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Effective Distance Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship among language learning strategies, personality type and gender of Iranian English distance learners. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning and Myeres Briggs Type Indicator were used to collect data from distance learners of Payam Nour University majoring in English. Statistical procedures used to analyze data revealed that there is a significant relationship between language learning strategies and personality types of distance learners. Also it indicates that students with ENTJ and ESTJ personality type are significantly better in strategy use than students with other personality types. The results obtained in this study also demonstrate that there is a relationship between language learning strategies and gender: males are better language strategy users than females at distance education.

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, within the field of education in general and, as a result, in distance education in particular, a gradual but significant shift has taken place, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching and greater stress on learners and learning. This shift has had a number of different consequences.

Sherry (1996) defines distance education as situations where the instructor and students are in separate locations or times, where communications are mediated between teacher and student by print or technology (Keegan, 1986).Distance learners have some characteristics as the following:

1. Students learning in a distance education environment do not have the same support systems as conventional learners do. First and foremost, they do not have the advantageous presence of a face-to-face instructor who can continuously supervise their learning process (Phipps & Merisotis 1999).

2. Most distance learners do not find the chance to benefit from their peer group, which can serve as a valuable source of insight and information for any learner (Harper & Kember 1986).
3. Many distance education students are older, have jobs, and families. They must coordinate the different areas of their lives, which influence one another (Schuemer 1993).
4. Distant students and their tutors often have little in common in terms of background and day-to-day experiences and therefore, it takes longer for student-teacher rapport to develop (Gladieux & Swail 1999).

Not all types of personality choose to continue their education through distance education. In other words, the particular characteristics of distance education make it more attractive to people with certain personality types.

As a result, personality type of distance learners may play an important role in distance education system. It is widely accepted that language learning strategies do not operate by themselves, but rather are directly tied to the learners' personality-related variables (Brown 1991). This is not an exception in distance education.

One of the questions that might arise here is that if certain personality types prefer to learn through distance education, do they also prefer to use certain types of Language learning strategies to the exclusion of others? To put it differently, are there certain language learning strategies that are more effective for certain personality types than others? If so, the findings of this study can have far-reaching implications in material design and delivery of English language materials in distance education.

This research is concerned with two factors that might have great influence in distance education, namely: learning strategies and types of personality. To further limit the study, it confines itself to the role and use of learning strategies and the importance of types of personality in distance foreign or second language learning, which, in this case, is English as a second language.

All language learners use language learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the language learning. Whether in the classroom or at home, language learning is a problem-solving activity in which language learners are likely to face new input and difficult tasks; as a result, learners need to find the quickest or easiest way to do what is

required. In other words, using language learning strategies is a necessity for success in learning an additional language.

It is hypothesized here that the language learning strategies learners use during the act of processing the new information and performing tasks can be influenced greatly by the type of personality that each person has. This research attempts to investigate if there is any relation at all between types of personality and learning strategies, and if so what can be its significance in distance education.

2. Why this study?

The following assumptions have provided the motivation to carry out the present study:

1. Successful English language learning at a distance is qualitatively different from that in face-to-face settings. Thus, it may require its own particular set of learning strategies.
2. Those that willingly choose to pursue their education at a distance are psychologically different from those who prefer conventional learning.
3. It is possible to intervene in the process of English language learning at a distance through strategy training.

Motivated by these assumptions, one of the important questions that arises is that why some people decide to enroll in distance courses; is it due to the possession of certain personality type? And if so, is there any relationship between their personality types and their use of learning strategies?

3. Teaching Language at Distance

Distance education places greater emphasis on independent study at all levels, although it does not necessarily eliminate entirely the face-to-face component of education (Harper & Kember 1986). However, it does represent a distinct difference in approach, not only from the learner's perspective but also from that of the institution. Whereas in conventional education the teacher teaches, in distance education the institution teaches (Burge and Howard, 1993).

There was a time when controversies were high about the capability of distance education to address foreign language teaching, but now, thanks to the relative success gained by some foreign language learning projects at a distance (White 1995), the theoretical debate about the possibility and desirability of teaching foreign language skills through the distance mode is almost over. Practice has demonstrated that implementing such programs is not only feasible

but also highly successful procedures to meet a growing educational demand (Hurd 2000). The key issue is no longer whether languages can or should be learnt using distance methods, rather, the main concern is how this can be done more effectively. Recent achievements in this field are encouraging the development of research to improve the design of self-study multi-media course materials and the provision of adequate student support services for language instruction in compliance with accepted pedagogic principles of both distance education and language teaching. However, the need to replace old-fashioned syllabuses and designs with new learner-centered ones within distance education poses significant difficulties.

The British and Canadian governments have both tried teaching languages through distance education. The national British program, established to teach French by radio and television, found it beneficial to augment the broadcasts with a course-linked magazine to increase learner involvement, with local study groups to allow students the opportunity to practice the language learned in the course, and with a telephone question-and-answer service to provide students with a channel for two-way communication (Rybak, 1984). A Canadian home study program was implemented in Manitoba, Ontario, and British Columbia to teach English as a second language using the telephone. Students work through units in a workbook using audiotapes. At specified points in each unit, the teacher provides the student with feedback over the telephone. The telephone conversation also provides the student with oral practice. The teacher records the telephone conversation and sends a tape to the student to review. A 1988 evaluation of the program revealed that both teachers and students were satisfied with the program (Selman, 1988).

4. Language Learning Strategies

The field of foreign/second language teaching became familiar with the concept of language learning strategies through the work of Rubin (1975). The behaviors good language learners engaged in (Naiman et al. 1978) became the focus of research in the hope of making some generalizations and recommendations about how to increase the efficiency of L2 learning/teaching. Since then, numerous studies and textbooks addressing the different aspects of the use of learning strategies in language learning situations have been published, and many MA and Ph.D. dissertations have been devoted to the topic.

Language learning strategies are defined by Cohen (1998) as "the conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge of a target language" (p. 68). Such strategies are usually contrasted with communication strategies, which are, unlike learning strategies, concerned with the production of L2 output, not its acquisition and internalization. Language learning strategies are also contrasted with learning styles due to their problem-oriented nature: Strategies are used when a learner is faced with a specific learning difficulty, and his/her strategic approach may change in accordance with the nature of the learning problem faced. Styles, on the other hand, are relatively fixed and do not change dramatically from one learning task to the next (Brown, 1994).

There are now different classification systems available for language learning strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) divide learning strategies into three groups of metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective. Metacognitive learning strategies are "higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity"(p.44), while cognitive learning strategies "operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways to enhance learning" (ibid.). Social/affective strategies are concerned with the control of affect and interaction with the others. In another classification, Oxford (1990) makes a distinction between two broad classes of language learning strategies: direct and indirect. Direct language learning strategies deal with "language itself in a variety of specific tasks and situations" (p.14) while indirect learning strategies are for "the general management of learning" (p.15). Direct language learning strategies include memory strategies (for storing and retrieving new information), cognitive strategies (for comprehending and producing language), and compensation strategies (for overcoming gaps in the learner's L2 knowledge). In the indirect category, Oxford refers to metacognitive learning strategies (dealing with the management and coordination of the learning process), affective strategies (concerned with the emotional regulation of second language learning), and social strategies (related to learning through interaction with others). Cohen (1998) has another classification which is to a large extent similar to the one offered by O'Malley and Chamot, (1990).

5. Distance Education and Learning Strategies

The literature on language learning strategy (LLS) studies in distance education is quite scanty and poor. One of the studies that address learning strategies directly is by Morgan et al. (1991). They state that the development of generic skills and deep approached to learning are much valued goals of tertiary education. They also believe that as distance education students are left to their own devices, they may develop learning skills on a trial-and-error basis. Therefore, they should receive special attention in terms of materials and methods. In their study, they introduced a learning strategy called ELP (Evaluative Learning Process) to teach essay writing and evaluated the responses in terms of both student satisfaction and intended ongoing use. A group of 97 adult learners participated, by undertaking a unit of distance study in which the structured study strategy was embedded. Findings indicated that while less experienced learners embraced the strategy with considerable enthusiasm, more experienced learners rejected it if it conflicted with their existing study learning strategies, time constraints or their need for self-direction. It was found that this learning strategy was useful to the degree that it was not imposed upon learners and was introduced early in distance education learners' pathways.

Field Independent (FI) or Field Dependent (FD) students have mostly been a part of cognitive style research. Price and Repman (1995) report that students who are considered FI are more likely to succeed in distance education because of their well developed learning strategies which they independently apply to complex situations. Successful students who had characteristics of field independence also performed better in tele-courses. These students also had a greater internal locus of control characterized by the belief that ability and effort determine personal achievement rather than situational factors or luck (Biner et al, 1995).

Bernt and Bugbee (cited in Schlosser & Anderson, 1994), examined two types of study strategies used by distance students: primary, cognitive strategies, such as active listening, and secondary, affective strategies, such as ability to work independently of the instructor. As expected, the researchers found that students who passed their courses differed significantly in primary strategies from those who failed, i.e., in test-wiseness, concentration, and time management skills. They found little difference among them in secondary strategies: active learning, diligence, and positive attitude.

6. Theory of Personality Types

Personality typing is a way by which one's preferences in life and doing activities is determined . The concept of personality types goes back to the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung (1923). He suggested that human behavior was not random, but rather predictable, and as a result, classifiable. He referred to this as the *typology of individual*. Jung believed that differences in behavior were the result of preferences (Kroeger and Theusen, 1988). These preferences are formed early in life and provide the key attributes for our personalities. Jung wrote extensively on function types of perceiving and judging, each with its own components: Sensing (S), Intuition (N), Thinking (T), and Feeling (F). Jung also focused on the attitude types of Extraversion (E) and Introversion (I), (Hughes, 1994). Functions related to the way we experience the world (perceiving function) or make decisions (judging function). Each of these functions has its own sub-categories: perceiving function will include sensing and intuition, while judging function includes thinking and feeling.

Basing their work on Jung's model, Katharine C. Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, built a model to classify behavioral preferences. The result of their work is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a questionnaire or indicator that reports preferences. The combination of the functions and attitudes will result in 16 personality types in Myers-Briggs instrument, which show preference of consistency scores for certain qualities associated with that type (Ehrman, 1996).

Myers-Briggs posited four bipolar scales "in which an individual is assumed to have a preference on the one side or the other" (Ehrman, 1996: 97) resulting in 16 possible combinations or types.

The bipolar scales and their abbreviations are:

- Extroversion (E) – Introversion (I)
- Sensing (S) – Intuition (N)
- Thinking (T) – Feeling (F)
- Judging (J) – Perceiving (P)

The following table, taken from Ehrman (1996) summarizes the characteristics of the four MBTI scales.

Table 1: Characteristics of the four MBTI scales

Extroversion	***Introversion***	***Thinking***	***Feeling***
Outside world Action Interaction Gregarious Seeks to find stimulation Impulsive Auditory Talkative Likes study groups	Internal world Introspection Concentration A few people at a time Seeks to manage or reduce stimulation Analytic Visual Reflective and constrained Likes to work alone	Head Seeking objectivity Logical Truth Fair Expresses criticism Analytic Cost beneficial	Heart Values subjectivity Values Tact Harmony Expresses appreciation Global Like-dislike
Sensing	***Intuition***	***Judging***	***Perceiving***
Relatively direct from five senses Physical world Sequential Experience Specifics Detail What is concrete	Further processed before becoming conscious Meaning Random Inspiration Generalization Big picture What is abstract	Planned Closure Decisions Sequential Conscientious Product Seeks certainty	Open-ended Flexibility Random Autonomy Process Tolerance of ambiguity

The combination of the four bipolar scales, as it was pointed out, will result in 16 personality types, summarized in table 2. Each abbreviation indicates a certain type. For instance, ESTJ is an extroverted sensing thinking judging type, while INFP will refer to an introverted intuitive feeling perceiving type.

Table 2: The sixteen personality types resulting from the four bipolar scales:

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ESFJ	ESTJ

6.1 Personality in Distance Education

An analysis of learner characteristics is a significant issue because it helps to show how the learners handle the feelings that are evoked during the learning process, what kind of motivation they bring to the

learning task, as well as personal values, beliefs and attitudes related to learning; whether they prefer to work alone or in groups, and the kind of relationship the learner prefers to have with the teacher and other learners. These are all key factors in the learning process. The learner's personality types as well as these various emotional factors form the affective side of a learner's total learning style.

Much attention has consequently been given to delineating the unique characteristics of the distance learner as well. Individual personalities and preferences discernible among students are as diverse as their profiles and rationales for enrolling in an educational program delivered at a distance. These include: physical distance, introverted personality, flexibility, self-starter, schedule conflicts, simple curiosity, preference for reading, ability to handle ambiguity, preference for distance education and the open door policy of some institutions offering degrees via distance delivery. Distance education modalities have created many assumptions about the characteristics of distance learners.

Distance students are probably autonomous and self-directed, and need less interaction with the instructor or tutor than students who are dependent on being given more formal direction, encouragement, and feedback. Good self-directed independent learners can chart a personal course of study, collect resources, conduct independent research, and engage in self -evaluation. They have, at least, the potential to be self-directing learners. Some researchers like Sheets (1992) tend to agree with many of these assumptions and suggest that there are identifiable differences between the characteristics of students who learn at a distance and those that chose classroom based instruction. Yet others (e.g., Gibson 1990) suggest that there are no significant differences between students engaged in a course of study delivered at a distance and the traditional classroom learner. Considering any difference or not, it is claimed that personality traits are expressed in learning styles, which are in turn reflected in learning strategies, which eventually produce a certain learning outcome(De Raad & Schouwenburg , 1996).

Halsne and Gatta (2002), however, compared the learning styles and strategies of community college students who enrolled in an off campus online course (via the Internet) and those who were taking the same course on-campus to shed more light on the controversy mentioned above. They concluded that online learners had several distinguishing characteristics and they were predominately visual learners. Lynch (1996) also found that successful distance education

students tend to have an internal locus of control, work harder than on-campus students, are more likely to be extraverted-sensing-thinking-judging personality types, are field-independent, and think more abstractly, are more emotionally stable, more trusting, and more controlled than their on-campus peers. Moreover, Moore (1991) hypothesized that persons who enroll in a correspondence or independent study program would have particular psychological characteristics (see also Moeller (2000) for his study on temperament types, communication styles, and learning styles of adult learners in non-traditional classrooms, and Jahan (2000) who conducted a study to determine the differences between distance and conventional learners in terms of their style, motivational level and attitude to distance education and found that there was a significant difference between the types of learning styles used by Bangladeshi distance education learners and those in the conventional system).

However, Willén (1988), undertaking an extensive study of distance students at Swedish universities, felt that her data showed that there were few essential differences between ordinary adult students and adult students studying at a distance.

> 'The foundation of (Moore's) theory, that distance students choose this kind of teaching because they have special personal qualities, is not corroborated by surveys. Distance teaching is mainly chosen for practical reasons e.g. inability to move to the university town due to factors connected with work, family circumstances and so on.' (Willén, 1988: 75)

As it was already pointed out, the present study also aims to see if specific personality types choose distance education system and in case they do, whether there is any relationship between the personality types and language learning strategies of distance learners. Our findings will hopefully reveal if there is any difference between distance and non-distance language learners.

7. Method

The participants were selected from among senior students studying for a B.A. degree in English at Payam Nour University (PNU) which was established as the only distance education institute in Iran. Since its establishment, this university has played a leading and vital role in the development of higher education in Iran. PNU can

be called the largest state university in the country with over 250,000 students enrolled in about 220 study centers all over the country. After many efforts the final sample size turned out to be 333.

The selection procedure started with the random selection of a number of Payam Nour University centers. Then from every English department of these centers, a number of senior classes were selected and the instruments were distributed among the students of those classes. To measure our subjects' use of language learning strategy, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was used. SILL was developed on the basis of Oxford's classification of learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). It has two different versions: an eighty-item version intended for speakers of English learning as a foreign language, and a fifty-item version – labeled Version 7.0— for learners of English as a second/foreign language. Reliability of various forms of the SILL is .93-.98, depending largely on whether the students take the SILL in their own language or in a foreign language (Oxford & Ehrman 1995).

To identify the type of personality of the subjects, Myers-Briggs Test was used as a personality indicator. Myers-Briggs personality type indicator (MBTI) is a 93-item instrument which divides people into 16 main personality types. Depending on their answers to Myers-Briggs questions, candidates are assigned one of the 16 types. These questionnaires were completed by the subjects in their class sessions. They were told that if stayed over each question longer than a few seconds, it might bias their answers.

Since, this study examined the relationship between two independent variables, that is, personality types, and gender as a moderator variable and one dependent variable, namely, language learning strategies, and the researchers did not have any control over the independent variables through some form of treatment, it does have an *ex-post-facto* design. Therefore, the statistical procedures were carried out at overall and category levels. A combination of ANOVAs, post-hoc tests, T-tests, and eta tests were conducted on SPSS.

8. Analyses and Results

Table 2: Subjects (male or female), styles and numbers

Gender	Personality	Number of Subjects
Female	ISTJ	58
	ISFJ	29
	ESTJ	92
	ESFJ	26
	ENTJ	14
	Total	**219**
Male	ISTJ	12
	ISFJ	5
	ESTJ	14
	ESFJ	6
	ENTJ	7
	Total	**44**

E: Extraversion I: Introversion
S: Sensing N: Intuition
T: Thinking F: Feeling
J: Judging P: Perceiving

According to Myers-Briggs type indicator there are sixteen personality types. But after our data collection, it was found that the majority of our informants had only the following types: ISTJ, ISFJ, INTJ, INTP, ESTP, ESFP, ENTP, ESTJ, ESFJ, ENFJ, and ENTJ[1]. At the same time among those personality types, for only five of them we had enough number of subjects which were ISTJ, ISFJ, ESTJ, ESFJ,

[1] E: Extraversion F: Feeling I: Introversion J: Judging
N: Intuition P: Perceiving S: Sensing T: Thinking

and ENTJ as shown in table 2. Other subjects and other personality types were therefore excluded from the analyses.
In order to see if there is any significant difference in the strategy use of the subjects with different types of personality, a two-way ANOVA was run; and as shown in table 3, there is a statistically significant difference in strategy use of the subjects with different types of personality.

Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects effects for LLS, Personality type, and gender: (Dependent Variable: TOTAL)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Critical f
Corrected Model	19.718(a)	9	2.191	10.902	.000	
Intercept	1340.368	1	1340.368	6669.996	.000	
GENDER	7.252	1	7.252	**36.087**	.000	**3.89**
PERSONAL	4.778	4	1.195	5.945	.000	2.42
GENDER * PERSONAL	4.014	4	1.003	4.993	.001	2.42
Error	50.842	253	.201			
Total	2793.200	263				
Corrected Total	70.560	262				

A R Squared = .279 (Adjusted R Squared = .254)

The F ratio for personality type (5.945) is larger than the critical value of 2.42; therefore, there is a significant difference in the use of LLS according to the personality types. A critical value of 3.89 or larger is needed to find a significant difference in the use of LLS according to gender. Our ratio for gender (36.087) is larger than the required critical value of F and this means that there is a significant difference in the use of LLS between females and males. Moreover, the F ratio for the interaction of personality type and gender (4.993) is also larger than the critical value of F (2.42), thus this interaction is significant as well.

Now we need to know what factor, personality type or gender, has the most influence. Moreover, to get a better interpretation that how much variance is left unaccounted for, we used the following procedure to find an estimate of the strength of the relationship. Since the effects for personality type, gender, and the interaction of these two were significant in the ANOVA, we found the strength of relationship for all of them by using the eta relationship of SPSS, shown in table 4.

Table 4: The strength of the relationship

Source	Eta squared	Percent of Variance
Personality	.209	**20.9**
Gender	.102	**10.2**
Personality by Gender	.056	**5.6**
Residual	.6329	63.29
Total	.9999	99.99

Personality type accounts for much more of the variance, 21 percent. The strength of that relationship for gender is almost 10 percent. The interaction of personality type and gender accounts for about 6 percent of the variance. As it is obvious, compared to gender, personality had a more significant effect on the selection of learning strategies. Having a general picture of the effects of personality types and gender, in order to find out whether males did better on the SILL or females, we compared the mean scores of both genders on the SILL.

Table 5: Mean Scores of both genders on the SILL

Gender	Mean	Std. Error	t-observed	t-critical
male	**3.5432**	.45104	**5.13**	1.96
female	**3.1521**	.50777		

As shown in table 5, the male subjects with a mean score of 3.5432 did better on the SILL than our female subjects with a mean of 3.1521. A T-Test was run to see if the difference was significant. Since t-observed of 5.13 was larger than t-critical of 1.96, we could conclude that males did better than females on the SILL significantly.

To find out on what categories each personality type is stronger, the performances of all the subjects with the specific personality type of ISTJ, ISFJ, ESTJ, ESFJ, and ENTJ were also compared on each of the six subparts of the SILL. The results of this analysis that was carried out based on the Two-Way ANOVA technique are reported in table 6.

As the table indicates according to the bolded F ratios, there is a statistically significant difference between the performances of the subjects with different types of personality on subparts of A, D, and E of the SILL.

Table 6: Personality by all strategy categories

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PART **A**	Gender	4.168	1	4.168	14.352	.000
	Personality	10.196	4	2.549	**8.776**	.000
	Gender * Personality	10.473	4	2.618	9.015	.000
PART **B**	Gender	14.703	1	14.703	36.225	.000
	Personality	3.355	4	.839	2.06	.005
	Gender * Personality	3.727	4	.932	2.295	.002
PART **C**	Gender	4.394	1	4.394	10.505	.001
	Personality	3.872	4	.968	2.314	.05
	Gender * Personality	2.263	4	.566	1.353	.002
PART **D**	Gender	6.046	1	6.046	18.633	.000
	Personality	4.632	4	1.158	**3.569**	.007
	Gender * Personality	2.335	4	.584	1.799	.002
PART **E**	Gender	3.093	1	3.093	6.782	.01
	Personality	9.169	4	2.292	**5.026**	.001
	Gender * Personality	6.616	4	1.654	3.626	.007
PART **F**	Gender	11.248	1	11.248	17.557	.000
	Personality	6.018	4	1.505	2.349	.05
	Gender * Personality	9.979	4	2.495	3.894	.004
TOTAL	Gender	7.252	1	7.252	36.087	.000
	Personality	4.778	4	1.195	**5.945**	.000
	Gender * Personality	4.014	4	1.003	4.993	.001

Part A: Memory Strategies Part B: Cognitive strategies
Part C: Compensatory Strategies Part D: Part MetacognitiveStrategies
Part E: affective Strategies Part F: Social Strategies

We ran post hoc Scheffe tests for each part to find out the performance of which personality types differed significantly on the SILL (summarized in table 7). The results revealed that the students with personality types of ESTJ outperformed all other types on Memory section. Subjects with ESTJ personality type outperformed those with ISTJ and ISFJ personality type on the Metagonitive section of the SILL. Subjects with personality type of ESTJ and ENTJ outperformed those with ISTJ, ISFJ, and ESFJ personality type on the Affective subpart of the SILL. The students with personality type of ESTJ and ENTJ outperformed those with ISFJ and ISTJ personality type on overall language learning strategies.

Table 7: Personality types and strategies

Memory	**ESTJ**	**ISTJ>**		**ISFJ**	**ENTJ**
	ESFJ				
Metacognitive		**ESTJ>**	**ISTJ**	**ISFJ**	
Affective		**ESTJ**	**ENTJ>**	**ISTJ**	**ISFJ**
	ESFJ				
Overall		**ESTJ**	**ENTJ>**	**ISFJ**	**ISTJ**

Discussion and conclusion

This study explored the possible effects of personality type and gender on the use of language learning strategies of distance learners at Payam Nour University. The conclusions based on the major findings are as follows:

Interestingly we found that there were only a few personality types among our subjects: meaning that people of these personality types are more apt to choose distance education system. The personality types of the subjects that were randomly selected from Payam Nour University students were only limited to five types out of those sixteen types that MBTI would indicate. It can be said that probably most of the people with these five personality types are interested in distance education. These five types in decreasing order of frequency are: ESTJ> ISTJ> ISFJ> ESFJ> and ENTJ. Other types might be available in distance education but their number is very low.

Those with ESTJ personality types (N=106) are the most interested ones in distance education. As we found students with ESTJ personality type are students that can manage their own learning and they try their best to find the best and quickest way to learning. We can suggest that they can be autonomous and independent learners and can be good distance learners. To become autonomous learners,

however, they need certain tools and support. The determining role of learning strategies in this regard is undeniable. These type of students should be encouraged to develop their autonomy by taking on the roles of teachers in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning process. As noticed metacognive strategies are strategies that involve planning and thinking about learning, such as planning one's learning, monitoring one's own speech or writing, and evaluating how well one has done. We can suggest that these students with ESTJ personality type should try to improve their metacognitive strategies as much as possible. As our study showed they scored the highest on the metacognitive strategies category and they can be good distance learners.

Students with ESFJ personality type scored after ESTJ on the SILL and most of its subparts. This indicates that the following guidelines might help these students as well. Their number is not very high compared to ESTJ personality type. Interestingly they scored the lowest on affective strategies after those with ISFJ personality type. As we remember the affective strategies were those strategies that aid learners to gain control over a number of factors such as emotions, attitudes, motivations, values, etc. We can suggest that students with ESFJ personality type need to be more encouraged and motivated. All these go back to one thing that students entering distance education system should be well informed of this system and its policies. They also should know themselves, their own characteristics as well as learning strategies.

Students with ENTJ personality type were the only type that scored the best on the SILL. We can say that they are the best learning strategy users. In metacognitive strategy category they scored after students with ESTJ personality type. These types of students also can be good distance learners only if they focus more on their metacognive strategies. Interestingly as we noticed these learners can be very successful in distance education due to their good ability in their learning strategies. Their personality type also suggests that they can find the best procedures to their learning. Also they enjoy planning and goal setting which both are necessary in distance education system.

Our subjects with ISFJ personality type scored the lowest on the SILL and surprisingly on all its subparts. This indicates they should try more to improve their learning strategies. It is suggested to make them aware of the learning strategies they use and encourage and support them to improve their learning strategies specially their

metacognitive strategies which is a need in distance education system. Their characteristics indicate that they are good for distance education system since they are ready to be responsible for their own learning. Also they are firm and steady in achieving their goals whatever the obligations. Only what they need is improving their learning strategies and of course strategy training is one of the best ways.

As the results show the students consciously employed a variety of language learning strategies with moderate frequency. They chose metacognitive strategies as most frequently used, whereas, they possibly avoided, or were unaware of how to apply, affective strategies. The most frequent use of metacognitive strategies probably reflects the efforts of learners to overcome the limitation of support of instructors. In conventional education, the teacher is in a position to take care of planning, monitoring, and evaluating (the three main components) the learning process, or, at least, make sure that students do it by themselves; whereas the very indispensable feature of geographical gap in distance education, totally or partially deprives the learners of this valuable source. Since in our study metacognive strategy occupied the top position, we can be rather confident that the students of Paym Nour University have overcome this limitation.

Affective, metacognitive, and social strategy categories are considered as indirect strategies. According to Oxford (1992), these strategies are used to manage the process of language learning and save a number of functions such as focusing, organizing, guiding, checking, correcting, coaching, and encouraging the learner. As a matter of fact, the main pedagogical purpose of these indirect strategies is to enable the learners to gradually develop autonomy in learning activities (Oxford 1992). Since autonomy is the most important issue in distance education, distance learners should try to improve these strategies. As the results show, metacognitive strategy has got an acceptable attention, but affective strategies have got the least. It shows that students should try to develop this category and they should be more encouraged and motivated. As Schmeck (1988) believes affective strategies should be developed to enhance the use of metacognitive strategies. According to him by fostering learners' self-esteem, it is possible to enhance their use of metacognitive strategies.

A number of studies based on the SILL have found significant gender differences around the globe, with females usually reporting more strategy use than males. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that females who took the SILL reported using strategies far more often than did

males. Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found significant gender differences on the SILL in favor of women.

The findings of this study supported the assumption that there is a relationship between gender difference and the choice of strategies. A significant difference was found between males and females in the use of strategies in this study. But surprisingly, contrary the previous studies, males showed greater use of strategies than females. A first assumption in this respect is that the nature of gender effect is different in regular and distance educations and because of that our male informants used more strategies.

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