

Language Learning Strategy Preferences and Levels of Willingness to Communicate by Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract: The present study aims at investigating the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' levels of willingness to communicate (WTC) and their preferences of language learning strategies. To achieve this goal, a quantitative study was carried out with 46 Iranian EFL learners majoring in English translation. The participants' WTC levels were determined through willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire developed by McCroskey and Richmond (2013). Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learners (SILL) was also used as another instrument to investigate the participants' preferences of language learning strategy use. The participants were moderate strategy users. Metacognitive and cognitive strategies were found to be used strongly by the participants of the study. It was also found that the participants were moderate regarding their willingness to communicate. Furthermore, a significant correlation was found to exist between the two variables of the study. The findings of this study have implications for teachers, students, material developers as well as course designers

Keywords: Willingness to communicate (WTC), language learning strategies (LLS), undergraduate EFL learners

1. Introduction

It is actually evident that communicative approach changed language teaching domain to a great extent; automatically, more scholars have put emphasis on the value and significance of communication in their language learning practices and concentrate on different constructs which affect communicative abilities of the learners. Among these, the construct of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is the focus of this study. This construct was first introduced by McCroskey and Baer in 1985; since then researchers have shown interest in this construct and started to investigate how WTC affect or is influenced by various aspects of language. Furthermore, taking affective factors in psychology of language learning into consideration, it is obvious that motivating learners to communicate provide an active language learning classroom. Hence, using L2 actively in language learning settings leads to the aforementioned construct which is called willingness to communicate. Learners with a high level of willingness to communicate tend to be very active and engaged in language learning activities and this leads to taking much more advantages of the presented materials in the class; this is proved in reviewing the related literature. (e.g., Rahbar, Suzani, and Sajadi, 2016; Bergil, 2016; Fahim and Dhamotharan, 2016; Aliakbari, Kamangar, and Khany, 2016). Hence, it is of utmost importance to pinpoint the factors that influence WTC of language learners as in this way, they use language in a more communicative way.

In order to communicate effectively, individuals also need to express what they mean in a number of ways in their everyday communication. According to Richards, Platt & Platt (1992) learners employ a wide range of language strategies to achieve this goal (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992). They argued that “learning strategies are intentional behavior and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to better help understand, learn or remember new information “(p.209).

Learning strategies are considered as special manners of information processing that could enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of information. A look at the related literature shows that different studies have focused on use of language learning strategies and the ones that are employed by language learners (e.g., Dawadi, 2017; Alhaysony, 2017; Chamot, 2004). The strategies that L2 learners employ in the process of learning the target language have been categorized by many professional experts in the area of foreign/second language learning. However, in the present research, Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies is applied. Oxford (1990) provided one of the most applicable definitions that has been cited most recurrently in the literature of L2 learning strategies, “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (P.8). This definition is a reflection of what language learners intend to do and the specific actions they can take. Correspondingly, she includes how context plays a vital role in the process of language learning

Predominantly

Many researchers have recently investigated WTC and language learning strategies (Rahbar, Suzani, and Sajadi, 2016; Aliakbari, Kamangar, and Khany, 2016; Khajavy, Ghonsooly and HosseiniFatemi, 2016; Chen, 2015; Zarei, and Gilanian, 2015; Valadi, Rezaee, and Kogani, 2015; Yousefi, and Kasaian, 2014; Ahmadi and Mahmoodi, 2012; Kunasaraphan, 2015; Mashhady, and Fallah, 2014; Ghavamnia, Kassaian, and Dabaghi, 2011), However, it seems a gap exists in the relationship between Iranian EFL learners’ levels of willingness to communicate (WTC) and their preferences of language learning strategies. Thus, the present study aims at filling the aforementioned gap. The findings of the present study are expected to shed some lights to teachers, learners, material developers, and curriculum developers. Teachers would enhance their students WTC in order to communicate more in language classes; also guiding them to improve their use of language learning strategies by familiarizing them with the appropriate use and automatically this will help learners to be more successful in language learning. Syllabus designers and policy makers can also arrange the materials in a way to improve WTC of the learners through enticing them to use proper and more language learning strategies in their process of language learning. To this end, the present study was an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Iranian EFL learners’ preferences of language learning strategies?
2. What are WTC levels of Iranian EFL learners?
3. What is the relationship between Iranian WTC levels and their preferences of language learning strategies?

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2. Review of the Related Literature

Various pieces of research have been carried out with concentration on the role of interaction and communication in improving language learning. Focus on communication came into vogue with the emergence of communicative language teaching during 1970s. Willingness to communicate (WTC) in

a second language which was raised by MacIntyre et al. (1998) initiate with the concept of learners' reluctance to speak in a second language. WTC is actually a process through which language learners decide whether or not to choose to apply second language in their speech. And the model of WTC which was introduced by MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model clustered linguistic, social psychological and communicative variables as factors contributing to WTC in a second language. Accordingly, a growing number of investigations (e.g., Alemi, Tajeddin, and Mesbah, 2013; Cao and Philip 2006) concentrate on the relationship between L2 learners' willingness to communicate and various variables that may impact language learning.

A quick look at the literature indicates that the most inclusive taxonomy of language learning strategies is proposed by Oxford (1990). Oxford divided language-learning strategies into two main categories, namely direct and indirect strategies, which are in turn subdivided into six categories. The classes in direct strategies, which include the new language directly, are memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. On the other hand, indirect strategies involve metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Actually, this effort provided a foundation for an instrument, namely the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), developed to get information about strategy use of language learners in learning a second/foreign language. Although Oxford's inventory is defined plainly, she emphasizes that the current understanding of learning strategies is still in its early stages and, in her exact words (Oxford 1990, p. 16), "it is only a proposal to be tested through practical classroom use and through research".

Through reviewing the related literature, it is evident that various lines of research have been performed on the construct of WTC and its relationship with other variables that affect language learning. (e.g., Rahbar, Suzani and Sajadi, 2016; Bergil, 2016; Fahim, and Dharmotharan, 2016; Aliakbari, Kamangar, and Khany, 2016). Also, there were different pieces of research on language learning strategies and other variables. Major findings and arguments of past studies on language learning strategies in ESL/EFL learning can be reported as follows: Language learning strategies use varies according to different educational and cultural backgrounds (Ersözülü, 2010; Li, 2010; Yang, 1999). Gender differences in employing learning strategies can be observed (Ersözülü, 2010; Yan, Chye, Lin and Ying, 2010; Zare, 2010). More proficient language learners employ language learning strategies more frequently (Griffiths, 2003; Sheorey, 1999; Tuncer, 2009). Language learners are more likely to employ metacognitive and compensation strategies than affective strategies (Chen, 2009; Hong-Nam and Leavell, 2006; Hajhashemi, Ghombavani, and Amirkhiz (2011); Yılmaz, 2010). Social strategies are beneficial in improving learners' proficiency in the target language and developing their intercultural communication (Griffiths, 2003; Sheorey, 1999). Bilingual L2 learners employ language-learning strategies more than monolinguals (Tuncer, 2009). However, there were very few studies concerning the two main variables of the current study. To mention one as one of the rare example, Aycan (2017) examined the relationship between EFL learners' language learning strategy use, willingness to communicate, and L2 achievement and he found that by providing the learners with strategy training and helping them to use more strategies, WTC levels of the learners can be increased. Furthermore, he added that WTC and language learning strategies affect each other. However, they do not lead to increased L2 achievement. In another study, Mirsane and Khabiri (2016) investigated that strategy instruction can improve WTC of learners. The researchers of the study found those learners who seemed more eager and willing to communicate, apply different and more language learning strategies in their communication. Also Jamaledin (2015) examined the relationship between socio-affective strategies and WTC and he claimed that there is a positive and strong relationship between these two variables.

The present study, however, was carried out to investigate the preferences of language learning strategies (namely both direct and indirect strategies including metacognitive, cognitive, social,

affective, memory as well as compensation strategies) of Iranian EFL learners and their levels of willingness to communicate (WTC). Although many pieces of research were conducted to investigate strategy use and its preferences by language learners on one side and WTC of language learners on the other, the aforementioned studies were performed separately. Therefore, the current study was carried out to investigate preferences of language learning strategies with regard to the WTC levels of the EFL learners in an Iranian context.

3. Method

The participants of the study, instruments, data collection procedures as well as data analysis are dealt with in this section.

3.1 Participants

The participants of the current study were 46 undergraduate university students majoring in English translation at some of the Islamic Azad University branches. They were selected based on convenience sampling method for manageability reasons as well as availability. In terms of age, they were within the age range of 18 to 31 and included both male (N=12) and female (N=34) participants.

3.2 Instruments and Design

The present study employed a quantitative research design and the instruments were two questionnaires including the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) designed by Oxford (1990) and a WTC questionnaire designed by McCroskey and Richmond (2013).

3.2.1 Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learners (1990)

The most inclusive taxonomy of language learning strategies and the most widely employed strategy scale has been proposed by Oxford (1990). Oxford developed the SILL to measure language learning strategies for ESL and EFL learners (Version 7.0). The SILL consists of 50 items in the two dichotomous constructs of direct and indirect learning strategies, which is shown in the following Table.

Table 1. Oxford (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Direct	Memory	9 items
strategies	Cognitive	14 items
29 items	Compensation	6 items
Indirect	Metacognitive	9 items
strategies	Affective	6 items
21 items	Social	6 items

In administering the SILL, respondents were asked to reflect on their use of language learning strategies in five-point Likert-scale items from "(1) never or almost never true of me" to "(5) always or almost always true of me." This questionnaire has been widely checked for its reliability and validity in multiple ways (Oxford, 1996). For example, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found Cronbach's Alpha of 0.96 for SILL. Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) established its predictive criterion-validity using its correlative relationship with language performance measures like course grades and proficiency ratings.

3.2.2 McCroskey and Richmond WTC Questionnaire (2013)

The Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC) which was used in the present study was designed by McCroskey and Richmond, (2013). This questionnaire is a 20-item, probability estimate scale. It is actually designed as a direct measure of the respondent's predisposition with regard to the way they avoid or approach the initiation of communication. The face validity of the questionnaire is strong, and

the results of extensive research confirmed the predictive validity of the instrument. Also, the Alpha reliability estimates for this instrument have ranged from .85 to above .90. It should be mentioned that among the 20 items of the instrument, only twelve items generate a total score, four context-type scores, and three receiver-type scores and the remaining eight items are used to distract attention from the scored items.

3.3 Procedures for Data Collection and Data Analysis

The present study coincides with the outbreak of corona virus (COVID-19) across the country. Thus, to protect the safety of the participants and to consider the international medical and health protocols, the researcher had to consider the individual and social distancing measurements and avoid gathering all participants in groups. Consequently, the two questionnaires were distributed online to the participants. In order to collect the related data, the aforementioned tests were administered by the researchers of the study as well as two other colleagues on behalf of the researchers in online classes. Then the questionnaires were collected and the data was analyzed.

In order to analyze the related data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used. The data was analyzed quantitatively, and inferential statistical procedures were applied. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run to check the normality and to determine whether to use parametric or nonparametric tests in the study; since the data was not normal, Spearman correlation was run.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Participants' Preferences of Language Learning Strategies

In order to measure language learning strategies for EFL learners, Oxford (1990) strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were employed. To analyze the data in regard with Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), the mean score was calculated. According to the criteria of mean (Oxford, 1990), a mean score equal or above 3.50 was interpreted as strong strategy users, ($3.50 \leq M \leq 5.00 = \text{strong}$); a mean score equal or above 2.50 but below 3.50 was interpreted as moderate strategy users ($2.50 \leq M < 3.50 = \text{moderate}$), and a mean score below 2.50 was considered as weak strategy users ($M < 2.50 = \text{weak}$). Percentages, means, and standard deviations were also used to analyze these statements. After analyzing the data, the preferences of language learning strategies were determined.

Table 2. Preferences of language learning strategies

Strategies	N		Mean	Media	Mode	St.d	Min.	Max
	Vali	Missin		n		Deviation		.
Compensation	46	0	3.072	3.000	2.67	.6718	1.8	4.33
			5	0		8	3	
Social	46	0	3.210	3.166	2.33	.8273	1.8	4.83
			1	7	^a	4	3	
Memory	46	0	3.350	3.500	3.67	.7344	1.2	4.44
			2	0		1	2	
Affective	46	0	3.452	3.833	4.17	.9051	1.6	4.83
			9	3		7	7	
Cognitive	46	0	3.523	3.571	3.57	.5767	2.2	4.43
			3	4		7	1	
Metacognitiv	46	0	3.872	3.944	3.67	.6719	1.7	4.78
			e	0	4	8	8	

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

According to Table 2, the participants' preferences in different parts of the SILL were as follows: Metacognitive strategy with the mean score of 3.87 ranked as the most frequent strategy applied by the participants of the study; cognitive strategy with the mean score 3.52 ranked as the second frequent applicable strategy by the participants; According to the criteria of Oxford (1990), the participants of the study were strong in the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies.

Moreover, affective strategy with the mean score 3.45 ranked as the third frequent applicable strategy. Memory strategy with the mean score of 3.35 ranked as the fourth frequent strategy, while social strategy with the mean score of 3.21 and compensation strategy with the mean score of 3.07 ranked as the least frequent strategies respectively. According to the criteria set by Oxford (1990), a mean score equal or above 2.50 but below 3.50 is interpreted as having a moderate degree of impact ($2.50 \leq M < 3.50 = \text{moderate}$). Hence, the participants of the study used affective, memory, social and compensation strategies moderately.

4.2 The Participants' Levels of willingness to communicate

The data in regard with WTC were analyzed based on the guidelines presented by the designer of WTC questionnaire (McCroskey and Richmord, 2013). The WTC questionnaire included 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. The participants were required to indicate the percentage of times they would choose to communicate in each type of situation. The participants needed to indicate in the space at the left of the item what percent of the time they would choose to communicate. (0 = Never to 100 =Always). According to the measure provided by McCroskey and Richmord(2013), the mean percentages of total WTC > 82 indicate high overall WTC, and < 52 Low WTC. For the Group Discussion, scores for items 8, 15, & 19 were added ,then divided by 3; for Meetings: scores for items 6, 11, 17 were added, then divide by 3;for Interpersonal, scores for items 4, 9, 12 were added ; then divide by 3;for Public Speaking, scores for items 3, 14, 20 were added, then divide by 3; for Stranger: scores for items 3, 8, 12, 17 were added; then divide by 4; for Acquaintance, scores for items 4, 11, 15, 20 were added then divide by 4 and for Friend scores for items 6, 9, 14, 19 were added then divide by 4.

In Table 3, the obtained mean score of the participants with regard to their willingness to communicate (WTC) is presented.

Table 3. The participants' performances on WTC

Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
67.47	23.74	11.67	95.83

As it is shown, the overall mean percentage was 67.5, meaning that the participants were moderate regarding their willingness to communicate.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for different levels of WTC

		Frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Low	11	23.9	23.9	23.9
	Moderate	17	37.0	37.0	60.9
	High	18	39.1	39.1	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 4, among the 46 participants of the study, 11 were low overall (23.9%), 17 were moderate overall (37%) and 18 (39.1%) were high overall with regard to their levels of willingness to communicate.

The males and females' performances on WTC levels were analyzed, using descriptive statistics, and the results are given below.

Table 5. Males and females’ performances on various levels of WTC

Sex			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	Valid	Low	2	16.7	16.7	16.7
		Moderate	4	33.3	33.3	50.0
		High	6	50.0	50.0	100.0
		Total	12	100.0	100.0	
Female	Valid	Low	9	26.5	26.5	26.5
		Moderate	13	38.2	38.2	64.7
		High	12	35.3	35.3	100.0
		Total	34	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 5, among the 12 male participants of the study, 2 (16.7%) were low overall, 4 (33.3%) were moderate overall and 6 (50%) were high overall, while among the female participants of the study, 9 (26.5%) were low overall, 13 (38.2%) were moderate and 12 (35.3%) were high overall. The overall performances of the males and females’ performances are depicted in Figure 2.

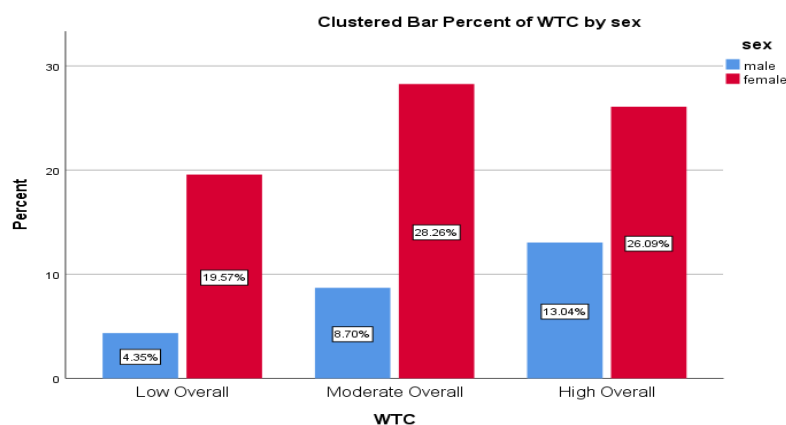


Figure 1. Descriptive statistics for gender and levels of WTC

4.3 The relationship between preferences of language learning strategies and willingness to communicate

To determine the correlation between SILL and WTC, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was firstly run to indicate the normality of the data. The results are given below:

Table 6. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		SIL	WTC
N		46	46
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3.413	67.4710
	Std. Deviation	.5217	23.74007
	Absolute	.103	.139
Most Differences	Positive	.051	.116
	Negative	-.103	-.139
	Test Statistic	.103	.139
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 ^{c,d}	.026 ^c

As shown in Table 6, one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run to check the normality and to determine whether to use parametric or nonparametric tests in the study; since the data was not normal, Spearman correlation was administered.

Table 7. Spearman correlation between SILL and WTC

			SIL	WTC
Spearman's rho	SI L	Correlation	1.000	.379**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.009
	W TC	Correlation	.379**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.
		N	46	46

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 7, the relationship between the participants' willingness to communicate (as measured by McCroskey, and Richmond, 2013) and the language learning strategies (as measured by Strategy Inventory for language learning, SILL) was investigated using Spearman Correlation coefficient. The analysis of the results indicated that $p=.009 < .05$, so there is a significant relationship between willingness to communicate and the learning strategies of the participants of the study ($r = .379$, $p = .009$).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for preferences of SILL and WTC

WTC	SILL	valid	Mean	Media n	Mo de	Std. Deviation	M in	Ma x.
Low	Memory	11	2.82 83	2.5556	2.1 1 ^a	.77198	1. 78	4.2 2
	Cognitive	11	3.22 73	3.2143	2.9 3 ^a	.60171	2. 21	4.2 9
	Compensation	11	3.03 03	2.8333	2.6 7	.71031	1. 83	4.1 7
	Metacognitive	11	3.55 56	3.6667	3.6 7	.72521	2. 11	4.6 7
	Affective	11	2.71 21	2.6667	1.6 7 ^a	.66705	1. 67	3.8 3
	Social	11	3.19 70	2.8333	2.6 7 ^a	.79519	2. 17	4.5 0
	Moderate	Memory	17	3.40 52	3.4444	3.4 4 ^a	.46637	2. 33
Cognitive		17	3.55 46	3.5714	2.9 3 ^a	.53840	2. 71	4.3 6
Compensation		17	2.95 10	2.6667	2.3 3 ^a	.63946	2. 17	4.0 0
Metacognitive		17	3.90 85	3.8889	3.6 7 ^a	.49727	2. 89	4.6 7
Affective		17	3.55 88	4.0000	4.0 0	1.00854	1. 67	4.8 3
Social		17	3.04 90	2.6667	4.5 0	.98560	1. 83	4.5 0
High		Memory	18	3.61 73	3.7778	4.2 2	.78588	1. 22
	Cognitive	18	3.67 46	3.8571	3.8 6	.55934	2. 21	4.4 3
	Compensation	18	3.21 30	3.2500	2.6 7 ^a	.69028	1. 83	4.3 3

Metacognitive	18	4.0309	4.2222	4.22 ^a	.74857	1.78	4.78
Affective	18	3.8056	4.1667	4.17	.67216	2.50	4.50
Social	18	3.3704	3.3333	3.17 ^a	.68732	2.33	4.83

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

As shown in Table 8, it was found that the participants who were low in their levels of WTC, use language learning strategies moderately in general and they prefer to use language learning strategies in the following order; metacognitive, cognitive, social, compensation, memory and affective strategies. Additionally, those participants who were moderate in their level of WTC, preferred to use language learning strategies as metacognitive strategies in the first place, and affective and cognitive strategies in the next places and memory, social and compensation strategies successively and finally those who were in the high level regarding their WTC, use language learning strategies in the following order: metacognitive, affective, cognitive, memory, social and compensation strategy.

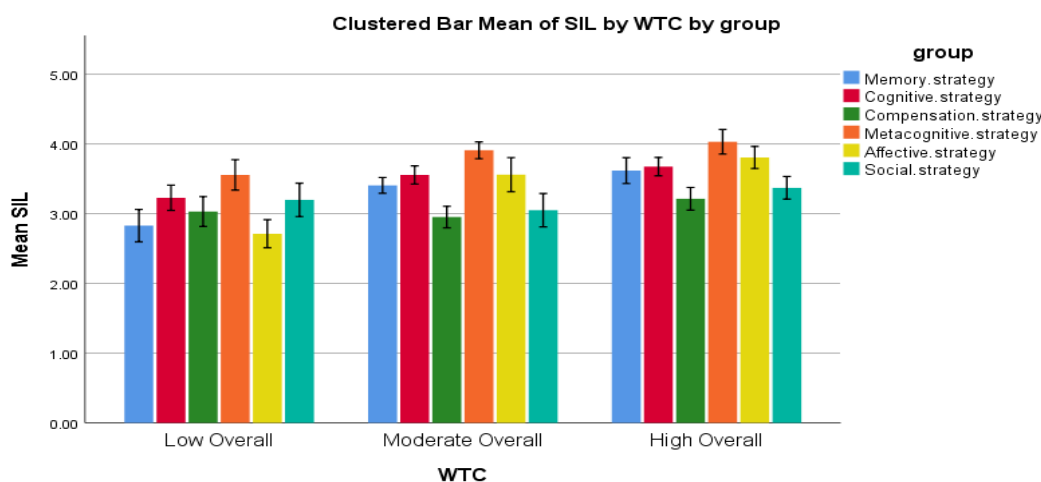


Figure 2. Participants' preferences in SILL based on levels of WTC

As depicted in Figure 3, the preferences of language learning strategies in regard with WTC are presented. Language learning strategies is shown graphically in details in order to have a better general view.

4.4 Discussions

In the previous sections, the analyses of the data which were collected through Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), as well as willingness to communicate (WTC) questionnaire developed by McCroskey and Richmond were presented and the results were reported in each section. In what follows, the research questions of the study will be answered. Then, the findings are compared with the findings of the past studies in each section.

4.4.1 Discussion on the first Research question

As it was mentioned the first research question of the study was as follows: 1. what are Iranian EFL learners' preferences of language learning strategies?

Based on the analysis of the data presented in the previous section in detail, the following answer is provided for the first research question.

Iranian EFL learners prefer to use language learning strategies in the following order: metacognitive, cognitive, affective, memory, social, compensation strategy.

Furthermore, it was investigated that Iranian EFL learners were generally moderate language learning strategy users. However, a closer look at the data indicated that the participants of the study were strong in the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies and they used affective, memory, social and compensation strategies moderately.

The results of this part of the study are in line with that of Nikoopour, Farsani, and Neishabouri (2011) and Zare (2010) who studied the strategies used by EFL learners and indicated that the learners were moderate language learning strategy users. Moreover, according to the present study, EFL learners used metacognitive and cognitive strategies more than other strategies; however, it is in contrast with Yılmaz's findings (2010) who found that EFL learners employed compensation strategies, as the most frequent language learning strategy. According to Li (2002) compensation strategies help lower the students' anxiety in language learning. However, compensation strategy was the least frequent employed learning strategy by the participants of the present study. The findings of the study are also in line with Tuncer's (2009) findings reporting that bilinguals were more likely to employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

4.4.2 Discussion on the Second Research Question

The second research question of the study was "What are WTC levels of Iranian EFL learners?"

According to the tabulated data in the analysis section, it was found that the participants were moderate regarding their willingness to communicate. However, a more detailed analysis of the data showed that 23.9% of the participants were low, 37% were moderate and 39.1% were high overall with regard to their levels of willingness to communicate.

4.4.3 Discussion on the third Research Question

The third research question of the study was as follows: what is the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' preferences of language learning strategies and their WTC levels? Based on the analysis of the data, it was found that there is a significant relationship between willingness to communicate and the learning strategies of the participants of the study. Additionally, it was found that the participants who were low in their levels of WTC, use language learning strategies moderately in general and they prefer to use language learning strategies in the following order; metacognitive, cognitive, social, compensation, memory and affective strategies. Additionally, those participants who were moderate in their levels of WTC, preferred to use metacognitive strategies in the first place, then affective, cognitive, memory, social and compensation strategies successively. Those who were in the high level regarding their WTC, used language learning strategies in the following order: metacognitive, affective, cognitive, memory, social and compensation strategy. It can be interpreted that the participants at the 3 levels of WTC used metacognitive strategy as the most preferred language learning strategy. Furthermore, it was revealed that the participants in moderate and high levels of WTC used the SILL in the same order although the obtained mean scores were different; higher mean scores for those with high level of WTC.

5. Conclusions

The present study investigated Iranian EFL Learners levels of willingness to communicate (WTC) and their preferences of language learning strategies. The results of the study indicated that Iranian EFL learners prefer to use language learning strategies in the following order: metacognitive, cognitive, affective, memory, social, and compensation strategy. A closer look at the data indicated that the participants of the study were strong in the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies and they used affective, memory, social and compensation strategies moderately. It was also found that the participants were moderate regarding their willingness to communicate. Through a more detailed analysis of the data, they were divided as high, moderate, and low levels of WTC respectively. (37%) of the participants were found to be willing to communicate moderately, (39.1%) were highly willing, and (23.9%) were low. Teachers and researchers should pay careful attention to see if the reasons for

low level of WTC are due to language problems such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the same, or to other factors (e.g., emotional factors). Furthermore, it was found that there was a significant relationship between willingness to communicate and language learning strategies of the Iranian EFL learners. The participants at the three levels of WTC were, however, moderate strategy users for some of the strategies and strong for some others.

The findings of the current study may be useful to those in the realm of education. It may help language instructors to pay more attention to the strategies language learners employ in the process of language learning. It also can help them to know the extent to which learners are willing to communicate. The results can also help language learners to become aware of their preferences in using SILL and WTC. Another study covering a higher range of population is suggested. Further studies are also suggested addressing the relationship between SILL and different language skills and sub-skills.

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