language item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. Various memory-related strategies enable learners to learn and retrieve information in an orderly string (e.g., acronyms), while other techniques create learning and retrieval via sounds (e.g., rhyming), images (e.g., a mental picture of the word itself or the meaning of the word), a combination of sounds and images (e.g., the keyword method), body movement (e.g., total physical response), mechanical means (e.g., flashcards), or location (e.g., on a page or blackboard)[5]. Memory-related strategies have been shown to relate to second language proficiency in a course devoted to memorizing large numbers of Kanji characters[12] and in second language courses designed for native-English speaking learners of foreign languages[15]. However, memory-related strategies do not always positively relate to second language proficiency. In fact, the use of memory strategies in a test-taking situation had a significant negative relationship to learners' test performance in grammar and vocabulary[16]. The probable reason for this is that memory strategies are often used for memorizing vocabulary and structures in initial stages of language learning, but that learners need such strategies much less when their arsenal of vocabulary and structures has become larger. Compensatory strategies (e.g., guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and writing ; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words) help the learner make up for missing knowledge. Some researchers asserted that compensatory strategies that are used for speaking and writing (often known as a form of communication strategies) are intended only for language use and must not be considered to be language learning strategies[17]. However, another researchers contend that compensation strategies of any kind, even though they might be used for language use, nevertheless aid in language learning as well. After all, each instance of L2 use is an opportunity for more second language learning[18], [5]. And others demonstrated that compensatory strategies are significantly related to second language proficiency in their study of native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages[15]. Affective strategies, such as identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self talk, have been shown to be significantly related to second language proficiency in research by some scholars among South African English second language learners and among native English speakers learning foreign languages[19]. However, in other studies with English second language learners in Thailand, affective strategies showed a negative link with some measures of second language proficiency[20]. One reason might be that as some students progress toward proficiency, they no longer need affective strategies as much as before. Perhaps because learners' use of cognitive, meta cognitive, and social strategies is related to greater second language proficiency and self-efficacy, over time there might be less need for affective strategies as learners progress to higher proficiency. Social strategies (e.g., asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language. Social strategies were significantly associated with second language proficiency in studies by the South African English as second language study and the investigation of native-English-speaking foreign language learners.

METHODOLOGY

This part provides a thorough description of the research methodology used in this study. For the sake of establishing a relationship between the various subparts of this section, the researchers will first describe the educational context in which the research was done is described and then the idea behind the employed study method will be explained in detail. Secondly, the study questions will be discussed. At last the researcher will elaborate on the methodology details including participants, instruments, and data collection as well as data analysis procedures.

A. Educational Context

The study was done in Erbil province. Its population is nearly 2 million and it is the fourth largest city in Iraq after Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. It is located in the Northern part of Iraq. It is the capital of the Kurdistan

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Region of Iraq. The Kurdish language is the formal language of the Kurdistan region. In the educational setting of the Kurdistan region, the Kurdish language is the language used in schools and universities and English is taught as a foreign language. In the last two decades, several local and international universities have been established in the Erbil province. The data was collected from one of the most important University in Erbil , Cihan University .

B. Research Questions

The current study investigated on the perceptions of Cihan University instructors and learners regarding the importance of learning language strategies including cognitive, affective and meta-cognitive strategies. Moreover, independent variables can be classified to three parts[21]:

- the students' gender.
- the university instructors' gender and the number of years of English teaching experience.
- The cost of learning English in the scientific departments of the university.

The research will deal with in order to answer the research questions of this study involving instructors' and learners' beliefs on the importance of learning language strategies , and according to the financial information of Cihan University.

C. Participants

The participants of the current study are the students of the scientific departments in Cihan University (Biology dept. of science collage , computer sciences dept. of science collage , civil engineering dept. of engineering collage , and architecture dept. of engineering collage), they are different from each other in terms of age, gender and number of years of studying English at university level. As a whole there are 100 students. As a result, the participants were selected from first, second, grade of the program. The table 1 below indicates the number of male and female students in the selected sample of the study.

Table 1: The Number Of Male And Female Students

Participants	Male Participants	Female Participants	Total
	55	45	100

The participants in this study pay different tuitions according to the policy of the university. The table 2 below shows the percentage of English language lectures fees compared to the tuitions of study in Cihan university for each department.

Table 2: The Percentage Of English Lectures Fees

Dept.	Duration of study	Percentage of English fees
Biology	4 years	5.78%
Computer sciences	4 years	5.88%
Civil engineering	4 years	6.35%
Architecture engineering	5 years	5.63%

The table 3 below shows the percentage of English language lectures cost compared to the total cost of study in Cihan university for each department.

TABLE 3: THE PERCENTAGE OF ENGLISH LECTURES COST

Dept.	Percentage of English lectures cost
Biology	7.15%
Computer sciences	8.15%
Civil engineering	8.27%
Architecture engineering	5.22%

DESIGNING AND ANALYZING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In this study , the researchers determine four dimensions of learning style , and 6 learning strategies groups to be the base of the questionnaire. The tables 4, 5 below show them .

Table 4 : The Four Dimensions Of Learning Style

Learning Style		Definition
1	Sensory Preferences	Sensory preferences refer to the physical, perceptual learning channels with which the student is the most comfortable.
2	Personality Types	Personality type (often called psychological type) is a construct based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung.
3	Desired Degree of Generality	Desired Degree of Generality focuses on the main idea or big picture with the learner who concentrates on details.
4	Biological Differences	Biological differences can be related to biological factors, such as biorhythms, sustenance, and location.

Table 5 : The Six Learning Strategies Groups

Learning Strategies		Definition
1	Cognitive strategies	Cognitive strategies can enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways.
2	Meta cognitive strategies	Meta cognitive strategies are employed for managing the learning process overall.
3	Memory-related strategies	Memory-related strategies enable learners to learn and retrieve information in an orderly string
4	Compensatory strategies	Compensatory strategies help the learner make up for missing knowledge.
5	Affective strategies	Affective strategies show a negative link with some measures of second language proficiency.
6	Social strategies	Social strategies help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language.

The results of above questionnaire were processed and analyzed by Fuzzy logic[22], [23] tools, the results of analyzing are shown in Table 6

Table 6 : The Analyzed Results By Fuzzy Logic Tools

	Female %	Male %	Total %
D1	32%	28%	36%
D2	41%	36%	40%
D3	24%	34%	25%
D4	51%	63%	47%
G1	35%	29%	31%
G2	31%	42%	36%
G3	36%	39%	37%
G4	49%	52%	51%
G5	55%	59%	48%
G6	38%	32%	35%

The Table 7 shows the relation between the benefit of using the dimensions of learning style and the learning strategies groups in learning English as second language , and the cost of English lectures .

Table 7 : Measuring Cost And Benefit Of Learning English In Cihan University

	Cost %	Benefit %	Differential %
D1	20%	36%	16%
D2	39%	45%	6%
D3	45%	31%	-14%
D4	29%	38%	9%
G1	10%	28%	18%
G2	44%	41%	-3%
G3	40%	34%	-6%
G4	15%	44%	29%
G5	30%	34%	-4%
G6	55%	37%	-18%

Fig. 1 shows the analyzed results of the 100 questionnaires in linear charts in three colors (blue for cost, red for benefit, and green for differential).

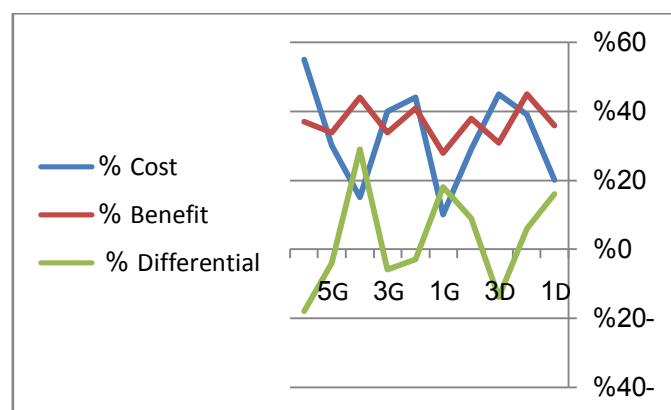


Fig. 1 : The linear chart of results

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this paper show the following :

- There is a big deferent among the dimensions of learning style and the learning strategies group of learning English as second language .
- The differential percentage between cost and benefit equals +33%
- The most expensive aspect is G6 with 55% , and the less expensive aspect is G1.

The most beneficial aspect is D2 with 45% , and the less beneficial aspect is G1 with 28% .

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