



## LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES OF TURKISH AND ARABIC STUDENTS: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

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### Abstract:

This study investigates the language learning strategy use of Turkish and Arabic students enrolled in middle schools and having different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Using a strategy inventory for language learning, the study examines the cross-cultural differences in strategy use of the mentioned students while learning English as a foreign language. The study has found out that though there are a number of cross-cultural similarities in the language learning strategy use between Turkish and Arabic students, there are also significant differences between them. For instance, Turkish students prefer to use a dictionary while reading English texts, but Arabic students generally do not use a dictionary in their reading activities. Conclusions and pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed in the study.

**Keywords:** language learning strategies, cross cultures, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

### 1. Introduction

There has been an outstanding deviation within the issue of language learning and teaching over the last decades with more and more stress put on students and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. With this transformation, how students deal with new data and what type of strategies they use to comprehend, to acquire or to remember the data have been the main interest of the researchers in the field of foreign language learning (Hismanoglu, 2000; Lessard-Clouston, 1997). Learning outcomes are highly determined by learning strategies. Thus, making students perceive particular

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strategies is a fundamental element which upgrades the learning competence (Lihui and Yanmin, 2014). Strategies are not one time actions, but a productive order of actions that learners industriously employ. There are a large number of English language learning strategies (Oxford, 1996). Language learning strategies refer to both language learning strategies and language use strategies. Being together, they form the actions chosen by learners either to develop the learning of a language, the practice of it, or both together (Cohen, 1995).

Learning strategies which are generally intentional and goal-oriented, particularly in the initial phases of working on a different language activity are practices that assist learning. Whenever a learning strategy is well known after ongoing use, it may be employed automatically, if needed however; many learners will be able to bring out the strategy again (Chamot, 2005). Every language learner uses language learning strategies in the learning practices. It is not sensible to favor the idea that each language learner uses identical language learning strategies and tries to look for same solutions to various problems, because the determinants like age, gender, personality, motivation, self-concept, life-experience, learning style, excitement, anxiety, culture, etc. influence the manner in which learners acquire the target language (Tseng, 2005). With all these in mind, the ultimate aim of this study is to discover whether there is any difference between Turkish and Arabic students' learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, the following research questions were put forward:

1. What are the language learning strategies the 6th grade Turkish students prefer to use?
2. What are the language learning strategies the 6th grade Arabic students prefer to use?
3. Is there any significant difference between Turkish and Arabic students in terms of language learning strategy use?

## **2. Language Learning Strategies**

Since 1970s, cognitive revolution has given way to a piling attraction of language learning and language learners, and considerable sympathy has been felt for language learning strategies ever since. The science was transformed from behaviouristic one into cognitive one in both psychology and education fields. Studies contributed many attempts to define the cognitive actions in all facets of learning, containing language learning as well. First language researches emphasized outwardly observable behaviours of learners, defined strategic behaviours, eventually classified those strategic behaviours, and associated them with language competency (Zare, 2012).

Learning strategy is a significant determinant of learning sufficiency, as well as being the subject of psycholinguistics. Strategies may concentrate on opted dimensions of new data such as examining and controlling data through acquisition, arranging and clarifying new data through encoding, testing learning when finished, confirming that learning will be adequate to pacify nervousness etc. (Lihui and Yanmin, 2014).

The significance of language learning strategies has been confirmed and stressed extensively. Language learning strategies are one of the fundamental dimensions of successful language learning (Su, 2005). It's necessary to teach a spectrum of methods and strategies and get learners to have a more progressive portrayal in the learning phase. Learners, who are aware of a series of learning strategies, can apply the most suitable strategy, conclude how to follow it and when to replace it with another one. Through teaching various strategies, teachers can also consider learners' multiple intelligences and let the learners take the advantage of diverse strengths (Edwardsdóttir, 2010). There is no agreement on what forms a learning strategy or how it is different from other forms of learner actions. Learning strategies are often mixed with each other in language learning process and are often applied to the same approach. Moreover, even within the range of activities based on specific learning strategies, there is a high complication about the explanations of particular strategies and the hierarchic connection within these strategies (O'Malley et al, 1985).

Although Pask (1988) states that there are apparently unique learning strategies, according to what Oxford (1990) puts forward that there is no full consensus on absolutely what and how strategies exist, how they should be labeled and classified, and also on whether it will be probable to form an authentic, scientifically confirmed hierarchy of strategies.

## **2.1. Categorization of Language Learning Strategies**

A large number of strategies can be employed by students: meta-cognitive techniques for regulating, checking and focusing on one's own learning; affective strategies for dealing with emotions or approaches; social strategies for collaborating with others in the learning phase; cognitive strategies for connecting new data with remaining background knowledge and for evaluating and grouping it; memory strategies for putting new data in memory box and for getting it back when necessary; and compensation strategies like figuring out or using gestures to prevail failures and cracks in one's existing language competency (Oxford, 1989). That's to say, Oxford (1990) classified language learning strategies in 6 categories. Oxford's (1990) categorization covers meta-cognitive strategies assisting students to adjust their learning, affective strategies including the learner's emotional necessities like courage,

social strategies giving way to boosting interaction with the objected language and also cognitive strategies in which students deal with their learning, memory strategies employed to store data, as well as compensation strategies supporting students to surmount the data gaps to carry on conversation.

### **3. Culture and Language Learning Strategies**

The student's objectives, the context of the learning atmosphere, and the cultural values of the student's community can be assumed to have a strong effect on selection and approval of language learning strategies. For instance, in a culture that values personal competition; excellent language learners may choose strategies that let them work alone instead of social strategies that necessitate cooperation with others (Chamot, 2004).

As Oxford (1990) has emphasized, it would be unreasonable to make an effort for ascribing one specific language learning approach to a particular cultural community. Versions in strategy employment established on cultural schemata and environment have naturally been argued in terms of strategy counts. For example, learners from diverse cultures are said to employ particular groups of strategies more commonly than others. Nevertheless, probably it is the use of strategies that has a bigger role in cultural variation (Nisbet, Tindall and Arroyo, 2005). In English language instruction, teachers generally stressed conveying language knowledge and working on language skills, but disregarded the analogy of the diversities between Chinese and English cultures, for instance. Consequently, it is not easy for learners to discard the impact of native language. So, the learners are incapable of having the appropriate conversation skills in English.

However, nowadays the case is no longer what it was before. Teachers certainly own the capability to welcome the knowledge of the diversities between English and Chinese cultures. Thus, it has become one of the teaching goals of English teachers to include cultural knowledge and direct the learners to approve logical and practical study strategies intently (Lihui and Yanmin, 2014). The Chinese EFL students had identical learning strategies in conversations as western second language students did. Yet Huang (1984) expressed that some strategies employed by the Chinese EFL students were affected by Chinese culture (cited in Su, 2005).

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Participants

The data for the study were collected from Turkish and Arabic students who were the 6<sup>th</sup> class EFL students. The Turkish students in the study were selected from the most convenient and accessible schools in Adana, Turkey, while the Arabic students in the study were selected from two Syrian primary schools in Adana, Turkey, as well. The sample consisted of 251 Turkish and Arabic students in total: 126 Turkish and 125 Arabic, both of whom voluntarily participated in the study. High consideration was taken in choosing urban and suburban Turkish schools from diverse populations that represent the composition of students in Turkey, while two Syrian schools were selected for the study as there were only two schools serving to Syrian refugees in Adana, Turkey. In selecting the students, we employed the convenience sampling method as the target population was too large, and therefore, not accessible (Castillo, 2009).

### 4.2. Instruments and Data Procedure

The study was carried out through quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The instruments employed in the study were: (1) the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) designed by Oxford (1989), (2) a semi-structured interview formed by the researchers. The inventory was administered to 126 Turkish students and 125 Arabic students while the interview was administered to 32 Turkish students and 14 Arabic students. The data of the interview were evaluated and presented in the paper while the data gathered from the inventory were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics. In other words, based on a descriptive research design, this paper contained the data analysis of descriptive statistics. In this sense, SPSS 20.0, a Statistical Program for Social Sciences was capitalized on to report the perceptions of language teachers in numerical data. For the analysis of the data obtained from the inventory, mean( $\bar{x}$ ) was used as a statistical technique to find out the rate of agreement related to the items about language learning strategies. The following scores were used in order to compare the means ( $\bar{x}$ ) of the views specified: (1) Never or almost never true of me: 1.00 – 1.49, (2) Usually not true of me: 1.50 – 2.49, (3) Somewhat true of me: 2.50 – 3.49, (4) Usually true of me: 3.50 – 4.49, (5) Always or almost always true of me: 4.50 – 5.00.

The assumption of normality was tested via examining Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk suggesting that normality was a reasonable assumption. As a result of these assumptions, t-test was used for the gender. When looking at the t-test results of the participants, gender is not an effective factor influencing the participants'

responds on language learning strategies. Besides, Cronbach’s Alpha was used in order to test the reliability of the scale, which was found highly reliable. Responds from 251 participants in total were used in the analysis.

## 5. Data Analysis and Results

In this section, the results of the study and the findings are described based on the data obtained from the participants by means of the instruments. They are grouped under the titles of the categories from the questionnaire, as well as the interview.

### 5.1. Results Pertaining to Remembering More Effectively

There are 9 items related to the part *remembering more effectively* in Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of Turkish and Arabic EFL students. Table 1 clarifies the results pertaining to the related strategies.

**Table 1: Remembering More Effectively**

	Turkish		Arab	
	M	SD	M	SD
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	4.11	0.825	3.78	1.222
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3.86	1.045	3.79	1.444
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	4.07	.877	4.23	0.824
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.79	1.161	3.55	1.393
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.	2.88	1.210	3.08	1.473
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.	3.31	1.306	2.89	1.424
7. I physically act out new English words.	3.30	1.286	3.00	1.385
8. I review English lessons often.	4.09	1.023	3.98	1.099
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	3.80	1.009	4.10	1.045

Note. SD=Standard Deviation

First of all, for the 1<sup>st</sup> item, regarding *I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English* it is clearly understood from the table that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.11 for Turkish students, while it is 3.78 for Arabic students. These scores indicate that Item 1 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

When it comes to the 2<sup>nd</sup> item, regarding *I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them* one can easily understand from the table that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.86 for Turkish students, while it is 3.79 for Arabic students, which clearly indicate that Item 2 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

In terms of the 3<sup>rd</sup> item, regarding *I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word comprehension*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.07 for Turkish students, while it is 4.23 for Arabic students, which mean that Item 3 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> item *I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used*, the table illustrates that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students' strategy use is 3.79, while it is 3.55 for Arabic students, which point out that Item 4 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

For the 5<sup>th</sup> item, it is clearly observed from the table that it is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students by looking at the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores: 2.88 for Turkish students, and 3.08 for Arabic students.

Besides, for the 6<sup>th</sup> item *I use flashcards to remember new English words*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (3.31), as well as for Arabic students (2.89) simply display that this item is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

By looking at the 7<sup>th</sup> item, regarding *I physically act out new English words*, it is easily understood that this item is again somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students based on the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students which is 3.30, besides the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Arabic students which is 3.00.

Moreover, for the 8<sup>th</sup> item *I review English lessons often*, we can easily comprehend from the table that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students, which is observed from the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score 4.09 for Turkish students, and 3.98 for Arabic students.

At the same time, by looking at the 9<sup>th</sup> item, one can easily see that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.80 for Turkish students, while it is 4.10 for Arabic students. These scores suggest that Item 9 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

## **5.2. Results Pertaining to Using all your Mental Processes**

There are 14 items related to the part *using all your mental process* in Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of Turkish and Arabic EFL students. Table 2 clarifies the results pertaining to the related strategies.

**Table 2:** Using all your Mental Processes

	Turkish		Arab	
	M	SD	M	SD
10. I say or write new English words several times.	4.44	0.942	3.87	1.191
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.	3.55	1.434	3.71	1.424
12. I practice the sounds of English.	3.76	1.036	3.24	1.347
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.	3.50	1.237	3.62	1.400
14. I start conversations in English.	3.76	1.182	3.84	1.016
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	2.88	1.451	3.48	1.147
16. I read for pleasure in English.	3.03	1.376	3.24	1.416
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	3.12	1.453	3.26	1.350
18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	3.70	1.271	3.24	1.522
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	4.18	1.091	3.62	1.365
20. I try to find patterns in the English.	3.58	1.188	3.12	1.325
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	4.23	1.013	3.58	1.345
22. I try not to translate word for word.	3.73	1.363	3.70	1.211
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	3.09	1.364	3.65	1.338

Note. SD=Standard Deviation

By looking at the 10<sup>th</sup> item *I say or write new English words several times* it is clearly understood from Table 2 that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.44 for Turkish students, while it is 3.87 for Arabic students. These scores clearly display that Item 10 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Regarding the 11<sup>th</sup> item *I try to talk like native English speakers* it can easily be observed that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.55 for Turkish students, while it is 3.71 for Arabic students, which clearly suggests that Item 11 is also usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

On the other hand, by looking at the 12<sup>th</sup> item *I practice the sounds of English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.76 for Turkish students and 3.24 for Arabic students, which means that Item 12 is usually true of Turkish students, while it is somewhat true of Arabic students.

With reference to the 13<sup>th</sup> item *I use the English words I know in different ways*, the table illustrates that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students' strategy use is 3.50, while it is 3.62 for Arabic students, which highlights that Item 13 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.



For the 14<sup>th</sup> item *I start conversations in English*, it is figured out from the table that it is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students by looking at the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores: 3.76 for Turkish students, and 3.84 for Arabic students.

Besides, for the 15<sup>th</sup> item *I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (2.88), as well as for Arabic students (3.48) simply display that this item is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

By looking at the 16<sup>th</sup> item, regarding *I read for pleasure in English*, it is easily perceived that this item is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students based on the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students which is 3.03, besides the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Arabic students which is 3.24.

Moreover, for the 17<sup>th</sup> item *I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English*, we can easily comprehend from the table that this item is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students, which is observed from the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score 3.12 for Turkish students, and 3.26 for Arabic students.

Additionally, by looking at the 18<sup>th</sup> item *I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully*, one can easily see that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.70 for Turkish students, while it is 3.24 for Arabic students, which reveals that Item 18 is usually true of Turkish students and somewhat true of Arabic students.

Furthermore, seeing the 19<sup>th</sup> item, it is clearly recognized from the table that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.18 for Turkish students, while it is 3.62 for Arabic students, which reveals that Item 19 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

By looking at the 20<sup>th</sup> item *I try to find patterns in the English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (3.58), as well as for Arabic students (3.12) simply emphasize that this item is usually true of Turkish students and somewhat true of Arabic students.

With respect to the 21<sup>st</sup> item *I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand*, it is easily comprehended that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students based on the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students which is 4.23, besides the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Arabic students which is 3.58.

At the same time, regarding the 22<sup>nd</sup> item *I try not to translate word for word*, we can easily understand that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students. This is clarified by the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (3.73), besides the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Arabic students (3.70).

Finally, by looking at the 23<sup>rd</sup> item, one can easily see that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.09 for Turkish students, while it is 3.65 for Arabic students. These scores

highlights that Item 23 is somewhat true of Turkish students, while usually true of Arabic students.

### 5.3. Results Pertaining to Compensating for Missing Knowledge

There are 6 items related to the part *compensating for missing knowledge* in Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of Turkish and Arabic EFL students. Table 3 clarifies the results pertaining to the related strategies.

**Table 3:** Compensating for Missing Knowledge

	Turkish		Arab	
	M	SD	M	SD
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	4.00	1.165	3.18	1.526
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	3.57	1.248	3.57	1.398
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	2.73	1.448	3.24	1.272
27. I read English without looking up every new word.	2.44	1.675	4.05	1.049
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	3.45	1.156	3.74	1.237
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	4.06	0.927	3.99	0.893

Note. SD=Standard Deviation

The 24<sup>th</sup> item regarding *To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses* displays that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.00 for Turkish students, while it is 3.18 for Arabic students. These scores illustrate that Item 24 is usually true of Turkish students, but somewhat true for Arabic students.

Regarding the 25<sup>th</sup> item *When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures* it can easily be observed that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.57 for both Turkish and Arabic students, which clearly shows that Item 25 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

On the other hand, by looking at the 26<sup>th</sup> item *I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 2.73 for Turkish students and 3.24 for Arabic students, which means that Item 26 is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

With respect to the 27<sup>th</sup> item *I read English without looking up every new word*, the table highlights that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students' strategy use is 2.44, while it is 4.05 for Arabic students, which highlights that Item 27 is usually not true of Turkish students, yet usually true of Arabic students.

For the 28<sup>th</sup> item *I try to guess what the other person will say next in English*, it is found out from the table that it is somewhat true of Turkish students, but usually true

of Arabic students by looking at the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores: 3.45 for Turkish students and 3.74 for Arabic students.

Besides, for the 29<sup>th</sup> item *If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (4.06), as well as for Arabic students (3.99) simply display that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

#### 5.4. Results Pertaining to Organizing and Evaluating your Learning

There are 9 items related to the part *organizing and evaluating your learning* in Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of Turkish and Arabic EFL students. Table 4 clarifies the results pertaining to the related strategies.

**Table 4:** Organizing and Evaluating Your Learning

	Turkish		Arab	
	M	SD	M	SD
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	4.14	1.025	3.80	1.299
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	4.23	0.964	4.20	0.879
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	4.22	0.866	3.92	1.333
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	3.97	1.189	4.13	1.010
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	3.42	1.273	3.57	1.206
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.	3.49	1.337	3.76	1.320
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.53	1.100	3.63	1.341
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	4.15	1.028	3.60	1.367
38. I think about my progress in learning English.	4.18	0.991	3.17	1.032

Note. SD=Standard Deviation

When looking at Table 4, for the 30<sup>th</sup> item *I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English*, it is clearly understood that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.14 for Turkish students, while it is 3.80 for Arabic students, which indicate that Item 30 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

By looking at the 31<sup>st</sup> item regarding *I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better*, one can easily understand from the table that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.23 for Turkish students, while it is 4.20 for Arabic students, which display that Item 31 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

In terms of the 32<sup>nd</sup> item, regarding *I pay attention when someone is speaking English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.22 for Turkish students, while it is 3.92 for Arabic students, which means that Item 32 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Regarding the 33<sup>rd</sup> item *I try to find out how to be a better learner of English*, the table illustrates that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students' strategy use is 3.97, while it is 4.13 for Arabic students, which points out that Item 33 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

For the 34<sup>th</sup> item *I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English*, it is easily seen from the table that it is somewhat true of Turkish students, but usually true of Arabic students by looking at the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores: 3.42 for Turkish students, and 3.57 for Arabic students.

Besides, for the 35<sup>th</sup> item *I look for people I can talk to in English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (3.49), as well as for Arabic students (3.76) illustrate that this item is somewhat true of Turkish students, yet usually true of Arabic students.

By looking at the 36<sup>th</sup> item, regarding *I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English*, it is simply conceived that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students based on the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students which is 3.53, besides the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Arabic students which is 3.63.

Moreover, for the 37<sup>th</sup> item *I have clear goals for improving my English skills*, we can easily comprehend from the table that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students, which is observed from the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score 4.15 for Turkish students, and 3.60 for Arabic students.

On the other hand, by looking at the 38<sup>th</sup> item, one can easily see that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.18 for Turkish students, while it is 3.17 for Arabic students. These scores suggest that Item 38 is usually true of Turkish students, but somewhat true of Arabic students.

## 5.5. Results Pertaining to Managing Your Emotions

There are 6 items related to the part *managing your emotions* in Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of Turkish and Arabic EFL students. Table 5 clarifies the results pertaining to the related strategies.

**Table 5: Managing Your Emotions**

	Turkish		Arab	
	M	SD	M	SD
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	3.96	1.189	3.60	1.344
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	4.00	1.193	3.96	1.207
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	3.69	1.267	3.63	1.370
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	3.43	1.305	3.76	1.403
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy.	2.60	1.475	3.12	1.396
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	3.35	1.292	3.72	1.375

Note. SD=Standard Deviation

With respect to the 39<sup>th</sup> item regarding *I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score is 3.96 for Turkish students, while it is 3.60 for Arabic students. These scores show that Item 39 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Regarding the 40<sup>th</sup> item *I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake*, it can easily be observed that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 4.00 for Turkish students and 3.96 for Arabic students, which clearly show that Item 40 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Additionally, by looking at the 41<sup>st</sup> item *I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.69 for Turkish students and 3.63 for Arabic students, which mean that Item 41 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

However, with respect to the 42<sup>nd</sup> item *I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English*, the table highlights that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students' strategy use is 3.43, while it is 3.76 for Arabic students, which highlight that Item 42 is somewhat true of Turkish students, yet usually true of Arabic students.

For the 43<sup>rd</sup> item *I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy*, it is found out from the table that it is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students, by looking at the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores: 2.60 for Turkish students and 3.12 for Arabic students.

Besides, for the 44<sup>th</sup> item *I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (3.35), as well as for Arabic students (3.72) simply display that this item is somewhat true of Turkish students, but usually true of Arabic students.

## 5.6. Results Pertaining to Learning with Others

There are 6 items related to the part *learning with others* in Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the aim of which is to specify the perspectives of Turkish and Arabic EFL students. Table 6 clarifies the results pertaining to the related strategies.

**Table 6:** Learning with Others

	Turkish		Arab	
	M	SD	M	SD
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	4.35	1.091	3.70	1.263
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	3.91	1.213	3.99	1.167
47. I practice English with other students.	3.83	1.129	4.03	1.135
48. I ask for help from English speakers.	3.86	1.188	3.77	1.249
49. I ask questions in English.	4.10	1.026	3.56	1.297
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	3.64	1.299	3.74	1.149

Note. SD=Standard Deviation

When we look at the 45<sup>th</sup> item regarding *If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score is 4.35 for Turkish students, while it is 3.70 for Arabic students. These scores show that Item 45 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Regarding the 46<sup>th</sup> item *I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk*, it can easily be observed that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.91 for Turkish students and 3.99 for Arabic students, which clearly show that Item 46 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Additionally, by looking at the 47<sup>th</sup> item *I practice English with other students*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for this part is 3.83 for Turkish students and 4.03 for Arabic students, which mean that Item 47 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

Besides, with reference to the 48<sup>th</sup> item *I ask for help from English speakers*, the table highlights that the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students' strategy use is 3.86, while it is 3.77 for Arabic students, which display that Item 48 is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

For the 49<sup>th</sup> item *I ask questions in English*, it is understood from the table that it is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students, by looking at the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores: 4.10 for Turkish students and 3.56 for Arabic students.

Finally, for the 50<sup>th</sup> item *I try to learn about the culture of English speakers*, the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score for Turkish students (3.64), as well as for Arabic students (3.74) show that this item is usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students.

## 5.7. Interview Results

As already discussed in the methodology above, interviews were implemented with 32 Turkish students and 14 Arab students who voluntarily took part in the study. According to what they declared, the Syrian (Arab) students had been learning English since the 5<sup>th</sup> class of their primary education, while Turkish students had been learning English since the 4<sup>th</sup> class of their primary education. The interview data were recorded by the interviewers. The interviewers tried to stimulate the interviewees to declare their perceptions appropriately. To present diverse views regarding language learning strategies of diverse cultures, the data were tabulated accordingly under each question in the interview. The questions and some main comments were summed up and introduced in the Table 7. Furthermore, quotations, codes and frequencies from the answers to the interview questions were given in Table 7, as well.

**Table 7: Interview Results**

Codes	Frequency		Quotations From Remarks of Students
	Turkish	Arab	
<i>The need of English</i>	10	3	<i>For my future career</i>
	6	7	<i>To talk with foreigners</i>
	5	1	<i>For enjoying English</i>
	4	-	<i>For course success</i>
	2	4	<i>As lingua-franca</i>
<i>Definition of Language Learning Strategies</i>	7	6	<i>Memorization</i>
	5	-	<i>Revision</i>
	4	-	<i>Note-taking</i>
	3	-	<i>Writing everything 10 times</i>
	1	-	<i>Repetition</i>
	1	-	<i>Translation</i>
	-	8	<i>Reading</i>
	-	6	<i>Watching original films</i>
<i>The usefulness of language learning strategies</i>	32	14	<i>Useful</i>
	-	-	<i>Not useful</i>
<i>The most used language learning strategies</i>	12	-	<i>Memorization</i>
	9	-	<i>Revision</i>
	8	-	<i>Note-taking</i>
	-	12	<i>Asking the teacher</i>
<i>The least used language learning strategies</i>	7	-	<i>Memorization</i>
	7	-	<i>Note-taking</i>
	4	-	<i>Revision</i>
	-	2	<i>Asking others</i>
<i>What teachers can do to make use of language learning strategies</i>	5	-	<i>Give homework</i>
	3	-	<i>Teach through games</i>
	2	-	<i>Give word lists</i>
	2	-	<i>Make us take notes</i>
	2	-	<i>Make us memorise</i>
	2	-	<i>Give tests</i>
	2	-	<i>Speak English rather than Turkish</i>
	-	14	<i>Using modern equipment and educational technologies</i>
<i>What is most difficult about learning English</i>	11	-	<i>Learning vocabulary</i>
	4	-	<i>Pronunciation</i>
	6	8	<i>Grammar</i>
	2	-	<i>Writing</i>
	-	4	<i>Speaking</i>

By looking at the interview results, we can easily see that in terms of how Turkish and Arabic students see the need of English, most of the Turkish students (10 respondents) defined the need *for their future career*, while some Arabic students (3 respondents) mentioned about the same reason. On the other hand, while most of the Arabic students (7 respondents) clarified the need as *to talk with foreigners*, almost the same number of Turkish students (6) stated the same. Meanwhile, a high number of Turkish students (5 respondents) stressed the need as *for enjoying English*, but only 1 Arabic respondent expressed this reason. Furthermore, 4 Turkish respondents specified the need as *to be successful at their courses*, while no such answer was given by Arabic participants. Lastly, while 4 Arabic respondents saw the need of English *for it is a lingua franca*, only 2 Turkish participants suggested the same reason.

In terms of *the definition of Language Learning Strategies*, 7 Turkish students defined it as Memorization, while 6 Arabic respondents defined it the same. Besides, 5 Turkish students defined it as *Revision*, 4 as *Note-taking*, 3 as *Writing everything ten times*, 1 as *Repetition*, and 1 as *Translation*, while 8 Arabic students defined it as *Reading*, and 6 as *Watching original films*.

Regarding *the Usefulness of Language Learning Strategies*, neither Turkish respondents, nor Arabic respondents suggested that they are useless. That's to say, while 32 Turkish respondents found them useful, 14 Arabic respondents found them useful as well. In other words, every respondent in the interview declared that he or she believes in the usefulness of the Language Learning Strategies.

Referring to the most used Language Learning Strategies, 12 Turkish participants stated *Memorization*, 9 *Revision*, and 8 *Note-taking*, while 12 Arabic students expressed that they ask the teacher. However, for the least used Language Learning Strategies, 7 Turkish respondents declared *Memorization*, 7 *Note-taking*, and 4 *Revision*, while 2 Arabic students expressed *Asking others*.

Considering *What teachers can do to make use of language learning strategies*, Turkish students think that the teachers should give homework (5 respondents), teach through games (3 respondents), give word lists (2 respondents), make students take notes (2 respondents), make students memorize (2 respondents), give tests (2 respondents), and speak English rather than Turkish (2 respondents), while 14 Arabic students think the teachers should use modern equipment and educational technologies.

Upon looking at *What is most difficult about learning English*, 11 Turkish students declared *Learning vocabulary*, 6 *Grammar*, 4 *Pronunciation*, and 2 *Writing*, while 8 Arabic students mentioned difficulty on *Grammar*, and 4 on *Speaking*.



## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

Researchers in educational field have diagnosed the significance of motivation for successful second language learning for a very long time (Gardner and Clément, 1990). On looking at the need of learning English language, most of the Turkish students perceive that English is significant for their future careers, while most of the Arabic students see English language as a required tool for talking with foreign people. The concept of *Learning Strategy* refers to learning-to-learn skills (Lee, 2010). When both cross cultural groups defined Language Learning Strategies, the Turkish group put forward the *memorization* concept and the Arabic group mentioned *reading* concept. Both of these cross cultural groups find English useful. Besides, for most of the Turkish students, learning vocabulary is the most difficult activity in learning English, while grammar is the hardest aspect of English for most of the Arabic students. Additionally, the most used language learning strategy is memorization for Turkish students, but the case for Arabic students is that they ask the teacher. A number of factors have an effect on learners' using of language learning strategies. These factors may be age, gender, approach, motivation, individual and cultural differences, learning styles, learner beliefs on language learning, and teacher expectation (Ehrman and Oxford, 1990). When it comes to the teacher's role in language learning strategies, while most of the Turkish students think that the teacher should give more homework (Cooper, Robinson, and Patall, 2006), the Arabic students are in the view that the teacher should use modern educational equipment and technology, the use of which aid teachers for a more successful learning environment (Gömleksiz, 2004).

Strategy Inventory for Language learning (SILL) is the most effective tool in the area of language learning strategies and covers the most extensive hierarchy of learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Vocabulary learning strategies are for instance seemingly attractive for both teachers and learners (Gu, 2010). Regarding the section *Remembering More Effectively* in the strategy inventory, both Turkish and Arabic students support most of the items by indicating that the mentioned points are usually true of them, though there are some items like *using rhymes and flashcards to remember new English words*, and *physically acting out new English words* which are somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students. Cognition is best comprehended by reviewing a form of cognitive structure in which the mind focuses on the neural system and its biological action (Ellman, 1997).

In terms of *Using all Mental Processes* in the strategy inventory, both Turkish and Arabic students again support the mentioned points by revealing that the items are usually true of them, however there are some items like *watching TV shows in English or*

*going to movies in English, reading in English for pleasure, and writing notes, messages, letters, or reports in English* which are somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students. Furthermore, while items like *practicing the sounds of English, first skimming an English passage then going back and reading carefully, and trying to find patterns* are usually true of Turkish students, they are somewhat true of Arabic students. The case is vice versa in *making summaries of information that the students hear or read in English*, since it is somewhat true of Turkish students, but usually true of Arabic students. It is necessary to recognize the advantages of using a dictionary, especially in the early stages of learning. Even an insufficient bilingual dictionary can help users by being a practical reference resource. It is clear that by making the students more independent of the teacher, the dictionary be a highly beneficial resource (Sarıgül, 2009).

When it comes to the section *Compensating for Missing Knowledge* in the strategy inventory, there are cross culturally significant differences. First of all, referring to *reading English without looking up every new word*, it is usually not true of Turkish students, but amazingly usually true of Arabic students. The item *making guesses to understand unfamiliar English words* is usually true of Turkish students, but somewhat true of Arabic students. The case is again vice versa for the item *trying to guess what the other person will say next in English*: somewhat true of Turkish respondents, usually true of Arabic respondents. While the item *making up new words if not knowing the right ones in English* is somewhat true of both Turkish and Arabic students, the rest of the items are usually true of both groups. A metacognitive system has been formed for developing learning strategy instruction covering four circular phases: planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating (Chamot, 2004).

With reference to *Organizing and Evaluating Learning*, most points in the inventory are usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students. Yet, some items under this section like *planning schedule to have enough time to study English, and looking for people to talk in English* are somewhat true of Turkish students, however usually true of Arabic students. On the other hand, *thinking about one's his or her own progress in learning English* is usually true of Turkish students, yet somewhat true of Arabic students. Managing emotions covers the competence to avert disturbing impulses and to eliminate negative feelings (Goleman, 1995). When we look at the section *Managing one's his or her emotions*, most of the Turkish and Arabic students usually follow the related strategies, though writing down their feelings in a language learning diary is somewhat true of both groups. However, *noticing tension or nervousness when studying or using English, and talking to someone else about feelings when learning English* are somewhat true of Turkish students, but usually true of Arabic students. Most of kids' knowledge

comes not from their involvement in the surrounding, but rather through the input of others (Gelman, 2009).

Addressing to the section *Learning with others* in the strategy inventory, it is clearly observed that all the related items within this category are usually true of both Turkish and Arabic students. Learning strategy use resembles footballers' tactics used to win a match. Learners just like football players use tactics in order to be successful in their learning (Lee, 2010). Like the tactical similarities and differences among football players, here in this study there are a number of cross cultural similarities in the language learning strategy use between Turkish and Arabic students, as well as significant differences.

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