A Systematic Review of Second Language Learning: Trends and Suggestions

Nor Anis Izzati Bt Muhamad Sahlan¹, Zulkifli Osman²*, Anida Sarudin³, Husna Fareedza Mohamed Redzwan⁴

¹,²,³,⁴ Fakulti Bahasadan Komunikasi, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris
¹anisizzatiz21@gmail.com, ²zulkifli@fbk.upsi.edu.my, ³anida@fbk.upsi.edu.my, ⁴husna.fareedza@fbk.upsi.edu.my

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Abstract: This paper aims to investigate trends and suggestions related to second language pedagogical strategies. A total of 31 articles from both leading (Scopus and Taylor & Francis) and alternative (Google Scholar and MyCite) databases were selected and analysed. In answering the research question, the present study adopts the systematic literature review (SLR) method by incorporating in-depth Evaluation of past studies from 2015 to 2020. Therefore, the research divides second language pedagogical strategies into four trends, namely computer-assisted language learning, module-assisted language learning, student-centred language learning styles and teacher-centred language learning. The findings indicate that computer-assisted learning comprising of module creation, e-learning and learning-based games are frequently used as the choice in tandem with the country’s education development. The study hopes that the acquired suggestion strategies are beneficial for stakeholders involved in second language learning education.

Keywords: Second language; learning strategy; Malay language; trend; language ability

1. Introduction

The Malay language is the national language for the people of Malaysia. Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution acknowledges and declares the usage of Malay language as the national and official language of the country.

The Malay language is also the medium of instruction uniting multicultural Malaysia (i.e. Malay, Chinese, Indians, Orang Asli and Sabahan and Sarawakian ethnicities). For races other than Malay, the Malay language is their second language. Despite their varying mother tongue, formal Malay is taught in schools starting from Primary 1 until Form 5. Hence, the mastery of Malay language begins at school, particularly primary school.

The Malay language is a mandatory subject for both primary and secondary schools as stipulated in the Malaysian curriculum. Despite Malaysia adopting a vernacular school system, all schools regardless of background, must put in efforts to teach Malay language spearheaded by teachers. Language pedagogy is of fundamental importance considered at all language practitioners: from teaching interns, trainee-teachers, to trained and professional teachers (Mohamed Redzwan, Bahari, Sarudin and Osman, 2020). In accomplishing a commendable language acquisition structure, Idris et al., (2013), Sarudin et al. (2019a) and Sarudin et al. (2019b) mention the significance of teaching Malay language through scientific processes. Therefore, teachers are expected to grasp language pedagogical strategies in the process of assisting students to acquire the Malay language as their second language (L2), particularly for students who have a different first language. The strategies in learning a second language must take on a distinct strategy as acquiring the first language was a natural process since birth (Osman, Z. et al., 2019; Bakri and Osman, Z., 2017). The latter was acquired through an indirect or informal process (Husin, 1998). The emphasis of Malay language learning to students with Malay as their first language (L1) is different from students with Malay as their second language (L2) (Ellis, 1986). Second language learners (L2) require more attention and systematic methods and activities (Aziz, 2000). Hence, teachers play an essential role in preparing themselves to deliver all expectations of L2 learning in tandem with the advancement of contemporary education (Krashen, 1981).

Language educators have applied various L2 learning strategies, particularly in helping non-native students acquire a second language either in Malay or English language (Shaari et al, 2018; Hassan, 2016; Mahamod, Ab. Ghani, & Wan Mohammad, 2016; Ujai et al., 2017; Yaminuddin & Osman, Z., 2018; Yaminuddin & Osman, Z., 2019; Bakri & Osman, Z., 2018; Bakri & Osman, Z., 2020). In fulfilling the needs of L2 learners, the process requires a learning input and output assisted by teachers (Krashen, 1981 dan Ellis, 1999).

However, this study cites only literature related to strategies in language learning and recommends suggestions on how the teaching and learning process of second language acquisition can be applied in the classroom. This paper aims to fulfil the following research objectives:
A Systematic Review of Second Language Learning: Trends and Suggestions

1. To investigate language learning strategy trends, especially in second language acquisition for the past five years.
2. To recommend learning strategies applicable for teachers to apply in teaching a second language which is the Malay language.

In answering these research objectives, the study adopts a comprehensive research method, namely, systematic literature review (SLR) (Mallett, Hagen-Zanker, Slater, and Duvendack, 2012). SLR formulates a way to evaluate and interpret past research according to sub-topics, research question or research focus (Kitchenhamand Charters, 2007). Besides, the SLR method enables researchers to assess any study in an empirical order and identify any gaps in research inquiry holistically and accurately (Monther, Shuib, Abdul Ghani, Yadegaridehkordi and Alaa, 2017).

Data in the form of selected articles from the year 2015-2020 were taken from two types of databases, namely, leading database (Scopus and Taylor & Francis) and alternative database (Google Scholar and MyCite). All data were analysed through the SLR method to answer the research questions.

2. Methodology

In answering the research question, this research implements the systematic literature review (SLR) method, which incorporates in-depth literature reviews by assessing past studies (Uman, 2011). Referring to Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2019) as a guide, the current study implements a similar four-phase approach namely searching, screening, and eligibility, and query/search, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

In the searching phase, specific keywords were entered in the search engine databases, as explained in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Keyword</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scopus</td>
<td>TITTLE-ABS-KEY (&quot;teaching practices&quot; OR &quot;learning theory&quot; OR &quot;teaching skill&quot; OR &quot;learning design&quot; OR &quot;learning process&quot; OR &quot;strategy learning&quot; OR &quot;strategy teaching&quot;) AND (education OR language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor &amp; Francis</td>
<td>(Teaching practices, learning theory, teaching skill, learning design, learning process, strategy learning, strategy teaching) in education or language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>All-in-title: &quot;strategipembelajaran&quot; (&quot;learning strategy&quot;) OR &quot;strategipengajarandanpembelajaran&quot; (&quot;teaching and learning strategy&quot;) OR &quot;strategipembelajaranbahasa&quot; (&quot;language learning strategy&quot;) OR &quot;strategipengajarandanpembelajaranbahasa&quot; (&quot;language teaching and learning strategy&quot;) OR &quot;amalanpembelajaranbahasa&quot; (&quot;language learning practices&quot;) OR &quot;kaedahpembelajaranbahasa&quot; (&quot;language learning methods&quot;) OR &quot;teknikpembelajaranbahasa&quot; (&quot;language learning techniques&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the keywords in Table 1, a total of 2501 articles were found in the searching phase. Subsequently, the screening process seeks out relevant titles, abstracts and articles related to language learning. The articles’ contents and abstracts were skimmed through in order to select articles which are most suitable to be analysed. The initial number of 2200 articles were screened, and only 301 were selected and accepted to go through the next approach process, which is eligibility.

In the eligibility phase, articles were filtered according to set categories such as publication date, subject matter, and ease of access either able to be accessed directly or not. The articles were carefully inspected, and only 60 articles were listed as potential subjects of research.

The next phase is inclusion. In this phase, only suitable articles were selected through careful screening. A total of 31 articles have complied with the set criterion related to second language acquisition such as Malay and English language. Despite most of the articles being related to English language learning strategies, the same strategies can be applied to Malay language learning. Furthermore, the articles recommend pedagogical strategies that can be applied after identifying the learning trend in a time frame of the latest five years of publication (2015-2020) (Mohamed et al., 2017).
3. Findings

Learning Strategy Trends of Malay as a Second Language

This section discusses the first research question of “What are the language learning strategy trends of Malay as a second language in the past five years?” From the literature review, there are four categories of learning strategy trends, namely, computer-assisted language learning, module-assisted language learning, student-centred language learning styles and teacher-centred language learning.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Among the primary trends in second language learning, L2 is Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Computer technology advancement has enabled education to flourish through maturity of various applications in graphics, video, audio, animation, word processing and many more (Tunde, 2019; Litman, 2018; Jeong, 2017; Nami, Marandi, & Sotoudehnama, 2016). Apart from that, website development is one crucial strategy aiding teachers in language acquisition (Fathi & Ebadi, 2020; Yamirudeng & Osman, 2019). Popular applications of YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Google Classroom made available on computers are used in the digital teaching and learning process of students despite the absence of teachers; the frequency of utilising these applications anytime and anywhere will help improve language acquisition (Bahari, 2020; Rustam & Mengke, 2020; Chiou, at el., 2019; Lee, 2019). Computer-assisted learning, including online and offline games, has helped significantly in amplifying the learning curiosity (Mcneil, 2019; Blume, 2019; Wingate, 2016).

Student-Centred Language Learning Styles

Every student has individual learning styles (LS). According to Dunn and Dunn (1978), LS is a method where one focuses, processes, learns and remembers new and difficult information or skills. LS involves four fundamental processes namely concrete experimentation (CE = feeling), reflective observation (RO = reflecting), abstract conceptualisation (AC = thinking), and active experimentation (AE = acting) (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). From the perspective of creating a learning ecosystem chain, Kolb and Kolb (2017) and Kolb et al. (2014) enlist four important indicators for educators in ensuring a dynamic learning style which includes Facilitator, Subject Expert, Evaluator and Coach. Learning styles refer to how a student adapts to his surroundings in processing, interpreting, and obtaining desired information, knowledge or skills (Perumal et al., 2017). The process of ones learning style is essential in language learning.

Students’ learning styles are also related to the analysis of Oxford’s theoretical framework which divides learning strategies into six major categories that are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies (Hassan, 2016). The students’ learning styles are also student-centred. The teaching and learning process encompasses the participation of students as a whole, assisted by teachers through determining methods and techniques. Such methods and techniques, to name a few, are collaboration, tasks, problem-solving, questioning and quizzes (Bruen, 2017; Huang, 2016). The language learning strategies enable teachers to
observe their students’ behaviour in the classroom (Mahamod et al., 2016; Muhd Zulkifli & Abu Bakar, 2016; Lambri, 2016).

**Teacher-Centred Language Learning**

The articles reviewed highlighted the teacher’s approach to teaching. Effective teachers apply their knowledge by developing the teaching and learning process through planning, implementation and assessments towards children (Abdul Sani & Yunus, 2018). Teaching begins from the understanding of teachers on what to teach and how it should be taught. The processes of before, during and after the teaching and learning are crucial in evaluating the quality of teaching. Such steps help teachers achieve the learning objectives and by the end of the lesson, enable teachers to measure how effective they are on their students.

The way teachers conduct their classroom becomes a strategy in learning language, particularly a second language. Strategies that teachers use in the classroom can assist students in language acquisition (Liviero, 2017). As explained by Wyra & Lawson (2018), most teachers have their meta-strategy; a plan to achieve their teaching and learning objectives. In brief, this meta-strategy sets the desired objectives subsequently lists the actions and approaches required to achieve them.

The focus of teacher’s teaching approach is not about what learning aids are used (i.e. computer) or what learning styles of students, but on how they plan, implement and evaluate the teaching and learning process as a whole (Angeliki et al., 2018). The teacher’s approach is interested in what kind of attitude teachers portray before their students in achieving the learning objectives such as understanding the students’ social background and individual strengths (Smits & Janssenswillen, 2019). The learning strategy of teachers’ approach concerns their involvement in the teaching and learning process.

**Module-Assisted Language Learning**

The use of modules in the teaching and learning process (T&L) could improve the academic prowess of students, especially in language learning (Yamirudeng & Osman, Z., 2018; Yamirudeng & Osman, Z., 2019). The developed modules must adhere to set criteria in order to achieve the desired objectives. In the field of education, institutions are obliged to develop modules for each of the courses taught. (Kormos, 2020). Teachers, on the other hand, are required to tailor specific modules on subjects within their teaching expertise in helping students learn (Wilcox, Gray, & Reiser, 2020). The modules are developed in assisting language acquisition of students, according to sub-topics (Najah, Rohmah, & Susilo, 2019).

Since designing modules are time-consuming, many issues need to be factored in. The evaluation system must be designed before such modules are applied to students to test their effectiveness (Yamirudeng & Osman, Z., 2018). The approaches of teachers in the context of students’ learning styles must be assimilated in the module.

The language learning strategy trends can be referred to in past research, as illustrated in Figure 2. In summary, computers are the most applied language learning strategy to date and the number one choice in the field of contemporary education, followed by students’ learning styles. Both trends centralise around student-centred learning. The remaining two learning strategies of module-assisted language learning and teacher-centred language learning both revolve around the experience and skills of teachers.

![Figure 2. Number of included articles by trends in L2 learning](image-url)
Learning Strategy Suggestions in Malay as a Second Language

This section deliberates on the second research question, “What are the strategies applied by teachers in instructing a second language, that is the Malay language?” From the assessment of articles, there are several suggestions highlighted. Among the suggestions is the frequency of the use of computers in the teaching and learning process observed from the development of modules, e-learning and learning-based games.

Development of Second Language (L2) Modules

Some of the reviewed articles suggest the utilisation of computer applications designed into attractive modules for language learning. Computer applications entice interests of students hence eases the teaching and learning process of a second language (Fathi & Ebadi, 2020; Yang & Kuo, 2020; Rustam & Mengke, 2020; Bahari, 2020). These articles recommend the frequent use of suitable computer applications in second language learning solely because of the technological appeal computers possess to pique the interest of students (Fathi & Ebadi, 2020).

The computer-assisted language learning strategy brings about benefits and improves the teacher’s teaching process (Fathi & Ebadi, 2020). Its function is holistic in the sense that there are applications which can focus on the development of students and at the same time assist in collaborations with teachers. Even though the practice of computer-assisted learning is not new, its function is never outdated as it evolves parallel with technological advancement (Rustam & Mengke, 2020).

Application of Digital Language Learning

The articles evaluated propose that second language learning (L2) should be implemented through a digital platform or better known as e-learning. The usage of computers is not to be limited to producing animation and graphics but should encompass all aspects of communication including e-learning (Tunde, 2020; Lee, 2019; Chiou et al., 2019). The advancement of computer-enhanced learning keeps on developing with prominent applications important to human edutainment such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Classroom, Zoom, Instagram and many others (Lee, 2019). Students are familiar with applications because they are easily accessed and do not require any subscription. Teachers have utilised these applications as their media of disseminating lessons not limited to the classroom but outside of class as well. The applications of today are distinctive than the restricted applications of yesterday which were limited to functions of Microsoft, video and audio playing and graphics only.

Besides, applications like AntConc could improve writing skills assisted by computers (Tunde, 2019). Educators have developed education programmes native to language acquisition as platforms in assisting students. Despite the extended time taken to produce such programmes, the students’ receptions are nothing short of outstanding and show admirable interest in Learning (Bahari, 2020). The evaluation process, being an essential factor in identifying the student’s understanding of an assessed skill, is convenient through computers (Litman et al., 2018). Such factors warrant why computer-assisted learning is compatible with students.

Learning Language Using Games

The articles under review also evoke the importance of learning-based games being given primary priority corresponding with the technology-dependent education. The interest of students is always heightened and sustainably maintained as they gradually learn a second language (Mcneil, 2019; Blume, 2019; Wingate, 2016). In assisting learning new vocabularies, word games challenge the ability of students to seek meanings of words initiated by teachers (Mcneil; 2019).

In brief, language learning strategies extracted from previous research are shown in Figure 2. To summarise, module development is frequently used when involving technology as it is less complicated compared to e-learning and learning-base games which require multi-skills specific in their development.
4. Discussion

This research analyses 31 articles from two sources of databases, namely leading database (Scopus and Taylor & Francis) and alternative database (Google Scholar and MyCite) published from 2015 to 2020. The findings suggest that there are several types of learning strategy trends in second language learning applied by educators in assisting students. The learning strategy trend is applied according to need, competency and capability of students (Lee, 2019; Osman J. et al., 2018; and Baharudin et al., 2015). The learning trends are categorised as computer-assisted language learning, teacher-centred language learning, module-assisted language learning and student-centred language learning styles. The frequency of each strategy trends is identified by the numbers of articles applying such strategies. 13 out of 31 articles applied computers or technology as their learning medium. Findings indicate that the application of computers involves the development of e-learning modules and learning-based games, which is significantly relevant in current education development. In addition, the country’s education system is embracing the 21st century’s progressive direction, which highlights student-centred Learning and facilitation rather than traditional teacher-centred Learning. Therefore, the learning process should be designed in a student-friendly manner by way of the 21st-century education foundation that encourages collaboration and higher-order thinking skills (KPM, 2012).

In conclusion, as previously discussed, the trends and suggestions of Malay language learning strategies as a second language could be beneficial for educators in applying the most suitable strategy when dealing with students of various backgrounds.

5. Conclusion

This research adopts the SLR method, which enables Evaluation and interpretation of previous papers divided according to topics, research question or research focus (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007). This study envisages that it could be a guideline for other researchers interested in furthering their academic exploration in language learning strategies of Malay language as a second language.

References


**Appendix**

**Included Articles By The Trending and Authors Suggestion of Second Language Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Num.</th>
<th>Title of article</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Language learning strategy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exploring EFL pre-service teachers’ adoption of technology in a CALL program: obstacles, motivators and maintenance</td>
<td>Fathi, J and Ebadi, S (2020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>review of studies on technology-enhanced language learning and teaching</td>
<td>Rustam, S and Mengke, Y (2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preparing EFL student teachers with new technologies in the Korean context, computerassisted language learning</td>
<td>Jeong, K. O. (2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CALL teacher professional growth through lessonstudy practice: an investigation into EFL teachers’ perceptions. computer assisted language learning,</td>
<td>Nami, F., Marandi, S. S., &amp; Sotoudehnama, E. (2016)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Implementing digital game-enhanced pedagogy: supportive and impeding language</td>
<td>Mcneil, L. (2019)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>New teaching strategies from student teachers’ pedagogical conceptual change in CALL</td>
<td>Yang, Y.F. and Kuo, N.C. (2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pre-schoolers with developmental speech and/or language impairment: efficacy of the teaching early literacy and language (TELL) curriculum</td>
<td>Wilcox, M.J., Gray, S. and Reiser, M. (2020)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Specific learning difficulties in second language learning and teaching</td>
<td>Kormos, J. (2020)</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Malay language teaching and learning strategy</td>
<td>Osman, J., Mohamad, J.B.,</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Authors/References</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Learning of Malay language as a second language among students of a Tamil school</td>
<td>Perumal@Pormalu, S., Kamaruddin, R., Muthusamy, P., Mohamad Bahari, A. &amp; Mansor, H.H (2017)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Malay language learning styles and strategies among French students</td>
<td>Hassan, R. (2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Language learning strategies for reading comprehension: assessing the strategy use of young adults at beginners’ level taking Chinese, German, Japanese or Spanish as foreign languages at university</td>
<td>Bruen, J. (2017)</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Student centered learning in teaching and learning of Bahasa Melayu in public university: implementation and acceptance students</td>
<td>Lambri, A. (2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Teachers on the teaching and learning programs in students.</td>
<td>Abdul Sani, N. and Yunus, F. (2018)</td>
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