

EXPLORING THE STUDENTS' MOST AND LEAST PREFERRED LEARNING STRATEGIES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF LORALAI, BALOCHISTAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the most and least preferred learning strategies from the preservice teachers who were enrolled in the Department of Education. The study employed the quantitative research method in which the descriptive research design was used to explore the learning strategies. The sample consisted of 157 preservice teachers (M=101, F=56) from the Department of Education, University of Loralai, selected through the simple random sampling technique. The ACRA-C learning strategies scale of 17 items (brief version) developed by Jiménez et al. (2018) was used for the data collection. The scale had three dimensions i.e., micro learning strategies (05 items, Cronbach's Alpha=0.83), keys for memory and metacognition learning strategies (05 items, Cronbach's Alpha=0.65), and emotional-social support learning strategies (07 items, Cronbach's Alpha=0.61). The total Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the complete scale was 0.84 achieved from the pilot study of 09 participants. Several researchers in different contexts and cultures (e.g., Almoslamani, 2022; Jiménez et al. 2018) already established the validity of the scale through factors analysis therefore; the current researchers did seek the validity of the scale. Findings revealed that overall all the participants were in favor of all three learning strategies to use them always for lecture learning because the overall mean score 3.27. It meant that the respondents were always engaged in all three learning strategies. Findings further revealed that of the three learning strategies, the emotional-social support learning strategy (Highest mean score=3.44, Rank=1) was mostly preferred and was always used while the micro learning strategy (Lowest mean score=3.12, Rank=3) was the least preferred and was often used for learning of the lesson. Results were discussed and recommendations were given in light of past literature.

Keywords: Learning Strategies, preservice teachers, metacognition learning strategies, emotional-social support learning strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Those steps, which are taken by learners for the ease of their lesson learning and to make the learning faster and more enjoyable are called learning strategies (Almoslamani, 2022; Muelas & Navarro, 2015). The learning strategies are the process of taking notes, organizing the material, underlining the important points, and then summarizing it finally to remember the lesson. Rote learning is the learning of a lesson by heart. Further, rote learning is a traditional approach to learning which has been active in past in various countries like Saudi Arabia (Almoslamani, 2022), Spain (Muelas & Navarro, 2015), Pakistan, and other countries as well. The researchers agreed on the point that rote learning makes the students passive rather than active recipients (Almoslamani, 2022; Al-Seghayer, 2021; Kim & Alghamdi, 2019). Our Pakistani education system acts upon rote learning in their classrooms; however, learners prefer other learning strategies (Almoslamani, 2022) rather than rote learning. It means that learners may be searching for diverse learning strategies that differ from traditional rote learning

(Almoslamani, 2022; Al-Seghayer, 2021). Good performance and high exam scores are predictors of academic achievement (Almoslamani, 2022; Vermunt & Donche, 2017). In turn, high academic achievement is due to the preferred learning strategies; therefore, preferred learning strategies from learners' perspectives must be examined to see which learning strategy the learners in Pakistan may prefer and may not prefer. Therefore, it is vital to identify the diverse learning strategies concerning the department of Education, University of Loralai, Balochistan, Pakistan. Once the learning strategies are identified, the teachers will then definitely be able to select the correct learning strategies to plan their lessons. Thus, the objective of this paper was to provide a complete profile of the learning strategies. The paper's goal is outlined in the following objectives:

- i. To examine the overall mean score of the three learning strategies and their level of frequency use from the perspective of preservice teachers in the department of Education, University of Loralai
- ii. To examine the most preferred learning strategy and its level of frequency use from the perspective of preservice teachers in the department of Education, University of Loralai
- iii. To examine the least preferred learning strategy and its level of frequency use from the perspective of preservice teachers in the department of Education, University of Loralai

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been done in various contexts on the learning strategies use. Further, research regarding learning strategies has many gaps in either way that somewhere the context was Europe (Jiménez et al. 2018) or Gulf countries (Almoslamani, 2022) or somewhere it was explored in the field of English language specifically (Al-Seghayer, 2021). In this case, we the authors of this study are of the view that we should explore the context of Pakistan and should see what position of Pakistani context has. Which kind of learning strategy is mostly preferred and which is least preferred by the Pakistani preservice teachers when they want their lecture learning?

The literature shows that the background and culture of the learners is the main thing that shapes the beliefs about learning strategies of the learners. For example, some of the researchers (e.g., Chiu, Chow & McBride-Chang, 2007) are of the view that social and financial background can also have particular effects on the learning strategies of the students. In this case, socio-cultural factors and experiences shape their strategies of learning.

Here the detail of several researchers who worked on the construct under investigation is displayed, for example, Vega-Hernández et al. (2017) conducted a study at a Spanish university among students by exploring the three learning strategies (i.e., cognitive and learning control, learning support and study habits). The cognitive and learning control strategy was most preferred while study habits were the least preferred.

Díaz et al., (2019) conducted a study in Peru among university students about learning strategies through a qualitative approach. The study found that the students were mostly using metacognitive strategies, processing of the information strategies, and control of the context strategies but the authors of this paper did not mention which of the strategy was mostly or least preferred. It means that this researcher has left this gap.

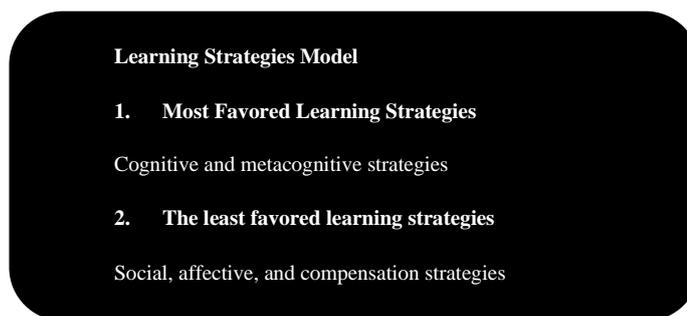
Some of the researchers had specifically explored the learning strategies that learners use in a specific subject such as English and specific contexts such as gulf countries. For example, several studies have closely explored the learning strategies Saudi EFL learners use. Al-Otaibi (2004) examined the language-learning strategies of Saudi EFL learners and found that memory and cognitive strategies were mostly favored while the social, affective, and compensation learning strategies were least favored. Al-Refay and Koura (2010) in Saudi EFL learners, ranked cognitive learning strategies as most preferred and effective least preferred.

Alhaisoni (2012) investigated Saudi EFL learners and stated that the most preferred learning strategies were cognitive and metacognitive while the least preferred was affective and memory strategies. Similarly, Aljuaid (2015) identified the learning strategies in Saudi EFL learners and found that the metacognitive strategy was the most preferred while the memory strategy was the least preferred. Previously, the same author i.e., Aljuaid (2010) examined learning strategies used in Saudi EFL learners and revealed that metacognitive strategies were the most preferred and memory strategies the least.

Consistent with these studies, Alkahtani (2016) investigated learning strategies in Saudi EFL learners and revealed metacognitive strategies were the most dominant strategy while memory and affective strategies were the least dominant. Alhaysony (2017) also reached the same conclusion, as the Saudi EFL learners in his study used cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies the most frequently, while memory and affective strategies were used the least often.

Thus, to make the long story short, learners prefer to use cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. They use effective strategies and memory strategies the least. Overall, learners prefer two (i.e., cognitive and metacognitive strategies) out of the six strategies and the other four strategies the least, particularly the affective and memory strategies (Al-Seghayer, 2021). The model of the learning strategies has been shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Learning Strategies Model



The rationale of the study

Problem regarding learning strategies and academic achievement has been investigated in different contexts e.g., Europe, Gulf countries, and in the field of English language specifically. As we saw from the above-extended research that learning strategies have not so far been explored in the Pakistani higher education system. Therefore, this study holds an important justification and significance in the Pakistani context. Therefore, the learning strategies in Pakistani University—a higher education context is an important place to go ahead with this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the quantitative method in which descriptive design was used because first, the learning strategies were explored, and then they were quantified in terms of the mean score. The study used the Brief ACRA-C learning strategy scale as the data collection tool. Its validity and reliability process has been explained in the later portion of this paper. The target population of the study was all the preservice teachers which were enrolled in the Department of Education at the University of Loralai, Balochistan, Pakistan. Among all the preservice teachers, the questionnaires were distributed to the 157 (M=101, F=56) preservice teachers simply through a simple random sampling technique. A simple random sampling technique was used in the current study because in this type of sampling each participant has an equal chance to include in the study (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). The complete profile of the participants is shown in table 1 below. The researchers did not apply the test of normality because according to CLT (central limit theorem) if the sample size is greater than 100 then one can ignore the test of normality because the exceeding limit of the sample size (Altman & Bland, 1995; Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

Since as mentioned before, the current researchers assumed that data is nearly normal, therefore, we chose the parametric assumptions for the analysis of the data. So, the mean as a measure from the central tendency was selected to compare the means for analysis purposes.

Participants of the Study

Table No. 1 Complete Profile of the Participants

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	M	101	64.3
	F	56	35.7
	Total	157	100.0
Degree	BS	82	52.2
	B.Ed. 1.5	28	17.8

	B.Ed. 2.5		47	29.9
	Total		157	100.0
Educational year	1st Year		58	36.9
	2nd Year		62	39.5
	3rd Year		16	10.2
	4th Year		21	13.4
	Total		157	100.0
GPA	2.1 to 2.5	Passing	9	5.7
	2.5 to 2.9	Good	46	29.3
	2.9 to 3.3	Better	41	26.1
	3.3 and Above	Best	61	38.2
	Total		157	100.0

Reliability the Scale

The current researchers adopted the short version of the ACRA-C learning strategies scale of Jiménez et al. (2018) which is widely used among researchers for higher education in universities. This scale had three dimensions, which were microlearning strategies, keys for memory and metacognition learning strategies, and emotional-social support learning strategies. The micro strategies and keys for memory and metacognition strategies have five items while the emotional-social support strategies had seven items thus the total scale had 17 items. The scale was constructed on a four-point Likert scale having a score of 4 for Always use, 3 for often use, 2 for rarely use, and 1 for never use.

To find the reliability, and to examine that the participants had no problem with the language of the scale, it was presented to nine participants for the pilot study. These nine participants were then excluded from the actual study. The reliability of the scale was determined through Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The reliability of each dimension and total reliability of the scale was from 0.6 to 0.8, which is acceptable among the researchers. Further, the total reliability score of the scale was 0.84, which is showing high consistency among the variable (Almoslamani, 2022). The reliability of the scale is shown in the following table 2.

Table No. 2 Reliability of the Scale- Dimension-wise and Total

S.No	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
1	Micro strategies	0.83	5
2	Keys of Memory and Metacognition	0.65	5
3	Emotional-Social Support	0.61	7
4	Total	0.84	17

Validity of the Scale

Various researchers through various techniques (e.g., principal component analysis and factor analysis) already established the validity of the scale e.g., Jiménez et al. in 2018 and Almoslamani in 2022 recently established the validity of the said instrument through EFA (exploratory factor analysis) technique. Besides, the above-mentioned two researchers, various other researchers had also established the validity of the said scale in various countries; therefore, we did not re-validate the scale for the current research paper.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis process, a scale was adopted from the study of Almoslamani (2022). This scale determines the ranges of mean scores and their level of frequency. Several researchers (e.g., Al-Nouh, et al., 2014) have also used similar scales in their studies to measure the ranges of mean scores and their level of perception or frequency use. The scale is shown in table 3 below.

Table No. 3 The scale of ranges of mean scores and level of frequency use

Ranges of Mean Scores	Level of Frequency Use
1.00-1.74	Never use
1.74-2.49	Rarely use
2.50-3.24	Often use
3.25-4.00	Always use

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective1. To meet the first objective of the study, the overall mean score of the three learning strategies (e.g., micro, keys for memory and metacognition, and emotional-social support learning strategies) and frequency of their use were examined as shown in table 4 below.

Table No. 4 Overall mean score and their Level of Frequency Use

Dimension	Mean	SD	Level
The overall mean score of the three learning strategies	3.27	0.440	Always Use

The overall mean score of the three learning strategies is 3.27, which falls under the category of “Always Use”. It means that in entirety all the preservice teachers at the University of Loralai mostly and completely preferred the three learning strategies when they have to learn their lecture. Therefore, it is interpreted that the University of Loralai preservice teachers were always using these three learning strategies. It is a good way to use all three learning strategies for learning the lecture because the respondents might have thought that it depends on the nature of the lecture that they want to learn. Although this result is not supported by the past literature still it is a unique result because at the university of Loralai level the faculty member of various departments can take this research as a guideline to plan their lesson plans because they will know what strategies are preferred in Loralai University. Contrary to the current study results, the recent study by Almoslamani (2022) revealed that the three learning strategies were only “often used” in the Saudi Arabian context. It is possible that this might be a contextual problem but it can be further explored by the researchers why these differences among the research studies are occurring.

Objective 2. To meet the second objective of the study, the mean score of the respondents was calculated based on which rank and use of frequency were assigned. The mean value, rank, and frequency are given in Table 5 below.

Table No. 5 Mean Score, Rank, and Frequency of Use (Emotional-social support)

Dimension	Mean	Rank	Frequency of Use
Micro strategies	3.127	3	Often use
Keys for memory and metacognition	3.249	2	Often use
Emotional-social support	3.449	1	Always use
Total	3.273		

Table 5 shows that participants preferred the emotional-social support learning strategy the most compared to the remaining two learning strategies (Micro strategies & Keys for memory and metacognition). It shows that the participants only used always the emotional-social support learning strategy for the learning of their lecture. It can be interpreted that Pakistani preservice teachers at the University of Loralai use the emotional-social support learning strategy because they might consider themselves more sociable. It seems that they always talk to classmates about the lesson and discuss it with each other. Further, they might discuss their lesson with their teachers if they feel any problems. Since the emotional-social support learning strategy is completely favored by all the participants, therefore, they also feel proud to help others in the learning.

This result is unlike in past studies (Almoslamani, 2022; Alhaisoni, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2004) where the students mostly use microlearning strategies when they have to learn their lesson. For example, Saudi University students have shown a high preference for micro learning strategies and have stated that students mostly use micro learning strategies and underline and summarize the main points in the lecture. However, it can be interpreted since the Pakistani culture has the characteristics of collectivism therefore; students mostly use the emotional-social support learning strategy because the students feel proud when they share the learning. It also meant that they do not memorize or practice rote learning but rather practice collaborative learning. The current study results have also shown contradiction with the past studies (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Al-Refay & Koura, 2010; Alhaisoni, 2012; Aljuaid, 2010, Aljuaid, 2015; Alkahtani, 2016; Alhaysony, 2017; Vega-Hernández et al. 2017) where the students have shown the extraordinary preference for the cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies rather than emotional-social support learning strategy.

Objective 3. To meet the third objective of the study, the mean score of the respondents was calculated based on which rank and use of frequency were assigned. The mean value, rank, and frequency of learning strategy use were calculated, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table No. 6 Mean Score, Rank, and Frequency of Use (Microlearning strategy)

Dimension	Mean	Rank	Frequency of Use
Microlearning strategies	3.127	3	Often use
Keys for memory and metacognition	3.249	2	Often use
Emotional-social support	3.449	1	Always use
Total	3.273		

According to Table 6, the study revealed that the least preferred learning strategy is the micro learning strategy shown by preservice teachers at the University of Loralai. It means that the participants least prefer and like the micro learning strategy. It seems that the participants do not underline the main points and do not make summaries of the topics at the end of their learning. This result is dissimilar to the past studies (Almoslamani, 2022; Alhaisoni, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2004) where the students mostly prefer and use microlearning strategies when they want their learning. The past studies' results (Almoslamani, 2022; Alhaisoni, 2012; Al-Otaibi, 2004) revealed that micro-learning strategies as highly preferred. However, in Pakistani culture the micro-learning strategy is least practiced therefore The present study results have shown inconsistency with the past studies (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Al-Refay & Koura, 2010; Alhaisoni, 2012; Aljuaid, 2010, Aljuaid, 2015; Alkahtani, 2016; Alhaysony, 2017; Vega-Hernández et al. 2017) where the students have shown extremely inclination towards the cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study assessed the preservice teachers' use of learning strategies when they encounter the learning of their lesson. The study found that the emotional-social support learning strategy was most preferred while the micro learning strategy was least preferred. It indicates that teachers have to rethink their lesson planning. According to the reported results of the current study, classroom teaching should be aligned with the most preferred learning strategy. If the teaching faculty has to enhance their teaching-learning process then they must plan their teaching according to the most preferred learning strategy.

Limitations of the Study

This is only a small level study that took place in the department of Education, University of Loralai, Balochistan, Pakistan. The results of this study reflect the perception of only one entity i.e., the department of Education preservice-Teachers which might be a limitation for the generalization about the broader population. Although the study is small scale, still it can give important inferences about the learning strategies. Future researchers can think of these limitations and can do a much broader study on the same construct to make the generalization process possible.

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