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The Effect of Culture and Gender on English Learning Strategies: The Case of Tunisian and German Learners

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ABSTRACT

This work presents the results of a comparative study into the learning strategies of two student populations in tertiary education. Subjects for the study were sixty university students belonging to the same discipline but from two different countries. Thirty students were from Tunisia, and the other thirty were from Germany. Both populations were registered in the first year Master's degree of Business Administration during the 2016/2017 academic year. Oxford's (1989) Language Learning Strategies Inventory was distributed to these students in their respective home countries. The study revealed key differences in learning strategy preferences showing a higher impact of culture and identity rather than discipline in determining learning strategies. Whereas, Tunisian learners relied more on memory, metacognitive, and affective strategies, German learners were more likely to use compensation strategies most. Significant differences were found in Tunisian and German males and females' strategy use. Implications of the study for instructors are presented and discussed.

Keywords: English language learning, learning strategies, Business English, culture, gender.

INTRODUCTION

Many studies on language learning have often established a link between learning strategies and successful language learners (Oxford, 1999; Slobin, 1993). The present work tackles what variables among discipline, culture, and gender are responsible for the selection of given strategies, bearing in mind that no learning strategy is better than the other, but rather a harmonious combination between instructional methods and learning strategies can help the language leaner be more efficient in their learning (Oxford, 2003). To this end, two populations from the same discipline in tertiary education yet from two different cultures were explored.

The approach to teaching and learning of English in Tunisia and Germany seems to be different. English is taught as a foreign language in Tunisia. Despite its importance as the main language for international communication, students at the tertiary level who learn English as a required module do not invest much time and effort learning it. Most often these students graduate with poor English skills. This often decreases recruitment opportunities for them. When they happen to be recruited, their employers often have to invest time and money to train them in English to be able to communicate in the workplace. In Germany, English is taught as the first

foreign language, and German learners of English seem to have built a tradition of autonomy in learning this language (Konigs, 2003). Being aware of the importance of English in the academic and professional field, Germans have adopted curriculum reform since the 1970's by increasing the availability of schoolbooks, training manuals, and research reports in English rather than German (Berns et al., 2007).

The present study has two main objectives. First, it seeks to compare the learning strategies of two student populations from two different cultural backgrounds yet in the same discipline: Tunisian and German Business Administration students studying English as a required module in their respective home countries. The main aim behind this is to explore the converging and diverging strategy use of these two populations. Such an exploration will help explain whether culture or discipline determines strategy use and, therefore, serves as an important link in the cultivation of identity, autonomy (Murray, 2011), and learning. Second, the study highlights what language teachers should know about the way students think when learning a language. This will help find more efficient teaching methods adapted to the learners' way of learning.

To the best of my knowledge, no research investigating the learning strategies of Tunisian and foreign, and more particularly German, learners has been conducted. In order to meet the objectives previously mentioned, the project aims to answer the following research questions:

- Are the Tunisian and German learners' learning strategies similar or different?
- Do females and males of the two nationalities differ in their learning strategy use?

Theoretical Framework

This section introduces the importance of language learning strategies in foreign language learning. It also draws on some previous studies related to the learning strategies used by both Tunisian and German learners of English.

English learning is an ongoing process that does not depend only on classroom instruction but rather on how far a learner is capable of being responsible for, and autonomous in, their own learning. In this sense, language learning strategies help learners be autonomous in their learning of the target language (Chen & Pan, 2015; Oxford, 1999). Learning strategies are "behaviors learners engage in to regulate the learning of a second language" (Rubin & Wenden, 1987, p. 6). Scharle and Szabó (2008) suggest that "learning strategies serve as tools to improve one's language competence, and learners can really only be held responsible for their competence if they are aware of these tools" (p. 53). For Oxford (2003), together with styles, "strategies are among the main factors that help determine how–and how well–our students learn a second or foreign language" (p. 1). In fact, a good use of language learning strategies helps a successful communicator in the target language save time, effort, and money (Solak, 2014).

However, although language learning strategies are among the strongest assets that determine successful language learning, they are not easily detected by the teachers (Martinez, 1996). Different factors have been reported to affect language learning strategies. Such factors include age (Khezrlou 2012; Oxford & Erhman, 1995), gender (Božinovic, 2011; Chang, 2011; Khalil, 2005; Khamkhien, 2010), discipline (Chang, 2011), culture (Khamkhien, 2010; Oxford &

Nyikos, 1989), experience with language learning (Kostic-Bobanovic & Bobanovic, 2010), and field of work (Ayachi, 2015).

To this end, Oxford (1989), one of the most prominent figures in developing the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) scale, presents six sub-categories that can be labeled as direct and indirect. The direct strategies involve a) cognitive, which allows the language learner to process information directly through reasoning, analyzing, note taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, and practicing; b) memory, which helps make connections with one L2 item or concept; and c) compensation strategies, which enable the learner to make up for knowledge gaps, through guessing, gesturing, etc. The indirect strategies include: a) metacognitive, which entails identifying one's learning style, planning, collecting and organizing resources, and evaluating one's learning to manage the learning process; b) affective strategies include identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self talk; and c) social strategies, which help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language (Oxford, 1999, pp. 12-14).

Previous research findings into English learning strategies have been consistent with the conclusion that policy makers, teachers, and students do not seem to share the same learning purposes due to conflicting goals (Ishler, 2011; Smaoui & Essefi, 2015). This might be one of the reasons that explain the lack of proficiency of the Tunisian learners in their English communication. In fact, policy makers and teachers seem to be too slow to implement changes that align with the learners' needs. Ishlers' (2011) findings revealed that EFL Tunisian learners "use specific cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective learning strategies to facilitate the listening comprehension process" (p. 15). However, when these strategies come to be ignored by the teachers, the learning process is hindered. On the other hand, Tunisian learners seem to transfer their L1 learning strategies to English learning (Arfi & Hannachi, 2016). Such an undertaking seems to hinder good learning due to the "mismatch between the two systems of language" (p. 405).

Elsewhere, Tunisian learners showed some sense of autonomy, which often helps them "select and make use of appropriate learning strategies" (Ounis, 2016, p. 891). Tunisian learners also seemed to use social strategies revealed by cooperative learning as reported by Shafaei (2010). In fact, pair and group work seemed to have a lot of benefits for the learning of English for students of Basic education as it helped develop their cognitive abilities through promoting positive attitudes towards English and peer learning. Besides, group and pair work helped lower the affective filter thanks to the relaxing and friendly atmosphere brought about through such collaboration.

However, Tunisian learners still seem to select the wrong learning strategies required for efficient learning. In fact, Tunisian students seem to use the same reading strategies for different types of texts while they lack the metacognitive strategies required to deal with the reading process as far as science and technology research articles are concerned (Dhieb-Hnia, 2003). This seems to be the normal outcome of the use of the traditional teaching methodologies (Smaoui & Essefi, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, the educational stakeholders seem to half-heartedly implement the use of learning strategies in the official program. In fact, in examining the official curriculum of grade 6 and 9 of Basic education and grade 3 of Secondary education in Tunisia, Ata Allah (2016) found that although the official programs included activities that alluded to the use of affective strategies, there was no clear guidelines that helped implement these strategies required for collaboration and emotion engagement in the learning process.

Contrarily, the German educational system seems to implement a valuable asset that values a "strong collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and other social partners who also work together on adjusting curricula" (OECD, 2014).

As far as English language strategies are concerned, it seems that German learners of English display a certain awareness of the learning process which is helpful in learning the target language. According to Rampillon and Zimmermann (1997, in Klein, 2002, p. 39), the "awareness" notion covers four subcategories: 1) "language awareness" (relating to meta-cognitive reflections on language learning), 2) "linguistic awareness" (covering linguistic knowledge and linguistic skills), 3) "communicative awareness" (including communication strategies, strategies concerning mime and body language, discourse strategies, dominance strategies, and the ability to interpret and implement these strategies), and 4) "learning awareness" (relating to the knowledge of the ways language is mentally processed and inference strategies). Viewing the importance of language awareness, similar to Britain, Germany integrated the concepts of language awareness, learning, and communication strategies into teacher/learner training programs (Klein, 2002).

Different studies revealed such awareness in German learners of English. In a study of the learning strategies of German young learners of English in elementary classes, De Leeuw (1997) suggested that these learners demonstrated a broad capacity for reflection on the learning process.

The awareness of language learning has most often been obvious in German learners' use of the cognitive strategy, which helps learners grasp concepts more quickly and efficiently by understanding the inherent relationships between old and new information (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000; Konings, 2003). In her investigation of the acquisition of the English tense and aspect systems by German adult learners, Dürich (2005) found that her participants used cognitive learning strategies revealed by their transfer from their mother tongue (MT) as well as overgeneralizations of target language (TL) rules. A similar finding was also revealed by Solak (2014), who found that contrary to Turkish, Arabic, and Portuguese speakers who use memory strategies in learning English, Germans used cognitive strategies.

It seems then that Tunisian and German learners do use learning strategies. The above studies revealed some common learning strategies used by some students of both nationalities. In fact, although some Tunisian learners sometimes fail to select the right learning strategy for the right skill, (Arfi & Hannachi, 2016; Dhieb Hnia, 2003;), many studies revealed that similar to German learners, they do use cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Ishler, 2011), which according to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) are "special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information" (p. 1). On the other hand, while Tunisian learners are more likely to use socio-affective strategies revealed by their tendency to engage in peer and group work (Shafei, 2010), German learners are more likely to prefer relying on the teacher rather than on their peers (De Leuve, 1997). Besides, German

learners of English display a kind of self awareness of the learning process which helps in the TL learning practice (Klein, 2002).

With regard to a gender effect on learning strategies adoption in EFL, many studies tended to reveal that gender impacted learning strategies. In fact, it was often found that females used strategies more frequently than males (Aslan, 2009; Chang, 2003; Khalil, 2005; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). On the other hand, in an in-company English training context, Ayachi (2015) found that both Tunisian males and females used learning strategies with the same frequency.

Concerning strategy selection, Green and Oxford's (1995) study revealed that female learners tended to use memory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more frequently than male learners. Chang's (2003) findings showed that females used cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, and social strategies significantly more frequently than males. Ching et al. (2007) concluded that females used cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies more frequently than males. Ching et al. (2007) attributed such differences to females' social skills, stronger verbal skills, and greater conformity to academic and linguistic norms (p. 256). However, elsewhere, Keshani and Heidari-Shahreza (2017), in their exploration of gender effect on the use of social strategy, and more particularly the apology strategy, found that there was no statistical significance between Iranian and German EFL learners in the use of an apology strategy. In the Tunisian context, Ayachi (2015) reported that females were more likely to use the affective strategy and the memory strategy, whereas males relied more on the use of cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, and social strategies in their learning.

In the German context, to the researcher's best knowledge, no clear findings were reported about a gender effect on English learning strategies. This posed another gap which the present study attempted to fill. In a nutshell, the present work sought to investigate the learning strategies of students from the same major yet from different cultural backgrounds to check convergent and divergent learning strategies. This will help to have a better picture of the effect of the characteristics of each population on the adoption of specific learning strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A convenient sample of sixty university students majoring in Business Administration from Tunisia and Germany was used for this study. Thirty participants (23 females and 7 males) were from the Higher Institute of Accounting and Business Administration in Tunisia, and the other thirty participants (19 females and 11 males) were from Freiberg University of Mining and Technology in Germany. The age range for the Tunisian population was 22 – 32 (M = 24.53), and 22 – 33 (M= 25.26) for the German students. The respective students' academic level was first year Master's degree in Business Administration. The English learning year range for the Tunisian students was 9 – 14 (M= 12), and that for the German learners was 9-18 (M= 13.16).

Instrument

A questionnaire divided into two sections was used with the participant sample. Section one explores bio data of the participants, including gender, age, nationality, length of time

learning English as a foreign language, and academic level. Section two explores learners' learning strategies through Oxford's (1989, version 7) fifty-item version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) designed for learners of English as a second or a foreign language. The SILL has been widely used and checked for reliability (Oxford & Erhman, 1995). The SILL used in the present study consists of 50 items and is classified into six categories: (a) memory strategy (items 1 to 9), (b) cognitive strategy (items 10 to 23), (c) compensation strategy (items 24 to 29), (d) metacognitive strategy (items 30 to 38), (e) affective strategy (items 39 to 44), and (f) social strategy (items 45 to 50). To assess the learners' learning strategies, a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used whereby 1 refers to no or almost no strategy use (never or almost never), and 5 refers to frequent strategy use (always or almost always).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

In compliance with research ethical practices which require data protection of the individual subjects as well as the free will to participate in a research project or not (Porte, 2010), an approval to conduct research was gained from the teachers and the participants of the respective institutions. The SILL questionnaire was administered by the English teacher to the respective participants during one of the English sessions. The participants were not required to write their names for ethical, privacy, and data reliability concerns. The questionnaire items were coded and entered in an Excel spreadsheet for processing. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages, were carried out to explore the use of language learning strategies pertaining to each population. T-tests as well as a p value of .05 were used to find out whether there was any significant difference between the two sample means in terms of learning strategies. It is important to note that although the sample size of the current study is small, and the number of males and females in both samples is unbalanced, t-test is feasible and can still be validly applied as there is no fundamental objection to using a regular t-test with extremely small sample sizes (de Winter, 2013, p. 6).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays that the mean of overall strategy use is 3.18 for the Tunisian learners, and 3.10 for the German learners which displays an average use of the strategies for the participants of both nationalities. The standard deviation for the Tunisians (1.33), and for the Germans (1.23) is relatively small, which indicates a small divergence in strategies use in both populations.

Table 1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Language Learning Strategy Use

Strategies	**Learners**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Frequency percentage**	
				m<3	**m≥3**

Overall strategy use	Tunisian learners	3. 18	1. 33	31. 12	68. 88
	German learners	3. 10	1. 23	33.33	66. 67

Research Question 1: Are the Tunisian and German learners' learning strategies similar or different?

As can be seen in Table 2, there are significant differences in strategy use between the Tunisian and German learners. In fact, Tunisian learners tend to use by order of importance metacognitive strategy (*M*= 3.41), memory (*M=3*), and affective strategy (*M*=2.83) more frequently than German learners (*M*= 3.10), (*M*= 2.70) and (*M*= 2.45), respectively. German learners, on the other hand, seem to favor a more direct strategy like the compensation strategy (*M*=3.61) over the Tunisian learners (*M*=3.53) (T=.52, p < .00001). A non-significant difference is displayed in the cognitive strategy use. In fact, although Germans have a higher mean use of this strategy (*M*= 3.30) over their Tunisian counterparts (*M*=2.98), the difference is not significant (p=.32).

The respective populations' divergence in strategy use can be explained by different factors. Tunisian learners seem to share the memory strategy use with Turkish and Arab learners as revealed by Solak (2014). Such use of memory strategy can be explained by the fact that starting from primary school, students in Tunisia rely heavily on memory in learning different subjects. Such subjects include history, geography, religious education, more particularly the Koran, and civil education. On the other hand, the present German learners seem to use more direct strategies like compensation strategies. Such reliance on compensation strategy reveals an attempt to make up for gaps in linguistic resources (Oxford, 1999), and this can be carried out through different ways like guessing and gesturing. This partially contradicts studies about the type of direct strategies adopted by German natives as revealed by common trend studies (De Leeuw, 1997; Dürich, 2005; Konigs, 2003; Solak, 2014). In fact, such studies revealed that German learners were more likely to use cognitive strategies. This was manifested in their reflection on the learning process, which seems to be less important with the present German sample.

The results pertaining to Research Question 1 adhere to the belief that culture affects learning strategies (Khamkhien, 2010; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Cultural identity emerges as a potent variable that distinguishes the learning behaviors of students of the same discipline. Hence, despite the influence of global factors and forces on local cultures, cultural universalism or homogenization is far from being a certainty, and the real core of the different cultures in the world continues to be unaltered (Hassi & Storti, 2012).

Table 2. Breakdown of Strategy Use by Nationality

Strategies	Learners	Mean	Std Dev	Frequency percentage			T value	P value
				<3	m	m≥ 3		
Memory	Tunisian learners	. 00	. 24	33. 33	1	66. 67	. 00	< .00001. 0
	German learners	.70	. 23	5. 92	1 4	54. 08		
Cognitive	Tunisian learners	. 98	. 38	8. 09	1 3	61. 91	.00	.3214 64 0
	German learners	. 30	. 10	6. 66	1 2	73. 34		
Compensation	Tunisian learners	. 53	. 15	7.77	1 1	82. 23	.52	< .00001. 0
	German learners	. 61	. 14	9.44	1 1	80. 56		
Metacognitive	Tunisian learners	. 41	. 34	8. 14	1 2	71. 86	,00	< .00001 0
	German learners	. 10	. 15	1. 48	1 3	68,. 52		
Affective	Tunisian learners	. 83	. 31	36. 66	1	63. 34	.00	< .00001. 0
	German learners	. 45	. 26	7. 22	1 5	42. 78		
Social	Tunisian learners	. 43	. 34	4. 44	1 2	75. 56	.22	< .00001 0
	German learners	. 27	. 14	2.77	1 2	77. 23		

Research Question 2: Do females and males of the two nationalities differ in their learning strategy use?

Table 3 displays the breakdown of strategy use by gender pertaining to each nationality. First, the results show that in line with mainstream research (Aslan, 2009; Chang, 2003; Khalil, 2005; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989), females seem to use more learning strategies than males. This is evident in all learning strategies used by the females of both nationalities as displayed in Table 3.

Second, Tunisian females seem to use more memory strategies (*M*=3.14) than Tunisian males (*M*=2.53). This might be explained by the tendency that the females of the present study attend classes more regularly than males; a finding that corroborates with Abdessalem (2010), who suggests that starting from secondary education, males in Tunisia show more abandoning and failure (p. 8). It seems then that regular attendance might activate the use of the memory strategy with the present females by linking "one L2 item or concept with another" as suggested by Oxford (2003, p. 13). Third, the findings also show that Tunisian females and German males seem to agree on the importance of the use of social strategies (*M*=3.42), respectively. The findings concerning the Tunisian females seem to agree with Ayachi (2015), Chang (2003), Green and Oxford (1995) and Shafaei (2010) whereby social strategy use comes out mostly in pair and group work, which contributes to lowering the affective filter. On the other hand, the same results pertaining to the German male learners seem to converge with Keshani and Heidari-Shahreza (2017), whereas German female learners seem divergent from the findings in the same study.

Finally, males and females of both nationalities differ in their strategy use. In fact, significant divergence in strategy use is observed in Table 3 whereby Tunisian females seem to favor the use of metacognitive (*M*= 3.47), memory (*M*=3.14), and affective (*M*=2.91) strategies. The German female learners, on the other hand, seem to favor cognitive strategy use (*M*= 3.32) over the metacognitive (*M*= 3.13), memory (*M*=2.73), and affective strategy use (*M*=2.61). Males of both nationalities, on the other hand, seem to differ mainly in the use of cognitive strategies whereby Tunisian male learners have a mean score of (*M*= 2.81) in cognitive strategy use whereas German male learners have a mean use of this strategy of (M= 3.32) (t=. 05; p=< .00001).

The results show that the males and females of both nationalities have significant divergence in their English strategies use. Such findings reveal the higher impact of culture and identity as reported by Murray (2011) rather than discipline in determining learning strategies. The results concerning the Tunisian female learners reveal some convergent and divergent results with learners of the same culture. In fact, in the use of memory strategies, Tunisian female learners seem to share common learning strategies with Turkish and Arab learners as revealed by Solak (2014). The more significant metacognitive strategy use on the part of the Tunisian female learners reveals their attempt to monitor their own learning as identified by Oxford (1999). Such results contradict Dhieb-Hnia's (2003) findings which reveal the lack of the use of metacognitive strategies required to deal with reading science and technology research articles. This shows some maturity in the adoption of the right learning strategies initiated by the Tunisian females of the current study.

While the German males and females of the current study tend to agree on the use of some strategies, their counterparts, Tunisian males and females, have some relative divergence. In fact, German males and females seem to agree on prioritizing the use of the cognitive strategies. This shows more gender parity in the German culture than in the Tunisian context. Such findings are in line with research that shows that German natives tend to use cognitive strategies most (De Leeuw, 1997; Dürich, 2005; Konigs, 2003; Solak, 2014). This further shows

the strong impact of culture in the selection of strategy use on both genders. Tunisian males and females, on the other hand, seem to diverge in their strategy use. In fact, contrary to Ayachi's (2015) study of in-company Business English trainees, where males scored a higher mean of cognitive strategy use (*M*= 3.22) than females (*M*= 3.15), the males in the present study seemed to use fewer cognitive strategies (*M*= 2.81) than females (*M*= 3.03). More regular attendance of Tunisian females as highlighted by Abdessalem (2010) might explain the more frequent use of the cognitive strategies with the present females.

Table3. Breakdown of Strategy Use by Gender and Nationality

Strategies	**Gender and nationality**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**T value**	**P value**
Memory	Tunisian Females	23	3. 14	1.22		< .00001
	German Females	19	2. 73	1. 20	.00	
	Tunisian Males	7	2. 53	1. 22		< .00001
	German Males	11	2. 65	1. 27	.56	
Cognitive	Tunisian Females	23	3. 03	1. 37		< .00001.
	German Females	19	3. 32	1. 15	.005	
	Tunisian Males	7	2. 81	1. 41		< .00001
	German Males	11	3. 27	1. 03	.00	
Compensation	Tunisian Females	23	3. 57	1. 22	.42	< .00001
	German Females	19	3. 69	1. 17		
	Tunisian Males	7	3. 42	. 91		< .00001
	German Males	11	3. 48	1.09	.77	
Metacognitive	Tunisian Females	23	3. 47	1. 53		< .00001
	German Females	19	3. 13	1. 17	.00	
	Tunisian Males	7	3. 22	1. 30		< .00001
	German Males	11	3. 06	1. 11	.41	
Affective	Tunisian Females	23	2.91	1.34		< .00001.
	German Females	19	2. 61	1.31	.07	
	Tunisian Males	7	2. 57	1. 19		< .00001
	German Males	11	2. 18	1. 14	.09	
Social	Tunisian Females	23	3. 42	1. 31		< .00001
	German Females	19	3. 19	1.23	.14	
	Tunisian Males	7	3. 47	1.43		< .00001
	German Males	11	3.42	. 96	.83	

CONCLUSION

This study explored the English learning strategies of a sample of students from the same discipline yet two different cultures. The results indicated that culture has a powerful impact on the learning strategies of these sample learners. While, in line with Arab and Turkish learners, the Tunisian learners of the current study heavily relied on the use of memory in the learning process. German learners, on the other hand, seemed to diverge from the mainstream research that suggests that German learners use cognitive strategies (De Leeuw, 1997; Dürich, 2005; Solak, 2014). In fact, the sample of the German learners in this study tends to use compensation strategies more significantly than cognitive strategies. A gender effect on the learning strategies was also obvious. While Tunisian females seemed to favor metacognitive, memory, and affective strategy use, German female learners tended to focus on cognitive strategies in the learning process. The other important finding reveals that the gender effect on the learning strategies was most obvious with the Tunisian sample. In fact, while German males and females tended to agree on the use of the cognitive strategies, Tunisian females and males had some divergent strategies' adoption. Tunisian females seemed to use more cognitive strategies than Tunisian males, which may be explained by more regular attendance on the part of the Tunisian females.

Pedagogical Implications

Some pedagogical implications are derived from the findings of this study. The main aim behind exploring language learning strategy use with the two sample populations is to identify learners' strategies respective to each nationality and gender to make learners more aware of and autonomous in their learning process. This will incite teachers to adapt their teaching by taking into account the learning strategies of learners from different cultures and genders, and more specifically learners of the Business Administration major. According to the results of this study, the Tunisian learners tend to favor metacognitive (*M* 3.41), memory (*M* 3), affective (*M* 2.83), and social strategies (*M* 3.43). The German learners, on the other hand, tend to favor compensation (*M* 3.53) and cognitive strategies (*M* 3.30). To help equip learners with metacognitive strategies, in line with Clipa et al. (2012), teachers should encourage learners to keep a diary, which helps them reflect on useful activities they carry out and the way they learn. Visualizations, graphic organizers, and associations are helpful tools to help learners associate concepts to one another, and hence boost memory strategy use. With regard to the affective strategy use, a good way to enhance this strategy is to relate students' feelings and motivations to the language learning activity. To boost the cognitive strategy use, in line with Oxford (1999), learners should be encouraged to use reasoning. Finally, guessing, using synonyms, or gesturing can help learners compensate for the linguistic deficiency they have in the target language, and hence meet their learning objective.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study should be interpreted with care because the distribution of male and female learners in the Tunisian sample and the German sample was not the same. Only about 23% of the participants were male students in the Tunisian sample, and only 37% were male

students in the German sample. This may explain the consistent results displayed in both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 concerning the Tunisian learners. Further studies should consider using a more balanced and larger sample between the two student populations. Other research instruments including interviews should also be used in order to have more comprehensive results.

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