Language Teaching Methods to Students with Special Needs

Farida Orazakynkyzy[1], Uzakpayeva Sakipzhamal[2], NurlanovaVinara[3], Savankova Marina[2] and Kabylgazina Klara[1]

[1]*KAZNU, al Farabi, Almaty, Kazakhstan;* [2]*Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages*, *Almaty, Kazakhstan;* [3]*KAZSPU for* Ladies, *Almaty, Kazakhstan*

Abstract: The idea of this research paper arose out of an awareness that students with language learning disabilities are completely ignored in the educational system and there are no special programs that cater to these students. They are placed in normal schools that are not prepared to deal with their unique difficulties. This paper, therefore, is an attempt to provide teachers with multiple-strategies models for teaching English language skills to these students at the intermediate level and beyond. More specifically, this research will help pre-and in-service teachers to:

- Identify effective strategies for learning and using language skills,

- Use multiple-strategies models for teaching language skills,

- Strategies for language learning and language use into regular language activities, and finally,

- Both the processes and products of language learning of students with learning disabilities.

Thus, the target audience of this research includes pre-and in-service regular teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists, counsellors, and administrators.

Keywords: Language, teaching, methods, students, special needs.

INTRODUCTION

Students with learning disabilities are not aware of how their minds work and fail to use strategies that represent the dynamic processes underlying effective learning and academic performance. In support of this, many neuropsychologists and psychiatrist associations agree that individuals with learning disabilities have neurologically-based processing disorders which means that their brains process information differently than most people. These information processing disorders manifest themselves in students' failure to independently apply effective learning processes and to monitor their own learning. More specifically, these information processing disorders manifest themselves in students' failure to:

(a)   Apply learning strategies,

(b)   Orchestrate among various plans, and

(c)   Change strategies when they don't work, or make adaptations to them when necessary.

These failures, in turn, interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following language skills:

(1)   Oral communication,

(2)   Reading comprehension, and

(3)   Written expression

The information processing disorders can also lead to frustration, disappointment, low self-esteem and withdrawal from school [1].

In simple words, having a learning disability means that the brain does not process information normally. This, of course, requires modelling effective cognitive processes through learning strategies instruction to help students with learning disabilities change their ineffective learning processes and employ effective ones in a reflective, purposeful way [2]. "Learning Disabilities" is a compact term describing a number of some other, more specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), Dyscalculia, Language Processing Disorder, Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities, Visual Perceptual/Visual Motor Deficit, etc.

Because of the nature of their learning difficulties, students with learning disabilities need to become *strategic* learners, not just haphazardly using whatever learning strategies or techniques they have developed on their own but becoming consciously aware of what strategies might be useful in a given learning situation and capable of using those strategies effectively. Teachers can be enormously helpful in this regard. They can introduce students to specific techniques and demonstrate when and how these techniques will be used. Students can then see how a person thinks or what a person does when using the strategies.

Address correspondence to this article at the Kazakh State National University of Al-Farabi, Almaty, Kazakhstan; Tel: +77073851878;
E-mail: zhanat_2006@mail.ru

Teachers can provide opportunities for students to discuss, reflect upon, and practice the techniques with classroom materials and authentic tasks. By giving feedback, teachers help students refine their use of strategies and learn to monitor their usage. Teachers may then gradually fade reminders and guidance so that students begin to assume responsibility for strategic learning [3].

Researchers also refer to learning strategies instruction as a solution to the processing difficulties experienced by students with learning disabilities in the following way: The Strategies Intervention Model (SIM), developed by researchers at the University of Kansas, is based on the theory that students with LD have information processing difficulties, are strategy deficient, and are inactive learners.

That is, they do not create or use appropriate cognitive and metacognitive strategies spontaneously to process information, to cope with problems they encounter, or to learn new material [4].

In teaching students with language disabilities, especially to help them overcome their own learning difficulties, we need to arrange the classroom instruction as its aim of the improvement the underlying processes and strategies, because these students depend upon to learn language skills as these skills are rooted in complex procedures.

Therefore, the present paper recommends on learning strategies in general and language learning strategies, in particular, to help teachers become more aware of the various strategies that they can use to enable students to learn independently and effectively. More specifically, this research deals with the definition of learning strategies and discusses the benefits and types of these strategies. It also addresses the most widely used models of learning strategies instruction. Then, it discusses the methods of identifying and assessing these strategies. Finally, it reviews research into effective/ineffective learning strategies as well as research on teaching learning strategies to students with learning disabilities. Definitions of learning strategies are many. Learning strategies are techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information. Learning strategies are "any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, and use of information".

In support of learning strategies instruction as an intervention for improving language skills, many studies have shown that: (a) learners' awareness of their own learning processes plays a significant role in improving language performance; (b) greater strategy use is related to better language learning and good language learners apply multiple strategies more frequently and more effectively than poor language learners; and (c) struggling language learners have difficulty in using learning strategies [5].

Along the same line, Schmeck defined the term learning strategy in relation to learning tactics in this way:

The term strategy was originally a military term that referred to procedures for implementing the plan of a large scale military operation. The more specific steps in implementation of the plan were called tactics. More generally the term strategy has come to refer to the implementation of a set of procedures (tactics) for accomplishing something. Thus a learning strategy is a sequence of procedures for accomplishing learning and the specific procedures within the sequence are called learning tactics [6].

Similarly, learning strategies were defined as special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Also, learning strategies are mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so". Besides, it is defined that language learning strategies as conscious behaviours used to learn the language. Anderson defined learning strategies as "the conscious actions that learners take to improve their language learning". Chamot defined learning strategies as "procedures that facilitate a learning task" [7].

As indicated above, although language learning scholars define learning strategies differently, there are a number of basic characteristics accepted by all of them. Oxford lists these basic characteristics as follows:

- They allow learners to become more self-directed;

- There are specific actions taken by the learner;

- They involve many aspects of the learners, not just the cognitive;

- They support learning both directly and indirectly;

- They are not always observable;

- They are often conscious;

- They can be taught;

- They are flexible;

- They are influenced by a variety of factors.

Learning strategies are a means of enhancing successful learning. As Oxford states, learning strategies "make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations". Rubin also believes that strategy instruction is a mean of enhancing learners' procedural knowledge, which leads to more successful learning. She states:

"Strategy instruction is one way to work towards enhancing your procedural knowledge. Since many adults are "language phobic" or inexperienced with language learning, they need to gain more procedural knowledge to deflect negative affective influences and to begin to experience some success [8]."

METHODS

Participants

The study done on a group of a hundred fifty Kazakh undergraduate learners learning English as a foreign language at university, most of the students were juniors (48 %), (52%) were seniors. In terms of gender, the students did not balanced with 122 Females (81%), 28 males (19%) and their age ranged from 18 to 21.

In support of the benefits of learning strategies instruction for students with learning disabilities, we found that these students scored lower on the measures of learning strategy use than did their non-disabled peers as a result of comparing the learning strategies used by 80 postsecondary students with disabilities to those used by 70 students without disabilities. We also found evidence that unsuccessful learners "apparently...lacked...what are often called metacognitive strategies...which would enable them to assess the task and bring to bear the necessary strategies for its completion". We found that the more-skilled listeners used more meta-cognitive strategies over time than the less-skilled listeners. Therefore, identifying the cognitive and metacognitive strategies successful learners use makes it possible to help unsuccessful language learners to become more successful, through the deliberate teaching of these strategies. This intentional teaching can benefit students with learning disabilities in particular because it will help them to grow more aware of their thinking processes, to recognise when meaning breaks down, and to understand what strategies work best for them. It has also been suggested that strategy instruction can help learners with disabilities to overcome certain psycholinguistic and effective constraints in the classroom.

Strategy instruction "helps overcome nervousness, the inability to remember and the need to produce language during oral communication immediately. Being able to overcome these limitations will make learning more efficient". In short, learning strategies instruction benefits all students, including those with learning disabilities. Learning strategy research also suggests that less competent students improve their skills through training in strategies used by more successful learners. Therefore, many educators propose that learning strategy instruction should integrate into regular courses.

Instrument

Two types of instruments were administered in this study (a) a written Quantitative questionnaire, (b) Qualitative classroom observations.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants for the Study

Category		Number	Percentage
University		96	100%
School year	Junior	39	40%
	Senior	57	59%
Gender	Male	13	14%
	Female	83	86%
Nationality	Kazakh	142	94%
	Other ethnic groups (Uyghur, Turk, Uzbek, Tatar).	8	6%

Table 2:   Reliability of the Test for Present Study

Content	number	Item used	Cronbach alphas
Part1: foreign language aptitude	8	B1=0.95/B11=0.32/B16=0.76/B19=0.9/B22=0.94 B23=0.3 B29=0.88/ B31=0.97	0.75
Part2: the difficulty of language learning	6	B2=0.87/B8=0.97/B10=0.56/B32=0.81/B33=0.45 B15=0.3	0.61
Part3: the nature of language learning	8	B7=0.65/ B9=0.93/ B17=0.7/ B18= 0.34/ B24=0.8 B25=0.73/ B28=0.67/ B30=0.99	0.73
Part4: learning and communication strategies	7	B4=0.98/ B12=0.78/ B14=0.46/ B21=0.98/ B26=0.94 B27= 0.75/ B6=0.75	0.81
Part5: Motivation	4	B3=0.92/ B5=0.97/ B13=0.98/ B20=0.9	0.94

To determine the effect of language teaching methods to students with special needs, the learners, took a test at the beginning of the study, the purpose of which was to achieve homogeneity between the two groups. The test is a standardised, reliable and valid test, which is known all over the world. Regarding the scores on the test, most of these selected learners could be assumed to be elementary. This pre-test contained the reading section of the test and it included 50 items. But the scores were calculated out of 100. Results of the pre-test were also used to homogenizing the groups. After the treatment, again a version of the test was administered in order to check the effectiveness of the two teaching methodologies on the language learning learners with special needs. The researcher used SPSS program to process the gathered data by pre-test and post-test.

The version of the test used for this study contained 50 items. Items were scored on a five-point: AD= strongly disagree, D= disagree, U= undecided, A= agree, SA=strongly agree. The items on the BALLI assess learners' beliefs in five areas:

1. Difficulty of the language learning. (six items: B2, B8, B10, B15, B32, B33)

2. Foreign language aptitude. (eight items: B1, B11, B16, B19, B22, B23, B31)

3. Nature of language learning. (eight items: B7, B9, B17, B18, B24, B25, B28, B30)

4. Learning and communication strategy. (seven items: B4, B6, B12, B14, B21, B26, B27)

5. Motivation and expectation. (four items: B3, B5, B13, B20)

PROCEDURE

This study was conducted in 2018 and was carried on once a week for twelve sessions at University. After selecting the students and assigning them into two homogeneous groups, the researcher (who was actually the instructor too) applied our methodology in group 1 and traditional methodology in group 2.

During-task phase, the students were engaged in completing different kinds of tasks, and in post-task phase, they gave a report through, for instance, repeating the tasks and practicing some formal and linguistic features of the text.

Here, the students read authentic materials and all the exercises and class activities were designed around the reading text. The researcher used realia, pictures and technological aids, as much as possible, to strengthen the learning of the subject matter. The treatment was given for 12 sessions. This procedure was carried on for the whole semester.

The reliability of "Nature of language" was a relatively acceptable 0.75, the reliability of "the difficulty of language learning" was acceptable 0.73, the reliability of "learning and communication strategy" was good 0.81, and the reliability of "motivation in language learning" was excellent 0.94. The reliability of this test items in the questionnaire was 0.76, highly acceptable.

RESULTS

The fourth category of items addresses issues about learning and communication strategies. Seven items belong to this category; three of them (27, 4, and 26) concern learning strategies and the others (12, 14, 6 and 21) concern communication strategies. The responses to the items in this category are reported in Table **3**.

Regarding the learning and communication strategies (Table **3**), the majority of students (94% of the group 1 and 96% of the group 2) agree that it is important to repeat and practice a great deal.

Table 3:   Survey Result: Learning and Communication Strategies

Item	Source	AG	DA	M	SD
4. it is important to repeat and practice a lot.	1	94%	--	1.22	0.53
	2	96%	--	1.34	0.63
6. its ok to guess if you don't know a word in a foreign language.	1	61%	21%	2.48	1.01
	2	63%	19%	2.48	0.93
12. it is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.	1	59%	19%	2.52	0.95
	2	68%	18%	2.26	1.1
14. you shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly.	1	26%	50%	3.28	1.22
	2	43%	39%	2.94	1.33
21. I heard someone speaking in the language I am trying to learn, I would go up them so that I could practice speaking the language.	1	89%	--	1.93	0.54
	2	79%	2%	2.3	0.69
26. It is important to practice with cassettes or tapes.	1	85%	2%	1.83	0.72
	2	80%	7%	1.97	0.85
27. I fell self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people.	1	50%	2%	2.57	0.72
	2	53%	19%	2.56	0.95

Note: AG=agree, DA=disagree.
The percentages (%) have been rounded to the nearest tenth.

Many from both group (85% of group 1 and 80% of group 2) believed that it is important to practice with cassettes or tapes. The groups were equally disposed (61% of group 1 students, 63% of group 2 students) towards guessing unknown words in English. However, exactly half (50%) of students from group 1 disagree or strongly disagree the idea that you shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly, while only 39 percent of group 2 students had same believes about it.

Slightly more than half (53%) of the group 2 students thought that they felt self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people, whereas exactly half (50%) group 1 students had same idea about it. 59 percent of group 1 students and 68 percent of group 2 students believed excellent pronunciation is important.

Summing up the results of the research it is better to mention that the recommendations and methodology helps the students to improve their learning strategy.

DISCUSSION

Specifically, the use of strategies for language learning in people with disability is a fundamental requirement for successful learning. They contribute to the development of comprehension and production of the target language. In this respect, it is better to mention that learning strategies are "especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence". In the *Concise Encyclopedia of Educational Linguistics*, Oxford adds that "language learning strategies can facilitate the internalisation, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language". In support of this, researchers found that skilled language learners are masters of learning strategies and that a positive correlation exists between strategy use and second language proficiency. The literature on metacognition also suggests that the use of metacognitive strategies positively influences learners' academic performance.

Learning strategies are also seen as a means of enhancing self-efficacy, motivation and self-confidence of learners. That is, strategic learners, perceive themselves as more able to succeed academically than students who do not know how to use strategies effectively, which in turn increases their motivation. We believe that "strategy training can enhance both the process of language learning (the strategies or behaviours learners use and the effective elements involved) and the product of language learning (changes in students' language performance)" [9].

Besides, learning strategies instruction is an important factor for developing independent learning as it helps learners discover what particular strategy works

for them in a particular situation and develops their control over their own learning The more students become aware of their learning strategies, the greater the control they develop over their learning. In this regard, Wenden says, "to be self-sufficient, learners must know how to learn". Along the same line, Cohen argues that strategy instruction helps learners explore ways in which they can learn the language more effectively. He further emphasises the significant role that strategy instruction plays in developing learners' independence in the following way:

The strategy training movement is predicated on the assumption that if learners are conscious about and become responsible for the selection, use, and evaluation of their learning strategies, they will become more successful language learners by taking more responsibility for their language learning and enhancing their use of the target language out of class. In other words, the ultimate goal of strategy training is to empower students by allowing them to take control of the language learning process.

Research has also shown that self-regulated learners engage in the use of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies for learning and that students who use effective strategies are better able to work outside the classroom, where teacher direction and teacher input are not present, because learning strategies enable them to become more independent, lifelong learners.

Moreover, learning strategies enable students to stretch their learning styles. In this respect, we can say that teachers can actively help students "stretch" their learning styles by trying out some strategies that are outside of their primary style preferences. She adds that this can happen through strategy instruction.

Furthermore, learning strategies instruction holds a significant benefit to students with learning disabilities, because these students often lack effective learning strategies. In this regard, it is better to point out that when students with learning disabilities become strategic learners, they become productive lifelong learners, and as a result of strategy use, they trust their

own minds, know that there's more than one right way to do things, acknowledge their mistakes, evaluate their products and behavior, feel a sense of power, and know how to try. It is better to note the importance of teaching students with learning disabilities to use learning strategies in the following way:

An increasingly robust research base points to the potential of strategy instruction to help support struggling learners, including students with learning disabilities. Specifically, teaching students how to use learning strategies, and helping them choose and implement them effectively, helps to strengthen their metacognitive abilities and this, in turn, connects to improved student learning [10].

REFERENCES

[1]   Alexander PA, Jetton TL. Learning from text: A multidimensional and developmental perspective. In Kamil, ML, Mosenthal PB, Pearson PD, Barr R, Eds., Handbook of reading research, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum 2000; Vol. 3: pp. 285-310.

[2]   Alfassi M. Reading for meaning: The efficacy of reciprocal teaching in fostering reading comprehension in high school students in remedial reading classes. American Educational Research Journal 2007; 35(2): 309-332. New edition
https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312035002309

[3]   Allwright D. Why don't learners learn what teachers teach? The interaction hypothesis. In Singleton DM, Little DG, Eds., Language learning in formal and informal contexts. Dublin, Ireland: Irish Association for Applied Linguistics 2006.

[4]   American Psychiatric Association (APA). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-IV-TR (4th edition). Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association 2000.

[5]   Anderson A, Howe C, Soden R, Halliday J, Low J. Peer interaction and the learning of critical thinking skills in further education students. Instructional Science 2001; 29: 1-32.
https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026471702353

[6]   Schmeck NJ. L2 learning strategies. In Hinkel E, Ed., Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum 2005; pp. 757-771.

[7]   Anderson V. Six writers in search of texts: A protocol-based study of L1 and L2 writing. ELT Journal 2009; 41: 257-267.

[8]   Arnold J. Affect in language learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004.

[9]   Arries JF. Learning disabilities and foreign languages: A curriculum approach to the design of inclusive courses. The Modern Language Journal 2001; 83: 98-110.
https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00008

[10]   Baker S, Gerstein R, Graham S. Teaching expressive writing to students with learning disabilities: Research-based applications and examples. Journal of Learning Disabilities 2003; 36: 109-123.
https://doi.org/10.1177/002221940303600204