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**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

*RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, POSITIVE EMOTIONS, LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG MALAYSIAN ESL UNDERGRADUATES*

**MOHAMMAD MOHAMMADIPOUR**

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By

**MOHAMMAD MOHAMMADIPOUR**

**Thesis Submitted to the School Of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, In Fullfilmet of the Requirments for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**December 2017**

بنام خداوند جان و خرد     کزین برتر اندیشه برنگذرد

خرد چشم جانست گر بنگری     توبی چشم شادان جهان نسپری

خرد رهنمای و خرد دلگشای     خرد دست گیرد به هر دو سرای

خرد جوید آگنده راز جهان     که چشم سرا مانند نهان

تو چیزی مدان کز خرد برتر است     خرد بر همه نیکویها سر است

دلی کز خرد گردد آراسته     چو گنجی بود پر ز زر و خواسته

حکیم ابوالقاسم فردوسی

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, POSITIVE EMOTIONS, LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG MALAYSIAN ESL UNDERGRADUATES**

By

**MOHAMMAD MOHAMMADIPOUR**

**December 2017**

**Chair: Sabariah Md Rashid, PhD**
**Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication**

During the previous decades, a considerable amount of literature was published on the relationship between language learning strategy use and language proficiency. These studies were conducted under the presupposition that more frequent use of language learning strategies is associated with higher language proficiency. However, to date, various studies have revealed contradictory findings. Similarly, second language learning studies have suggested that the construct of emotions is related to second language learning variables, such as language learning strategy use and language learning motivation. As a pioneering research in this realm, this study argues that students' positive emotions is a mediating variable in the relationships between language learning proficiency, language learning strategy use, and language learning motivation. In this respect, this study was aimed at investigating the use of English learning strategies among Malaysian ESL undergraduates. In addition, it attempted to determine whether there is any significant difference in the use of language learning strategies across English proficiency levels among the participants. It also aimed to compare the frequent users and under-users of language learning strategies in terms of their levels of positive emotions. Finally, it examined the relationships between language learning strategy use, positive emotions, and language learning motivation. The theoretical bases of the study were the broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory of academic emotions, and Gardner's motivation theory (1985).

This study adopted a sequential mixed methods design. In total, 750 Malaysian ESL undergraduates were selected through stratified random sampling from five Malaysian public universities. The quantitative data were collected through three sets of questionnaires: (a) Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), Fredrickson's (2009) modified Differential Emotional Scale (mDES), and Perez's (2013) Attitude and Motivational Test Battery (AMTB). Moreover, the follow up qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion with a select number of the participants. For the quantitative data, a series of

MANOVAs, ANOVAs, t-tests and correlational analyses were employed, whilst for the qualitative data, the value-laden responses were transcribed, coded thematically, and analysed.

The findings of the study indicate that Malaysian ESL undergraduates have a medium degree of strategy use and there are significant differences in their overall uses of language learning strategies across proficiency levels. Furthermore, the findings revealed significant discrepencies in positive emotions levels across users of language learning strategies. A positive significant relationship was also found between positive emotions, overall language learning strategy use, and different categories of language learning strategies. The qualitative findings demonstrated that there is consistencey between learners' enhanced experience of positive emotions and their tendency to apply a greater variety of language learning strategies.

The findings of the study underscore the importance of students' positive emotions in their language learning strategy use and language learning motivation, which in turn, are related to their language proficiency. The study proposes further consideration of positive and negative emotions in future studies on language learning as they seem to have significant bearing on English language learning.

## HUBUNGAN ANTARA STRATEGI PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA, EMOSI POSITIF, MOTIVASI PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA, DAN KEMAHIRAN BAHASA INGGERIS DALAM KALANGAN SISWAZAH ESL MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Dalam dekad yang lalu, sejumlah besar bidang kesusasteraan telah diterbitkan mengenai hubungan antara kekerapan menggunakan strategi pembelajaran bahasa dan kemahiran belajar bahasa. Kajian-kajian ini telah dijalankan berdasarkan pengertian bahawa kekerapan penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa dikaitan dengan kecekapan pembelajaran bahasa yang lebih besar. Walau bagaimanapun, setakat ini kajian-kajian tersebut telah menyampaikan hasil yang pelbagai. Pada masa yang sama, bukti terkini dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua telah mencadangkan bahawa emosi berkaitan dengan pembolehubah pembelajaran bahasa kedua, seperti penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa, dan motivasi belajar bahasa. Kajian ini berpendapat bahawa emosi positif pelajar adalah pemboleh ubah intervensi dalam hubungan antara kemahiran belajar bahasa, penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa, dan motivasi pembelajaran bahasa. Oleh itu,, kajian yang dilakukan ini pada mulanya untuk mengenal pasti penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris oleh siswazah ESL Malaysia. Selain itu, kajian ini juga menentukan sama ada terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa merentas tahap keupayaan bahasa Inggeris di kalangan siswazah ESL Malaysia. Tambahan pula, kajian ini membandingkan antara pengguna kerap dan pengguna kurang dalam strategi pembelajaran bahasa dari segi tahap emosi positif. Akhirnya, dalam kajian ini memberi penjelasan mengenai hubungan antara penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa, emosi positif, dan motivasi pembelajaran bahasa. Teori yang memperluaskan dan membina (Fredrickson, 2001), Pekrun (2006) teori nilai kawalan emosi akademik dan teori motivasi Gardner (1985) mendasari kajian ini.

Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kaedah campuran berurutan. Secara keseluruhannya, tujuh ratus lima puluh siswazah ESL Malaysia dipilih melalui persampelan rawak berstrata daripada buah lima universiti awam di Malaysia. Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui tiga set soal selidik: (a) Oxford (1990) *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)*, Fredrickson (2009) diubahsuai *Differential Emotional Scale (mDES)* dan Perez's (2013) *Attitude and Motivational Test Battery*

*(AMTB)*. Data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui temu bual separuh berstruktur dan perbincangan kumpulan berfokus. Berkenaan dengan analisis data kuantitatif, satu siri MANOVA, ANOVA, ujian t dan analisis korelasional digunakan. Bagi data kualitatif pula, maklum balas terhadap soalan terbuka dan temubual telah dianalisis dan dikodkan secara tema.

Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar ESL Malaysia mempunyai tahap penggunaan strategi yang sederhana. Penemuan ini juga mendedahkan perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penggunaan keseluruhan strategi pembelajaran bahasa mereka di seluruh tahap kemahiran yang berbeza. Selain itu, penemuan menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan dalam tahap emosi positif pelajar antara pengguna kerap dan pengguna kurang bagi strategi pembelajaran bahasa. Hubungan positif juga didapati antara emosi positif, keseluruhan penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa, dan pelbagai kategori strategi pembelajaran bahasa. Penemuan dari analisis data kualitatif juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar ESL siswazah mengalami emosi yang lebih positif, dan mereka juga cenderung menggunakan pelbagai strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang lebih luas. Penemuan kajian ini menekankan pentingnya emosi positif pelajar dalam penggunaan strategi pembelajaran bahasa dan motivasi pembelajaran bahasa, yang mempunyai kaitan dengan kemahiran pembelajaran bahasa mereka.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 4 December 2017 to conduct the final examination of Mohammad Mohammadipour on his thesis entitled "Relationships between Language Learning Strategies, Positive Emotions, Language Learning Motivation and English Language Proficiency among Malaysian ESL Undergraduates" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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**Declaration by graduate student**

I hereby confirm that:
- this thesis is my original work;
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This is to confirm that:
- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
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| | |
|---|---|
| AMTB | Attitude/Motivation Test Battery |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| L2 | Second Language |
| | |
| LLM | Language Learning Motivation |
| LLS | Language Learning Strategy |
| mDES | Modified Differential Emotions Scale |
| MLR | Multiple Linear Regression |
| MUET | Malaysian University English Test |
| SILL | Strategy Inventory for Language Learning |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| TESL | Teaching of English as a Second Language |

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1    Background to the Study

Positive psychologists believe that there has been a past over-emphasise on the negative areas of cognition and affect, and this over-emphasis has unduly influenced scientific research in diverse areas, such as psychology and education (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010; Rusk & Waters, 2013). MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) argue that positive psychology is a rapidly expanding sub-field in psychology, which has significant suggestions for the field of second language learning (SLL). Similarly, Hoy and Tarter (2011) argue that positive psychology can facilitate language learning by assisting individuals to develop and maintain their positive emotions and motivation necessary for the long-term undertaking of learning a second language. The potential contributions of positive psychology, with reference to prior works in second language learning research, include the humanistic movement in language learning, models of motivation, the concept of the affective filter, the concepts related to the self, and studies of the good language learners (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

Griffiths (2008, p. 1-2) raises important queries in her studies on good language learners, such as "why are some learners more successful than others?" "what is it that makes a good language learner?" through a positive psychology lens, these inquiries might take a somewhat dissimilar emphasis directed not on levels of achievement, language competence, and proficiency, but as an alternative making an allowance for the processes, instead of the product of learning (Lake, 2013). This view considers the learner as an active participant in the teaching-learning process, which could be influenced by factors such as the learners' previous knowledge, and their active cognitive processes (Macaro, 2004). Also, this perspective has brought attention to the use of learning strategies which an individual learner makes use of during the learning process to facilitate second language learning (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Research on language learning strategies (LLS) was initiated by good language learner studies (e.g., Naiman, Froanhlich, Stern, & Toedesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). Studies on good language learners have been criticized for being overly-prescriptive, which disregards the lessons to be learned from less proficient students as a way to balance the approach (Rees-Miller, 1993). In this light, this study sheds light on the differences between less proficient and proficient language learners with regard to using learning strategies in light of positive psychology.

Language learning strategies, which have been defined as actions employed by learners to assist them in acquisition, storage, retrieval, and the use of information or as steps taken by learners to enhance their own learning have been examined in many studies (Adnan, 2011; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Khalil, 2005). Recent studies on LLSs can be classified into three types: (1) studies that identify specific learning strategies used by learners; (2) studies that examine the variables that influence the use of LLSs; and (3) studies that focus on strategy training and instruction.

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To date, the investigation of the relationship between the frequency of using language learning strategies and language learning proficiency has remained the main trend of research in this area (e.g., Kiram, Sulaiman, Swanto, & Din, 2014; Radwan, 2011; Shafie, 2013). On the other hand, studies that have attempted to investigate the relationship between the frequency of using language learning strategies and language learning proficiency have revealed mixed findings. For instance, Vann and Abraham (1990) observed the language learning behaviours of two participants who struggled in their language learning efforts. The goal of their study was to determine the possible reasons for the failure to succeed by these participants. The findings of the study showed that contrary to the common belief that poor language learners are inactive; the participants were actively engaged in their learning. They were consistently busy using strategies such as checking for errors, attempting to clarify meaning, checking comprehension and repeating words. However, these participants were not able to use a sufficient variety of LLSs appropriate for different tasks.

The present study argues that positive emotions may help individuals to use a wide variety of LLS which are more appropriate for the tasks during second language learning process. The broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) hypothesizes that positive emotions broaden individuals' scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. Two experiments with 104 college students tested this hypothesis. In each, participants watched a movie that triggered (a) amusement, (b) contentment, (c) neutrality, (d) anger, and (e) anxiety. Scope of attention was assessed using a global-local visual processing task, and thought-action repertoires were assessed using a Twenty Statements Test. Compared to a neutral state, positive emotions broadened the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. In addition, negative emotions, relative to a neutral state, narrowed individuals' thought-action repertoires. The present study also focuses on the relationship between positive emotions, variety, and the frequency of the use of LLS.

Another concern, which is related to the study of language learning strategies is highlighted by numerous researchers (e.g., Gan, Humphreys & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Griffiths, 2003) who argue that the difference between good and poor language learners in terms of using language learning strategies is related to the use of specific categories of language learning strategies. Particularly, according to Vann and Abraham (1990, p. 184), "poor language learners use as many strategies as good language learners; however, less proficient students tend to frequently fail to use strategies appropriate for the task, due to a lack of cognitive control", that referring to metacognitive processes that allow information processing and behaviour to vary adaptively from moment to moment depending on current goals, rather than remaining rigid and inflexible (Luna, Padmanabhan, & O'Hearn, 2010; Rodriguez, 2013). The two components of cognitive control; (i.e., conflict monitoring and intentional control) are metacognitive strategies which contribute distinctly to second language learning. Conflict monitoring is necessary for critical appraisal of the learning process, and attending to errors. On the other hand, intentional control refers to control works which are essential to suppress irrelevant information and engage in aim activity (Botvinick, Braver, Barch, Carter, & Cohen, 2001). In this regard, concerning the studies in the area of neuroscience, there is substantial evidence to indicate that positive emotion can facilitate the cognitive control by increasing dopamine levels in the frontal brain areas (Dreisbach, 2006; Schultz, 2013; Van Holstein et al., 2011).

In the same vein, in a study, Cohen (2003) found that higher proficiency level students reported a greater use of metacognitive strategies. However, this result is in contrast to the findings of a study by Su (2005) who examined the correlation between end-of-course proficiency and a number of variables, including language learning strategies. In this study it was found that cognitive strategies (e.g., reading for pleasure in the target language and looking for patterns) were the only kinds of strategies that significantly positively correlated with success in learning a second language. In this respect, numerous studies in the area of neuroscience have shown that there is significant evidence on the influence of positive emotions on individuals' cognitive processes (e.g., mood congruent recall, elaboration, cognitive flexibility, etc.) and performances (e.g., prosocial behaviours, risk taking ability, etc.) (e.g., Finucane & Whiteman, 2007; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). Thus, this study also seeks to determine the relationship between positive emotions and the use of specific categories of language learning strategies.

Moreover, concerning the use of language learning strategies, different variables have received attention in terms of how they are related to the use of language learning strategies. For example, Liao (2000) examined the correlation between language learning motivation (LLM) and strategy use on 312 senior high school students in Taiwan. In this study Liao used several methods to collect data: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The findings indicated that the learners were not self-initially motivated, and when motivated at all, they tended to be extrinsically motivated. The learners also did not show frequent use of a wide variety of strategies. Their low language learning motivation was significantly associated with their infrequent use of learning strategies.

Furthermore, the impact of motivation on the use of LLSs was investigated. For instance, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) surveyed 1200 university students taking various language courses in an attempt to find out the types of language learning strategies students reported using. They found that the degree of motivation was the most influential of the variables affecting strategy use. In another study, in Taiwan, Peng (2002) explored the relationship between language learning motivation and strategy use among 326 senior high school students. Significant differences were found between strategy use and each motivation aspect, namely, motivation intensity, extrinsic/intrinsic motivation, and requirement motivation. Requirement motivation refers to situations when learners are forced to learn the language because of the design of the curriculum. It was found to be significantly negatively correlated with strategy use, as well as learners' achievement. In other words, high school students felt the pressure and experienced anxiety to learn English used strategies much less frequently and performed more poorly, compared to those who were motivated.

Also, recent evidence suggests that positive emotions have a unique ability to down-regulate negative emotions. Fredrickson (2004) for instance, argues that negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, stress, sadness, etc.) narrow down individuals' thought-action repertoires. The narrowed mind-sets arising from these negative emotions are contrasted to the broadened mind-sets arising from positive emotions (e.g., interest, joy, etc.). Concerning the findings of the above mentioned studies on the relationship between language learning motivation and the use of language learning strategies, as well as the

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broaden and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), the present study argues that positive emotions may be a mediating variable between language learning motivation and the use of language learning strategies. Thus, this study aims to find out the relationship between positive emotions, language learning motivation and the use of language learning strategies.

In addition, to date, the relationship between academic emotions and language learning motivation have largely been neglected by educational psychology, with the exception of language learning anxiety. In four qualitative studies by various researchers, it was found that students experience a rich diversity of emotions in academic settings, with anxiety being the emotion experienced most often (Goetz, Frenzel, Pekrun, & Hall, 2009; Goetz, Pekrun, Hall, & Haag, 2006; Ouano, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). The results of these studies showed that second language learning anxiety can be assumed to reduce intrinsic motivation, because negative emotions tend to be incompatible with enjoyment due to the intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, these emotions can induce strong motivation to cope with the negative events that caused them, thus strengthening specific kinds of extrinsic motivation. For example, task-related anxiety may be assumed to trigger motivation to overcome obstacles (Khodadady & Khajavy, 2013), and anxiety and shame may induce motivation to avoid failures by investing effort.

Accordingly, Fredrickson (2004) argues that evidence for the broaden and build theory has clear implications for the strategies that people use to regulate their experiences of negative emotions. She argues that positive emotions might correct or undo the after effects of negative emotions, such as anxiety. In this light the present study explores the relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors (i.e., English class anxiety, instrumental motivation, interest in foreign languages, integrative orientation, parental encouragement, and attitude toward learning English).

## 1.2    Statement of the Problem

Positive emotions are an indispensable part of human behaviour and cognition. They protect well-being by nurturing resiliency, make attachments to significant others, aid to envision goal lines and challenges, and guide the behaviour of groups, social systems, and nations. However, regardless of their numerous functions, positive emotions have been abandoned by psychology. Until recently, psychology has concentrated on the negative side of human life. Particularly, negative emotions such as stress and anxiety have been studied comprehensively, whereas positive emotions did not receive that much attention (cf. Fredrickson, 2001; Pekrun, 2005).

In the same vein, academic emotion is an increasingly important area in second language learning. Several studies have revealed that the process of learning a second language is replete with emotions, which can impact students' heterogeneous second language learning factors, such as language learning strategy use, and language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; Garret & Young, 2009; Bown & White, 2010; Imai, 2010).

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However, second language learning studies in general seem to have neglected this variable, specifically, positive emotions. Whilst students' negative emotions such as language learning anxiety in relation to language learning strategy use and language learning motivation, have been studied extensively; positive emotions, however, has rarely been examined. In this regard, recent developments in positive psychology have increased the need for studying positive emotions in academic contexts (in relation to LLS and LLM). Nevertheless, most studies on positive emotions have only been carried out in a small number of areas (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007; Villavicencio & Bernardo, 2013).

In addition, numerous studies have highlighted that one of the problems that learners face in the process of language learning is related to the use of language leaning strategies (e.g., Lai, 2009; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Razak & Baikkoi, 2014; Weng, 2012). In this case, previous studies have reported that proficient and less proficient language learners are different in terms of the frequency, variety and the choice of specific categories of language learning strategies used (e.g., Kiram, Sulaiman, Swanto & Din, 2014; Lai, 2009; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). Several studies have also revealed that the wrong use of language learning strategies (i.e., the frequency, variety and choice of specific categories) by language learners might lead to experiencing more negative emotions, which in turn can decrease their language learning motivation. Thus, in the light of theories in the area of positive psychology, language learning strategy use, language learning motivation and findings in the area of neuroscience, the present study argues that positive emotions can relate to students' use of language learning strategies (i.e., the frequency, choice of specific categories and variety) and language learning motivation (language learning motivational factors). Thus, this study aims to determine the relationship between positive emotions, the use of language learning strategies and language learning motivation.

This study is different from the studies done previously on the use of language learning strategies and language learning motivation based on the following points. First, during the last decade most of the studies in the area of language learning strategies, have mainly focused on the relationship between frequency of the use of language learning strategies and language learning proficiency (e.g., Kiram, Sulaiman, Swanto, & Din, 2014; Lai, 2009; Razak & Baikkoi, 2014; Roehr, 2004; Shafie, 2013). Also, the impact of heterogeneous factors such as cultural backgrounds (Peacock & Ho, 2003; Rao, 2006), beliefs (Su, 2005; Yang, 1999), anxiety (Wu, 2010), motivation (Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002; MacIntyre, 2002), and learning styles (Wong, 2005) which are related to frequency of the use of language learning strategies have been widely examined. These studies were conducted on the presupposition that more frequent use of language learning strategies is related to a greater language learning proficiency.

However, the findings seem to be mixed. Frequency of the use of LLSs has been verified to have important relationships with English proficiency (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Weng, 2012; Wharton, 2000). Yet, some studies indicated a different view concerning this result as they demonstrated this association to be somewhat weak and not meticulously demarcated (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Borzabadi, 2000). In this regard, the results of previous studies showed that the difference between good and poor language learners in terms of the use of language learning strategies is not quantitative

but qualitative. Lai (2009) for instance, discusses that more proficient students seem to use a greater variety of language learning strategies in numerous circumstances than do less proficient learners. Similarly, Oxford (2003) argues that proficient language students take mindful steps to understand what they are doing by using a broader range of strategies than less proficient learners do. Similar results have also been reported in a few studies on second language learners (Aliakbari & Hayatzadeh, 2008; Chang & Liu, 2013; Griffiths, 2008; Kunasaraphan, 2015). As explained in Chapter Two, various studies have shown that positive emotions broaden individuals' thought-action repositories (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Frederickson & Cohn, 2008). In this light, the present study examines the relationship between positive emotions and the use of language learning strategies in terms of not only the frequency but also the variety of LLS use.

Second, the results of studies on language learning strategies of poor language learners shows that, less proficient language learners are not able to apply language learning strategies appropriate for the task. In a study on poor language learners, Halbach (2000) found that these learners failed to properly match the language learning strategies to the tasks. Similarly, Kiram, Sulaiman, Swanto, and Din (2014) found that less proficient language learners applied strategies in a less appropriate and refined manner than proficient language learners did in their approach to a specific activity. Related to this, previous studies have reported that poor language learners are unsuccessful to apply strategies appropriate for the task due to a lack of cognitive control, which is related to the regulation of mental activities to support and guide flexible behaviour, comprising language processing, working memory, and attention (Abutalebi et al., 2013; Grant, 2017; Van & Abraham, 1990).

In this regard, in their introduction to the relationship between cognitive control and metacognition Shea et al. (2014, p. 1) described that,

> the broad definition of metacognition as cognition about cognition is often interpreted widely, to include any cognitive process that receives information from and has a controlling influence on another cognitive process. So-construed, metacognition would encompass every components of cognitive control.

Cognitive control has two components: intentional control and conflict monitoring. Intentional control works to abolish unrelated information and involves in goal activity. Conflict monitoring is for attending to errors and critical evaluation of the learning process (Botvinick et al., 2001). There is considerable evidence to specify that positive emotions can regulate cognitive control, and accordingly metacognition processing (Dreisbach, 2006; Martin & Kerns, 2011; Van Wouwe, Band, & Ridderinkhof, 2011). These findings are harmonized with the neuropsychological theory, according to which positive emotions can moderate the cognitive control processes by amplified dopamine levels in the frontal brain areas (Botvinick, Braver, Barach, Carter, & Cohen, 2001; Colzato, Waszak, Nieuwenhuis, Posthuma, & Hommel, 2010; Dreisbach & Goschke, 2004; Van Holstein et al., 2011). What can be inferred from the above-mentioned studies on cognitive control is that experiencing positive emotions might relate to the use of specific categories of language learning strategies by retrieving task-relevant information, maintaining and selecting task-relevant goals, or remembering task order.

In the same vein, numerous studies have tried to find a significant difference in the use of individual categorise of LLSs across various proficiency levels. For instance, Radwan (2011) investigated the use of language learning strategies by 128 students majoring in English at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. The study showed that the more proficient students used significantly more cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and affective strategies than the less proficient learners did, concurring with result obtained by Nisbet, Tindall and Arroyo (2005). He argued that proficient learners seem to be more aware of their language needs; thus, they tend to utilize strategies that help them master the target language through practicing, reasoning, analyzing, as well as strategies that allow them to control their own learning through planning and evaluating learning. Moreover, these learners exercise a great deal of control over their emotions through lowering their anxiety levels and increasing their motivation levels.

In another study, Lai (2009) investigated language learning strategies used by 418 EFL learners in Taiwan and the difference in the use of specific categories of language learning strategies across different levels of language proficiency. The results of the study showed that the more proficient learners used metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies most frequently and memory strategies least frequently. The less proficient learners, on the other hand, preferred social and memory strategies to cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The research also analysed individual strategy items, finding that the strategies reported as used more frequently by the more proficient learners were elaboration, rehearsal, appraisal, planning learning, and using analytical and reasoning skills.

In this regard, as elaborated in Chapter Two, experimental studies on mood effects have revealed that mood, which might be considered as low-intensity emotion, can have several divergent effects on individuals' thoughts and actions. One consequence is that negative and positive moods can improve mood-congruent memory processes by mechanisms of mood-congruent recall and state-dependent learning (Ochsner & Gross, 2005). Second, positive and negative mood have been presented to activate explicit modes of problem solving and thinking. Negative mood might augment further analytical, detail- oriented, focused, and algorithmic modes of processing information. Also, it has been publicized that negative mood might produce task-irrelevant thinking that might be disadvantageous for task performance (Davis, 2009). Conversely, positive mood might assist intuitive, holistic, flexible and creative methods of solving problems, along with a critical appraisal, elaboration and positive dependence on generalized knowledge structures (Martin & Kerns, 2011). In this light, it might be expected that, experiencing positive emotions may improve the usage of meta-cognitive monitoring, critical evaluation, organization, and elaboration. However, few studies by now have tried to find the relationship between positive emotions, and the use of definite categories of language learning strategies. Thus, this study tries to shed new light on the relationship between positive emotions and the use of specific categories of language learning strategies.

Third, as mentioned earlier the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and motivation has been widely examined (e.g., Chung, 2000; Xu, 2011; Ziahosseini & Salehi, 2008). As discussed in Chapter Two, the results of these studies show that, in comparison to less motivated students, more motivated students use

language learning strategies more frequently and with a greater variety. Also, Dornyei (2009) argues that motivation continuously exhibits itself in a dynamic interaction with emotional and cognitive factors. Before trying to recognize distinct motives in separation (as has been the classic exercise in motivation study in the past), he advised that to theorize motivation, a more productive method is to emphasize on motivational conglomerates of emotional and cognitive variables that form coherent forms or combinations that act as units. However, motivation study in second language learning has mostly concentrated on scrutinizing it as if motivation were a static, unchanging concept which is not advanced over communication with context, subject content, teachers and peers (Dörnyei, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2004).

Dörnyei (2005) further discusses that, currently academics distinguish the need to study motivation as an affective viewpoint. Olafson and Ferraro (2001) argue that through emotion-congruent methods of processing task-related and self-related information, one can concentrate on self-efficacy information in a positive mood. In this light, positive emotions, such as enjoyment of learning might boost academic motivation. As mentioned earlier and discussed further in Chapter Two, Fredrickson (2005) argues that positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. In light of the above mentioned studies the present research argues that positive emotions might be a mediating variable between the use of language learning strategies and language learning motivation. To date though some studies have been conducted on emotions in second language learning (Aragão, 2011; Bown & White, 2010; Imai, 2010), they have not focused on the relationship between positive emotions, language learning motivation, and the use of LLSs.

Fourth, a review of the literature revealed that, anger, shame, and anxiety have been found to decrease motivation and concentration. However, the occurrence of extrinsic motivation can bring about adaptive learning performance (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Olthof et al., 2000). For instance, in a study on test anxiety, Lang and Lang (2010) found that test anxiety mostly hinders learners' achievement (i.e., decreases interest and attention), though in the existence of a wish to sidestep failure, it can make the learner feel focussed to complete the task. Fredrickson (2001) argues that positive emotions undo the after effects of negative emotions. Although, the basic observation that positive emotions are incompatible with negative emotions has been demonstrated in earlier work on anxiety disorders (e.g., Wolpe's (1958) work on systematic desensitization), motivation (e.g., Solomon & Corbit's (1974) work on opponent-process theory), and aggression (e.g., Baron's (1976) work on principle of incompatible responses). No studies by now tried to find the relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation and language learning motivational factors. Thus, the present study also aims to find the relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors (i.e., English class Anxiety, instrumental orientation, interest in foreign languages, integrative orientation, parental encouragement, and attitude toward learning English).

Fifth, over the previous few years, a substantial number of studies have been conducted on language learning strategies, numerous of which are the emphasis of English education in Malaysia (Rashid, Chew, & Kabilan, 2006; Razak & Baikkoi, 2014; Yunus,

Sulaiman & Embi, 2013). Nevertheless, the relationship between positive emotions, the use of language learning strategies, and motivation among the Malaysian ESL undergraduates has not been examined in the context of language learning. Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between these variables among the Malaysian ESL undergraduates.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationships between the use of language learning strategies, positive emotions, language learning motivation, and language proficiency. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the use of English learning strategies by the Malaysian ESL undergraduates
2. To determine whether there is any significant difference in the use of language learning strategies across English proficiency level among Malaysian ESL undergraduates
3. To compare the frequent users and under-users of language learning strategies in terms of the level of positive emotions
4. To determine the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and positive emotions
5. To examine the perceptions of the Malaysian ESL undergraduates on the relationship between positive emotions and the use of various language learning strategies
6. To determine the relationship between positive emotions and language learning motivation.

## 1.4 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study presented earlier, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. What language learning strategies are used by Malaysian ESL undergraduates?

RQ2. To what extent is there any significant difference in the use of language learning strategies across proficiency levels?

RQ3. Is there any significant difference in the positive emotions of Malaysian ESL undergraduate over-users and under-users of language learning strategies?

RQ4.1 Is there any significant relationship between the overall use of language learning strategies and positive emotions among Malaysian ESL undergraduates?

RQ4.2 Is there any significant relationship between the use of specific categories of language learning strategies and positive emotions among Malaysian ESL undergraduates?

RQ5. How do the Malaysian ESL undergraduates perceive their use of various language learning strategies in relation to positive emotions?

RQ6. Is there a significant relationship between positive emotions and language learning motivation?

## 1.5 Theoretical Framework

In the words of Grant and Osanloo (2014) theoretical framework is the blueprint for the

study. It works as the conductor on which to support and build the study, and correspondingly provides the structure to explain how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the study as a whole. Eisenhart (1991, p. 205) demarcated a theoretical framework as "a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory…constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships". Similarly, Grant and Osanloo, (2014, p. 13) assert that,

> the theoretical framework consists of the selected theory (or theories) that undergirds the researchers' thinking with regards to how they understand and plan to research their topic, as well as the concepts and definitions from that theory that are relevant to their topic.

Particularly, concerning the fact that the present study is addressing the relationships between variables which have not been addressed adequately in previous SLL studies. It discusses the theoretical framework of the study not only in the light of theories and findings in SLL studies, but also in various felids of studies. In this concern, underlying present study are findings derived from studies on language learning strategies, theories in the field of positive psychology, findings in the area of neuroscience, academic emotion researches, and motivational theory. In this light, the theoretical framework of study is elaborated further in this section.

Initially, this study tries to provide a descriptive analysis of language learning strategy use by Malaysian ESL undergraduates. It also tries to find the differences in the use of language learning strategies across three proficiency levels (i.e., elementary, intermediate, and advanced). For that reason, a general framework consisting of taxonomy of language learning strategies by Oxford (1990) would serve as a basis for the present study. The Oxford's language learning strategies are divided into six categories, namely, memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. These categories consist of different kinds of thoughts and behaviour as specified in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990). Merrifield (1996, p. 12) comments on the SILL as covering all the main aspects of learning strategies in one test so that learners are made aware of the complex strategies that can be exploited to assist their learning. She notes that:

> this focused attention on strategies provide a valuable springboard for discussion. The ideas interest students and promote many insights into what they and others do in order to facilitate learning. For some learners they will not have had this opportunity before to talk overtly about their learning…. the SILL makes learning strategies explicit and in some ways makes the complex task of learning … more accessible.

In addition, Oxford (1990, p. 1) defines language learning strategies as "specific thoughts, actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques students use to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the second language". She argues that all language learners use language learning strategies either consciously or subconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the second language learning process. Moreover, numerous researchers in the field of language learning strategies have identified and described the learning strategies that language learners use during the act of second language learning (Chamot, Keatley, Meloni, Gonglewski & Bartoshesky,

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2010; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). There are a number of definitions and frameworks of language learning strategies ranging from broad definitions (Rubin, 1987) to more specific categorizations (Oxford, 1990) which are discussed in this study.

Furthermore, one of the aims of this study is to shine new light on the relationship between positive emotions and language learning strategy use in terms of the overall use of language learning strategies and variety of language leaning strategy use. Accordingly, another theory which is at the cornerstone of present study is Fredrickson's (2001) broaden and build theory of positive emotions. In her introduction to broaden and built theory of positive emotions, Fredrickson (1998) asserts that definite emotions which are renowned as positive, for instance pride, joy and love, initiate an ascending spiral to emotional well-being by broadening the scope of actions and cognition. Also, Fredrickson (2004) found that positive emotions carry lasting adaptive benefits by building personal resources (i.e., resilience, or coping with negative emotions), which outlive the transient emotional states. In particular, in the light of broaden and build theory of positive emotions, the present study seeks to address the relationship between positive emotions and the use of language learning strategies (i.e., overall frequency and variety).

Besides, as mentioned earlier, the present study also examines the relationship between positive emotions, and the use of specific categories of language learning strategies. In this regard, findings in areas of academic emotions and neuroscience provided the theoretical framework for this study. Particularly, in recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the role of emotions in the use of individual categories and subcategories of language learning strategies. For example, a number of studies have found that emotions relate to accomplishment, through affecting effort and learning strategies that students use (Garcia & Pekrun, 2011; Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). In the same vein, detailed examination of achievement emotion by Pekrun (2005) showed that enjoyment affects in a more creative and holistic method to thinking, whereas anxiety bounds memory and attention. Besides, as further discussed in Chapter Two, recently, comparable questions have been addressed by researchers in numerous fields. For instance, the results of studies in the area of neuroscience show that positive emotions can impact on individuals' thoughts, and actions (Erez & Isen, 2002; Forgas, 2008; Ochsner & Gross, 2005). Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for positive emotions in the use of explicit categories of language learning strategies. Thus, in the light of above mentioned studies, this study critically traces the relationship between positive emotions, and the use of specific categories of LLSs.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the present study seeks to provide a more detailed investigation regarding the relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors (i.e., English class anxiety, instrumental orientation, interest in foreign languages, integrative orientation, parental encouragement, and attitude toward learning English). Principally, Gardner's motivation theory (1985) constitutes the theoretical framework for this study. The Gardner's motivation theory has four parts: 1. a general learning model, labelled the socio-educational model, which integrates motivation as a cornerstone; 2. the construct of the integrative motive; 3. an extended second language motivation construct developed together with Paul Tremblay (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995); 4. the

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Attitude/Motivation Test Battery(AMTB). As further discussed in Chapters Two and Three, Pérez (2013) modified Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). This study has applied the Pérez (2013) AMTB, to determine the relationship between positive emotions, language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors.

Moreover, in order to provide a better understanding of relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors, Pekrun's (2000, 2006) control-value theory of academic emotions applied as a framework for the present study. The control-value theory of academic emotions is a theoretical framework that looks at how motivation and competency-related beliefs affect the emotions that students experience in achievement settings (Pekrun, 2006). The control-value theory of academic emotion is grounded on the principles of attribution theories (Weiner, 1985, 2008), appraisal (Scherer, Schorr & Johnstone, 2001), and expectancy-value (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). It proposes that emotions track from cognitive appraisals of the learning situation (i.e., value, expectancy for failure and success) are affected by the context in which they happen (throughout an action that the learner likes or finds thought-provoking). Along with this theory, emotions are the result of the relationship between numerous motivational and social-cognitive factors (Pekrun, 1992). The theory hypothesizes that academic emotions are tempted while the individual senses in control of, or out of control of achievement deeds and consequences are subjectively significant, inferring that appraisals of control and value are the proximal causes of these emotions (Elliot, Murayama & Pekrun, 2011). Details about these theories, their components, and empirical evidence validating the models are presented in Chapters Two and Three.

## 1.6    Conceptual Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014, p. 16) assert that "a conceptual framework is the researcher's understanding of how the research problem will best be explored, the specific direction the research will have to take, and the relationship between the different variables in the study." Likewise, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 440) declare that conceptual framework is an organization of assumptions, conceptions, and beliefs that direct and support the study plan. Explicitly, the conceptual framework "lays out the key factors, constructs, or variables, and presumes relationships among them". Grant and Osanloo (2014) further argue that the conceptual framework offers a logical structure of connected concepts that help provide a picture or visual display of how ideas in a study relate to one another within the theoretical framework. In the light of above mentioned studies, the conceptual framework of the present study is presented in this section.

Firstly, within the field of second language learning and teaching, there has been a prominent shift over the last twenty years towards greater emphasis on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. As a consequence, language learning strategy use and language learning motivation have been the primary concerns of researchers such as Oxford (1990), Griffiths (2008), Dornyei (2009) and others working in the area of second language learning. In this respect, although affect has been recognised as having a crucial role in second language learning (Ellis, 1994; Arnold &

Brown, 1999), the investigation of emotions has not been at the forefront of the research trend in the second language learning field (Dewaele, 2005; Garret & Young, 2009). Cognition has been emphasised in language learning research in spite of the interplay that both dimensions have on learning (Arnold & Brown, 1999). Correspondingly, Dörnyei (2014) argues that currently, researchers recognize the need to review second language learning from an affective perspective. However, research to date has tended to focus on negative emotions or emotions in general rather than positive emotions. Thus, arguably, there is a need to examine the relationship between positive emotions, language learning strategy use, and language learning motivation.

As can be seen from Figure 1.1, the proposed conceptual framework is hypothesized to describe the relationships among the selected variables of the study. Primarily, as shown on the left side of the figure, this study takes a new look at the use of language learning strategies by Malaysian ESL undergraduates. As such, Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies was used in this study.

Secondly, the present study aims to call into question the differences in language learning strategy use across three proficiency levels (i.e., elementary, intermediate, and advanced). It is hypothesised that there are differences in the use of language learning strategies in terms of the overall use of language learning strategies and the use of specific categories of language learning strategies across three proficiency levels, namely, elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

Also, during the last decades, a large and growing body of literature have investigated the use of language learning strategies by different proficiency levels (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2009; Khalil, 2005; Wu, 2008). Traditionally, it has been argued that incompetent students use fewer types of strategies and that the commonly used strategies are inappropriate for the task while competent learners use a variety of strategies appropriately (Lee, 2010; Oxford, 2003; Radwan, 2011). Notably, as mentioned earlier, previous studies have mainly focused on the relationship between frequency of language learning strategy use, in of itself, and in relation to heterogeneous variables. In this regard, a neglected area in the field of language learning strategy use is: variety of language learning strategy use.

As further discussed in Chapter Two, Fredrickson's (1998, 2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions shows that positive emotions have a broadening effect on the individuals' thoughts and actions repositories. The broaden-and build-theory could be defined as a model for explaining the mechanisms behind positive emotions in our minds and bodies, what their effects are, what the evolutionary reason is behind them and why studying them is so important for our well-being. In the same vein, in (2004, p. 1), Fredrickson published a paper in which she described,

> by broadening an individual's thought–action repertoire whether through play, exploration or similar activities, positive emotions promote discovery of novel and creative actions, ideas and social bonds, which in turn build that individual's personal resources; ranging from physical and intellectual resources, to social and psychological resources.

Similarly, recently, studies in the area of neuroscience have shown that positive emotions can broaden individuals' thoughts and actions repositories (e.g., Colzato, Waszak, Nieuwenhuis, Posthuma & Hommel, 2010; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Van Holstein et al., 2011). Accordingly, in the light of Fredrickson's (1998, 2001) broaden-and-build theory and findings in the area of neuroscience, the present study postulates that experiencing more positive emotions may help students in using a greater variety of language learning strategies. Furthermore, recent evidence in the area of academic emotions suggests that emotions that students experience in educational settings impact their persistence, and engagement in class activities (Ainley & Ainley, 2011; Meyer & Turner, 2002; Pekrun, 2006). Considering the broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) and the findings in the area of neuroscience, this study also proposes that students' positive emotions are also related to the frequency of use of language learning strategies. In view of that, the present study begins with the premise that having positive emotions may assist students in using more variety of language learning strategies and in a more frequent manner (see Figure 1.1).
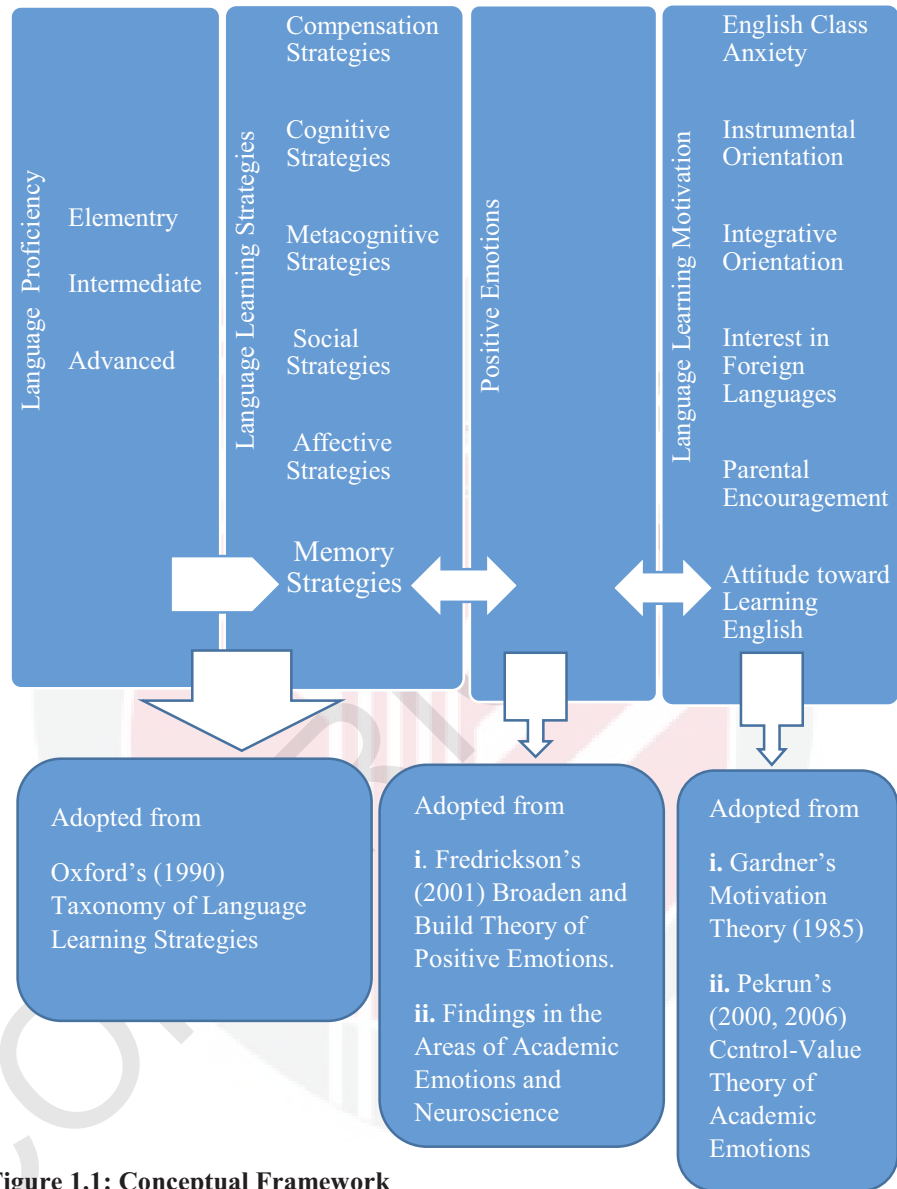
**Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework**

Column 1 — Language Proficiency:
- Elementry
- Intermediate
- Advanced

Column 2 — Language Learning Strategies:
- Compensation Strategies
- Cognitive Strategies
- Metacognitive Strategies
- Social Strategies
- Affective Strategies
- Memory Strategies

Column 3 — Positive Emotions

Column 4 — Language Learning Motivation:
- English Class Anxiety
- Instrumental Orientation
- Integrative Orientation
- Interest in Foreign Languages
- Parental Encouragement
- Attitude toward Learning English

Adopted from

Oxford's (1990) Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies

Adopted from

**i.** Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions.

**ii.** Findings in the Areas of Academic Emotions and Neuroscience

Adopted from

**i.** Gardner's Motivation Theory (1985)

**ii.** Pekrun's (2000, 2006) Ccntrol-Value Theory of Academic Emotions

In addition, another aspect that warrants investigation is the use of specific categories of language learning strategies. As mentioned earlier, numerous studies have attempted to explain that less proficient language learners are unsuccessful in using strategies appropriate for the task because of a lack of cognitive control (i.e., a metacognition component) (Abutalebi et al., 2013; Grant, 2017; Van & Abraham, 1990). Accordingly, as further elaborated in Chapter Two, laboratory researches in the areas of neuroscience show that positive emotions can modulate individuals' cognitive control, and in sequence metacognition process (Botvinick et al., 2001; Colzato et al., 2010; Van Holstein et al., 2011). Also, recent evidence suggests that more efficient use of dopamine as the results of experiencing positive emotions is related to greater levels of cognitive flexibility, creative problem solving, and prosocial behaviour (Barajas et al., 2014). Barajas and colleagues (2014, p. 10) further argues that "dopamine mediates the influence of positive emotions on human cognitive abilities and that positive affect expands and enhances human cognitive abilities". In this regard, there seems to be some evidence to speculate a possible relationship between positive emotions and individuals' cognitive abilities and behaviours. In this light, this study also focuses on the relationship between positive emotions and the use of specific categories language learning strategies. It is hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between students' positive emotions and their use of particular categories of language learning strategies.

Finally, up to now, numerous studies have tried to find the relationships between frequency of language learning strategy use and language learning motivation. The present study hypothesized that positive emotions are mediating variable between language learning strategy use, and language learning motivation. In the same way, recent evidence suggests that second language learning motivation is emotionally driven (Bown & White, 2010; Dörnyei, 2005; Garret & Young, 2009; Imai, 2010; MacIntyre, 2002). So far, however, there has been little discussion about the relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors. In this concern, as shown in Figure 1.1, the present study will also focus on the relationship between positive emotions, overall language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors (i.e., English class anxiety, instrumental orientation, interest in foreign languages, integrative orientation, parental encouragement, and attitude toward learning English). Accordingly, Pekrun (2006) control-value theory of academic emotions and Gardner's motivation theory (1985) provide the theoretical underpinning of the study.

## 1.7    Significance of the Study

This study offers a comprehensive, quantitative sketch as well as an in-depth qualitative interview with the Malaysian ESL undergraduates with regard to positive emotions, the use of LLS, and LLM. The study is significant for the several contributions it can make to the body of research concerning positive emotions, the use of language learning strategies and language learning motivation. For example, finding of the study, would give insights into the relationships of the aforementioned variables which would be useful for language instructors and learners.

First, the relationship between positive emotions and the use of LLSs has not been widely studied, particularly in the university context in Malaysia. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a better understanding of why certain learners use particular combinations of LLSs in their ELS in relations to their positive emotions.

Second, the findings on the relationship between positive emotions and learning motivation would shed light on the Malaysian university students and ESL instructors find out more students' learning motivation. As a result, the ESL instructors can adjust their instruction to enhance their students' motivation.

Third, findings of this research concerning the use of language learning strategies, would provide insight into the nature of individual differences in the use of language learning strategies across different proficiency levels among ESL learners. Thus ESL instructors would use such information in assisting their students to make use of appropriate learning strategies for better English language learning.

Fourth, the present study would encourage ESL learners to experience more positive emotions, use additional language learning strategies and have better language learning motivation. Since learners are conscious of the advantages of using strategies in their language learning course, they could be more enthusiastic to employ these strategies to facilitate their second language learning. Thus, the findings of this study may contribute to the enhancement of learners' awareness of the importance of positive emotions. When learners are aware of the benefits of experiencing positive emotions in their language learning process, they might be encouraged to use affective strategies to enhance the experiences of their positive emotions.

## 1.8    Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined according to their use in the study:

**Foreign Language (FL)**: "A foreign language does not have immediate social and communicative functions within the community where it is learned" (Oxford, 1990, p. 6). This term refers to the teaching of a foreign language to speakers of other languages where the foreign language is neither the language of instruction in schools nor an official language.

**Language Learning Strategies (LLS)**: Oxford (1990, p. 1) defines LLSs as "specific thoughts, actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques students use to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the second language". Strategies help learners plan, acquire, store, retrieve, and use information (Oxford, 1990; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, as cited in Oxford, forthcoming). Oxford (1990) categorizes LLSs into six major categories: (a) memory strategies; (b) cognitive strategies; (c) compensation strategies; (d) meta-cognitive strategies; (e) affective strategies; and (f) social strategies. See Chapter Two for a detailed explanation of these categories. In the present study Oxford's

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(1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was used to measure LLSs use by Malaysian ESL undergraduates.

**Positive Emotions:** This type of emotions is related to the broaden and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) proposes that positive emotions are evolved adaptations that function to build lasting resources. Unlike negative emotions, which narrow attention, cognition, and physiology toward coping with an immediate threat or problem (Carver, 2003; Cosmides & Tooby, 2000), positive emotions produce novel and broad-ranging thoughts and actions that are usually not critical to one's immediate safety, well-being, or survival. Over time, however, these novel experiences aggregate into consequential resources that can change people's lives. Positive emotions include amusement, awe, compassion, contentment, gratitude, hope, interest, joy, love, and pride (Fredrickson, 2001). In the present study, Fredrickson's (2003) modified Differential Emotions Scale (mDES) was used to measure student's positive emotions.

**Second Language (SL):** A second language is "a language other than the mother tongue, learned in an environment in which that language is the dominant language (e.g., English in the USA, French in France, for immigrants or minority learners), or where the language is an international language of commerce and industry (e.g., English in Korea or Hungary, German in Poland or Russia)" (Kramsch, 2008, p. 4).

**Language Learning Motivation:** In a broad sense, motivation can be demarcated as the dynamically altering cumulative stimulation in an individual that triggers, leads, organizes, intensifies, dismisses, and assesses the cognitive and motor processes whereby preliminary needs and wishes are designated, ordered, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). In the present study, Pérez's (2013) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was used to measure students' language learning motivation, and language learning motivational factors. Primarily, the AMTB was developed by Gardner and Lambert in 1959. The motivational factors defined by Perez (2013) in AMTB are presented below:

Attitude Toward Learning English**:** the opinions and feelings that individual usually have about learning English, especially when this is shown in their behavior (Perez, 2013).

English Class Anxiety: English class anxiety is the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced when learning or using English language (Perez, 2013).

Integrative Orientation: This is the drive to learn a second language because the learner wants to interact with native speakers of the second language. It is characterized by positive feelings towards the second-language group (Perez, 2013).

Interest in Foreign Languages: the feeling of a person whose attention, concern, or curiosity is particularly engaged by foreign languages (Perez, 2013).

Instrumental Orientation: This is the drive to learn a second language because doing so will result in some benefits or rewards that are not inherent to the process of learning the language itself (Perez, 2013).

Parental Encouragement: the act of encouraging by parents in relation to learning English language (Perez, 2013).

## 1.9    Outline of the Thesis

Chapter One serves as an introductory chapter, consisting of fundamental topics of the study, namely, background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and research questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and definition of key terms used in the study. Following this chapter, Chapter Two, deals with the literature review of positive psychology, academic emotions theories, and findings derived from studies on positive emotions researches, language learning strategy researches, and motivation theories. Chapter Three describes aspects of the methodological design of the study. It includes explication of the overall research design and sampling, descriptions of the various data collection procedures and methods, and the data analysis procedures. In addition, a brief report on the pilot study conducted for the study is also highlighted. Chapter Four presents the results of the study and a discussion of the various findings obtained via the methodological procedures. These results are presented in line with the research questions. Chapter Five, provides a summary of the dissertation and conclusions drawn base on the findings in relation to the research questions of the study. It is followed by the implications of the study for various educational sectors involved in research and planning of language learning and teaching programmes. Also included in this chapter are some suggestions for further studies.

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