Language Learning Strategies Use and Challenges Faced by Adult Arab Learners of Finnish as a Second Language in Finland

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Abstract

Adult Arab learners of Finnish as second language (FSL) often encounter communication difficulty when dealing with official documents. They also cannot help their children in their school homework. FSL proficiency is an essential requirement to get an employment and to obtain the Finnish citizenship. The aim of this paper is to explore the use of the language learning strategies by a number of adult Arabs learning FSL in Finland. In addition to issues and difficulties related to the learning process encountered by this category of learners. Oxford's Strategy Inventory for language learning was used for the purpose of data collection and SPSS programme was employed to analyse data collected from the questionnaire, however, interview data were analysed manually. 30 (20 male and 10 female) adult Arab FSL learners taking beginning level course in Finnish at Helsinki School for Adult Learners participated in the current study. The results showed that adult Arab learners of Finnish used the language learning strategies at medium level with the average of (m=3.25). The results also showed a number of challenges that impede their second language learning process like the low literacy level of the learners, lack of communication with the Finnish society, and difficulties in reading and writing in Finnish.

Keywords: adult learners, finnish as a second language, language learning strategies, problems

1. Introduction

Language learning strategies (LLSs) "are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). "L2 learning strategies are specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own L2 learning" (Oxford, 2003). Paredes (2010) defines LLSs as "the means through which students develop an awareness of their own metacognition and thus control of their own learning". In the same vein, Cohen (1998) defines LLSs as "processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in actions taken to enhance the learning or use of a foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about the target language". It is also defined by Chamot (2004) as "thoughts and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal". "Strategies, plans, techniques, actions, use of gadgets, attempts, thoughts, and steps that are deliberately taken by the learners to enable them to perform a language task and become better at learning the target language" (Noor Saazai, 2014).

The use of LLSs is beneficial for all learners; however, it is essential for adult learners to ease their task in learning the target language and to enhance the language learning process (Oxford, 2003). Moreover, the use of the language learning strategies helps adult learners to overcome some factors that affect the second language (L2) learning process like age, anxiety, attitude, aptitude, personality, and motivation. Adult learners can gain control over these factors by using the language affective strategies (Oxford, 1990). In addition, language learning strategies help learners to organise their learning and to ease the process of storing, remembering, and retrieving information (Saleh, 1999).

1.1 Significance of the Study

Through examining the use of the LLSs by L2 learners within the process of learning, some "insights into the metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective processes involved in language learning" can be gained (Chamot,

2005). These insights could be helpful for L2 instructors to adjust their teaching methods or textbooks to suit the learners' aptitude and learning abilities.

The study aims at filling the gap concerning the use of the LLSs by a number of Arab adult learners of Finnish as a second language and the challenges and difficulties encountered by this category of learner during their learning process. The significance of the study lies in the fact that that there is a paucity of research on this category of learners. In addition the researcher do believe that learning the use of LLSs , particularly affective and social LLSs, will help immigrant adult learners to learn Finnish better when used or enhance the learners' chances in learning that language. For example, the use of strategies like "encouraging one's self" by "making positive statement" or "taking risk wisely" will help adult learners to have the enough courage to participate and use target language in and outside the classroom as adult learners are usually encountered with low self-esteem factor.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Finnish as a Second Language FSL

Finnish language is deemed as a second language for the Arab immigrants who participated in the study. These people need Finnish for communicative purposes within the Finnish host community. Oxford (1990) argued that "refugees or immigrants usually have to learn a second language in order to survive in their adopted country". The following section is discussing the LLSs in detail.

2.2 Language Learning Strategies

LLSs taxonomy has been presented by many researchers, however, the one presented by Oxford (1990) is considered to be the most comprehensive. It is mainly classified into Direct and Indirect LLSs. The direct LLSs are subdivided into: memory strategies (used for storing information), cognitive strategies (used to make learning reasonable and beneficial), and compensation strategies (used to help learners bridge gaps when knowledge is limited in the target language).

On the other hand, indirect LLSs are subdivided into: metacognitive strategies (used to monitor and organize Language Learning LL process), affective strategies (used to control learner's emotional factors; attitude motivation, and values), and social strategies (used to promote and encourage learner to interact and use the target language).

Many previous studies have revealed that there is a clear and positive relationship between language learning strategy use and successful language learning. (Alnujaidi, 2017, Meyer, 2015; Mahnani et al., 2014; Rahi, 2013; Ismail & Alkhatib 2013; Tashakori, 2013; Alhaisoni, 2012; Ozmen, 2012; Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012; Judge, 2010; Paredes, 2010; Khalil, 2005; Park, 2005; Stenberg, 2005; Darst, 2003; Chamot, 2004; Oxford, 2003; Chou, 2002; Djigunovic, 1999; Saleh, 1999; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The proper use of these strategies can make language learning "easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990).

Table 1 below includes a number of studies from different parts of the world like Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, Romania, Spain, Palestine, Finland, Croatia, and USA.

Table 1. Studies on LLSs in different countries

Location & Target language	Purpose of study	Methods used	Samples	Major findings
Saudi Arabia Alnujaidi 2017, English	Investigate factors influence the use of LLSs	Oxford's (1990) SILL version (7.0).	178 male and female higher education learners	-LLSs used at medium level -Metacognitive were the most used LLSs -Affective were the least used LLSs - no effect for age, college level, nationality, and major on LLSs use
Iran	Investigate the	Oxford's (1990) SILL	41 junior high	-Language proficiency is

Mahnani et al. 2014, Englsih	effect of LLS training on the high school learners' sub-skill development	version (7.0).translated ,Persian	school students.	highly correlated to the use of LLSs - High school learners' educational level may not be appropriate to benefit from LLSs instruction -considerable progress in memory, social, and compensation LLSs -affective strategies were the least after instruction.
UAE Ismail &AlKhatib 2013, English	Investigate the use of LLSs.	Oxford's (1990) SILL translated (Arabic version)	190 (131female and 59 male) English Major students at the UAE Uni.	-moderate use of LLSs -males & females used LLSs at same level. -highest use of metacognitive & social LLSs -moderate use of compensation and affective LLSs -least use of cognitive & memory LLSs -language proficiency level correlated to the choice of the right LLSs
Saudi Arabia Alhaisoni 2012, English	-Investigate the use of LLS -the relationship between the use of LLSs and gender and proficiency	Oxford's (1990) SILL version (7.0)	701 male (61.8%) and female (38.2%) EFL students at preparatory course, Ha'il Uni. Saudi Arabia	-moderate use of LLS. -highest use of cognitive &metacognitve LLSs. -moderate use of social & compensation LLSs. -least use of affective & memory -high anxiety in language learning. -no significant effect of gender factor. -proficiency has main effect of LLSs use.
Romania Ungureanu & Georgescu 2012	To evaluate the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective LLSs	37- questions questionnaire	50 third year foreign language learners from Pitesti University-Romania	-highest use of cognitive LLSs -moderate use of metacognitive LLSs -least use of socio-affective LLSs -awareness in LLSs use increases learners' learning autonomy and communicative competence
Spain Judge 2010,	Explore the use of LLSs of	Oxford's (1990) SILL version (7.0)	11 Spanish adults use English in their business	-highest use of social, cognitive, and metacognitve LLSs

English	Spanish adults in a business context		communication tasks	-absence of memory, affective, and compensation LLSs
Palestine Khalil 2005, English	To asses LLSs used by 194 high school and 184 university majoring in English as FL in Palestine. To assess the effect of language proficiency and gender on LLSs use.	Oxford's (1990) SILL version (7.0)	194 high school and 184 university English majors as FL in Palestine.	-medium use of LLSs -highest use in memory & cognitive LLSs -moderate use in compensation & metacognitive LLSs -least use of social and affective LLSs -language proficiency level and gender have main effect on overall LLSs use -females showed higher frequency of LLSs use than males did
Finland Stenberg 2005, English	Investigate the use of LLSs	Oxford's (1990) SILL version (7.0)	89 7th grade pupils at a Finnish comprehensive school	-highest use of metacognitive LLSs -moderate use of compensation & memory LLSs -least use of social & affective LLSs
Croatia Djigunovic 1999, English	To assess LLSs used by Croatian EFL learners	Oxford's (1990) SILL (version 5.1) translated – Croatian version	137 primary school, 169 secondary school, and 56 university Croatian EFL learners	-medium use of the LLSs -female used LLSs more often than males -highest use of comprehension LLSs -moderate us of communicativeLLSs -least use are socioaffective LLSs -EFL achievement is negatively correlated to socioaffective LLSs
USA Saleh 1999, English	To investigate the use of cognitive and metacognitve LLSs.	Oxford's (1990) SILL (5.1 versions)	82 Arabic language learners as FL in the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in Washington.	-moderate use of cognitive and metacognitive LLSs Metacognitive used more than Cognitive LLSs -no significant difference between male and female use of cognitive & metacognitive LLSs -no significant effect of language proficiency level on strategy use

As explained in Table 1, there are plenty of studies about the LLSs; however, some studies have been selected from different continents like America, Asia, and Europe. The selected studies include (Alnujaidi, 2017;

Mahnani et al., 2014; Ismail & AlKhatib, 2013; Alhaisoni, 2012; Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012; Judge, 2010; Khalil, 2005; Stenberg, 2005; Chou, 2002; Djigunovic, 1999 & Saleh, 1999). The diverse locations in which LLSs studies are conducted shows the importance of this kind of study.

Studies like Alnujaidi (2017), Ismail and AlKhatib (2013), Khalil's (2005), Saleh (1999), and Alhaisoni (2012) are in line with the current study in terms of participants. These studies used Arab high school and university EFL students as participants, however, the current study uses adult Arab Finnish as second language (FSL) learners and some of the participants are low-literate or illiterate learners.

The participants used in the above mentioned studies are mostly college level students or adult learners and that is similar to the current study, though, in (Alnujaidi, 2017; Djigunovic, 1999; Saleh, 1999; Khalil, 2005) studies, different categories of learners have been used as participants. Djigunovic (1999), studied the use of LLSs by (362) learners of three different education and EFL proficiency levels; (137) primary school learners, (169) secondary school learners, and (56) university undergraduates. The findings showed that; the least used are the socioaffective LLSs, the EFL achievement is negatively correlated to socioaffective LLSs and language proficiency is not significant in LLSs use. In other words, the young learners report same level of use as the university undergraduate ones. This echoed in Alnujaidi's (2017) study who investigated factors affect LLSs use of 178 (male & female) Arab and non Arab different levels higher education learners. The findings showed that LLSs were used at medium level and metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used ones. However, affective LLSs were reported to be the least used strategies. The study also showed no significant effect for age, nationality, college level and major on LLSs use. Saleh (1999) came up with the same findings when he studied the use of cognitive and metacognitive LLSs by (82) Arabic language learners in the USA and found no significant effect of language proficiency level on strategy use.

On the contrary, the findings of Ismail and AlKhatib (2013) and Khalil's (2005) studies emphasized the significance of language proficiency in LLSs use. Khalil (2005) studied the effect of language proficiency on the use of LLSs by (194) high school students and (184) college level students majoring in English as FL in Palestine, showed that language proficiency affected the use of the LLSs of university learners more than young learners. Investigating the average use of LLSs by (190) (131female and 59 male) English major Arab students at the UAE University. Ismail and AlKhatib (2013) revealed that the participants showed moderate average use of LLSs. This finding is similar to other research findings in which Arab learners were targeted (Alnujaidi, 2017; Ismail & AlKhatib, 2013; Alhaisoni, 2012; Khalil, 2005).

Proficiency factor also echoed in Mahnani's et al (2014) study. They looked at the effect of training in cognitive and metacognitive strategies on (41) junior high school EFL students' sub-skill development. The findings showed that the proficiency level of young learners is not appropriate to make use of the strategy training to develop their sub-skill and the post-training results are not significant. Language proficiency is highly correlated to the use of LLSs. Khalil (2005) justifies the disparity in LLSs use between these two different levels of participants that "learning experience motivates learners to use more strategies that require planning and evaluation of learning". In his study, the university students used more LLSs than high school students did.

In Romania, Ungureanu and Georgescu (2012) evaluated the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective LLSs by (50) third year foreign language college level learners. They found that the learners frequently used cognitive strategies followed by metacognitive strategies and the least used were socio-affective strategies. The findings also showed that promoting the learners' LLSs awareness enhances their communicative competence and increase their learning autonomy.

In the Finnish context, Stenberg's (2005) study is similar to Khalil (2005); Mahnani et al. (2014) and Djigunovic's (1999) studies with regard to participants. Stenberg (2005) studied the use of LLSs by 7th grade (89) EFL students. She justified the use of young learners as participants for her study that age factor is a significant one to be considered and young learners' metacognitive knowledge and skills develop between ages of 10-14. Investigating the use of LLSs by people of different categories provide more knowledge and wide perception about the usefulness of the LLSs. The young participants in Stenberg's (2005) study reported a humble use of LLSs and that supports Mahnani's (2014) claim that young learners are not appropriate for LLSs training because of their proficiency level.

As a learner of Finnish, the researcher thinks that adult learners of Finnish are facing number of impediments in learning that language. Interaction with the Finnish society and communication with Finns are deemed to be the main impediments. Lack of interaction and communication with Finns is attributed to the Finn stereotype. The following section explains that in details.

2.3 Stereotypical Finn and Adult Learners of Finnish

Finns, the native speakers of Finnish language are reticent, quiet listeners and they prefer not to be the ones who initiate conversation. Besides, they do not usually tend to mingle with foreigners and that has a negative impact on foreign learners of the Finnish language. Jaworski (1997:263) presentd a precise description of the Finnish personality as "taciturn, stubborn, and slow backwoodsmen, who live in the periphery of Europe, do not speak, communicate, or show their feelings, and whenever they open their mouths, they speak one of the most difficult languages in the world". In the same way, the stereotypical reticent Finn is described by Peterson (2009) as "silent Finn" who prefers action over speech and tend to "keep a certain distance from their interlocutors" (Jaworski, 1997).

The Finnish culture and society have a negative attitude toward foreigners and that is undoubtedly reflected on the L2 learning process in Finnish context. Sajavaara and Lehtonen (1997) argued that "Finnish culture is closed and it is characterized by a high degree of uniformity. Its members are highly suspicious of anything that is foreign and different. The threshold to open up discussion with a stranger is very high". Following much the same line, Mwai and Ghaffar who investigated the role of Finnish language in the integration process among five immigrant women, opined that "Finnish people are very antisocial with immigrants" (2014).

Consequently, the process of learning Finnish seems rather difficult as adult learners do not get enough exposure to the target language and culture through interaction and communication with native speakers of Finnish. The following studies show the importance of interaction and communication for better second language learning.

Stefánsson (2013) investigated the relationship between age and second language learning. He argues that three factors affect the process of language acquisition: motivation, exposure to the target language, and the kind of surrounding in which learner is involved. These factors are more important than age factor in the process of learning. He also opined that promoting these factors is essential for language learning process by implementing motivation and providing learners with adequate language exposure no matter how old the learners are. Cultural interaction with the target language culture is also recommended by Stefánsson (2013) for better L2 acquisition.

Nurmi and Kontiainen (1995) studied how adult immigrants learn L2 and support the importance of exposure to the target language for the purpose of adaptation. They argued that language learning by adult immigrants is rather limited as learners usually acquire skills of the target language from refugee camps and learning centers. The researchers also reported that autonomy scarcity influences the adaptation process and makes it slow even when immigrant is willing to learn.

In the same context, a qualitative study was conducted by Hubenthal (2004) to investigate the experiences in learning ESL of ten Russian immigrants in the US. The findings showed that the motivation of the old learners was to integrate into American society, engage in meaningful communication and be autonomous. However, impediments to their learning of English skills were consisted of memory, shame, health problems, lack of accessible ESL courses, and Russian social context.

The aforementioned studies are congruent with the current study when old and adult learners have been used as participants. The importance of exposure to the target language was confirmed by the results of these studies. In the current study, it is hypothesized that the awareness and use of LLSs, particularly affective and social LLSs, will help immigrant adult learners to learn Finnish better or enhance the learners' chances in learning that language by encouraging promoting the use of these strategies.

2.4 Research Questions

1). How often do adult Arab FSL learners use LLSs during their learning process?

2). What are the difficulties encountered by adult Arab FSL learners during their learning process?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

30 (20 male and 10 female) Arab adult FSL learners taking beginning level course in Finnish at Helsinki School for Adult Learners (Helsingin aikuisopisto) participated in the current study. Finnish is considered as a second language for the participants as their first language is Arabic and they learn Finnish as an L2 because they live in Finland and it is essential in their daily life communication there. The participants are Arab immigrants who came from different Arab countries like Iraq, Syria, and Sudan to live in Finland. Their ages range between 20 – 60 years old. The highest rate of the participants aged between 30-39 years old that is (40%). As explained in Table 2, 67% of the participants are males and 33% are females. The difference in the proportion of males and females is attributed to the fact that the number of male adult Arab learners is more than female adult Arab

learners.

The participants are low-literate and illiterate FSL learners who have different backgrounds and different levels of education received at their home countries. This category of learners are new comers to Finland and usually live with no or limited communication with the host community. Sample participants were selected with the help of some course instructors who usually have some information about the background of each adult learner and that helps them to group the adult learners into groups according to their educational backgrounds. Adult Finnish language courses are usually attended by learners coming from different countries and backgrounds; however, Arab adult learners were selected as participants for the study and that is due to some communication difficulties with adult learners from other races like Russians and Africans and to ease the process of data collection.

Table 2. Gender of the participants

Sex	Percentage	Number of participant
Female	33%	10
Male	67%	20

Table 3. Age range of the participants

Age	Percentage	Number of participant
20-29	33%	10
30-39	40%	12
40-49	20%	6
50-59	7%	2

3.2 Instruments

Two methods were used in the current study for the purpose of data collection, Oxford's (1989) SILL and in-depth interview. Oxford's SILL was used to assess the use of LLSs by adult Arab FSL learners. It covers the six main strategies presented by Oxford (1989) and namely cognitive, metacognitive, memory, compensation, affective, and social strategies. Oxford's (1989) SILL consists of 50 items of statements with five different options for each. These 50 items compromise the main six strategies. There are five answers for each of the 50 statements and they include: 1) never or almost never true of me, 2) usually not true of me, 3) somewhat true of me, 4) usually true of me, and 5) always or almost always true of me.

Oxford 1990 presented a scale for the average use of the LLSs, see Table 4 below. High use ranges between (3.5-5), medium use ranges between (2.5-3.4), and the low use ranges between (1-2.4).

Table 4. Oxford's scale for the level and the average use of the LLSs

Level	The frequent use of LLSs	Averages
High	Always or almost always used	4.5 – 5.0
	Usually used	3.5- 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 – 3.4
Low	Generally not used	1.5 – 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 – 1.4

Adapted from Oxford 1990.

Oxford's (1990) SILL, as strategy assessment self-report scales, is widely used nowadays. The significance of this technique lies in the fact that "these self-report scales are easy and quick to give, provide a general assessment of each student's typical strategies across a variety of possible tasks, maybe the most co-effective model of strategy assessment" (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

As explained in Table 1 above, the numerous studies that used translated versions of Oxford's (1990) SILL for data collection boost the reliability of this taxonomy. For example; Ozmen (2012), Turkish version; Khalil (2005), Ismail & Alkhatib (2013), and Alhaisoni (2012), Arabic version; Rahi (2013) and Mahnani et al., Persian version; Djigunovic (1999), Croatian version; and Chou (2002), Chinese version. However, an Arabic translation version of Oxford's (1990) SILL adopted from Ismail and Al Khatib (2013) was used as most of the participants of the current study are illiterate and low-literate and English version was not favorable for them. This version was approved by a committee that comprised experienced translators and Arabic professional editor.

Cronbach's alpha was used to set the reliability of SILL in many studies around the world with Chrombach's alpha value ranged between .91-.95. (Alnujaidi, 2017; Ismail & Al Khatib, 2013; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The reliability of the adopted Arabic translation version of SILL was also tested by the researcher using Chrumbach's alpha and the value was .93 and this result is inline with the findings of many previous studies around the world that evaluated the SILL's reliability.

Table 5. Chronbach's alpha reliability coefficient

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	n. of Items
.93	50

In-depth interview, the second instrument, was also used for the purpose of data collection. Interview is one of the common methods of data collection in qualitative research. To be close to the participants and to explore the difficulties faced by the adult Arab FSL learners during their language learning process, a number of interview sessions were conducted to collect precise data. Describing the advantages of interview, as an important data collection method, Creswell (2008) opined that interviews "provide useful information when you cannot directly observe participants, and they permit participants to describe detailed personal information". Bogdan and Biklen (1998:94) also supported the prominence of using interview and argued that "Interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world".

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

At Helsinki School for Adult Learners (Helsingin aikuisopisto) and with the help of some school instructors SILL questionnaire forms were delivered to the Arab participants who were asked to finish the questionnaire at home and return it the following day. This was to give more time to some learners who are low-literate and did not finish even their primary education at their home countries. Three low-literate learners asked the researcher to read the questionnaire for them as they are not fluent in reading in their native language. The researcher explained to the participants in Arabic the purpose of the study and how accurate answers are important for the results of the study.

Eight low-literate participants were interviewed to explore the difficulties and challenges encountered by these learners during their Finnish language learning process. Participants were interviewed separately and interviews were audio recorded because video recording was rejected by most of the participants as they are asylum seekers and it was rather sensitive for them.

3.4 Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 programme was used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics that included (means, ranges and standard deviations) was used to identify the frequent used LLSs. The average of these strategies was also cumulated. Oxford's (1990) scales will be followed to interpret the SILL mean scores, (Refer to Table 4).

4. Findings

Table 6 demonstrates the number of the participants, average use level, standard deviation, and the mean score of each strategy. With regard to first research question, the analyzed data showed that the general average use of the LLSs by the adult Arab FSL learners, was at medium level (m=3.25). and as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. LLSs used by the participants

Strategy Category	n.	Mean	Level	Std. Deviation
Metacognitive	30	3.75	High	1.18
Social	30	3.70	High	1.26
Compensation	30	3.29	Medium	1.19
Affective	30	3.20	Medium	1.22
Cognitive	30	2.90	Medium	1.27
Memory	30	2.67	Medium	1.24
Average		3.25	Medium	1.22

Apparently, metacognitive strategies were reported to be the most frequently used (m= 3.75). The next frequently used ones are social strategies (m=3.70) followed by compensation (m=3.29) and affective strategies (m=3.20). The less frequently used ones are cognitive (m=2.90) and memory (m=2.67) LLSs. The moderate use of LLSs was also showed by the findings of other studies in the reviewed literature (Alnujaidi, 2017; Ismail & AlKhatib, 2013; Alhaisoni 2012; Khalil, 2005; Djigunovic, 1999).

The most frequently used LLSs, as reported by the adult Arab FSL learners, were metacognitve. Similar findings were obtained by Alnujaidi (2017), Ismail & AlKhatib (2013), Stenberg (2005), and Khalil (2005). The second frequently used strategies were social strategies (m=3.70) and this is in line with some previous research findings (Ismail & AlKhatib, 2013; Khalil, 2015). Compensation strategies were the third frequently used ones (m=3.29) and this result is consistent with Ismail and AlKhatib's (2013) and Stenberg's (2005) results. Affective strategies were reported to be used at medium level (m= 3.20) and ranked four. This finding is compatible to Ismail & AlKhatib's (2013) but incompatible with findings of other studies (Alhaisoni, 2012; Judge, 2010; Stenberg, 2005). The fifth frequently used strategies were cognitive (m= 2.90). The use of these strategies is essential for the L2 learners and these findings are consistent with the research findings of Ismail & AlKhatib's (2013). Memory strategies were the last and least used strategies (m=2.67). These Findings are compatible with other studies on Arab learners, (Ismail & AlKhatib, 2013; Alhaisoni, 2012). (Refer to Appendix 1 for more detailed findings).

To find answers for research question two, eight participants were interviewed and Table 6 below shows some details about each of the eight interviewees.

Table 7. Demographic details of interviewees

Participants	Sex	Nationality/mother tongue	Age	Course	Education	Time spent in Finland
A	Male	Iraqi-Arabic	32	2nd	Primary school	2 years
B	Female	Iraqi-Arabic	48	6th	Primary school	17 years
C	Male	Syrian-Arabic	22	1st	Primary school	14 months
D	Female	Iraqi-Arabic	48	3rd	Primary school	3 years
E	Male	Iraqi-Arabic	49	1st	Primary school	18 months
F	Male	Iraqi-Arabic	27	1st	Primary school	1 year
G	Male	Iraqi-Arabic	27	1st	Primary school	20 months
H	Female	Sudanese-Arabic	34	2nd	High school	9 years

As explained in Table 6 above that the level of literacy of most of the participants is very low, primary education only, except participant H who reported high school education. The interview participants included 6 males and 2 females. The participants' ages range between 22-49 years old. The mother tongue of the participants is Arabic and Six participants reported to be from Iraq, one from Syrian and one from Sudan. Five participants reported that they are taking their 1st course in Finnish when two participants are in their 2nd course, however, one participant only reported that she is taking her 6th course in Finish. Female participants reported the longest

period of stay in Finland; participant B 17 years, H 9 years, and D 3 years. Male participants' periods of stay in Finland range between (1-2) years only.

Number of themes emerged from the interviews (see Table 7 below) like anxiety, age, communication, literacy level, integration difficulties, motivation, and difficulties in grammar, reading and writing.

Table 8. Themes emerged from the interviews

Emerged themes	Participants
High level of anxiety	D,E,I
Age variable	E
Motivated	B,D,E,F,G,H
Less motivated	A,C
Lack of communication	A,B,C,D,E,F,G, I
Integration difficulties	A, B,C,D,E,F,G
Effect of low literacy level	A,B,C,D,E,G
Difficulty in grammar, reading and writing	A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H

The results for research question two showed that there are number of challenges and impediments faced by adult Arab FSL learners. Three participants D, E, and I reported high level of anxiety while one participant reported the effect of age variable on his language learning process. For example, participant D reported a high level of anxiety which negatively affected her language learning and said that *"When I want to read a word in the class all the students start to laugh and I feel very shy and cannot continue"*. When asked about her feeling while learning Finnish, participant E reported another cause of anxiety and said *"my problem is that I am thinking about my family in Iraq, it is not here. I do not know what is going to happen with the immigration laws, they might change"*.

Most of the participants reported good motivation in learning Finnish except participants A and C. Explaining his low motivation in learning Finnish participant A said *"I am not very well motivated because the language is very difficult for me to learn. In addition, the Finns do not prefer to interact with foreigners"*. However, Participant C mentioned different reason for that and reported *"Before I come here I was very enthusiastic and motivated but when I started the course I felt that I am just normal, less motivated"*.

The lack of communication with Finns, as an important variable in learning second language, was also reported by all participants except Participant H. This finding was confirmed by Mwai and Ghaffar's (2014) who argued that adult FSL learners are involved in social isolation in Finland. The participants mentioned two different reasons for that, the Finn stereotype and lack of Finnish language skills. For that participant A said *"the Finns do not prefer to interact with foreigners"*. When asked about communication with Finns, Participant B reported a paucity of communication and said *"not always at spaced intervals I can speak to my neigbours… they do not like to mingle or speak with foreigners"*. Participant F also voiced this complaint and said *"I did not receive positive response from Finnish people when I ask them a question"*. However, participant I reported that the lack of communication is due to *"both, my poor Finnish and the taciturn Finnish personality"*.

The effect of literacy level has a clear impact on the language learning process and the LLSs use of the participants and was reported by six participants (A, B, C, D, E, and G) as an impediment faced while learning Finnish. This finding is consistent with other studies explored the use of LLSs (Mahnani et al. 2014; Alhaisoni, 2012; Khalil, 2005). When asked if he studies Finnish at home, participant C said *"I do not study at home, sometimes I try but I cannot because I am not used to that as I stopped my education at primary school long time ago"*. The effect of literacy level on learning Finnish was very clear on participant E who is illiterate when said *"I am not educated and I think that it is easier for those who can read and write or speak English but for me it is rather difficult as I cannot read or write"*. Participant D also confirmed that effect of literacy level when asked about her education and said *"only primary school and I did not study English"*.

Difficulties in writing, reading and grammar in Finnish were also reported by all of the interviewees. For instance participant B declared that she is facing difficulty in writing Finnish because *"some letters do not exist in English like the letters (å and ä), double letters are one more problem for me too"*. Difficulty in writing was

reported by participant H who lived nine years in Finland and working for the Finnish Language Proficiency Test now. She uttered, *"writing is my problem"*. Reading in Finnish was difficult for participant F who said *"I have difficulty in reading long words; the teacher taught us to break down long words"*. Participant D, who received limited education at her home country, also expressed difficulty in pronunciation in Finnish and said *"I have difficulty with vowels in Finnish, for example, where there are two vowels in one words"*. Grammar, on the other hand, was also reported by the participants as an impediment to learning Finnish. Explaining the difficulty in Finnish grammar participant F said that *"in English there are propositions before the place you are talking about while in Finnish the proposition is after and attached to the noun. For example, at school in Finnish is 'koulussa'.*

5. Discussion

RQ 1- How often do adult Arab FSL learners use LLSs during their learning process?

The results for this question reveal that the general average use of the LLSs by the adult Arab FSL learners, males and females, is (m=3.16) and that is medium level (2.5-3.5). According to Oxford (1990:300) the medium average of strategy use means that the LLSs are "sometimes used" by the Arab adult FSL learner and that is not enough for this category of learners who need every possible means for better language learning and to overcome the low level of literacy, anxiety, age, and motivation impediments.

The high frequent use of metacognitve strategy (m=3.75) reflects the need of the adult Arab FSL learners "to coordinate their own learning process" Oxford (1990:136). For example, the adult Arab FSL learners need to use 'seeking practice opportunity' strategy to find chances by themselves to practice their new language inside and outside of the classroom. The need for this strategy was also emphasized by the learners themselves when interviewed. Nevertheless, most of the participants reported lack of communication with Finns and integration difficulties during learning Finnish language and this might be due to the Finn stereotype and Finnish life style. However, the proper use of this strategy might help the adult Arab FSL learners for better language learning. This category of learners is involved in learning new vocabulary, rules, system of writing, and social tradition.

Social strategies are based on interaction between L2 learners and the native speakers of the target language. However, the participants found it difficult to interact and communicate with Finns for reason related to the nature of the Finnish society, yet, they reported frequent use of some social LLSs inside the classroom like 'asking for clarification', 'asking for correction', and 'cooperating with peers' strategies. The use of this strategy is essential for all FSL learners, if used properly, not only inside but outside the classroom too. The proper use of this strategy promotes the learners' communicative competence and autonomy in language learning, (Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012).

With regard to compensation strategies and according to Oxford (1990), these strategies help to overcome limitations and language deficiency in speaking and writing. The frequent use "adjusting or approximating the message" strategy by the participants, when they cannot find a suitable word to use, reflects their limited language proficiency. However, frequent use of this strategy helps the adult learners to get more language practice despite deficiency in vocabulary. The least used compensation strategy, and as reported by the learners, was 'guessing intelligently'. This strategy is usually adopted by "good language learners, when confronted with unknown expression, make educated guesses" Oxford (1990:47). Nevertheless, the low range use of strategies like ''guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in Finnish' and 'read without looking up every word in Finnish' compensation strategies might be attributed to the participants' lack of in Finnish skills, low literacy level, and low general awareness of how to learn a new language. As explained earlier, the participants are illiterate or low-literate, see Table 6. The proper use of significant compensation strategies, like the use of the dictionary to look up meanings of new words, may help adult Arab learners to overcome some of their learning difficulties and improve their learning autonomy.

According to Oxford (1990), affective strategies help learners to control their anxiety, motivation and emotions. This strategy is essential for L2 learners and adult Arab FSL learners in particular. This category of learners usually faces a number of challenges like age factor, motivation, and lack of communication that hinder their language learning process. The humble use of these important strategies might be related to the participants' awareness as they received limited education at their home countries. The participants reported low range of use of 'writing a language learning diary', (m=1.56) strategy. This might be explained that the participants are not aware of that strategy, however, the use of this strategy is of great significance that helps L2 learners to "keep track of events and feelings in the process of learning new language" (Oxford, 1990).

Cognitive LLSs help the learner to make use of the language material "through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas, practicing in

naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally (Oxford, 2003). Moreover, learners need to use all their mental abilities like receiving and sending verbal messages to practice speaking the new language, practicing unfamiliar sounds, and dealing with new grammatical rules. The high use of 'Analyzing expressions' cognitive strategy (m=3.53) is due to the fact that Finnish language is rich with very long words; i.e. 'jalkapallokenttä' (football field) and the use of this strategy helps FSL learners to break down new long words into small parts to ease the reading and understanding processes. To use this strategy, the learner must be acquainted with reasonable amount of vocabulary in Finnish language. The example mentioned earlier can be broken down into three meaningful words; 'jalka' (foot), 'pallo'(ball), 'kenttä'(field). The user of this strategy must know where to stop when breaking down a long word.

'Practicing naturalistically' cognitive strategy, that means the practical use of the target language by manipulating the possible opportunities, was not frequently used by the learners. Yet, the use of this important strategy also requires a reasonable level of competence in Finnish that enables the learners to: practice speaking Finnish by communicating with native speakers; watch some T.V programs in Finnish; and read a story or magazine in Finnish. The low use of this strategy might be explained that the participants are FSL learners are at the beginning level with simple knowledge in Finnish. In addition, the Finn stereotype and the Finnish life style are real impediment for learning Finnish. Finns do not usually tend to mingle with foreigners, (Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997). Accordingly the participants are lacking the required exposure to Finnish. This will be explained in details in discussing research question two.

Memory strategies "help learners link one L2 item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding" (Oxford, 2003). The results showed very humble use of these strategies and the least used cognitive strategy was 'applying images and sounds', (m=2.6). It means connecting the sound of the new Finnish word with the image of the word to help remembering the word. (Oxford, 1990:40) emphasizes the effect of this strategy and argues that "linking the verbal with the visual is very useful to language learning ". 'Acting physically the new Finnish words' (m=1.56) and 'using the rhymes to remember new Finnish words' (m=2.1) were the least frequently used cognitive strategies. This kind of learning is not familiar for adult Arab learners even for those who received some schooling at their home countries. The very low average use of memory strategies in general might be attributed to the fact that the participants are low-literate and illiterate learners and their learning awareness is low. The use of memory strategies is, to some extent, related to the learners' life experiences, cultural background, and previous knowledge, however, most of the participants' experiences in learning and education are limited and not related to language learning if any. In other words, some of the participants lack the required awareness of how to learn and how to manage their learning process.

RQ 2- What are the difficulties encountered by adult Arab FSL learners (males and females) during their learning process?

According to Oxford (1990), sometimes anxiety is a positive factor and good motivator for learners to learn the L2; however, for some adult learners it is an impediment that impedes the learning process. In the present study, it was found that two factors generate the feeling of anxiety for the participants; the low literacy level and state of instability. Most of the participants are asylum seekers experiencing loneliness in Finland away from their families and left schools long time ago. Hence, the level of anxiety is high and has a negative impact on this category of learners.

Communication with native speaker is essential for better and fast L2 learning, however, communication opportunities are rather limited for Arab adult FSL learners. They reported lack of communication with Finns and difficulty in integrating into the Finnish host society. The adult FSL learners sometimes cannot get the chance to practice what they have learnt outside the school and that is due to the fact that Finns are "taciturn, do not speak, communicate, or show their feelings" Jaworski (1997). In addition, Finns are "antisocial people" who commonly prefer to socialize and communicate in places like bars, for instance, (Mwai & Ghaffar, 2014). Such places are not favoured by some Arab adults and female learners in particular. The importance of exposure to the target language group and the kind of surrounding in which the learners are involved were confirmed by findings obtained by Stefansson, 2013, Nurmi & Kontiainen, 1995 and Hubenthal, 2004.

6. Conclusion

In sum, the participants reported medium level use of LLSs with (m=3.25). The most frequently used one is metacognitive LLSs and the least used one was memory LLSs. Difficulties reported to be faced by adult Arab FSL learners included literacy level, lack of communication, integration difficulties, and difficulties in grammar, reading, and writing.

The results of this study are limited to adult Arab FSL learners (males and females) living in Finland and cannot

be generalized to other category of learners. The findings will contribute toward filling the gap concerning the use of the LLSs by adult Arab learners taking Finnish courses as a second language in Finland.

The results of this study showed the need to encourage adult FSL learners by the Finnish Ministry of Labor and Economy, the patron of the Finnish language courses, to interact and integrate with the Finnish host society and manipulate any possible opportunity for the purpose of learning Finnish.

The results of this study provide the Finnish Ministry of Education, curriculum designers, educators and administrations of language institutes that administer Finnish courses for adult learners with a clear view about adult learners' perceptions related to difficulties encountered while learning Finnish as part of their integration programme. It is recommended to develop and modify text books used in Finnish courses to match the low-literacy level of some adult learners.

There is a need to allocate instruction in LLSs for the adult Arab FSL learners. Awareness of LLSs is inevitable for this category of learners and the proper use of some of the LLSs helps adult learners to overcome numerous difficulties that impede the L2 learning process like age, self-esteem, and low literacy level. In addition, improving the LLSs awareness of this category of learners will increase their learning autonomy and reduce the burden shouldered by FSL teachers as Finnish classes for adults are usually teacher-centered. Both, implicit and explicit instruction in LLSs is recommended for adult Arab FSL learners. Besides this, promoting the use of LLSs by these learners inside and outside of the classroom is necessary too.

Finally, the study paves the way for other future studies about Arabs learning Finnish as literature is lacking such kind of studies in English language to meet the needs of the growing number of Arab immigrants in Finland who must learn Finnish as their first step into integration.

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Appendix 1

Descriptive Statistics of each strategy

Descriptive Statistics(Memory)					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	30	1.00	5.00	3.1333	1.38298
Q2	30	1.00	5.00	3.2000	1.03057
Q3	30	1.00	5.00	2.6667	1.34762
Q4	30	1.00	5.00	3.0333	1.21721
Q5	30	1.00	5.00	1.5667	1.00630
Q6	30	1.00	5.00	2.4000	1.49943
Q7	30	1.00	4.00	2.1000	1.02889
Q8	30	1.00	5.00	2.8667	1.19578
Q9	30	1.00	5.00	3.0667	1.48401
Valid N (listwise)	30	Total of mean		24.0334	
		Average of mean		2.670	
Descriptive Statistics(Cognitive)					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q10	30	1.00	5.00	3.2000	1.32353
Q11	30	1.00	5.00	3.5667	1.27802
Q12	30	1.00	5.00	3.5000	1.25258
Q13	30	1.00	5.00	3.6000	1.16264
Q14	30	1.00	5.00	3.1667	1.36668
Q15	30	1.00	5.00	2.2667	1.22990
Q16	30	1.00	4.00	1.6667	1.02833
Q17	30	1.00	4.00	2.0000	1.11417
Q18	30	1.00	5.00	2.6000	1.37966
Q19	30	1.00	5.00	3.2667	1.46059
Q20	30	1.00	5.00	3.2000	1.37465
Q21	30	1.00	5.00	3.5333	1.35782
Q22	30	1.00	5.00	2.9000	1.06188
Q23	30	1.00	5.00	2.1333	1.50249
Valid N (listwise)	30	Total of mean		40.600	
		Average of mean		2.900	
Descriptive Statistics (Compensation)					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q24	30	1.00	5.00	3.1333	1.27937
Q25	30	1.00	5.00	3.5000	1.30648
Q26	30	1.00	5.00	3.4000	1.37966
Q27	30	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.10641
Q28	30	2.00	5.00	3.5333	.97320
Q29	30	1.00	5.00	3.7333	1.11211
Valid N (listwise)	30	Total of mean		19.799	
		Average of mean		3.299	

Descriptive Statistics Metacognitive

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q30	30	1.00	5.00	3.7667	1.19434
Q31	30	1.00	5.00	3.9667	1.15917
Q32	30	2.00	5.00	4.2667	1.01483
Q33	30	1.00	5.00	4.1000	1.09387
Q34	30	1.00	5.00	3.3333	1.51620
Q35	30	1.00	5.00	3.3000	1.41787
Q36	30	1.00	5.00	2.8000	1.56249
Q37	30	1.00	5.00	3.8333	1.28877
Q38	30	2.00	5.00	4.0000	1.11417
Valid N (listwise)	30	Total of mean		33.36	
		Average of mean		3.755	

Descriptive Statistics (Affective)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q39	30	1.00	5.00	3.7000	1.23596
Q40	30	2.00	5.00	4.0667	.90719
Q41	30	1.00	5.00	3.1667	1.41624
Q42	30	1.00	5.00	3.2000	1.34933
Q43	30	1.00	4.00	1.5667	1.07265
Q44	30	1.00	5.00	3.5000	1.38340
Valid N (listwise)	30	Total of mean		19.200	
		Average of mean		3.200	

Descriptive Statistics Social

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q45	30	2.00	5.00	4.1667	.98553
Q46	30	1.00	5.00	3.2667	1.33735
Q47	30	1.00	5.00	3.8333	1.17688
Q48	30	1.00	5.00	3.9333	1.20153
Q49	30	1.00	5.00	3.6000	1.13259
Q50	30	1.00	5.00	3.7333	1.25762
Valid N (listwise)	30	Total of mean		22.533	
		Average of mean		3.707	