



# Learning Strategies in Literature-Based Instruction: A Qualitative Study of Jordanian University Students

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**Abstract:** This study examines the learning strategies used by eight Jordanian university students during literature-based instruction. It extends the rather extensive research on the learning strategies by foreign language learners from diverse language backgrounds. Even though the research design is essentially qualitative, in which observation is the basic instrument used, triangulation was achieved through the use of a set of other instruments including a pre-/post test, interview, journal writing and role-play evaluation of oral proficiency. The findings revealed that the participants use three major types of strategies: cognitive, social and effective. Cognitive strategies were subdivided into critical thinking and creative writing and social and affective strategies into cooperative learning and self-confidence, respectively.

**Keywords:** learner-centeredness, learning strategies, literature-based instruction

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Learning strategies are used by learners to improve their comprehension, learning, and retention of information (Center for Research on Learning, 2011; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). According to Faersch and Casper (1983:67) a learning strategy is "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language". Similarly, Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) define learning strategies as "sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information" while Richards and Platt (1992:209) see learning strategies as "intentional behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information".

Extensive research has been done to identify and classify language learning strategies used by language learners from diverse language backgrounds (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, Carbonaro & Robbins, 1993; Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura & Wilson, 1981; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975; Rubin, Quinn & Enos, 1988; Thompson & Rubin, 1993). Rubin, who essentially pioneered research on strategies, distinguishes three types of strategies: learning strategies, communication strategies, and social strategies.

The present study extends the work on learning strategies to college EFL learners in literature-based instruction. College-level language learners are expected not only to exhibit higher cognitive abilities but also to engage in other more demanding tasks, such as reading novels, analyzing poems or stories, listening to lectures, or writing research papers, to which learning strategies lend themselves rather readily (Chamot, Meloni, Gonglewski, Bartoszesky & Keatley, 2007).

Research (see, for example, Paris & Winograd, 1990) found that language learning involves higher levels of thinking and that some ways of thinking facilitate effective language learning. Studies on EFL learners at school and college levels revealed differences between more and less effective learners in the number, range, manner, and task appropriateness of the strategies they use (Bruen, 2001; Fan, 2003; Green & Oxford, 1995; Halbach, 2000).

Embracing literature in language instruction is nothing new but rather dates back to the era when Grammar-Translation was the dominant method in foreign language classrooms all over the world. Literary pieces, then, played an evident role as supplementary sources of grammar practice, vocabulary learning, translation and mechanistic writing exercises (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Grammar-Translation encouraged reading and writing while listening and speaking received



less attention, as reading very demanding canonical texts started early and little attention was given to pronunciation, let alone giving elaborate grammatical explanations and long, decontextualized lists of isolated words (Brown, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

In fact, this could readily be the source of the notoriety of literature and literary texts as a stilted art which is essentially beyond the reach of its learners. For example, Floris (2004:1) maintains that, in the Indonesian EFL classroom, literature is categorically rejected as 'difficult', 'hard to understand' and 'irrelevant' to students' lives, which she attributes to the lack of knowledge on the utility of literary texts, the criteria of text selection, and the way texts should be used in the language classroom.

As the Grammar-Translation method was replaced by methods that emphasized structure and vocabulary, literary texts were no longer celebrated. Thus, neither the Direct Method nor the Audiolingual Method activated literature in teaching second/foreign languages. In the 1970s, methods, such as Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, the Silent Way, Total Physical Response, and the Natural Approach, did not invite literature into the process of teaching/learning second/foreign languages as neither did the Notional-Functional Syllabus (Erkaya, 2005).

Nevertheless, a reawakening of the appreciation of literature in language teaching became evident in the 1980s (Collie & Slater, 1987; Hussain, 2007; Maley, 2001). New arguments for the utility of literature in the language classroom were raised in a plethora of research (see, among several others, Brumfit, 1985; Carter & Long, 1991; De Riverol, 1991; Long, 1986). For example, De Riverol (1991) points out that the rehabilitation of the relationship between literature and foreign language teaching, or at least viewing literature as a legitimate source of authentic materials, opened new venues for the language learner.

Later, the prominence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) promoted literature as a catalyst for discussion and genuine communication to replace traditional practices in which students merely parroted pre-planned phrases. Literature started to be used for "internalizing specific grammatical construction and reinforcing points previously learned" (De Riverol, 1991:65) without jeopardizing the learner's enjoyment of authentic texts or marring his/her experience by overdoing linguistic analysis. Not only does an appropriate choice of text provide the learner with examples of many features of written language, such as sentence structure, various forms, and various ways of connecting ideas, but also requires that this learner use his/her imagination in discussing literature, which, in turn, contributes to making learning a memorable and enjoyable experience.

To this effect, Pattison (1972) argues that maintaining interest in studying literature is important, as literature has a role to play not only in the learner's personal development but also in their social adjustment. He further suggests that the literature lesson should always be broader than a mere language lesson for students to think for themselves, ponder the author's message, and draw on other personal experiences. Along the same lines, Lazar (1993) emphasizes the importance of reading literature as a vital way of supplementing the inevitably restricted classroom input. She calls for new instructional techniques which go beyond yes/no questions to, among several others, asking students to free-associate/brainstorm around a given theme/title or to close their eyes and imagine certain situations, sights, or sounds.

Salih (1986) and Obeidat (1997) attest to the role of literature as a major language component. Obeidat (1997) raises questions pertaining to issues such as whether or not Arab students are actually interested in learning language or literature and whether poetry or prose, modern or non-modern literature is more appropriate. He reports cautious attitudes toward a potential moral clash of Arab Muslim students when reading non-native literature. Additionally, Obeidat (1997) opposes the views of linguists, such as Zughoul (1986), who question the validity of the inclusion of literature in the curricula of the Third World countries and hold literature responsible for the failure of English departments to respond to the needs of their communities. Instead, consistent with Salih's (1986) conclusion, Obeidat (1997:30) reports that literature helped his students "acquire native-like competence in English, express ideas in good English, learn features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely and concisely, become proficient in English as well as become creative, critical and analytical learners".

Research (see, for example, Nada, 1993; Povey, 1972; Ronnquist & Sell, 1994) reveals that the study of literature not only reinforces the study of language but also helps learners think and understand the target culture. For example, activities, such as characterization, essentially help learners elevate their thinking and define personal points of view based on their reading and understanding of the work of art. Furthermore, Ronnquist and Sell (1994) claim that reading literature not only gives practice in pragmatic contextualization of linguistic expressions but also strengthens integrative motivation.

However, a substantial body of literature (see, for example, Brandão, 1999; Brumfit & Carter, 1986) calls for redefining the way literature is taught in the language classroom. Brandão (1999) claims that literature would remain an arid business unless measures are taken to



revolutionize its use in language instruction. She holds more traditional teacher-centered approaches responsible for limiting the knowledge about literature to teachers. She calls for the replacement of 'knowledge about' literature with 'knowledge of literature' among students who are, more often than not, quite embarrassed and hesitant participants, shifting towards a more learner-centered approach which potentially transforms the classroom into a more enjoyable learning arena.

A good body of research (see, for example, Hess, 2003; Nasr, 2001) highlights the role of poetry in foreign language teaching and learning. Claims that reading poetry is a reproduction of a concentrated piece of parallel life prevail. Nasr (2001), for example, uses masterpieces of two Lebanese-American poets (viz. Ameen Rihani and Kahlil Gibran) for teaching language and reports highly favorable results and glowing recommendations about the use of literature in language teaching. Similarly, Erkaya (2005), who examines the use of short stories in EFL/SL instruction, reports substantial gains in the four skills, motivation for learning, and cultural awareness. Along the same lines, Bang (2003) reports on drama and drama-oriented activities as catalysts for highlighting cultural appropriateness of verbal and non-verbal responses.

## 2. PROBLEM, PURPOSE, QUESTION, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Even though constant innovations take place in the Jordanian educational system, students are often reported as passive recipients of ready-made instruction. They mainly study for tests but, oftentimes, fail miserably in any authentic communicative tasks (Mukattash, 1983; Rabab'ah, 2005). CLT is presumably adopted and learner-centeredness is capitalized, yet reality is often a different story. The researchers, as language practitioners, have noticed over the years that their students need to be constantly urged to think more critically and independently in a nonthreatening learning environment in which the teacher is no longer the ultimate authority or sole provider of knowledge. These researchers have come to believe that literature-based instruction provides a haven for implementing CLT and better addressing the learners' linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences (Bataneh, Al Rabadi & Smadi, 2013).

The study aims to examine the types of learning strategies used by Jordanian EFL students in a literature-based instruction. The strategies are identified by means of verbal reports, a role-play, and classroom observation and interviews. More specifically, the study seeks answers to the question, *what are the learning strategies used by Jordanian college EFL students to achieve*

*communicative performance in literature-based instruction.*

As the teacher is no longer the all-knowing authority in the language classroom (Bataneh & Zghoul, 2006; Evans, 1997; Toland, 2006), new venues are sought to accommodate the paradigm shift from a tightly teacher-controlled learning environment to a learner-centered one. Literature avails itself as a valid alternative which not only reinforces the learner's learning strategies but also helps him/her take responsibility of his/her own learning in-and outside the classroom.

Therefore, this research may help open new horizons for instructors, especially for skeptics about the utility of literature-based instruction. Probing a learner-centered approach goes hand in hand with learner's autonomy and personal growth. Fostering critical thinking, creative imagination, personal involvement and problem solving are only a few of the potential advantages of literature-based instruction (De Riverol, 1991). The authors, however, do not offer any ready-made recipes even though they believe that teachers could gain invaluable insights into their own role and that of their language learners.

In addition, this research can be beneficial to curriculum designers who are urged to opt for authentic materials which potentially better foster students' learning strategies and communicative abilities. In fact, even though the Jordanian EFL context reportedly embraces CLT, reality is often a different story. The gap between theory and practice is traced in the students' evident weakness in expressing themselves communicatively (Bataneh & Zghoul, 2006; Mukattash, 1983; Rabab'ah, 2005). Bataneh and Zghoul (2006), for example, found that Jordanian graduate students exhibit substantial weaknesses in critical thinking which, they claim, is gravely needed to foster students' academic and professional abilities. Hence, literature-based instruction may lend itself as a viable alternative for allowing students opportunities to work with functional, authentic and contextualized language.

This study is also significant in scope as it raises awareness of how strategies can be a major contributor to successful language learning. It affords, through literature-based instruction, language learners opportunities to learn more effectively as they are allowed to maximize their ability to understand, solve problems, and complete tasks. Furthermore, this study may help teachers gain valuable insights into how learners approach a task or attempt to solve a problem, which, in turn, helps teachers not only better plan for instruction but also identify and train students to use appropriate strategies to manage their own learning.



### 3. METHOD, SAMPLING, AND INSTRUMENTATION<sup>1</sup>

The design applied in this research is basically an emergent interactive qualitative design. It is based on multiple narrative inquiry procedures, where the participating students' points of view and reactions are emphasized.

The participants are eight female students from the English Department at Ajloun University College (AUC). They were selected purposefully based on their willingness to participate in the experiment. They share some common characteristics, most important amongst which are that they have each studied a minimum of two years at AUC, that they all share an interest in improving their communicative abilities, and that they all suffer from evident weaknesses in certain aspects of communicative performance.

Pseudonyms are used to maintain privacy and assure confidentiality. The participants are studied closely and in depth as case studies in order to gain as much data as possible about the issues under investigation. The research treats each case as an individual narrative, using the inductive approach to identify the learning strategies used and the potential effectiveness of literature-based instruction in fostering such strategies.

The data collection instruments incorporate a classroom observation, which documents students' suggestions, complaints, and remarks on each class session as well as observable behavioral conduct such as enthusiasm, appreciation or rejection; role-play for the purpose of evaluating oral proficiency according to an assessment rubric adapted from North Dakota Standards and Benchmarks/ Foreign Language (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2001); journal dialog writing that comprises an open channel of communication between the participants and the instructor which culminated in a personal account for each student's questions and feedback; and interviews with participants.

The instruments were validated by a jury of four experts whose respective feedback was used to make amendments. Multiple-source triangulation (data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theory triangulation) established the reliability of the findings. A two-week pilot study on an outside sample of 19 students was used to establish the reliability of the literary tasks, yielding a coefficient of 0.86, which is considered statistically appropriate for the purposes of this research. Similarly, the role-play was rated by one of the researchers and another expert. The inter-rater reliability was gauged at 0.96, which is also statistically appropriate for the purposes of this study.

Most of the literary content used in the treatment is either taught or approximates content taught in an introductory *Language through Literature* course at most Jordanian

universities. The selection of this course was based on its nature which focuses on students' involvement in language learning through literature. Three short stories (viz., *The Japanese Quince* (Glassworthy, 1910), *The Lottery* (Jackson, 1948), and *The Hitch-Hiker* (Dahl, 2003); three poems (viz., *Ozymandias* by Shelly (in Abrams, 1997), *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* and *The Tables Turned* by Wordsworth (in Abrams, 1997); and a story book (viz., *Whispers* (Plain, 1993) were taught.

Rapport was established with the participants by visiting their classroom and chatting with them at recess prior to the treatment. Subsequently, a multiple-choice pre-test was administered to measure the students' general communicative performance as well as increase their awareness of the four components of communicative competence.

Ninety-minute training sessions were held twice a week on Monday and Tuesday mornings. Each session was tape-recorded throughout. The lesson usually started with a short story or a poem that the instructor/researcher had previously distributed to the participants. A number of tasks, each relating to a certain communicative competence, were given. Towards the end of each session, students were asked to write down their thoughts and feedback in a journal.

To assess the participants' oral proficiency and implementation of learning strategies, a role-play based on one of the stories, *The Hitch-Hiker*, was performed. The assessment was based on the rubric adapted from previous literature. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out at the end of the program. Students were asked seventeen questions and were encouraged to elaborate should they feel the need to do so.

In addition, classroom observations by the first researcher were carried out to identify the strategies used by the students in literature-based instruction by using a checklist and video recording to support the findings of the observation. As learning strategies are essentially unobservable, albeit some are manifested in observable behavior, they are basically identified through self-report. However, even though self-report may be inaccurate if the learner does not report truthfully, it is still the only way to identify mental strategies, as maintained by Grenfell and Harris (1999: 54):

it is not easy to get inside the 'black box' of the human brain and find out what is going on there. We work with what we can get, which, despite the limitations, provides food for thought.

The literature shows a variety of elicitation techniques for self report in language learning tasks, most notable amongst which are questionnaires, retrospective interviews, stimulated recall interviews, written journals, and think-aloud protocols. However, in most learning contexts, the only way to find out whether or not students



are using strategies during a language learning task is to ask them. Nonetheless, observation is a viable option even though it does not capture mental processes (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1975; Wenden, 1991).

As each of these techniques has its own limitations, it has the potential to provide important insights into unobservable learning strategies. The researchers use a combination of self-report, retrospective interviews, and written journals. The participants were asked to describe what they were thinking or doing during a recently completed learning task (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). To offset the limitations of forgetfulness or evasion, written journals were used to collect data on the participants' strategies. They were instructed to write personal observations about their own learning experiences and the ways in which they have solved or attempted to solve language problems (see, for example, Carson & Longhini, 2002). Again, learners may not necessarily provide accurate descriptions of their learning strategies, which has led Rubin (2003) to suggest using diaries in instruction to help students develop metacognitive awareness of their own learning strategies.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Strategies were identified by means of oral and written reports through observation, written journals, and interviews. Through data analysis, three major categories of strategies emerged: cognitive, social and affective strategies, as discussed below.

##### A. Cognitive Strategies

Literature-based instruction brought with it a positive learning environment in which students were able to think not only independently but also critically and creatively. Free from the burdens of heavy instruction, students seemed prone to analyze and synthesize, attempt to solve-problems and make interpretations.

Cognitive strategies were further subcategorized into *critical thinking* and *creative writing*. Both subcategories could be traced, albeit in varying degrees, in the tasks and outcomes of the literary tasks. In other words, students manifested their responses and involvement in the tasks differently depending on their language repertoire, interests, and readiness to produce outcomes.

The analysis of individual participants shows that some, inspired by the literary tasks, exerted serious effort to write short stories or poems for the first time in their lives. Others cherished the critical analysis of characters and plots in addition to summaries of the stories and interpretations of the selected poems. A third group mostly opted for identifying and solving problems or analyzing arguments.

##### B. Critical Thinking

The literature offers a plethora of definition for critical thinking. However, for the purposes of this research, critical thinking is seen as an intellectual process of rational higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, problem identification, problem solving, inferencing, evaluation, and reasoned judgment (see, for example, Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993). Literature-based instruction is believed to have the potential to turn students into open-minded, critical thinkers who appreciate different views and tolerate ambiguity (Plummer, 1988).

To achieve this end, procedures, such as asking probing questions prior to students' judgment-making, were promoted for the purpose of allowing them to discard their customary role of passive recipients of information. The participants were also urged to think critically of the materials they study.

More specifically, critical thinking was promoted not only in the pre-reading phase but also in the post-reading phase. The participants were always given a copy of the text to be read in the following session so they could read it at home, appreciate it, ask questions, and spot problems and solutions. Following the discussion of the text with their instructor and fellow participants, students were given consolidation tasks and further questions to answer in their journals to both foster their learning and trigger their critical thinking. Questions, such as what have you learned from the session today and what is the theme of today's story, were recurrent questions for the students' journals. They were also asked to summarize the story or the poem.

The participants seemed to do the most amount of thinking as they analyzed the characters of a literary piece, probably not only because of the demanding nature of the task but also because of the novelty of the activity. Their journals invariably documented that they are carrying out such activities for the first time, as shown in excerpt 1, below.

*Excerpt 1: (dialogue journal)*

*Sajeda: This is the first time I analyze a character by my own. And it is the first time we took a poem and analyze it. I don't know the right way to make it.*

What is most heartening, however, is that this participant, Sajeda, soon understood what it means to trigger her higher thinking skills. She communicated with the instructor/researcher through her journal to delve into higher levels of thinking. Eventually, she managed to provide samples, as shown in excerpt 2.

*Excerpt 2: (Journal writing)*

*Sajeda: (character analysis) The writer is a nice person who likes to help others. He makes use of his*



*experience. He asks a lot of questions because of his work. He's a person who easily effected by others.*

The cooperative learning atmosphere of the sessions played an essential role in promoting the participants' critical thinking. It enabled them to engage more actively in critical thinking, which was further aided by continuous feedback from the instructor and fellow-participants. For example, in activities of group debate and discussion of the poems *I Wondered Lonely as a Cloud* and *The Tables Turned*, students had to debate for or against either nature or books as a source of wisdom and knowledge. The participants presented their views with pieces of evidence, as shown in excerpt 3.

*Excerpt 3: (Classroom conversation)*

*Rula: Really doctor, it (nature) is ...from the nature...err...to get my feelings when I get miserable or in the middle of problems.*

*Baylasan: Both*

*Anmar: I agree her, also books can teach us many things about the history of the leaders and many things we want to know.*

*Sulaf: I consider nature something remember...*

*T: Something ...what Sulaf?*

*Rula: Reminds*

*Sulaf: Yes, it's something that reminds me that time is passing if we don't contact the nature we become out of time.*

*Laila: I don't like books; they ...full of information.*

Role-plays were also a fertile soil for critical thinking. The participants were asked to analyze the character to render an impromptu role-play in their own language. They were expected to interpret, analyze and create something original, which mandated the activation of their higher thinking skills instead of resorting to their traditional role as passive recipients, as evident in excerpt 4.

*Excerpt 4 :( Role-play/Whispers)*

*Wehad: I'll be so serious with you Lynn; he's not a good man; he's not the right man for you, he's a snob.*

*Sulaf: How you judge about a man you don't know about him!*

*Wehad: I know that ...I have a hunch.*

*Sulaf: I met him ...err... for many time...I have never noticed.*

*Wehad: OK. Do whatever you want but don't say I didn't advise you.*

*T: Notice, ladies, Wehad and Sulaf have their books closed and are using their own language.*

To develop their oral and written communication, the participants were asked general questions to get the main idea of a literary text, after which more specific details were given to trigger their critical thinking (e.g., what, in

your opinion, is the general topic or theme of the Japanese Quince?) The Quince was initially linked to materialism, lack of social ties, or spiritual emptiness and, later, traced into a higher realm of thinking through analyzing the character of Mr. Nilson, a major character in the story. Linking clues (e.g., the significance of the newspaper) and interpreting symbolism (e.g., the black bird) used in the story took the students' thinking into a loftier level. Eventually, practice brought with it skill that enabled the students to think critically without much prompting or assistance from the instructor.

### C. Creative Writing

Under creative writing, students developed their skills through practice. They became more comfortable with putting their pens to paper to discover what they really know. Journal writing constituted a conduit for students to take charge of their own writing.

Attempts at creative writing gave the participants a sense of ease and confidence, as they were aided to overcome their fears and maximize their potential for creativity and growth, as shown in excerpt 5 below.

*Excerpt 5: (group interview)*

*Wehad: I never thought of writing stories or poems before the program.*

Similarly, Reem, who was initially reluctant to participate in oral activities, made some serious attempts to write something of her own, admittedly for the first time ever. Dr. Raghad, in excerpt 6 below, is one of her attempts at literary production:

*Excerpt 6 :( Journal writing)*

*D Day with you is the better*

*R Rose, flower, and bird in the summer*

*A A good morning for you will glitter*

*G Go run and jump to be the winner*

*A A prize for you if you go faster*

*D Do it now, we will be with you*

*Just remember!*

In addition, equally reluctant Anmar described one of her dreams, as shown in excerpt 7.

*Excerpt 7: (Journal writing)*

*I want to go beyond the limits*

*I want to reach the sky*

*To reach the stars*

*To reach the moon*

*To reach the sun*

*I want to go beyond my life*

*I want to go beyond the limits*

*To be good in every thing*

*In my religion, in my social ties*

*To know them all*

*To go up high*

*I must read hard,*



*More listen to the wise  
To do in true heart  
But the important thing that I need it  
God's help!*

Note how daring some of these participants have become to try to write about both their inner thoughts and the people around them.

#### D. Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning, realized mainly through pair and group work, is social in nature. At the onset of the program, the instructor/researcher consulted the participants about whether they prefer working individually or in groups. They opted for working together, which was reportedly uncommon in their other courses. In other words, the participants made a radical shift from individual work into more cooperative learning, managing to support each other and facilitate actual learning, as opposed to competing and striving to outperform one another.

The instructor/researcher attempted to promote a cooperative learning environment by allowing students to choose partners and make their own interpretations rather than forcing on them a certain seating arrangement or classroom layout. This way, they felt responsible not only for their own learning but also for their partners'. Students' cooperation was encouraged and reinforced, as shown in excerpt 8.

*Excerpt 8 :( Classroom Conversation/Whispers)*

*T: Why did the men admire Robert?*

*Sulaf: because he had authority...err...*

*Anmar: authority to promote*

*Sulaf: yes promote or discharge you.*

*T: yes, good, ladies!*

#### E. Self-Confidence

Research on learners from diverse language backgrounds reveals positive correlations between strategy use and learners' confidence in their language learning ability (Chamot et al, 1993). Self-confidence was the major affective strategy revealed in this research. The moment the participants felt the non-threatening climate of the program, they were trying hard to change and did change indeed, as illustrated in excerpt 9 which portrays a text message sent by Baylasan to the instructor/researcher immediately after the program.

*Excerpt 9: (Text message (translated from Arabic))*

*Baylasan: At a certain moment, reminiscing about my past, I stand at my very beginning and contemplate where I used to be in my major and how I am now after all the challenges and tribulations that I went*

*through and wonder how after a lapse of time I became a legend of success destined to be read by all people ...nothing is impossible...and now I can only say to all those who helped me, to you especially ...Thank you!*

Excerpt 9 eloquently tells Baylasan's story. She changed from a frustrated and confused student into a more self-confident challenger. Her English suffered from many weaknesses, but she was determined to change with a proper charge of self-confidence.

The instructor/researcher insisted on breaking the ice right from the onset of the program which ensued in her earning the participants' trust. This trust was reciprocated, as the participants started not only to trust their instructor but also to trust their potentials. However, even though the participants varied in their capacities and self-confidence, not once were they expected to either produce perfect English or keep silent the way they are in traditional instruction.

In a group interview, Baylasan asserted how many times she was previously let down whenever she faced a communication problem or resorted to code-switching into Arabic to save face. The cooperative nature of the program required getting involved in group/pair work, which promoted both the students' interactional activities and sense of belonging.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present findings identify the language learning strategies used by eight Jordanian EFL learners in a literature-based instructional intervention. These findings are consistent with earlier reports that more proficient language learners make better use of strategies (Bruen, 2001; Green & Oxford, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Differences between more and less proficient language learners have been found in (1) the number and range of strategies used, (2) the manner in which the strategies are applied to the task, and (3) the appropriateness of the strategies for the task. Language proficiency have also been reported to correlate positively with anxiety and confidence (Khaldieh, 2000), which is partially consistent with the present findings.

Literature has come to be a viable alternative in today's classroom not only for contextualizing language and raising cultural awareness but also for fostering critical thinking, creative writing, cooperative learning and self-confidence. The findings bring about a number of conclusions, most significant amongst which are that literature-based instruction constitutes a potential catalyst for activating learners' cognitive strategies (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, creative writing), social strategies (e.g., pair/group work) and affective strategies



(e.g., self-confidence, risk taking). It also enables teachers to detect points of strength and weakness in their students' communicative performance, fosters learner-centeredness and, thus, enables learners to take ownership of their own learning, and constitutes a viable alternative for authentic, contextualized and functional language in the EFL classroom.

In light of the findings, a number of pedagogical implications can be drawn concerning the cornerstones of tertiary teaching/learning: students, instructors, and curriculum designers. As education is witnessing serious reforms in teacher and student roles, in that the latter are no longer passive recipients, a new equilibrium has to be established with students as active partners in the teaching/learning process.

Literature-based instruction provides an environment conducive for critical thinking, creative writing, cooperative learning and self-confidence. Through literature-based instruction, students were found to share ideas and seek feedback by cooperating with fellow-students, use various graphic organizers to present information, and use appropriate information sources such as reference materials and the Internet to complete assignments.

As students are expected to work independently and take charge of their own learning, they are expected to manage their language learning in a variety of contexts, in which literature-based instruction works as a conduit for them to take responsibility for and reflect on their own thinking by monitoring their progress and assessing their achievement. It goes without saying that the more strategies they have at their disposal, the better able they are to make use of the resources available to them to learn more effectively.

In addition, language learners need to explore, experiment with, and evaluate a variety of learning strategies to determine which best facilitate their own learning. Furthermore, learning how to make use of metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning may prove instrumental.

As instructors shoulder the responsibility of choosing what suits their students as distinct individuals, they should keep abreast with pedagogical innovations and select up-to-date material to help maximize their students' potential, not to mention use criterion evaluation and pre-planned parameters to accurately gauge the ratio of development of students' communicative performance.

Curriculum designers should cater for optimal pedagogical output to avoid shouldering the blame for student weaknesses and shocking inability to think critically and creatively (Bataineh & Zghoul, 2006). Students should be exposed to authentic texts and, thus, a spectrum of functional and pragmatic language, which

enables them to communicate properly in authentic contexts.

The present findings bring about a number of recommendations for future research: learning strategies other than those tackled in this study should be examined in literature-based instruction. Moreover, alternative designs, such as experimental/control group, should be used to examine the activation of learning strategies in literature-based instruction, which would lend further credibility to the present findings.

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