

Mongolian Students' Learning Strategies in Mastering English Receptive Skills

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ABSTRACT

A number of studies have investigated English language vocabulary learning strategies; however, these studies did not focus on receptive skills. Since the goal of language learning is communication, students need to comprehend spoken and written language first and then respond based on their comprehension. The Mongolian government added English as a second language to its language policy in 2005. However, language learning strategies (LLS) have not been assessed yet in Mongolia. This paper explores which strategies are used by 6th and 8th grade Mongolian students in mastering English language receptive skills. Such language learning strategies help students to gain more responsibility for their own learning. Two surveys were conducted in Mongolia among 6th graders (N=99) and 8th graders (N=114). Data were collected with an online questionnaire using the Electronic Diagnostic Assessment (eDia) platform. The survey questionnaires were based on three international questionnaires and augmented with a few extra items. Descriptive statistics was used to identify the frequencies of strategy usage. An independent sample t-test was run to see if there is a significant difference between two grades' reading strategies; a correlation analysis was done to find the relationship between student attitudes towards language skills and their LLS. Also, the effects of some background variables were examined, such as age, gender, and the mothers' education level on the children's LLS. The results indicated that most 6th grade students prefer to ask questions to clarify meaning, to use key words, to do mind mapping, and to use "speaker's voice" to understand the content for listening strategies. For reading, students indicated that they would rather guess the words from the context, participate more in reading activities, divide the story if it is long, and predict the main idea from its title. Moderate correlation was found between the children's attitude towards listening and reading and their LLSs. Age and mother's education negatively affected their LLSs. There was no significant correlation between gender and LLSs. However, students' listening and reading attitudes affected their learning strategies. Strategies involving cognitive, social, and compensation were used more, while memory and metacognitive strategies were likely not to be used at all. Based on these results, I recommend that language instructors train and encourage their students to apply appropriate receptive strategies and focus on those proven to be most useful based on this research.

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