A Survey on the Intervention of Social Media in Second Language (English) Acquisition

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Abstract The purpose of this research is to analyze how the learners utilize social media to acquire English language. The strategies they employ during the process of language acquisition is a combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. It is an assumption that the social media like Whats App, Face book, Instagram and Twitter are meant for entertainment; however the present survey predicts that the second (English) language can be acquired through the intervention of social media. As long as the students are in the classroom, they take the instructions from language trainers where learning becomes a procedural practice. Once the students find their personal time at home, they browse social media for various reasons like entertainment, knowledge, information and so on. In the present study, the learners' strategies inside and outside the classroom are surveyed based on the mechanism developed by three language researchers namely, J. Michael O'Malley, Anna Uhl Chamot and Rebecca L Oxford. Their propositions are applied to a sample of 108 first Semester. Engineering graduates of Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation. The impact of social media on the students is examined by administering a questionnaire through Google forms. Language learning enhances if the students are allowed to operate their mobile phones in the campus. It is understood from the present investigation that language can be learnt implicitly and involuntarily through self -directed learning skills by using social media. The findings reflect that the receptive and productive language skills of the students are enhanced when they explore social media.

Keywords Language Acquisition, Cognitive, Meta-Cognitive, Mechanism, Strategies. Positive Effect, Social Media

1. Introduction

Learners' strategy can be defined as a plan of action which involves the application of tools and techniques. Rebecca L Oxford observed that "L2 learning strategies are the learner's goal-directed actions for improving language proficiency or achievement, completing a task, or making learning more efficient, more effective, and easier" (2011). English as a second language learning has become learner centric with self-motivated awareness. With the development of latest technologies, the access to the language learning has become an easy task. Language is learnt through cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Cognitive skills are organizing, summarizing, guessing and memorizing whereas meta-cognitive skills are self-planning, assessment, correction and evaluation. J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot made a study on the cognitive skills in second language learning. They accounted for the nature and significance of learning strategies in planning more effective instructional practices. They had three goals; firstly on how instruction

can be integrated with cognitive theory; secondly the need for a synthesis of research and theory in cognition with current views of second language acquisition; thirdly to respond to the need of second language teachers for guidance and instructions on how to capitalise the knowledge and skills of students in the classrooms and develop new strategies in learning processes. They partially supported the opinion that language learning in classrooms occurs most effectively when teachers are comprehensible. They strongly believed that learning involves many conscious decisions at both cognitive and meta-cognitive levels. Teachers as facilitators can encourage students to use effective strategies. O'Malley and Chamot's approach is referred as Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). Theory, research and practice are the three key points of their argument. Their approach considered the educational researchers, teacher trainers, coarse designers, and language teachers who wish to apply CALLA. According to Oxford (1990) the strategies of learners is denoted by specific actions who make their learning easy, fast, and enjoyable. Their language acquisition is self-directed, effective and more compatible to new situations. The research findings of the above-mentioned propositions help the teaching/learning community to become more effective and independent in the process of second language acquisition.

2. Background

Good language learning is said to depend on at least three variables: aptitude, motivation and opportunity (Rubin, 1975). In the world of computer technology, students are aware of the fact that good communication skills are very much important either to be placed in good multinational companies or study abroad. This factor drives them to develop their own strategies consciously. It is Oxford (1990) who believed that cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies assist the learners in regulating their learning. Social strategies enhance their learning proficiency and self-confidence. Students in the present educational system are updating their learning methodologies as per the demands of the industries. Teachers are adopting and adapting the suitable pedagogies. They are the facilitators and instructors in the classroom. Students follow the procedures and practice the tasks assigned in the classroom. Most of the time the learning is dependent on self-motivation and self-learning processes. The behavior of the students varies from one situation to the other based on the task they are assigned with. Learning strategies are associated with observable and unobservable behaviors. A learner focusing on listening to newscast is unobservable and deciding to take notes to remember the information is observable. (Chamot, 2004). Here the decision of taking notes from listening task is a meta-cognitive strategy as it is reflecting one's

own style of learning and planning. In my opinion, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies go hand in hand. Cognitive strategies are thinking, reading, learning, remembering, reasoning and paying attention. Every learning process requires a manner or strategy to be adapted in order to achieve the main purpose of learning (Hardon, 2013). Cognitive skills are personal and self-directed. When the learning strategies (cognitive/meta-cognitive) are strong, the academic learning moves with great pace and efficiency. This kind of self-trust leads to the possession of active inclination rather than that of passive inclination toward learning both inside and outside the classroom (Wenden, 1991). Electronic and print media helps the students to learn the language beyond the classroom environment. They are self-motivated when they observe the newspaper columns or the postings on social media. The news may be on different genres like political, educational, societal, spiritual, and motivational to name a few. In these situations, the students acquire the language automatically because it is their interest in the content which drives them to learn the language. Motivation plays an important role in learning English as a second language. language learning is rapidly enhanced through the use of technology and mobile usage (Peremalatha et al., 2019). Every student in the present scenario possesses a mobile phone with internet access. In the same way, a technical graduate also makes it a point to have a laptop with high specifications. Language learning has become an easy tool with academic guidance and self-motivation. Some of the pioneering language experts like Chamot Uhl and EL-Dinary, (1999), Cohen, A.D., Weaver, S., and Li, T-Y. (1996),Graham, S., & Harris, K.R. (2003),Grenfell, M., & Harris, V. (2017), Harris (2003) O' Malley and Chamot (1990),Rebecca L. Oxford (1990), Pressley, M, El-Dinary, P.B., Gaskins, I., Schuder, T. Bergman, J.L., Almasi, J., and Brown, R. (1992) believed that the classroom teaching and modeling enhances the meta-cognitive skills of the students. Tools and symbols are central concepts of second language acquisition. They discussed widely about the mediation as a form of symbolic artifacts through gestures in a sociological approach (Mazina et al., 2019). The opportunities of learning and practicing enables the students to use their strategies automatically and become self-reliant. The students also evaluate their strategies and implement them in various language tasks they take up.

3. Methodology

The focus of this research is to find out the scope of second language (English) acquisition through learning strategies. A survey is made on the students' learning strategies in relation to cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. It is a known fact that students of the present generation are attracted towards social media for multiple reasons. It

can be entertainment, personal/public interaction, online shopping or education. One should understand that all these activities are English language based. Knowingly or unknowingly, the students who are involved in electronic and print media learn language automatically as a procedural practice. In order to find out the strategies used in learning listening, speaking, reading and writing skills using print and electronic media, a survey is made by administering a questionnaire which had twenty-five questions. They were based on the usage of Whats App, Instagram, Face book, Twitter, YouTube and print media. All the questions reflected on the strategies they use to learn English language. The time spent on listening, reading and writing skills is considered for analysis. The questionnaire also focused on speaking skills which tried to find out the difficulties while speaking. Their opinions on immediate feedback by teachers/friends regarding error correction is also surveyed. The responses of one hundred and eight students are retrieved from the questionnaire operated through Google forms. Each question is analyzed on four parameters depending on the nature of the question. A systematic analysis is made on the students' cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies at the time of learning listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Sample

One hundred and eight students of the B.Tech first semester are selected to respond to the questionnaire through Google forms. They were from the stream of Computer Science Engineering. There is no special agenda for selecting CSE students. The survey was conducted on the last instruction day of their English proficiency course. The intention behind the survey at the end of the course is to apply CALLA of O'Malley and Chamot. The students answered the questionnaire in twenty-five minutes in the classroom environment. Their responses were recorded in pictorial diagrams of pie charts and bar graphs. The questions were related to the usage of electronic and print media based on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to find out their learning strategies of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. Two questions were focused on error analysis and syllabus revision in their pedagogy to find out their opinions.

Research questions and hypothesis

It is an assumption that students' reading skills are fading in the present days and they are getting attracted to the social media and neglecting the habit of reading newspaper. Do the students really benefit from following Instagram, Face book, Twitter and YouTube posts apart from entertainment? What are the strategies they are adopting while listening, reading and writing tasks? Are they transferring the strategies acquired through social media to the classroom pedagogy? It is the hypothesis that students waste their time in chatting on Whats App, watching You Tube and Face book videos, following tweets on the Twitter. I would like to establish the three variables of hypothesis in this survey.

- Is language (English) learnt through social media?
- What kind of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies are the students applying?
- Are they using the self-learning strategies in the classroom?

Instrument

The present research is based on the application of O' Malley, Chammot and Oxford's propositions of learner learning strategies. They believed that cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies play an important role in language acquisition. O'Malley and Chammot believed that Second language acquisition is best understood as a complex cognitive skill. Their discussion is based on a comprehensive model of cognitive skill learning. Their viewing of cognitive skill provides a mechanism for describing how language learning can be improved. Oxford's taxonomy is based on direct and indirect strategies (memory, cognitive and mental strategies) (meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies) respectively. Based on the two mechanisms of the above-mentioned researchers, this study tries to understand the qualities of a good language learner. Finding out how the language skills are acquired by using cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies through electronic and print media is the backdrop of this research paper.

4. Research Results

A.   Bar charts

Figures. 1, 2 & 3 reflect the students' accessibility of electronic social media.

The first bar graph shows the usage of electronic media which is recorded 97.2% with WhatsApp, 82.2% for Instagram, 69.2% for Facebook and 42.1% with Twitter. Predominantly they use English language either to post their stories or to read the peer postings.

The second bar graph shows that 68.2% of the students feel easy to attempt reading skill during the testing processes. 66.4% find the listening skill easy. 51.4% find writing skill easy. The remaining 37.4% of them find speaking skill easy.

The third bar graph shows that 88.88% students use English language while communicating through emails. 85% students use English in the classroom, 83.2% students use English for Social media. 33.6%.
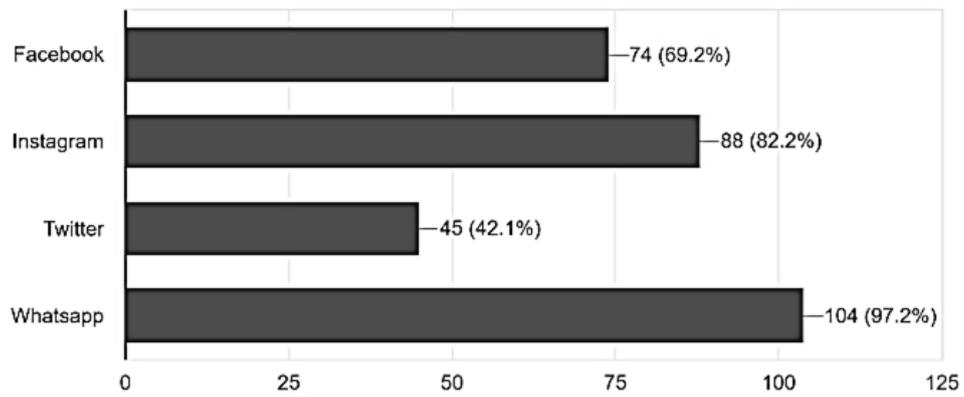
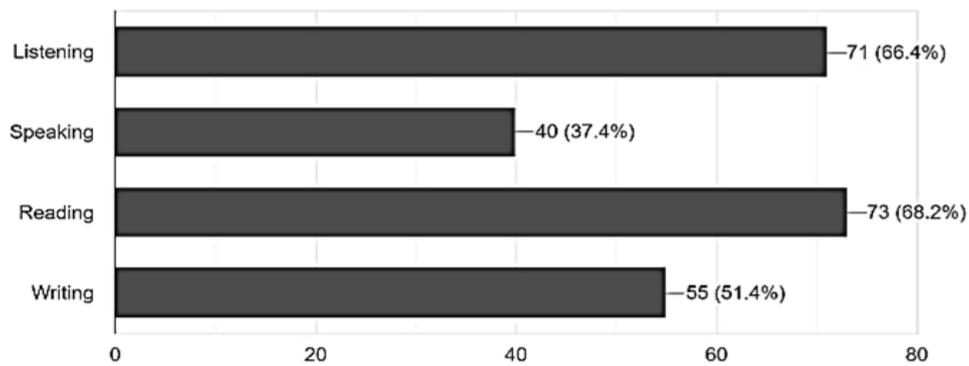**Figure 1.** Students having an account in Social media

Figure 2. Skills that students find easy to attempt during testing process
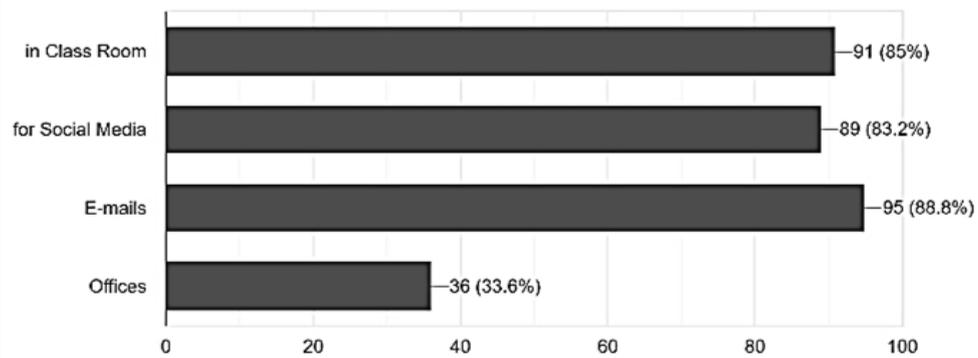

Figure 3. Students using English language for writing purpose

B.   Pie diagrams

Figures of pie diagrams 4, 5&6 reflect on the difficulties in using English language in day to day life.

Figure 4 shows that 78.5% of the students find it sometimes difficult to use appropriate words while writing. 20.6% do not find it difficult while writing. 0.9% find it always difficult.
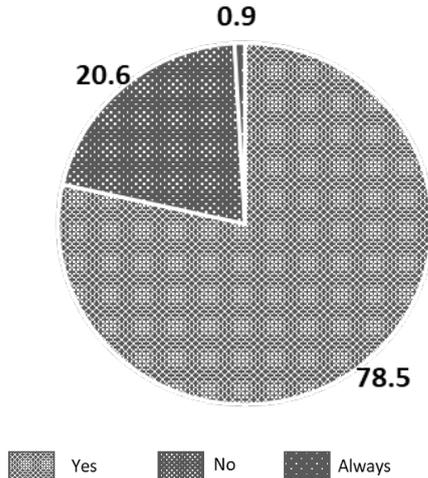
Figure 4.   Students who find it difficult to use appropriate words while writing English
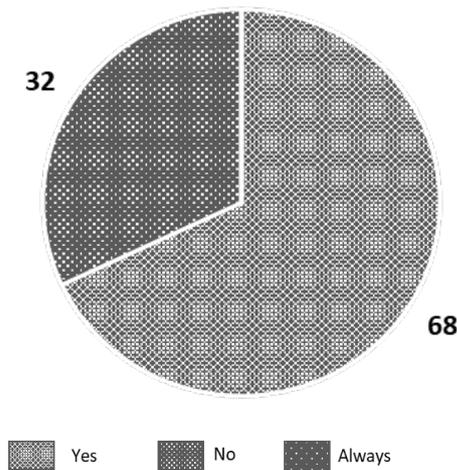
Figure 5.   Students who find it difficult to frame sentences while drafting documents

Figure 5 shows the difficulty of students in framing the sentences. 68% of the students feel it difficult sometimes, 32 % do not find it difficult at all.

Fig. 6 shows the inhibitions of the students during public speaking in English. 74.5% of them feel nervous sometimes, 20.8% do not feel nervous at all and 4.7% of them find it difficult always.

Figures of pie diagrams 7 & 8 reflect that students find it difficult while using English & and they think that University should introduce fiction and poetry into B.Tech English syllabus for better outcomes.
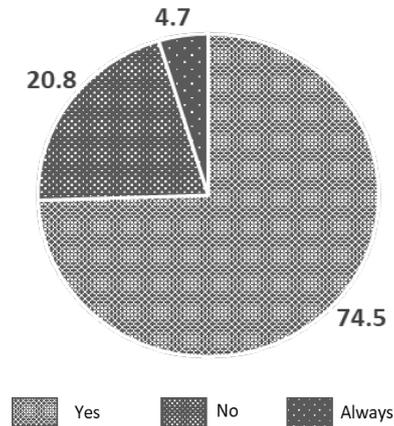
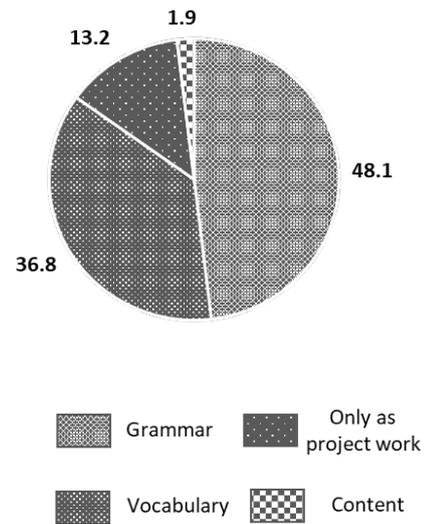**Figure 6.**   Students who feel nervous to speak English in a public gathering

Figure 7.   Sections that students find it difficult while using English
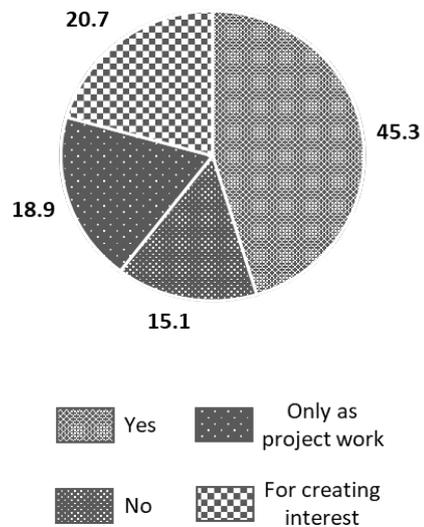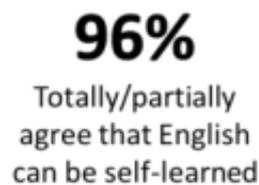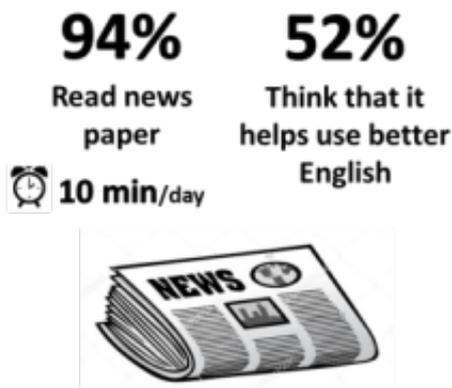
Figure 8.   Students who think that University should introduce fiction & poetry into B.Tech syllabus for better outcome

C. Social media

The figures of print and electronic media reflect the learners' interests in using them. 94% of them read newspapers every day. 71.3% are interested in story reading, 33.3% are interested in novel reading, 31.5% students are interested in reading dramas, and 31.5% of the students are interested in employment news. For reference skills 68% students use dictionary. 93% students are interested in listening to cricket commentary, 81% students are interested to watch English movies. 73% students are interested in checking Instagram posts. It is interesting to note that 99% of the students agreed that the knowledge of English helps them to secure good employment. 96% students reflected that English can be self-learnt. Finally, 95% of the students reflected positively for their mistakes to be corrected by teachers and friends.

94% Read news paper
⏰ **10 min**/day

52% Think that it helps use better English

Predominantly interested in Sports and Films news

93% Listen English commentary   **81%** Watch English movies

73% Check Instagram posts

68% Use dictionary

99% Think that English helps to secure a good job

96% Totally/partially agree that English can be self-learned

Stories ★ ★ ★ ⯪ ☆
Novels ★ ⯪ ☆ ☆ ☆
Plays ★ ⯪ ☆ ☆ ☆
News ★ ⯪ ☆ ☆ ☆

95% Like friends and teachers to correct their English

5. Discussions

This paper outlines a conceptual overview of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies of ESL learners. The mechanism selected is based on the application of O' Malley, Chamot and Oxford's study on learner strategies. Cognitive psychology is the study of mind and how we think. It is how the brain connects and makes the learners to remember. Reasoning through logic is a fine example of cognitive strategy. Summarizing, guessing, and memorizing are cognitive in nature. Meta-cognitive strategies are exploring one's own learning styles like planning, organizing, arranging, monitoring, and evaluating which are consciously acquired. Direct and indirect strategies of Oxford include memorization, compensation, and social strategies, respectively. The analysis of the present findings observed that newspaper reading involves the cognitive skills like summarizing the content, memorizing the events and guessing the meanings of the new vocabulary. Sixty three percent of them referred to dictionaries. Reading stories, novels, dramas, newspaper columns and employment news indicates various purposes of reading. They read for aesthetic interest, recreation, and personal interest. No matter what their purpose might be, the results of survey showed that the habit of reading skills in students did not get down. The most encouraging part is that ninety four percent of students read newspaper at least for ten minutes daily. Planning to read and organizing the materials is a good indication of students' meta-cognitive strategy. It is not only the print media but also, they read the Whats App, Face book, Instagram, and Twitter posts. It is a noteworthy observation that the students use social media not only for entertainment but also to learn English. Their reading, listening, and writing skills also develop simultaneously. Majority of the students responded that they find difficulty in using appropriate words and framing correct sentences occasionally. It is also observed that twenty eight percent of students speak without any inhibitions. Thirty seven percent of them feel nervous while public speaking. This shows that the students utilize social media to read, listen and write but not post their own audio or video clippings. Thirty percent of students opted that speaking English is easy and the rest expressed that reading, listening and writing skills are easy comparatively during testing process. When it matters to writing skill, eighty eight percent of students use English in emails, eighty five percent in classroom, eighty-three on social media and thirty three percent in offices.

6. Conclusions

Based on the study and discussions, it can be interpreted that the instructional practices given in the classroom become procedural practices and language is learnt automatically without the awareness of the learner. There was a mixed response when asked if literary genres to be included in the syllabus. Nearly twenty percent of them indicated that these can be included as a part of project work. Fifteen percent of them said frankly that it's not necessary. Nearly twenty one percent of them responded positively saying that it creates interest in learning ESL. It is also observed that ninety three percent students watch sports commentaries, and eighty three percent students watch English films. Sixty eight percent of them reported they use dictionary if they come across any difficult word. This can be interpreted that they use referential skills as learner strategy. Fifty two percent of them reflected that they improve their language usage by reading newspaper. Language theories say that errors must be implicitly corrected rather than explicitly as it demotivates the learners. Quite opposite to the established notion it is interesting to note that ninety five percent of students reported that they are not offended when their mistakes are corrected by friends and teachers. This shows their meta-cognitive strategy of self-monitoring and the proactive skills of getting evaluated by peers or teachers. Finally, ninety nine percent of the students voted that learning English language in an organized manner helps them to secure good employment. The teachers as facilitators encourage students to use effective strategies. The propositions of O' Malley, Chamot and Oxford are applicable to the sample students of the first semester B.Tech program and the results of the research indicated positive observations regarding their usage of self-learning strategies through social media.

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