



## Unfolding the Lived Experiences of the College Students' Language Learning Strategies vis-à-vis their English Proficiency: A Convergent Design

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**Abstract**

The study determined students' language learning strategies (LLS) status and English proficiency (EP). A mixed-method, particularly the convergent design, was used. Through purposive sampling, 378 and 17 Education major in English students served as participants for the quantitative and qualitative strands. An adapted questionnaire for quantitative strand and interview guide for qualitative strand were used to gather the necessary data. The study revealed a high level of LLS and a low level of EP. The compensation strategy has a significant relationship to EP. Six themes unfolded as the lived experiences in learning English: sustaining interest amidst fear, looking through an uphill battle, experiences enrich communicative competence, courage to face adversities, igniting positive language learning, and translating excellence in multilingual contexts. Regarding the insights on the contribution of English LLS, five themes emerged: a window of opportunities, towering the students' lamp, guarding with a bulletproof vest, dreaded fires of mediocrity, and kindling brighter lamps through assistance. Moreover, the joint display of quantitative and qualitative findings yielded that students' LLS and their lived experiences are convergent when the merging function is employed; EP status and experiences are convergent when the merging function is employed. However, on the relationship of LLS on the EP of the students, the results show the merging functions as diverging. Further, only the compensation strategies have a significant relationship with the EP of the students.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English is inevitably the bridging language of the global village, where it has become the language of business, law, and education. It is the medium of instruction in many academic institutions, and it is a subject required at all levels. However, engaging oneself in English has remained a grueling task among students (Mamonong, Rillo, & Repato, 2018). Learning the language has become an ordeal activity for students because of the mismatch of the teaching methods and learner's language learning strategy that affects the English proficiency of the students (Ella, 2018). As a result, English language educators are faced with the challenge of addressing the needs of pupils whose first language is not English (Vizconde, 2016).

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A 2016 research by Education First found that Laos with 38.45%, Libya with 37.82%, and Iraq with 37.65% had the lowest English proficiency rates in Asia, while the Philippines got 60.33 percent. Similarly, Hopkins International Partners (2018) found that Filipino university graduates' English competence was comparable to native speakers of 5th and 6th grade in the US and the UK. Moreover, the level of English proficiency of Filipino college graduates is lower than that of Thai high school students (Tima, 2018).

Because the English language is essential in a person's life, students feel compelled to acquire it while also acquiring other skills and knowledge in other subject areas (Vizconde, 2016). Language learning strategies that generally refer to the learners' preferred way of learning the language have been widely researched and discussed in second language acquisition (Radwan, 2011). Many researchers believe that strategies for language learning are essential for they become the tools for active involvement in their language development. The study of Sa'ad and Usman (2014) has stated that students' declining performance in the English language is because of students' negative attitudes toward the English language. These statements and facts compelled the researcher to explore how learners' language learning strategy promotes proficiency and eventually provides concrete ways to enhance language proficiency.

Over time, empirical studies on language learning strategies and English proficiency have been conducted. According to Habok and Maygar (2018), more skilled students employ a broader range of strategies than less proficient students, and strategy use significantly impacts foreign language grades. Fewell (2010), on the other hand, discovered a negative correlation between strategy utilization and language proficiency, concluding that Japanese college students mainly rely on memory techniques. That was their only option. Similar patterns of technique utilization were seen for expert and less proficient learners.

Ella (2018) also mentioned that senior high school students are aware of the need to select learning strategies that best suit the demands of language work. Her research on high school students' language techniques found that they are more intrinsically motivated to organize, direct, manage, and enhance their learning based on their metacognitive methods.

Locally, in Davao de Oro, as most of the state colleges and universities in the area adopted a new curriculum to address and cope with the new curriculum in basic education, it has been observed by most of the teachers that the level of English proficiency of the products of the K-12 curriculum, especially in grammar and reading comprehension, do not reflect on their level of development. This is seen during language learning activities such as writing, reading, and speaking. Since the addition of the two years in the basic education curriculum, it is expected that they should be good at these areas given that they have been exposed to the different subjects during senior high school.

Furthermore, most studies on language learning strategies are separately purely conducted in quantitative or qualitative approaches. Variables used in these studies were paired with high school students' learning styles, self-determination, and motivation. To name a few, Cabaysa (2010) assessed the poor or absence of information on the kind of language learning strategies that Filipino students adopt, while Hardan (2013) focuses on the awareness of the language learning strategies that can help teachers to understand and cope with the students. This study crossed the border as it had done differently by using a mixed-methods approach to come up with a more valid, reliable, and robust result by combining two approaches in determining the status of the students' strategies in English language learning. Another gap in this research is that the researcher had not read any literature that focuses on students' experiences studying in the new curriculum.

Nevertheless, to fill in the gaps, the results of this study are significant, as it would become the baseline information for the enhancement of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the tertiary level. It would help the curriculum developers to look at the strengths and loopholes of the newly constructed curriculum at the tertiary level. Accordingly, teachers

could promote strategies that could meaningfully attract students to become active, compelling, and successful second language learners. It would benefit teachers to look and provide teaching-learning activities and create assessment tools that would help learners become the best language learner. Additionally, this would also be beneficial to the learners, as they would know the best strategy. Knowing the strategy that works for them helps them become proficient and effective in using the oral or written language.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Language Learning Strategies

Numerous scholars and academics have defined language learning strategies in second language teaching. Additionally, it has been used in a number of studies to help improve the quality of second language learning. According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are learners' behaviors or acts that contribute to the meaning of language acquisition. Language learning strategies refer to the methods or devices that students employ to acquire knowledge of the language they are studying. According to Ella (2018), language learning strategies are the behaviors and thoughts that a learner utilizes to grasp and comprehend a language. Additionally, it has an effect on how pupils encode and process language information.

According to Oxford (1990), there are six major groups of Language Learning Strategies that have been used and observed by language learners. These are the memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

*Memory Strategies.* These strategies let students connect concepts without fully understanding them (Oxford, 1990). According to Samida (2013), these tactics include organizing, associating, and reviewing. These ideas are used when a student runs into a lexical obstacle. Words and phrases can be saved and retrieved as graphic representations. Many kids use visual images, while others easily connect words and phrases to sound, motion, or touch.

*Cognitive Strategies.* Words, sentences, and other features of the second language are frequently engaged in these processes (Oxford, 1990) This allows learners to directly influence their language learning through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, knowledge structures, natural language practice, and structure practice (Samida, 2013).

*Compensation Strategies.* These language-learning tactics involve inferring meaning from the context of hearing and reading (Oxford, 1990). According to Samida (2013), when learners lack an adequate understanding of the target language, they develop compensatory mechanisms for comprehension. These strategies make up for grammatical and lexical shortcomings. When pupils are unfamiliar with novel phrases or idioms, they make educated assumptions about their meanings. By speculating, a learner adds their own life experience to the task of comprehending data.

*Metacognitive Strategies.* These tactics take into account the learner's learning styles, preferences, and needs (Oxford, 1990). Anderson (2003) asserts that metacognitive strategies transcend cognitive mechanisms and enable learners to coordinate their learning. This enables them to efficiently schedule their language studies. These strategies become crucial for successful language acquisition when the learner becomes perplexed by unfamiliar terminology, regulations, or writing systems.

*Affective Strategies.* Oxford (1990) asserts that affective variables such as emotion, attitude, motivation, and values all have a significant effect on learning. Samida (2013) proposes three tactics for this group: anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and increasing emotional temperature. Language learners who are adept at managing their attitudes and emotions toward learning recognize how negative emotions obstruct learning. Increasing

student accountability, facilitating natural communication, and teaching affective skills all contribute to a healthy classroom culture (Samida, 2013).

*Social Strategies.* These tactics include eliciting confirmation from others, requesting clarification, requesting assistance with a specific language task, conversing with native and non-native speakers of the target language, and researching the culture and norms of the society (Oxford, 1990). According to Samida (2013), they would aid learners in efficiently learning the language and aid learners in comprehending culture through language.

## **2.2.English Proficiency**

Proficiency in English is a need for success in contemporary culture. According to Runde (2017), English is the world's third most spoken and taught language. English is a global language, the lingua franca of the modern era, spoken by around 300 million people as their native tongue and over 600 million as a second language in over 100 countries. English proficiency is necessary for any country to reap the full benefits of global trade, obtain access to cutting-edge research, technology, and innovation, and exercise global influence. English accounts for more than 20% of published literature, followed by Mandarin and German at 10% and 10%, respectively. The United States, in partnership with other Anglophone countries, should do more to promote English usage throughout the world, particularly in critical geographies such as the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, where English competence is currently low.

According to Pannersilvam (2018), in many nations, English is not only widely spoken but is also the main business language. If people want to work in a global workforce, they must communicate in English. The language is still as relevant as it was before, and it is quickly becoming a required ability for all employees around the world. Being able to communicate effectively in English is akin to climbing the corporate ladder. This is because one will cope with various clients and interact effectively with coworkers, resulting in efficient tasking.

### *Grammar*

There are several assumptions and speculations concerning the concept of grammar, all of which point to the underlying techniques' effect (Ellis, 2006). The ambiguity of these assumptions is revealed by looking at these definitions. Grammar is the set of rules that govern a language. According to Crystal (1995), Grammar is the process of dissecting a language to figure out how it works. Penny (2000) defines grammar as a set of rules that control how words are joined or modified within a language to produce acceptable units of meaning. Grammar, on the other hand, is characterized in a larger sense as "an internal conceptual framework," "a set of prescriptions for language forms," "a description of language behavior," "the major structures of a language," and "rules for instructional and assessment purposes" (Larsen-Freeman, 2009).

The term "grammar" is used by linguists in a very specific sense. According to linguistics, grammar is a set of internalized rules that speakers use to construct and interpret language. Grammar is often acquired rather than learned in this manner through instruction and careful practice. According to Richards (1992), grammar is the language's structure and the manner in which linguistic components such as words and phrases are integrated to form sentences. According to Richards, grammar is the part of the language that exists independently of meaning and sound and is composed of the words, phrases, and clauses that comprise sentences. As a result, grammar is a set of rules governing the proper arrangement of words at the sentence level (Nunan, 2003) or the rules governing how sentences are constructed in a given language (Thornbury, 2008).

### *Reading Comprehension*



Reading is one of four macro skills of the students that the parents and teachers must nurture. This is to improve the standards of attainment and the quality of the students learning experiences.

In teaching reading, Canapi and Cruz (2009) stated that the teachers must make sure that their pupils have developed a basic understanding of the meaning of all new concepts. They may check the comprehension through questions for complete sentence responses, providing further drills to establish comprehension and correct pronunciation and intonation habits if needed. The teacher not only asks questions but, as soon as possible, directs pairs of pupils to ask and answer basic questions to aid them in developing accuracy and fluency in the language. Moreover, comprehension is the act of grasping an idea's meaning, significance, or nature with "intellect" and specifies "understanding" as its closest synonym: Reading and thinking, therefore, cannot be separated; thinking is integral to reading. There can be no accurate reading without thinking.

Anderson (2003) views comprehension as an integrated skill, "a process of constructing meaning from written texts, a complex skill requiring coordination of several kinds of interrelated sources of information" (Villamin, et al., 2001). As a result, reading comprehension must be the primary concern of all readers. Comprehension refers to a reader's ability to comprehend what they are reading, interpret concepts, and provide meaning to printed words. To apply different thought processes, the readers should know how to integrate words as part of the sentence, sentences as part of the paragraphs, and paragraphs as part of the section (Coiro, 2003).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This research study utilized mixed methods, particularly the convergent design, to explore the language learning experiences and strategies of the K-12 curriculum products for learning English.

Cameron (2015) defines mixed methods research as collecting, assessing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a sequence of studies that investigate the same underlying topic. Berman (2017) stated that mixed-method analysis requires at least one quantitative and one qualitative analysis, meaning that both types of analysis are necessary.

This study's quantitative component was descriptive-correlational. The descriptive-correlational design was used in this study to ascertain the degree to which various variables in the population of interest were related to one another (Lomax & Li, 2013).

The phenomenological design was the qualitative component of this investigation. Phenomenology is used to focus attention on the participants' lived experiences. By articulating how individuals experience an event, it seeks to dispel preconceived notions and biases about human experiences, attitudes, and behaviors in a particular setting. The researcher conducted interviews in this phenomenological study to ascertain and comprehend the participants' experiences, insights, and coping mechanisms related to English language learning.

The research participants of the present study were the college students of the four campuses in one of the state colleges of the province, who are the pioneering products of the K-12 curriculum of the Basic Education of the Philippines. The respondents came from a Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English. The respondents were chosen because they are the pioneering graduates of the K-12 curriculum that would help this study identify their language learning strategies. Thus, the students who are products of the old curriculum in the Basic Education were not allowed to participate in this study. The data were gathered from the response of the 385 students enrolled in the first semester AY 2019-2020. This figure was based on the pertinent records disclosed by the school registrar.

In the quantitative phase of the research study, the study utilized an adapted questionnaire. The first part of the adopted questionnaire determined the language learning strategy of the respondents. The second part of the adopted questionnaire measured the level

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of English proficiency of the respondents that, focused on grammar and reading comprehension.

In the second phase of the research study, the qualitative phase, the researcher used an interview guide containing questions that helped generate themes that supported the results in the quantitative phase. The questions covered the experiences, insights, and coping mechanisms of the K-12 curriculum products for learning the English language.

Moreover, the data were analyzed through statistical treatment to use the data in the right form for the quantitative phase. The organization of data is equally crucial to draw appropriate conclusions. Mean was used to determine the level of language learning strategies and the English proficiency of the college students; Pearson-r product moment of correlation was used to test the significance level of the relationship between language learning strategies and the English proficiency, and standard deviation was used to calculate and indicate the extent of deviation for the group. For the qualitative phase, the accumulated data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

After the result of both phases, the researcher corroborated the two measures and discussed a relationship between the result in the quantitative and qualitative phases.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The status of language learning strategies, as reflected in table 1.1, is high, with an overall mean of 3.65. It means that language learning strategies are experienced frequently by the Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English students. In addition, the standard deviation that ranges from .46 to 1.22 showed that there are standard deviations which are greater than 1, particularly in the affective and social strategies. The students' consistency of responses about their language learning strategies vary minimally. Notably, among the language learning strategies, Metacognitive strategies got the highest category mean of 3.98, described as high, which means that metacognitive strategies are experienced frequently. In contrast, the category with the lowest mean of 3.38 was Memory Strategies.

Table 1.1  
Status of Language Learning Strategies of College Students

Strategy	Mean	SD	Description
Memory Strategies	<b>3.38</b>	<b>.54</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
Cognitive Strategies	<b>3.67</b>	<b>.54</b>	<b>High</b>
Compensation Strategies	<b>3.55</b>	<b>.68</b>	<b>High</b>
Metacognitive Strategies	<b>3.98</b>	<b>.57</b>	<b>High</b>
Affective Strategies	<b>3.58</b>	<b>.69</b>	<b>High</b>
Social Strategies	<b>3.74</b>	<b>.73</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>HIGH</b>

This backs Habok and Maygar's (2018) findings, which found that more proficient learners employ a wider range of techniques than less proficient students and that strategy use substantially impacts foreign language grades. Students that employ techniques when learning a language have a better chance of mastering the language.

Additionally, the result corroborates Ella's (2018) assertion that senior high school students are aware of the need to select the learning strategies that best suit the demands of the language job. Having a method for language learning helps the student be more attentive to the process.

The status of English proficiency of college students is low, with an overall mean of 13.55 as presented in Table 1.2, which means that the level of English proficiency of the students is poor. The standard deviation of 3.22 implies that the English proficiency skills of students are quite varied. Likewise, students' grammar and reading comprehension skills are

both low, with a mean of 7.13 and 6.42, respectively. It means that the level of grammar skills employed by the students is poor. Similarly, the level of reading comprehension skills of college students is also not proficient.

Table 1.2  
Status of English Proficiency Skills of College Students

	Mean	SD	Description
Grammar Skills	7.13	1.93	Low
Reading Comprehension Skills	6.42	2.37	Low
<b>English Proficiency Skills</b>	<b>13.55</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>Low</b>

According to Tima (2018), the level of English proficiency of Filipino college graduates is lower than the target level of English proficiency for Thai high school students, according to a study conducted by Hopkins International Partners, the Philippines' official representative to the group called Test of English for International Communication. This verifies the study's findings, which suggested that students lacked basic English proficiency.

The findings of this study back up Suelto's (2018) assertion that English competency is deteriorating in her report. According to a new language test, the Philippines is no longer Asia's top English-speaking country. This has had an unsettling influence on job-creating businesses inside and outside the country, prompting the Department of Education to step up its efforts to provide an educational system that will boost students' English comprehension.

Table 2 presents a significant positive, strong relationship between Language learning strategies and English proficiency ( $r = .11, p < .05$ ). This means that if the level of Language learning strategies increases, the English proficiency of college students also increases. However, among the domains of Language learning strategies, only compensation strategies have a significant relationship with English proficiency ( $r = .16, p < .00$ ). This means that the increase in the level of compensation strategies would also likely increase the English proficiency of college students.

Table 2  
Relationship between Language Learning Strategies and English Proficiency of College Students

	English Language Proficiency		
	R	p-value	Remarks
<b>Language Learning Strategies</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>Significant</b>
Memory Strategies	.05	.35	Not significant
Cognitive Strategies	.08	.13	Not significant
Compensation Strategies	.16**	.00	Significant
Metacognitive Strategies	.08	.11	Not significant
Affective Strategies	.07	.18	Not significant
Social Strategies	.04	.47	Not significant

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

This result corroborates the findings of Peacock and Ho (2003), who discovered that 27 distinct techniques were strongly connected to language proficiency, with around 59% of these strategies being compensatory strategies. Similarly, it accords with Karbalaei and Taji's (2014) study, which tries to ascertain the compensating mechanisms employed by Iranian students.

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According to descriptive and statistical analyses of the data presented, Iranian EFL students tended to utilize a range of CS to convey their intended meanings. They placed a priority on reverting to their language. This suggests that the study's participants desired to interact in English, not avoid it.

Presented in Table 3 is the thematic analysis based on the participants' responses in the In-Depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion, which are transcribed verbatim. Responses are extracted from the result of the six probed issues to unveil the lived experiences of the college students in learning English as a second language. All issues obtained three codes with corresponding ideas and essential themes.

Table 3  
Lived experiences of college students as regards their learning of the English language

Issues Probed	Core Ideas	Code/Categories	Essential Theme
Effect of Learning English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being afraid to be corrected and criticized by teachers and classmates because of grammatical errors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Living up to the expectations of peers because of being an English major</li> </ul>	Fear in using the English language	Sustaining interest amidst fear
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dreaming of becoming an English teacher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Improving the weaknesses in English language</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Considering to develop English skills because of models</li> </ul>	The desire to the enhancement of English language skills	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Studying English because of no choice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Proving of one's excellence in the field of English</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Having limited knowledge in English</li> </ul>	Learning English as a challenge	
Struggles in learning English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unfamiliar to speaking activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Having difficulties in spelling</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing difficulty in organizing thoughts while speaking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing difficulty in reading in terms of vocabulary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing difficulty in writing in terms of sentence construction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding to the expectations of teacher of being a Senior High School Graduate</li> </ul>	Speaking, Reading, and Writing Activities in English	Looking through an uphill battle
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encountering challenges in following the prescribed grammar</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experiencing struggles in identifying the function of the word in the sentence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Facing difficulties in phonemes and morphemes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encountering challenges in pronunciation</li> </ul>	Difficulties in Structures of English and Linguistics	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feeling of being uncomfortable</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feeling of being anxious</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being afraid not to be able to cope with the lesson</li> </ul>	The unfamiliarity with the topics and lessons	



Success in English	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with lessons makes learning English easy	Existing knowledge in learning English	Experiences enrich communicative
	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing the software applications related to English <input type="checkbox"/> Researching using the Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Employing audio-visual presentations <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing the materials after discussion	Learning resources in learning English	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practicing English in the classroom <input type="checkbox"/> Not being pressured while learning <input type="checkbox"/> Employing Intrapersonal Skills	Environmental factors in learning English	
Overcoming the struggles in Learning English	<input type="checkbox"/> Researching about the English language before and after the discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the text twice <input type="checkbox"/> Using familiar words in understanding the text	Reading strategies in English	Courage to face adversities
	<input type="checkbox"/> Approaching expert individuals for help <input type="checkbox"/> Giving attention to the difficult lessons <input type="checkbox"/> Applying independent learning	Practicing English	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching English movies <input type="checkbox"/> Looking at the online for answers <input type="checkbox"/> Looking at the dictionary and grammar application	Use of media in learning English	
References in learning English	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching American movies <input type="checkbox"/> Watching K-drama shows with subtitles <input type="checkbox"/> Watching news and documentaries	Shows using the English language	Igniting positive language learning
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading stories in Wattpad <input type="checkbox"/> Reading novels and stories <input type="checkbox"/> Looking at the dictionaries for unfamiliar terms <input type="checkbox"/> Reading newspapers and magazines	Texts in the English language	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to broaden knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to learn new vocabularies <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to develop English skills <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing them to my outputs	Reasons for using shows and texts as references for learning English	
Rehearsing English as a medium of communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing English language for formal events <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing vernacular language for informal events <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing multimedia presentations <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing in writing posts in social media	By writing letters	Translating excellence in multilingual contexts
	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing English language for formal events <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing vernacular language for informal events <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing vernacular language and jargon words for close friends	By speaking to friends	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Being amazed because of the words used <input type="checkbox"/> Being shocked because of not being used to using the English language <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking of being a spot stealer because of using the English language	Reactions during conversations using the English language	

*They are sustaining Interest amidst Fear.* Based on the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, results showed the behavior of the college students toward learning the language. College students considered learning the English language as a behavioral activity with the obtained data. They believe that the performance of a behavior is a joint of intention and perceived behavioral control.

According to Alhamami (2019), students/learners who have a greater sense of control over the learning process attend more classes, study more and reach better proficiency levels.

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Of course, perceived control is a belief in and of itself, and it can influence attitudes and/or other beliefs. It's difficult to quantify or assess how the impression of control influences performance on its own.

*Looking through an Uphill Battle.* Based on the data gathered from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, college students who are products of the K-12 curriculum have different experiences with regard to their English language learning. According to the participants, challenges arose as they learned English in specific contexts. These challenges are on the speaking, reading, and writing activities, learning the basic structures of the English language, and feelings toward learning the English language. This means that learners have difficulty with English grammar and comprehension as they see the differences in their first and second languages.

According to the Norwegian Learning Center (2016), students with reading impairments do not gain reading fluency while also changing their reading technique and speed to meet their needs. As a result, individuals may find it more challenging to comprehend what they are reading. Communication challenges arise when a learner encounters a word they do not comprehend, a form of the word they do not know how to use, or finds themselves unable to articulate their intended meaning, according to Hinkel (2005). In addition, poor development of analytical and cognitive abilities, a lack of writing practice, insufficient word stock, and little feedback on their work are reasons why students fail to enhance their writing skills, according to Scott (2004).

Likewise, teachers cannot presume to have taught students a particular structure by getting them to memorize the rules (Tilfarlioglu, 2005). Thus, it becomes a problematic learning activity for the learners to learn grammar because of their confusion about the rules of the language.

Besides problems with learners' self-confidence and anxiety, they may also be confronted with certain feelings of shyness, anxiety, and nervousness. If the students themselves do not believe that they can speak, it has become a big problem (Fitriani, Apriliaswati, & Wardah, 2015).

*Experiences Enrich Communicative Competence.* Based on the information gleaned from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, it is claimed by the research participants that English language learning affected them to certain extents. According to the participants' responses, their existing knowledge of English through their experiences helped them be successful in learning the language. Moreover, learning resources and environmental factors help them achieve their goal of becoming proficient in English.

The purpose of communicative language teaching and the communicative method, according to Canale and Swain (1980), is communicative competence. It is challenging to assess communication skills in the classroom. Teachers can utilize a variety of forms to test their students' competency, including information gap and role-play activities for speaking, letters for writing, and note-taking and summarizing, which combines listening and writing competencies.

*Courage to Face Adversities.* Based on the obtained data from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, participants imparted their ways of overcoming the struggles as they faced the different challenges they have encountered while learning the English language. They provide a remedy for their inadequacies in terms of the skill of using the English language. According to the participants, they employ different reading strategies to understand and comprehend what they are reading. They also mentioned that they constantly practice using the English language through daily conversations. Furthermore, media plays a significant role in learning the English language of the participants.

Glosikka (2017) indicated in her research on language learning methodologies that language learning is complex. To overcome language learning challenges, she advises students

to listen to native speakers as often as possible. The major reason why full immersion seems to be so beneficial in learning a language is because it optimizes exposure to your target language.

*Igniting Positive Language Learning.* Based on the obtained data from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, participants imparted their ways of enriching their English language skills and proficiency. The interview showed that watching video presentations and reading texts in the English language helped elevate their English proficiency. Moreover, in the interview, the informants also stated their reasons for watching shows and reading texts as their references in learning the English language.

According to the Ministry of Education Guyana (2019), learning resources are crucial since they help students achieve more. A worksheet, for example, can help a student practice a new skill learned in class. This strategy allows pupils to examine facts while simultaneously providing repetition independently. Every sort of learning material has a role for students.

*Translating Excellence in Multilingual Contexts.* Based on the qualitative data gathered from the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews, college students have different means of applying what they have learned in English language learning. Through the help of their references and strategies, they have been able to apply what they have learned in English in real-life scenarios. According to the participants, they have been able to apply and utilize their English language learning through writing letters and speaking to friends. Moreover, through applying it in real-life situations, they have gathered reactions when they are using the English language.

According to LaRock (2018), the most effective technique to improve one's English proficiency is completely immerse oneself in the language. Numerous individuals learn English and have never met an English-speaking individual in their lives. There are numerous internet resources accessible to assist with language acquisition these days.

Table 4 presents the scrutinized and synthesized notions involved in the insights of college students with regard to the contribution of language learning strategies to the learning of English. The result discusses and delves deeper into the five essential themes obtained from a thorough analysis and investigation of the qualitative data. The significant results yielded sixteen (16) codes in total out of the five issues probed. Issues one, three, four, and five obtained three codes each, while issue two procured four codes.

Table 4

Insights of college students with regards to the contribution of language learning strategies to the learning of English

Issues Probed	Core Ideas	Code/Categories	Essential Theme
Importance of English Proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/> Being an English major requires to be good at English <input type="checkbox"/> Boosting self-confidence <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling of being better from someone	Learning English as an advantage	A window of opportunities
	<input type="checkbox"/> Being able to communicate verbally to foreigners <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to write letters	Social Development	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Having a suitable job <input type="checkbox"/> Proficiency in English facilitates communication	As a component of competitiveness	
Strategies in Learning English	<input type="checkbox"/> Research engagement widens language knowledge • Engaging oneself in reading <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and re-reading enhances comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Reading it aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Learning a word in a day	Reading English materials	Towering the student's

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	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching talk shows and copying their styles <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching expert individuals for help <input type="checkbox"/> Observing the delivery of the professionals	Modeling peers and experts	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Using social media to read poems and watch spoken poetry <input type="checkbox"/> Finding new words in the dictionary <input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing grammar applications on cellular phones	Utilizing software applications and digital materials	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Forcing oneself to read for the betterment <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and exploring things about English to widen knowledge	Motivation	
Benefits of Language Learning Strategies in English Proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/> Being not surprised in encountering new words <input type="checkbox"/> Developing comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Enhancing writing skills <input type="checkbox"/> Developing oral skills	Enhancing and broadening learning	Guarding with a Bulletproof Vest
	<input type="checkbox"/> Making better outputs <input type="checkbox"/> Going out from the comfort zone <input type="checkbox"/> Considering a person as an intelligent person <input type="checkbox"/> Being not conscious in using the English language	Boosting self-confidence and self-esteem	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Being competent in the profession <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to go to other countries <input type="checkbox"/> Completing the English course <input type="checkbox"/> Learning for future purposes	Preparing and equipping someone for future	
Consequences of lack of strategies in English language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Being unable to improve <input type="checkbox"/> Does not have anything to use in the future <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot enhance capabilities process	Unable to develop potential	Dreaded fires of mediocrity
	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing and reading skills may have problems <input type="checkbox"/> Causing a lot of errors in outputs <input type="checkbox"/> Grasping the lesson is difficult <input type="checkbox"/> Causing errors in grammar, pronunciation, and spelling	Difficulty in learning	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Being motionless in learning <input type="checkbox"/> Remains on his current learning <input type="checkbox"/> Slow development in learning	Stagnation	
English language Learning assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Initiating literary activities to enhance learning <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating writing activities <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating oral activities <input type="checkbox"/> Providing workshops for students	Providing learning materials and activities	Kindling brighter lamps through the assistance
	<input type="checkbox"/> Providing an internet connection for research	Installation of Internet	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowing that learners have different abilities <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the learning capacity of the students <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging student to learn and not to laugh at their mistakes	Considering needs and interests	

*A Window of Opportunities.* Based on the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, results showed that learning the English language and becoming a proficient user of the language, according to the informants, is an essential factor in facilitating an individual's growth and development. For the informants, learning the English language is an advantage for an individual. It helps for social development and is a factor or component to become globally competent in the modern world.

Learners learn the language because of its prime importance to one's life. More specifically, becoming a proficient English language user makes an individual more competitive and ready in any field. Students who learn a language can consider the

unimaginable. It enables us to think, feel, speak, listen, read, and write in previously unimaginable ways. We gain fresh insights into ourselves (Harvey, 2017).

*Towering the Student's Lamp.* Based on the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the participants have imparted their strategies while learning English. They shared that they read English material to support their language learning. Also, they model peers and experts to develop their English language proficiency fully. Moreover, they also utilize different software applications and digital materials as scaffolds to their language learning. Lastly, they shared that they look for motivation to learn the language. According to the interview and discussion informants, all these strategies helped develop their English language proficiency.

Additionally, Hismanuglo (2000) asserts that language learning strategies, which are distinct acts, behaviors, tactics, or procedures, aid the learner in acquiring the target language. Naturally, language learners adopt language learning strategies during their studies. Due to the fact that age, gender, personality, motivation, self-concept, life experience, learning style, excitement, and anxiety all influence how language learners acquire the target language, it is implausible to believe that all language learners employ the exact effective language learning strategies or that all language learners should be trained in using and developing the same strategies in order to become successful learners.

*Guarding with Bulletproof Vest.* Participants of the in-depth interview and focus group discussion have shared the importance of language learning strategies in becoming a proficient user of the English language. According to them, language learning strategies are very beneficial to one's development as they enhance and broaden the child's learning. Additionally, it can also boost self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, language learning strategies can help an individual to become prepared in the future, especially since the informants will soon become English teachers.

According to Briggs (2009), learning strategies are steps made by students to improve their learning. Language learning strategies are particularly significant because they provide instruments for active, self-directed participation, critical for establishing communicative competence.

*Dreaded Fires of Mediocrity.* The qualitative data from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion showed that an individual without language learning strategies would hinder one's holistic development as an individual and learner. Holistic individuals refer to individuals who can excel in different areas and compete globally. However, according to the participants, if an individual does not have any language learning strategies, they will not be able to develop to their full potential. Moreover, there will also be difficulty learning if one does not employ language learning strategies. Furthermore, stagnation of learning will also happen if one does not create their language learning strategies.

Fitriani, Aprihaswati, and Wardah (2015) shared that students who do not have any language learning strategies may also be confronted with certain feelings of shyness, anxiety, and nervousness. If the students themselves do not believe that they can speak, it has become a big problem since they will not be able to deliver their full potential as learners.

*Kindling Brighter Lamps through Assistance.* Based on the qualitative data gathered from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the participants have divulged the support they needed during the interview and discussion to enhance their language skills and develop their English language proficiency. According to the participants, to become proficient in the English language, one should have enough learning materials and experiential learning activities to support their learning. Moreover, they shared that considering their needs and interests as language learners would help develop their English language learning. It is also notable that the informants stated that an internet connection should be available within the school's premises since the school has no internet connection due to its location.

Furthermore, Ahmadi (2018) stated that learning a language can be done through various methods. This includes everything from the way we learn our first language through



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physical immersion to classroom-based teaching methods, solo ways like book learning, and more technology approaches like online language classes. All of these strategies have in common that learning a language on your own is difficult. As a result, kids who have access to competent support are more likely to succeed in language learning.

Table 5 divulges the joint display of salient qualitative and quantitative findings. Based on the gathered quantitative data, an overall rating of high level in language learning strategies was 3.65. Specifically, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies elicit high rating levels with 3.67, 3.55, 3.98, 3.58, and 3.74, respectively. Memory strategies only got a moderate level with a mean of 3.38. These data express convergence to the qualitative data gathered, in which cognitive strategies are represented by the data from the informants, specifically reading English materials, modeling peers and experts aligned with social strategies, utilizing software applications and digital materials represented by metacognitive strategies, and motivation which is considered to be part of the affective strategies.

Table 5  
Joint display of salient quantitative and qualitative findings

Aspects/ Focal	Quantitative Data Findings	Qualitative Data Findings	Nature of Data
Language Learning Strategies	<p>In Table 1.1, an overall rating of High level in language learning strategies with a mean of 3.65.</p> <p>More specifically, it elicits high levels in cognitive strategies (M= 3.67), compensation strategies (M= 3.55), metacognitive strategies (M=3.98), affective strategies (M= 3.58), and social strategies (M= 3.74).</p> <p>However, only moderate level in terms of memory strategies (M= 3.38).</p>	<p>In Table 4, the following data express parallelism in terms of findings with the identified quantitative data:</p> <p>The following categories are observed: cognitive strategies, represented by reading English materials; modeling peers and experts, which aligns with social strategies; utilizing software applications and digital materials that signify metacognitive strategies; and Motivation, considered an effective strategy.</p>	Merging-Converging

English Proficiency of College students	In Table 1.2, the overall rating of English proficiency is Low (M= 13.55). More specifically, the students have low scores in grammar skills (M= 7.13) and Reading Comprehension Skills (M= 6.42).	In Table 3.2, the following data express parallelism in terms of findings with the identified quantitative data:  The results reflect students' difficulties in grammar, particularly in the aspects of structures of English and linguistics.  Moreover, the core ideas stated that the students experience difficulties in reading and spelling.	Merging-Converging
On the relationship of language learning	The results in table 2 reveal a significant positive relationship between language learning strategies and English proficiency ( $r = .11$ ). However, among the domains of the language learning strategies, only the compensation strategies have a significant relationship with the English language proficiency of students ( $r = .16, p < .00$ )	The qualitative data shows that social, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies contribute to the English Language Proficiency of Students.	Merging-Diverging

Moreover, these findings portray that students employ cognitive strategies such as reading English materials to enhance their proficiency in the English language; students use social strategies by considering their peers and experts as models to seek assistance for their English proficiency; software applications and digital materials such as online dictionaries and grammar checker application, as metacognitive strategies, support the development of the language skills of the college students; and, self-motivation to learn the language is one way to develop the proficiency of the college students in the English language.

Language-learning strategies assist an individual in developing into a more proficient language learner. Briggs (2009) defined learning strategies as the actions students take to improve their learning. Language acquisition strategies are crucial because they enable active, self-directed engagement, necessary for developing communicative competence.

The second aspect, which is the English proficiency of the college students, shows the merging functions as converging in the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data shows that students have an overall rating of low English proficiency, which is 13.55. Specifically, the students have low scores in grammar with a mean of 7.13 and low scores in reading comprehension with a mean of 6.42. The results have converged to the qualitative data gathered in which students have difficulty with grammar, especially in Structures of English and Linguistics. Moreover, students also have experienced difficulty reading and spelling, which are components of good reading comprehension. Therefore, participants deemed grammar and reading as factors of difficulties in developing proficiency in the English language.

The conclusion is consistent with the study of Farooq et al. (2012), in which he examined the writing challenges of Pakistani matriculation and intermediate students. He discovered that pupils in these classrooms faced significant challenges due to a lack of grammatical understanding, punctuation marks, vocabulary, and spelling.

Lastly, on the relationship of language learning strategies to the student's English proficiency, the results show the merging functions as diverging in the quantitative and qualitative data. The results reveal that only compensation strategies significantly correlate to the student's English proficiency with a  $p < .00$  and  $r = .16$ . However, in the qualitative data, most of the students have employed social, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies that contribute to

the student's English proficiency. From the axiological perspective, students prefer varied strategies to contribute to their English language proficiency.

The findings supported the result of the study of Ella (2018), which explained that language learning strategies are the behaviors and thoughts of how a learner understands and comprehends the language. In addition, it also affects how learners encode and process information about the language. Thus, language learners find different ways to learn the language and not just employ one strategy. This would make their language learning more varied and authentic. Each learner should vary their language learning strategies to ensure that they become proficient English language users.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The result shows that college students' language learning strategies are high, especially in the five domains, namely metacognitive, cognitive, social, affective, and compensation strategies. On the other hand, the status of memory strategies is only moderate. This implies that college students employ language learning strategies frequently except for memory strategies that are occasionally employed.

Moreover, the results show that the status of the English proficiency of the college students is low; both indicators, which are grammar and reading comprehension, got a low rating. This means that the status of English proficiency of the college students is poor, and they are in need of help to become proficient in the English language.

Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between language learning strategies and the English proficiency of college students. This implies that if the level of language learning strategies increases, the English proficiency of college students also increases. However, among the domains of Language learning strategies, only compensation strategies have a significant relationship with English proficiency. This means that the increase in the level of compensation strategies would also likely increase the English proficiency of college students.

Thematic analysis of data reveals the college students' lived experiences in learning English as a second language, which is probed on six issues. The participants are able to sustain their interests in learning the English language amidst fear. The participants also manifest struggles in their language learning as if they are looking through an uphill battle. However, through their experiences, it enriches their communicative competence, which helped them gain proficiency in the English language. As the participants experience difficulties in language learning, they develop the value of courage to face adversities through the help of different learning resources and constant practice. Thus, the participants are igniting positive language learning in themselves and translating excellence into multilingual contexts.

Thematic analysis of data to the insights of the college students regarding the contribution of language learning strategies to their learning of English is also revealed through the formulated and validated probing issues, which sprouted five essential themes. To the participants, learning the English language and becoming proficient in the English language opens a window of opportunities in the academe and real-world contexts. The participants are towering their lamps to achieve the goal of being proficient in the language. As the participants realize the prime importance of being proficient in the English language, the participants guard their bulletproof vests with language learning strategies. The participants recognize that an individual will live in the dreaded fires of mediocrity and stagnation without language learning strategies. Through assistance and the right scaffolds from others, the participants will be able to kindle their lamps brighter.

Finally, a joint display of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that the status of the language learning strategies and English proficiency of the college students connect with the lived experiences of the college students toward language learning. However, it is notable

that the quantitative findings revealed that only the compensation strategies have a significant relationship to the English proficiency of the college students. More so, in the qualitative findings, college students revealed that social, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies contribute to the English proficiency of college students. This implies that college students develop their English proficiency through employing varied language learning strategies.

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