

# Malaysian Gifted Students' Use of English Language Learning Strategies

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## Abstract

Many studies have been done on language learning strategies employed by different type of learners and in various contexts. However, very little studies have been done on gifted students regarding language learning. Gifted students have unique characteristics and have different ways if thinking and learning. These characteristics affect how they learn a language. The main objective of the study was to investigate language learning strategies use among gifted students enrolled in special programme called PERMATApintar Education Programme. Data was gathered using a survey questionnaire with 104 gifted students. The instrument used in this study was Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire by Oxford (1990). Data was analyzed using descriptive analysis. It provides mean, percentages of responses and level of frequency. The findings revealed that gifted students use more indirect strategies particularly metacognitive strategies than direct strategies. There was variation in responses with regard to the use of language learning strategies among Malaysian gifted students. Language learning strategies have many potential benefits to educators, teachers and students. Implications and suggestions for future research are further discussed.

**Keywords:** language learning strategies, gifted students, ESL

## 1. Introduction

English Language has become the second most important language in Malaysia, after Bahasa Malaysia as the country's national language. The importance of English language as a global lingua franca has always been a major motivating factor in the learning and use of language in Malaysia, especially as a vehicle to gain information in science, technology and also for academics purposes. Malaysia is aware of the vital need to be literate and competence in English in order to access the wealth of data available and achieve a reasonable measure of success in all fields.

In addition, English language is also used in various profesion and is a compulsory requirement in Malaysian academic setting. Competence in English is highly prized in all field of interest, and students are aware that getting a good grade in English greatly increases the chances of acceptance at both local and foreign universities as well as providing a coveted edge in the workplace (Vinodini 2003). However, recently, the issue of declining standard of English among Malaysian students has become worrisome for all (Saadiyah and Kaladevi 2009). This is evident in Malaysians' everyday speech, which are often marred by grammatical and phonological errors or at times too loaded with "suffixes" (e.g. *lah*, *lor*, *meh*) and loan words from other languages (Muniandy et al. 2010). One of the possible reasons that the majority of Malaysian ESL learners are incompetence user of English is because they do not learn the language effectively (Sahandri and Saifudin 2009).

Language learning strategies are among the main factors that help to verify competency and how our students learn a second or foreign language. In addition, understanding of what students do in language learning process and how it affects language success is important in assisting students in the learning English language. Furthermore, many factors affect the choice and suitability of strategies. One of the factors is individual differences especially, in Malaysian context, the diversity of learners that come from different cultural and language background affects how they learn. This is more obvious in second language learning which is English. Accordance to that, many studies have been done on language learning strategies employed by different type of learners and in various contexts. However, very little studies have been done on gifted students regarding language learning.

Gifted students have unique characteristics and have different ways of thinking and learning. Generally, they have a higher linguistic ability. This ability enables them to use language effectively in receiving, understanding and relaying information. They are fond of language games, writing and they love to speak. They are sensitive towards structures of languages, have vast vocabularies, can spell accurately, and are able to memorise and learn various foreign languages (Hamidah, Aliza and Azlina 2009). These characteristics affect how they learn a language. It also influences the way they overcome problems in language learning and improve their language performance. However, the characteristics cannot be generalized to all students identified as gifted students because each student has their own unique pattern of development (Clarks 2002).

According to Tretter (2010), certain learning strategies and skills are especially effective for enhancing gifted students' learning. Gifted students have special learning needs, which if not met, can lead to frustration, a loss of self-esteem, boredom, laziness and underachievement (Crooker 2004). In addition, appropriate strategy couple with rigorous intellectual demand able to provide worthwhile educational experiences for gifted students (Van Tassel-Baska 2003). Thus, this study wants to find out language learning strategies employed generally and based on gender among gifted students under PERMATApintar Educational Programme. The programme identified gifted students who have higher ability in mathematics and science domains only. It did not look at students' language ability in identification process of gifted students. Therefore, the students' language skills are remained unknown, particularly in the learning of second language. More information is needed to define the language learning difficulties faced by gifted students in order to develop the suitable education environment and material for gifted students to reach their potential in language learning.

### *1.1 PERMATApintar Education Programme*

PERMATApintar Education Programme is the first educational programme that jewels gifted students in Malaysia. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) has been entrusted by the Prime Minister to implement this educational programme through PERMATApintar National Gifted Centre. The programme was formed in January 2010 and was commenced in January 17, 2011. The first intake of gifted students for this programme is a total of 114 students aged 16 years old from all over Malaysia who has been through three of screening tests: PERMATApintar UKM1, test and test competency UKM2 PERMATApintar Mathematics and Science (test UKM3).

The objective of the programme is to produce gifted students who have the following characteristics; competent, skilled and competitive to achieve greatness in academic at national and international level, has good values, high creativity in generating solutions to problem, innovative and critical thinking, exhibit good leadership, responsible, good language skills and can communicate effectively and demonstrate sensitivity towards social responsibility.

PERMATApintar Education Programme focuses on holistic education and learning based on the Philosophy of Education. It also emphasizes the development of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social balance. Moreover, the programme is a full-time program that takes about two years. It emphasizes on learning differentiation (differentiated learning) in which all students learn at different levels according to their learning level. It also emphasizes student-centred learning and using various methods including cooperative learning and collaborative methods based, lecture, large group and small groups in laboratory and field studies, research projects with research expert group UKM, research reports, construction folio, mobility programs and student exchanges, self-esteem building activities modular and spiritual programs and problem-based learning (PBL). Students are introduced to the concept of Higher Order Thinking (HOT) to help them develop creative thinking, critical and innovative in their learning. All learning are conducted in both languages; using Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language) and English. Hence, competency in both languages is crucial.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Language Learning Strategies (LLS)*

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviours, steps or techniques that students (often consciously) use to improve their progress in developing second language skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. It also promotes learner's autonomy as learner can monitor their own progress and take into control of what strategy suit them best in any situation. Cohen (1998) stated that learners are aware of their use of language learning strategy with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and gain better understanding of target language. Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies classification is widely referred to in the field of language learning. In addition, she looked at the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence. Oxford's classified LLS into two main categories: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies

comprise of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies while indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. This study referred to Oxford's language learning strategies and its classification.

### *2.2 Language Learning Strategies in Second Language Classroom*

Ellis (2002) stated that language learning strategies are the key factor affecting learner's rate of language acquisition and the ultimate level of language proficiency. There are many studies done on, LLS, globally and locally since 1980's. The most widely used instrument to investigate LLS in many researchers done is Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire by Oxford (1990). Among the studies that used SILL were Chew and Tian (2012), Adel (2011), Jalal and Kaveh (2011), Zhou (2010), and Haifa (2010). Some of the studies revealed that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used by the respondents (Adel 2011, Jalal and Kaveh 2011, Haifa 2010). On the other hand, Chew and Tian (2012)'s study on TESL students found that social strategies were the most frequently used, while Zhou (2010)'s study revealed that Chinese high school students employed compensation strategies the most when learning English. In addition, many studies have been done to investigate factors affecting language learning strategies use by learners. One of the factors is gender. Most of the studies showed that female students reported to use more strategy than male students (Jalal and Kaveh 2011, Zhou 2010, Izawati 2008). Nevertheless, there are few studies revealed that male students use more strategy than female students (Adel 2011, Tercanlioglu 2004, Wharton 2000). If the differences do exist, better understanding of it will help educators to guide the learner to enhance their comprehension in language learning.

### *2.3 Gifted Students and Language Learning*

It is essential to investigate the use of language learning strategies as it helps to enhance competency in the target language. However, there are little studies done related to language learning strategy in gifted education context. Seokhee and Doehee's (2003) study on strategy acquisition and maintenance of gifted and non gifted student young children found that gifted children have a good understanding of the usefulness of strategies and use them spontaneously to perform given task without explicit instruction.

Rosadah, Zalizan and Noriah (2009) in their studies in which to find out learning preferences among academically talented students found that academically talented students are interested in learning to become independent learners, do not like music or drama and need to be given a chance to be creative, and ideas on the aspect that will make an environment suitable for learning to happen. Moreover, they concluded that academically talented students will regard learning as easy if the students successfully associate their positive attitudes with their learning. A few academically talented students revealed to seek a wider scope to learn. They need flexibility in learning and want room to be creative. In addition, an environment that promotes creativity and healthy competition are needed by these students in order to expand their potential and ability.

In addition, Van Tassel-Baska (2000) also calls for the inclusion of foreign languages in the gifted and talented curriculum in order to maximize the linguistic understanding that is commensurate with their abilities. As Deaveau (2006) puts it, high ability students use their verbal gifts and test their hypotheses analyzing the structure of the target language and comparing it to the other languages (cited in Okan and Ispinar 2009).

## **3. Method**

This study employed a quantitative method to investigate gifted students' language learning strategy use in learning English. The quantitative approach was chosen because of the construction of the measurement technique bridged concept and data (Neuman 2000).

### *3.1 Participants*

For the purpose of this study, a total of 125 gifted students from the second batch (Form Four) of the gifted students under PERMATApintar Programme were chosen as the sample for this study. However, only 104 participated in this study. They were chosen as the respondents due to their first year enrolling in the special program, therefore, it is assumed that majority of them have fairly moderate command of English. Only some of them are at advanced level. PERMATApintar Programme is the pioneer education programme for gifted students in Malaysia. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all gifted students in Malaysia. The subjects have different level of proficiency levels, abilities, motivation and interest. In addition, there are other factors which could influence second language acquisition and performance.

### *3.2 Instruments*

The instrument used in this study is a set of questionnaire adapted from Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990) that incorporates six categories of language learning strategies namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social

strategies. It consists of 50 statements and each statement was given a four-point Likert scale. An even number of scale was used with concern of middle category that avoids respondents making real choice (Dornyei 2003). The four-point Likert scale is (1) Never true of me, (2) Usually not true of me, (3) Usually true of me, and (4) Always true of me.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data from the SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) by Oxford (1990) were analyzed using descriptive analysis. It provides mean, percentages of responses and level of frequency. To determine the level of frequency of language learning strategies used in terms of six broad categories and individual items strategies, an interpretation mean score was employed. Green and Oxford (1995) suggest that the variation of an individual item that varied significantly by a variable in question can be described as positive, negative or mixed by examining the percentage of respondents at each level and reporting their usage (high, medium, low) of the strategy. Mohamed Amin et al. (2001) used a similar approach by Green and Oxford (1995). However, in their analysis, the responses were grouped into two categories instead of three categories based on Oxford (1990). The rating of frequency of used adapted from Oxford combined responses obtained from the five point Likert scale employed in the SILL into three categories of use 1 and 2 ( $M=2.4-1.0$ ) into 'low strategy use', 4 and 5 ( $M=5.0-3.5$ ) into 'high strategy use', and 3 ( $M=2.5-3.4$ ) as 'medium strategy use'. This study referred to analysis from Mohamed Amin et al. (2001) because four point Likert scale was used in the SILL instead of five point scale. A response of 1 ('never true of me') and 2 ('sometime true of me') were combined into 'low strategy use' category; while, a response of 3 ('usually true of me') and 4 ('always true of me') were combined into 'high strategy use' category.

Table 1. Level of Frequency Rating for Strategy Use

Frequency of Use	Responses	Mean Scores
High	Always true of me	3.5-4.0
	Usually true of me	2.5-3.4
Low	Usually not true of me	1.5-2.4
	Never true of me	1.0-1.4

Table 1 shows the summary of interpretation score adopted from Mohamed Amin et al. (2001). In addition, percentages of each response were calculated to further identify gifted students' language learning strategies pattern.

## 4. Results and Findings

### 4.1 Overall Strategy and Category Strategy Use

The mean scores for all six categories of LLS as well as individual strategy use by gifted students were calculated. Oxford (1990) divided learning strategies into two main groups: direct strategies (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective and social strategies). For this study, the gifted students were reported to use indirect strategies more than direct strategies.

Table 2. Mean Scores and Frequency of LLS According to Category

Strategy Category	Mean	S.D.	Frequency of Use	Rank of Use
Memory	2.347	0.415	Low	5
Cognitive	2.556	0.449	High	4
Compensation	2.664	0.475	High	3
Metacognitive	2.794	0.606	High	1
Affective	2.303	0.567	Low	6
Social	2.707	0.537	High	2
Overall	2.562	0.508		

As shown in Table 2, the overall strategy used is  $M=2.562$ , slightly above high strategy use level. It indicates that gifted students are high strategy users. They also reported having high level of frequency for four categories namely cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, social strategies with the mean scores ranging between  $M=2.794$  to  $M=2.556$ . The most frequently used language learning strategies were metacognitive strategies ( $M=$

2.794). As for the least frequently used strategies, affective strategies which deal with emotions (Chamot and O'Malley 1990) showed the lowest mean scores with (M=2.303). The rank of use between categories based on descending order is metacognitive strategies, social strategies, compensation strategies, cognitive strategies, memory strategies and affective strategies.

#### 4.2 Strategy Use Based on Gender

Table 3 shows as a whole, both female and male students are high strategy users although mean scores for female is slightly higher, 2.575 compared to male students with 2.542. The finding of this study support findings by previous studies done by Jalal and Kaveh (2011), Zhou (2010) and Izawati (2008). The most frequently used strategy by male students was social strategies and for female students were metacognitive strategies. The results also revealed that male students used more direct strategies. Meanwhile, female students used more indirect strategies than direct strategies. On the other hand, mean score for memory, compensation social category of strategy for males are higher than females. As for the least strategy use, affective strategies indicate the lowest mean score for male students and memory strategies for female students.

Table 3. Strategy Category Use According to Gender

Strategy category	Male(N=47)			Female(N=57)		
	Mean	Frequency	Rank	Mean	Frequency	Rank
Memory	2.390	Low	5	2.312	Low	6
Cognitive	2.533	High	4	2.575	High	4
Compensation	2.706	High	3	2.611	High	3
Metacognitive	2.716	High	2	2.858	High	1
Affective	2.196	Low	6	2.389	Low	5
Social	2.713	High	1	2.702	High	2
Overall	2.542			2.575		

#### 4.2 Overall Individual Strategy Use

The mean, standard deviation and frequency usage of each item are presented according to the category. Overall, out of 50 items, the descriptive statistics indicated that a total of 29 individual strategies were at high level of use and with mean score ranging from 3.183 to 2.509. The other 21 items fall under low frequency of use. Meanwhile, one of item under metacognitive strategies showed the highest mean score (M=3.183) and as for lowest mean score (M= 1.586) falls under item in memory strategy.

##### 4.2.1 Memory Strategies

Table 3 shows the percentages of responses, mean scores, and level of frequency of individual items under memory strategies. The mean scores indicated that four out of nine items are at high scale of frequency with mean scores ranging from M=2.721 to M=2.567. Total of four items are classified as low frequency with mean scores ranging from M=2.471 to M=1.586. The item that shows the highest mean score was "I remember a new English word by making a mental picture (visualize) of a situation in which the word might be used". Similar finding was reported in study done by Izawati (2008) on polytechnic students. Meanwhile, the item that has the lowest mean score is "I use flashcards to remember new English words" which was parallel with findings from Izawati (2008) and Johari (2005).

Table 3. Memory strategies

Memory Strategies	Never True Of Me	Sometmes True Of Me	Usually True Of Me	Always True Of Me	Mean	Level Of Frequency
I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in the English	4 (3.8)	43 (41.3)	45 (43.3)	12 (11.5)	2.625	High
I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3 (2.9)	50 (48.1)	40 (38.5)	11 (10.5)	2.567	High
I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	7 (6.7)	51 (49.0)	36 (34.6)	10 (9.6)	2.471	Low

I remember a new English word by making a mental picture (visualize) of a situation in which the word might be used	8 (7.7)	32 (30.8)	45 (43.4)	19 (18.3)	2.721	High
I use rhymes to remember new English words	28 (26.9)	37 (35.6)	35 (33.7)	4 (3.8)	2.144	Low
I use flashcards to remember new English words	59 (56.7)	33 (31.7)	8 (7.7)	4 (3.8)	1.586	Low
I physically act out new English words	15 (14.4)	52 (50.0)	31 (29.8)	6 (5.8)	2.269	Low
I review English lessons often	15 (14.4)	61 (58.7)	23 (22.1)	5 (4.8)	2.173	Low
I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	16 (15.4)	30 (28.8)	41 (39.4)	17 (16.3)	2.567	High

In addition, based on the percentages of responses of the item, it shows that more than half of the respondents (56.7 %) stated that it never true of them to use flashcards to remember new English words. The use of flashcards in teaching and learning in secondary education is scare unlike in preschool or primary level of education. Malaysian classroom have been traditionally teacher-centred. Simulations and games are two very effective techniques to allow second or foreign language learners practice in the target language. It is not only benefit for oral practice, but also allows learners to experiment with new structure (Gaudart 2003). This might affect students' perception on the use of flashcards or other simulation for language learning. On top of that, the least use of memory strategies is quite surprising as Malaysian students are used to rote memorization due to our education system that emphasize on examination. This indicates that memory strategies are regarded as rigid and they the students prefer more communicative and productive strategies.

#### 4.2.2 Cognitive Strategies

Table 4 reveals the percentages of responses, mean scores of individual items, and level of frequency of each item under cognitive strategies. The mean scores indicate that eight items are at high level and six items are at low level of use. The item that most frequently use under cognitive strategies was "I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English" with mean score of 3.182 which similar with Izawati (2008). 40.4% of the respondents revealed that usually true of them and another 39.4% stated that it was always true of them to practise their English language using English materials and resources such as English books, movies, TV programme, dictionaries and internet.

Table 4. Cognitive strategies

Cognitive Strategies	Never True Of Me	Sometimes True Of Me	Usually True Of Me	Always True Of Me	Mean	Level Of Frequency
I say or write new English words several times	10 (9.6)	49 (47.1)	32 (30.8)	13 (12.5)	2.461	Low
I try to talk like native English speakers.	5 (4.8)	42 (40.4)	36 (34.6)	21 (20.2)	2.702	High
I practice the sounds of English	4 (3.8)	31 (29.8)	43 (41.3)	26 (25.0)	2.875	High
I use the English words I know in different ways	6 (5.8)	44 (42.3)	36 (34.6)	18 (17.3)	2.634	High
I start conversations in the English.	16 (15.4)	57 (54.8)	19 (18.3)	12 (11.5)	2.260	Low
I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English	1 (1.0)	20 (19.2)	42 (40.4)	41 (39.4)	3.182	High
I read for pleasure in the English	3 (2.9)	40 (38.5)	38 (36.5)	23 (22.1)	2.779	High
I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	9 (8.2)	59 (56.7)	27 (26.0)	9 (8.7)	2.346	Low
I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly)	3 (2.9)	36 (34.6)	41 (39.4)	24 (23.1)	2.827	High

then go back and read carefully						
I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the English	16 (15.4)	42 (40.4)	33 (31.7)	13 (12.5)	2.557	High
I try to find patterns in the English.	24 (23.1)	47 (45.2)	30 (28.8)	3 (2.9)	2.029	Low
I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand	12 (11.3)	40 (38.5)	29 (27.9)	23 (22.1)	2.413	Low
I try not to translate word for word	9 (8.7)	47 (45.2)	29 (27.9)	19 (18.3)	2.115	Low
I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the English	26 (25.0)	54 (51.9)	19 (18.3)	5 (4.8)	2.605	High

The use of all types of dictionaries and internet access are common strategy among gifted students in order to find out meaning of what is heard or read in the target language, or to produce messages in the target language. The internet interface empowers individuals to set goals, search for information and deconstruct and then reconstruct knowledge that is relevant for each learner. In line with the learning characteristics, gifted students are attracted to new technologies that cater to their drive for depth and complexity, the rapid pace of their learning, the inductive nature of the materials presented, the interdisciplinary focus and the linkages, the open source material available (Erikson 2012). The item "I try to find pattern in English" shows the lowest use of cognitive strategy with mean score of 2.029. In addition, a quarter of the respondents (25%) revealed that it was never true of them to make summaries of information that they heard or read in English. Presumably, having a good retention of large quantities of information as one of the characteristics of gifted students (Clark 2002) lead them to understand manipulate or transform information better without summarizing it in written or oral forms.

#### 4.2.3 Compensation Strategy

The mean scores presented in Table 5 indicate that three items are at high level and three items are at low level of use for compensation strategies. The mean scores of items at high level ranging from M=3.058 to M=2.712. On the other hand, mean scores for items that indicated low level of use ranging from M=2.490 to M=2.346. The item with the highest mean was "If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing" which similar with findings from Izawati (2008) and Johari (2005). The strategy that has the lowest mean score was "I read English without looking up every new word". Interestingly, more than half of the respondents (55.8%) revealed that sometimes true of them to use this particular strategy. The use of this strategy is probably depending on the reading material, the purpose of reading and also level of language difficulties of that reading material. They might employ skimming technique to grasp the main ideas and general overview of the content. Thus, looking up every word will slow down the process of reading.

Table 5. Compensation strategies

Compensation Strategies	Never True Of Me	Sometimes True Of Me	Usually True Of Me	Always True Of Me	Mean	Level Of Frequency
To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses	4 (3.8)	25 (24.0)	46 (44.2)	29 (27.9)	2.962	High
When I can't think of a word during a conversation in the English, I use gestures.	7 (6.7)	35 (33.7)	43 (41.3)	19 (18.3)	2.7.12	High
I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the English	21 (20.2)	41 (39.4)	26 (25.0)	16 (15.4)	2.356	Low
I read English without looking up every new word.	11 (10.6)	58 (55.8)	23 (22.1)	12 (11.5)	2.346	Low
I try to guess what the other person will say next in the English	17 (16.3)	29 (27.9)	48 (46.2)	10 (9.6)	2.490	Low
If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	1 (1.0)	21 (20.2)	53 (51.0)	29 (27.9)	3.058	High

Compensation strategies were employed by most students to overcome limitations in speaking and writing. Code switching to mother tongue, use body language, synonym words were among the commonly use strategies. Information on strategy that students use to compensate their lack of writing skill emerged from the interview was by selecting topic on essay to write in examination. They feel more confidence writing about something that they have experienced before or have background knowledge on it for which they possess the needed vocabulary and structures.

#### 4.2.4 Metacognitive Strategy

The mean scores indicate that eight items are at high scale and only one at low scale of use. Item “I pay attention when someone is speaking English” shows the highest mean score, while item “I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English” shows the lowest mean score. Presumably, aware of the importance of language competency, gifted students took the initiative to seek opportunities to plan and improve their language competency as metacognitive strategies deal with the discipline, skill, and ability to plan, monitor and evaluate (Chamot and O'Malley, 1990).

Table 6. Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive Strategies	Never True Of Me	Sometimes True Of Me	Usually True Of Me	Always True Of Me	Mean	Level Of Frequency
I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English	5 (4.8)	44 (42.3)	39 (37.5)	16 (15.4)	2.634	High
I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better	1 (1.0)	19 (18.3)	56 (53.8)	28 (26.9)	3.073	High
I pay attention when someone is speaking English	1 (1.0)	17 (16.3)	48 (46.2)	38 (36.5)	3.183	High
I try to find out how to be a better learner of English	4 (3.8)	24 (23.1)	38 (36.5)	38 (36.5)	3.058	High
I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English	28 (26.9)	55 (52.9)	14 (13.5)	6 (5.8)	2.192	Low
I look for people I can talk to in English	3 (2.9)	35 (33.7)	42 (40.4)	24 (23.1)	2.826	High
I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English	3 (2.9)	35 (33.7)	42 (40.4)	24 (23.1)	2.836	High
I have clear goals for improving my English language skills	11 (10.6)	42 (40.4)	38 (36.5)	13 (12.5)	2.509	High
I think about my progress in learning English	6 (5.8)	32 (30.8)	39 (37.5)	27 (26.0)	2.837	High

As shown in Table 6, the percentages of responses for item ‘I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better’ showed that 53.8% of responses were ‘Usually true of me’ and 26.9% were ‘Always true of me’. This indicated that majority of the gifted students participated in this study realize and aware of their own weaknesses in language learning. In addition, gifted students are reported to strongly motivated by self- actualization needs, advances capacity for conceptualizing and solving societal problems (Clark 2002). Therefore, they use metacognitive strategies the most which provide a way to coordinate their learning process.

#### 4.2.5 Affective Strategy

The mean scores and percentages of responses presented in Table 7 indicate that four items are at low level and two items are at high level of use under affective strategies. The mean scores ranging from M=2.962 to M=1.673. The item that shows the highest mean is “I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake”. This reflects their high motivation and positive attitudes towards language learning. Moreover, affective strategies concern with regulating emotion, motivation and attitudes (Mohamed Amin 2000). Therefore, gifted students do encourage themselves in different ways in order to become better in English. However, the use of language learning diary to express their feeling showed to be the least favourable strategy among gifted students. It reflects in their responses that indicated more than half of the students (54.8%) revealed than it is never true of them to use language learning diary to express their feeling.

Table 7. Affective strategies

Affective Strategies	Never True Of Me	Sometimes True Of Me	Usually True Of Me	Always True Of Me	Mean	Level Of Frequency
I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English	10 (9.6)	26 (25.0)	36 (34.6)	32 (30.8)	2.865	High
I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake	6 (5.8)	24 (23.1)	42 (40.4)	32 (30.8)	2.962	High
I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English	35 (33.7)	42 (40.4)	17 (16.3)	10 (9.6)	2.019	Low
I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	22 (21.2)	39 (3.5)	23 (22.1)	20 (19.2)	2.394	Low
I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy	57 (54.8)	32 (30.8)	7 (6.7)	8 (7.7)	1.673	Low
I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English	42 (40.4)	39 (37.5)	14 (13.5)	9 (8.7)	1.904	Low

Generally, gifted students are different from their normal peers in many developmental aspects such as physical and psychomotor, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social (Touron, Touron and Silvero 2005). They might possess emotional stability that enables them to control their emotions (Aliza and Hamidah 2009), hence conveying their feeling in a different way. Presumably, it affected their least use of affective strategies in language learning context.

#### 4.2.6 Social Strategy

The mean scores and percentages presented in Table 8 indicate that four items are at high level use and two items are at low level of use under social strategies. The mean scores of items ranging from M=3.135 to M=2.404. The item with the highest mean is "If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again". Presumably, the highest use of this particular strategy is due to the gifted students' high curiosity (Clark 2002, Aliza et al 2009). On the other hand, the item that has the lowest mean score is "I try to learn about the culture of English speakers".

Table 8. Social strategies

Social Strategies	Never True Of Me	Sometimes True Of Me	Usually True Of Me	Always True Of Me	Mean	Level Of Frequency
If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again	5 (4.8)	16 (15.4)	43 (41.3)	40 (38.5)	3.135	High
I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk	6 (5.8)	31 (29.8)	48 (46.2)	19 (18.3)	2.769	High
I practice English with other students	4 (3.8)	31 (29.8)	45 (43.3)	24 (23.0)	2.859	High
I ask for help from English speakers.	10 (9.6)	36 (34.6)	41 (39.4)	17 (16.3)	2.625	High
I ask questions in English.	6 (5.8)	57 (54.8)	29 (27.9)	12 (11.5)	2.452	Low
I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	15 (14.4)	45 (43.3)	31 (29.8)	13 (12.5)	2.404	Low

In addition, English language curriculum syllabus for secondary schools that aims to extend learners' English language proficiency in order to meet their needs to use English in certain situations in everyday life, plan to mould students' ability to form and maintain relationships through conversations and correspondence; take part in social interaction; and interact to obtain goods and services. Therefore, the movement of communicative teaching to accomplish the plan has emphasized the importance of interacting with others and that has encouraged the use of social strategies (Griffiths 2003).

#### 4. Discussion

Overall, the result derived from descriptive analysis of the study indicated that gifted students are high strategy users. Based on total mean of each category, it was found that gifted students use more indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, social) compared to direct strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation). The use of indirect strategy more shows that gifted students prefer strategies that support and manage language learning strategies without (in many onstances) directly involving the target language (Oxford 1990). In addition, the most frequently used language learning strategies were metacognitive strategies. Such result also appears in other studies, for example Adel (2011), Jalal and Kaveh (2011) and Haifa (2010). This indicates that metacognitive strategies are generally favoured by ESL students, as they allows learners to control their own cognition by coordinating the planning, organising, and evaluating the learning process. The high use of metacognitive strategies in language learning are in line with gifted students characteristics such as setting priorities, selecting information, monitoring solituoins and use regulartory(metacognitive process listed by Roger (1986) and Shore (1991) cited in Yewchuk (1999). This means that giftes students participated in the study aware and able to regulate their own learning. As for the least frequently used strategies, affective strategies which deal with emotions (Chamot and O'Malley 1990) indicated the lowest mean scores. The habits of realizing and recording emotional tremors are not a habit among students when learning English might resulted in lack of use of affective strategies (Chew and Tian 2012).

In terms of gender, the study revealed that female students used more straegies that male students. A possible explanation for this result is due to different level of competency in certain language skills. According to Ellis (2002), in second language learning classroom, females often have more positive attitudes and as result, achieve greater success in learning a second language. In addition, Green and Oxford (1995) stated about biological and socialization factors that might contribute to gender differences in the language. This means that males and females students are using different approaches to language learning.

As for individual strategy use, the finding of highest and lowest item based on mean score in each category showed a similar pattern with studies done by Izawati (2008) and Johari (2005). These two studies were conducted in tertiary level context; Izawati (2008)'s on polytechnics students in Malaysia while Johari (2005)'s study was on students in private college in Pekan, Indonesia. The unique pattern of this finding might be due to gifted students' exceptional characteristics that differentiate them from their peers. This is supported by Diezmann and Watters (2006) which stated that 'gifted students have an advanced knowledge base compared to their non-gifted peers'. Malaysian gifted students have good devices, such as ability and potential for language learning, however, they just need to know how to fully utilize those devices in order to excel in language learning domain.

#### 5. Implications

Learning strategies are important in second language acquisition. By investigating the strategies used by second language learners during the language learning process, we can gain insight into the cognitive, social and affective processes involved in language learning. In addition, by attaining information related to language learning, it can help us to understand better on mental processes possessed by gifted students as it relates to second language acquisition.

This study acknowledged the individual differences of learners in language learning. It is important to be aware of these differences as it affects how the learners' learn especially in the case of gifted students. Gaining information on the way the gifted students learn and at the same time embraces their differences can be helpful for nurturance of their potential. Growth, change, and advanced levels of gifted student achievement can only occur when educators and leaders acknowledge the nature of language learning of gifted students. Based on that acknowledgement, educators can develop specific strategies and approaches for serving gifted learners especially in teaching and learning of target language.

In addition, according to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), most students could benefit from the teaching of learning strategies. Therefore, it is important that teachers and students be made conscious of LLS and try to use these strategies in their teaching and learning. However, it is not enough just to know about the strategies. Students should also understand how to apply them strategically. Moreover, Nambiar (2009) believed that strategy use and learning outcome are cyclical process. Regardless of the types of strategies, if one of them is extensively practices, students will be consistently motivated to learn.

Therefore, the teacher's role in language learning is crucial in order to make sure that the students reach their full potential and thus master the language. Teacher need to help the students to identify their own learning strategies that suits them to enhance their performance. Not only that, teacher should be able to identify students' language

learning strategies that suit the teaching and learning process. This is important to teacher because those who understand students' language learning strategies will design the course content in a way that benefits students the most and they can enhance the teaching and learning process in the classroom by adjusting their approach in teaching.

Furthermore, by enhancing students' awareness of their own strategies, it assists them to evaluate their own learning and the effectiveness of the strategies that they employ. They also need to know how to assess the success of given strategy and apply corrective feedback to its use. For example, students should be given hands-on experience to experiment and see how the strategies work (Nguyen 2008). In addition, the results of the study highlight the fact that strategy use affected by number of variables, particularly for this study, gender and cognitive styles. Thus, all these aspects should be taken into consideration in language learning. It is important to be aware of these differences as it affects how the learners' learn.

As mentioned before, teachers and educators play an important role in increasing students' awareness and use of language learning strategies. As suggested by Nguyen (2008), there is few basic principle that can be used in teaching and learning strategies in order to encourage students to adopt and use the strategies. For example, the strategies should be taught explicitly and taught together with the language skills or language components. Hence, students should be able to see the rationale and use the strategies effectively to enhance their proficiency in the language.

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