

*Learning Strategies for the Success of EFL Learners : An Evaluation in the Context of
Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

Masud Rana

Jazan University, Saudi Arabia

0079

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

This paper examines how language learning strategies can be the key factors for the success of EFL learners at Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. And the purpose is to investigate how these factors influence the rate and the ultimate success of Saudi learners. Overall 81 students of the preparatory year have participated in this study. Basically, foreign language (FL) or second language (SL) learners vary on a number of strategies employed by learners while learning and using the target language. Therefore, it has been found that a 'good language learner' is in command of a rich and sufficient personalized repertoire of such strategies.

Introduction

Language learning strategies have generated a great deal of interest in the EFL field and there is a plethora of learning strategies in the literature. But it seems that in most of the cases students are not aware of the strategies are being used by them or even they do not know how to use them consciously. On the other hand, the importance of learning strategies is undeniable to be more successful language learners. Hence, this paper has discovered the strategies used by EFL learners at the tertiary level of Jazan University.

Over the last few years, it has been traced out by research that students at the tertiary level having high scale of strategies are doing better than students having less scale of strategies. (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara, & Campione, 1983 and Skehan, 1989; Oxford 1989; Oxford & Crookall, 1989).The same way Naiman et al. (1976) has noted that "good" language learners appeared to use a large and wide range of strategies than "poor" language learners. And the implications of understanding the use of strategies seemed to have increasingly important. To deal with these strategies, the study has tried to find out the answers of the following questions:

- I. Are the EFL students at Jazan University using strategies consciously or unconsciously?
- II. What sort of strategies do they like to use?
- III. What are the roles of the strategies?

Rationale of the study

The objective of this paper is to find out the strategies used (especially most frequently used) by English language learners at Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study provides taxonomy of effective strategies and evaluates the feasibility of the role of these strategies for English language learners to achieve success and finally, recommends language teachers/instructors to train or make the students conscious to use strategies while learning the target language.

An Overview

Learning strategies are the mental processes which learners employ to learn and use the target language. Others argue that language learning is a *conscious* and *systematic* process. For example, Oxford (1992) says 'Language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students often intentionally use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools, the self-directed involvement, and necessary for developing communicative ability.

The development of learning strategies over the last few decades has been immense; there are now a plethora of these in the literature to categorize it or provide suggestion for pedagogy. The

learner has two types of L2 knowledge: declarative and procedural knowledge (Farech and Kasper 1983b). Declarative knowledge is ‘knowing that’; it consists of internalized L2 rules and memorized chunks of language. Procedural knowledge is ‘knowing how’; it consists of the strategies and procedures employed by the learner to process L2 data for acquisition and for use (Ellis, 1986).

Procedural knowledge can be subdivided, initially, into social and cognitive components. The social component comprises the behavioral strategies used by the learner to manage interaction opportunities (i.e. the use of the L2 in face-to-face contact or in contact with L2 text). The cognitive component of procedural knowledge comprises the various mental processes involved in internalizing and automatizing new L2 knowledge and in using L2 knowledge in connection with other knowledge sources to communicate in the L2. These processes, therefore, involve both learning and using the L2. Learning processes account for how the learner accumulates new L2 rules and automatizes existing ones by attending to input and by simplifying through the use of existing knowledge. The processes involved in using L2 knowledge consist of production and reception strategies and also communicative strategies (Ellis, 1985). Ellis (1985) provides a framework of the different learner strategies shown in figure 1.1 below:

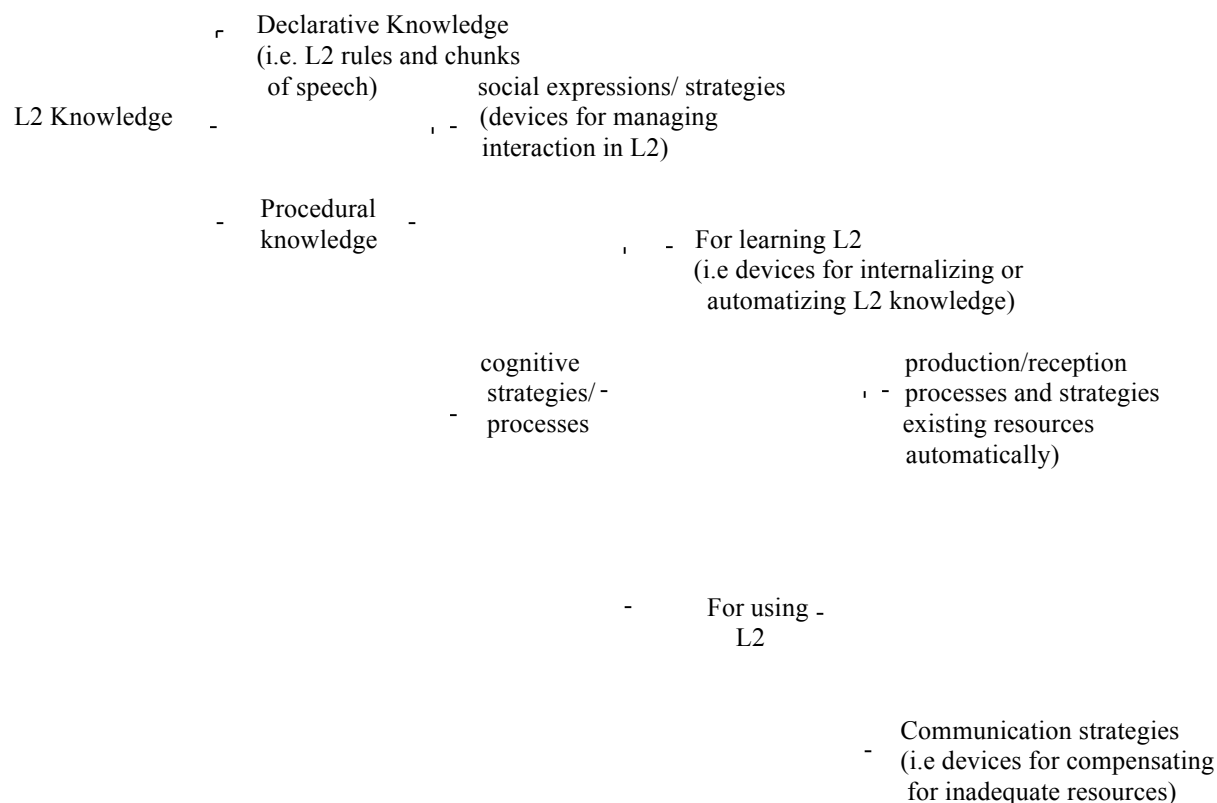


Figure 1.1 .Types of L2 knowledge.

On the basis of the above mentioned framework, Ellis (1985), however, has categorized learning strategies under three broad process types: hypothesis formation, hypothesis testing, and automatization. Hypothesis formation includes such strategies as simplification and inferencing, and refers to strategies whereby learners come to conclusion about the structure of the target language based on samples of the language, or by transferring from knowledge of one's first language. Hypothesis testing refers to strategies such as trying out rules when communicating with a native speaker and monitoring the speaker's reaction to evaluate whether or not the rules seem to work. Automatization includes strategies for practicing the language.

Aside from classifying strategies as focused on the learning or the use of language, there are two other notable approaches to categorize strategies (Schmitt, 2002). One is to categorize them into one of four groups according to whether they are cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective or social (Chamot, 1987). Another is to group them according to the skill area to which they relate (Cohen, 1990). 'Cognitive strategies' encompass the learning strategies of identification, grouping, retention and storage of language material, as well as the language use strategies of retrieval, rehearsal and comprehension or production of words, phrases and other elements of the L2. In short, they cover many of the processes or mental manipulations that learners go through in both learning and using the language (Cohen and Dornyei, 2002).

'Meta-cognitive strategies' are those processes which learners consciously use in order to supervise or manage their language learning. Such strategies allow learners to control their own cognition by planning what they will do, checking how it is going and then evaluating how it went. Affective strategies serve to regulate emotions, motivation and attitudes such as, strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self encouragement. So, for example, before a job interview in the L2, a learner may engage in positive self talk about focusing on the message rather than on the inevitable grammatical errors that we will emerge. Finally, social strategies include the action which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers (i.e., asking questions to clarify social roles and relationships or directed at increasing the learner's exposure to L2 communication and to interactive practice).

The next type of classification of strategies is skill area. The receptive skill, listening and reading skills, productive skill, and speaking and writing skill, are the four basic skill categories. There are, however, other skill areas as well. For example, there are strategies associated with vocabulary learning which cross-cut the four basic skills.

Although the terminology is not always uniform, the term is used as "learner strategies" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987), "learning strategies" (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994), and "language learning strategies" (Oxford, 1990a.), but there are a number of basic characteristics in the generally accepted views of LLS. However, six major groups of L2 learning strategies have been identified by Oxford (1990). I. cognitive strategies II. meta-cognitive strategies III. memory-related strategies IV. compensatory strategies V. affective strategies VI. social strategies .

Thus, many different strategies can be used by language learners: meta-cognitive techniques for organizing, focusing, and evaluating one's own learning; affective strategies for handling emotions or attitudes; social strategies for cooperating with others in the learning process;

cognitive strategies for linking new information with existing schemata and for analyzing and classifying it; memory strategies for entering new information into memory storage and for retrieving it when needed; and compensation strategies (such as guessing or using gestures) to overcome deficiencies and gaps in one's current language knowledge (Oxford, 1990).

Methodology

There were 81 students participated in this study and they were the students of level one & two (First & second semester 2012-13 academic year), department of computer science, engineering and department of science of Preparatory Year of Jazan university. The first language of the students is Arabic and English is used as foreign language.

Data for this study has been collected through questionnaire surveys. The questionnaire is designed based on Oxford Strategy Classification System (1990), 'taxonomy of learning strategies' (O'Malley et al. 1985b:582-584); classification of Communication strategies (Tarone 1981: 286). Lickert scale has been followed to prepare questionnaire.

Descriptive data analyses have been used for data analyses and for this IBM SPSS software has been used.

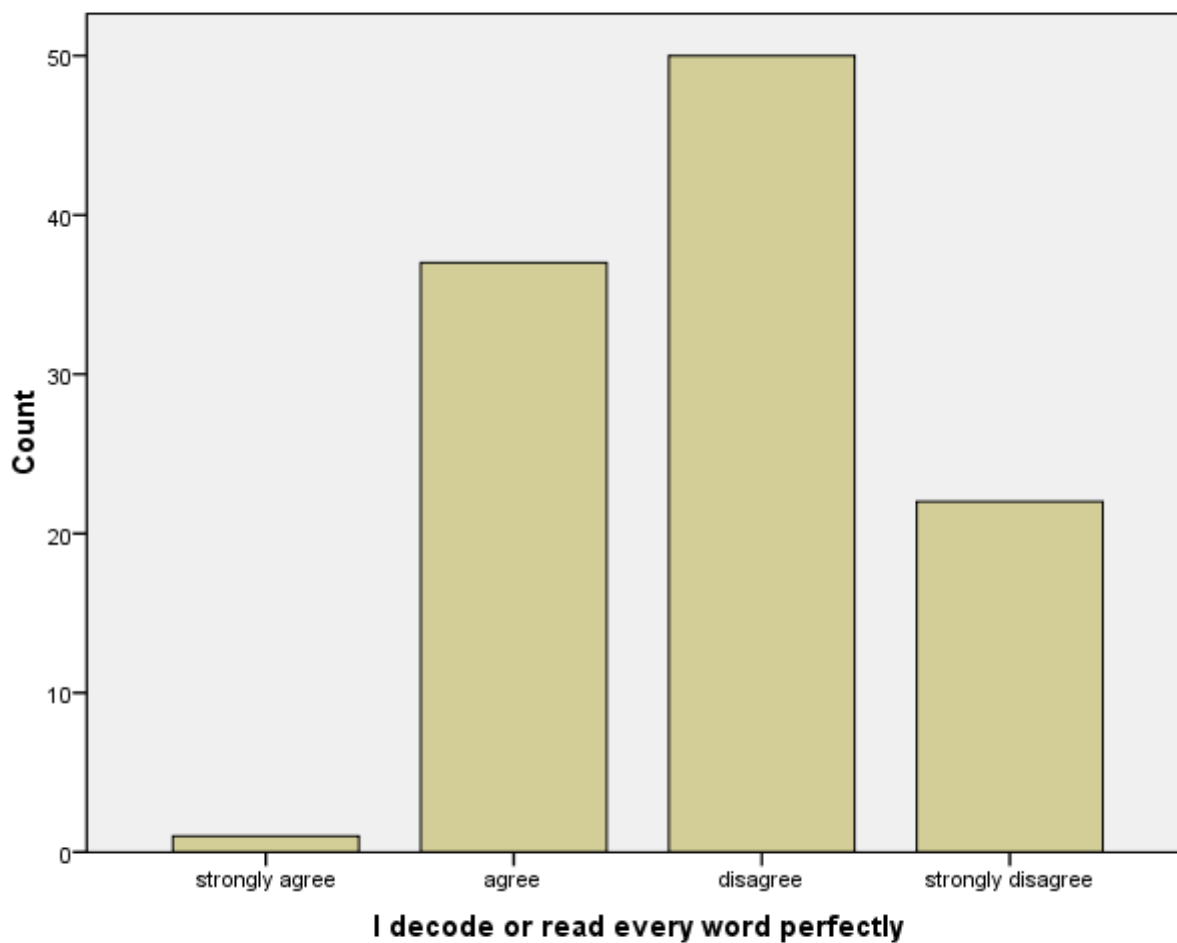
Results and Recommendations

It has been found that students are not normally conscious about learning strategies. They even don't have any prior knowledge of strategies, but students have realized that they need some established techniques/ strategies to be the most successful learners. To what extent learning strategies are being used by Jazan University is shown in the tables and histograms below:

Frequency Table

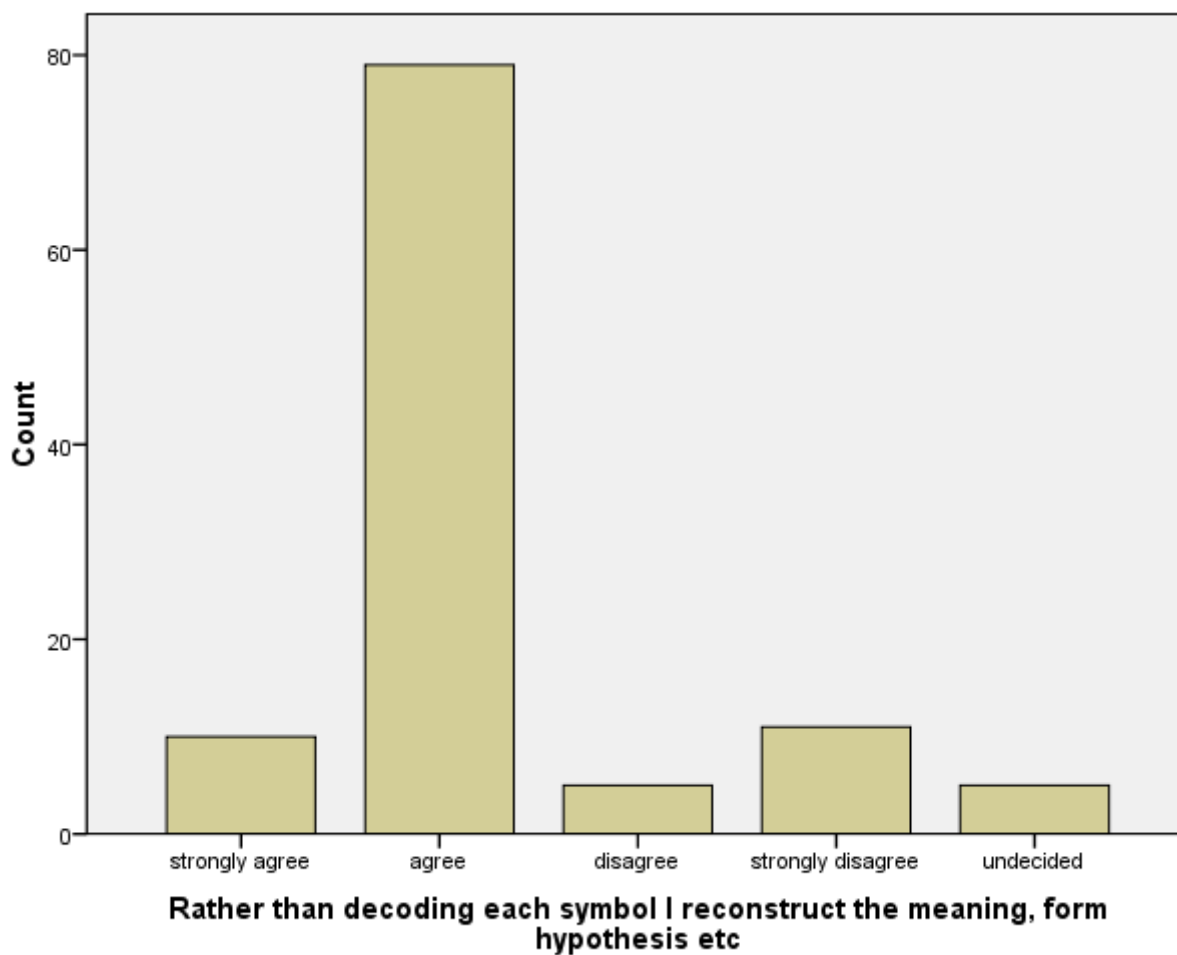
Question : 1 I decode or read every word perfectly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	1	.9	.9	.9
	agree	35	31.2	31.8	32.7
	disagree	50	44.6	45.5	78.2
	strongly disagree	22	19.6	20.0	98.2
	undecided	2	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



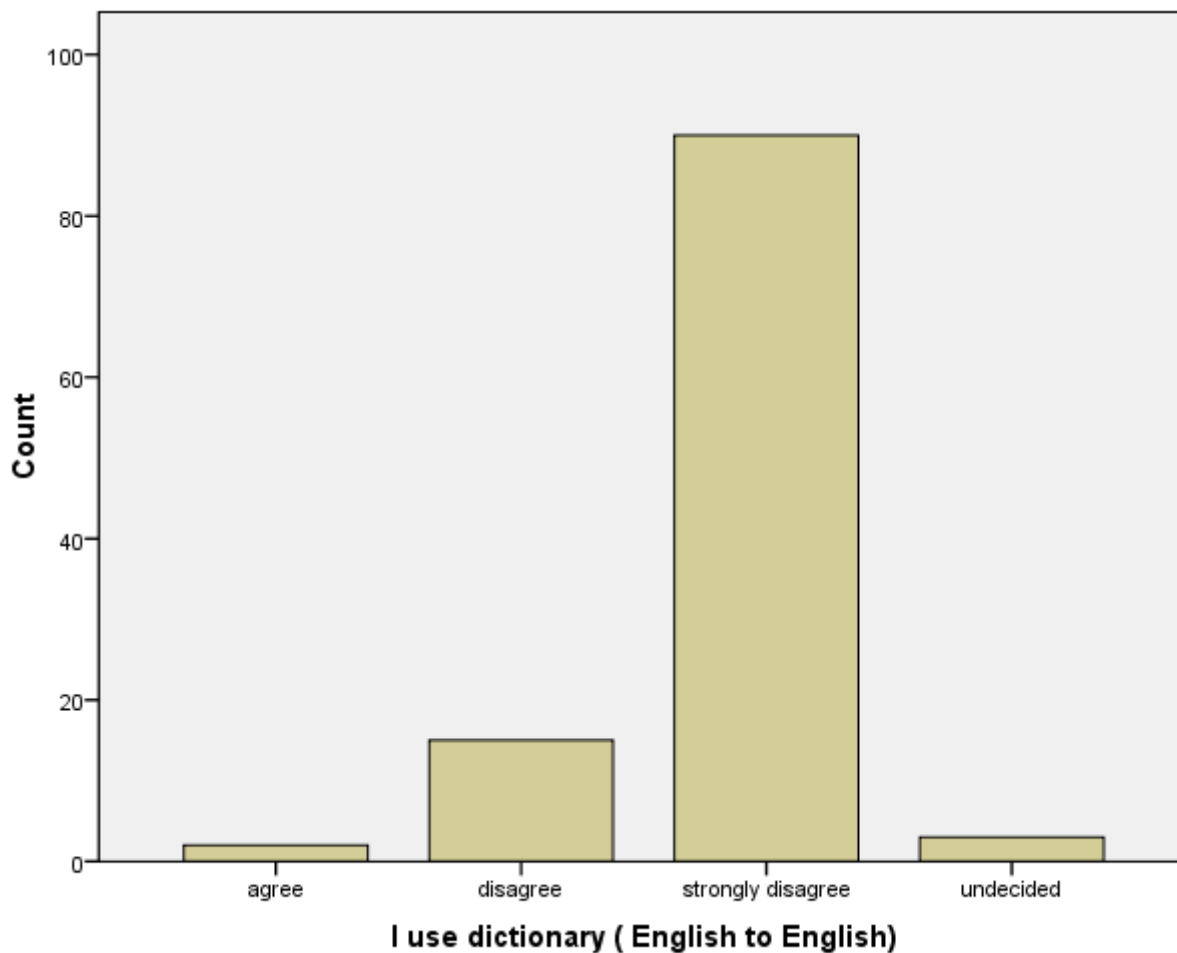
Question : 2 Rather than decoding each symbol I reconstruct the meaning, form hypothesis etc

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	10	8.9	9.1	9.1
	agree	79	70.5	71.8	80.9
	disagree	5	4.5	4.5	85.5
	strongly disagree	11	9.8	10.0	95.5
	undecided	5	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



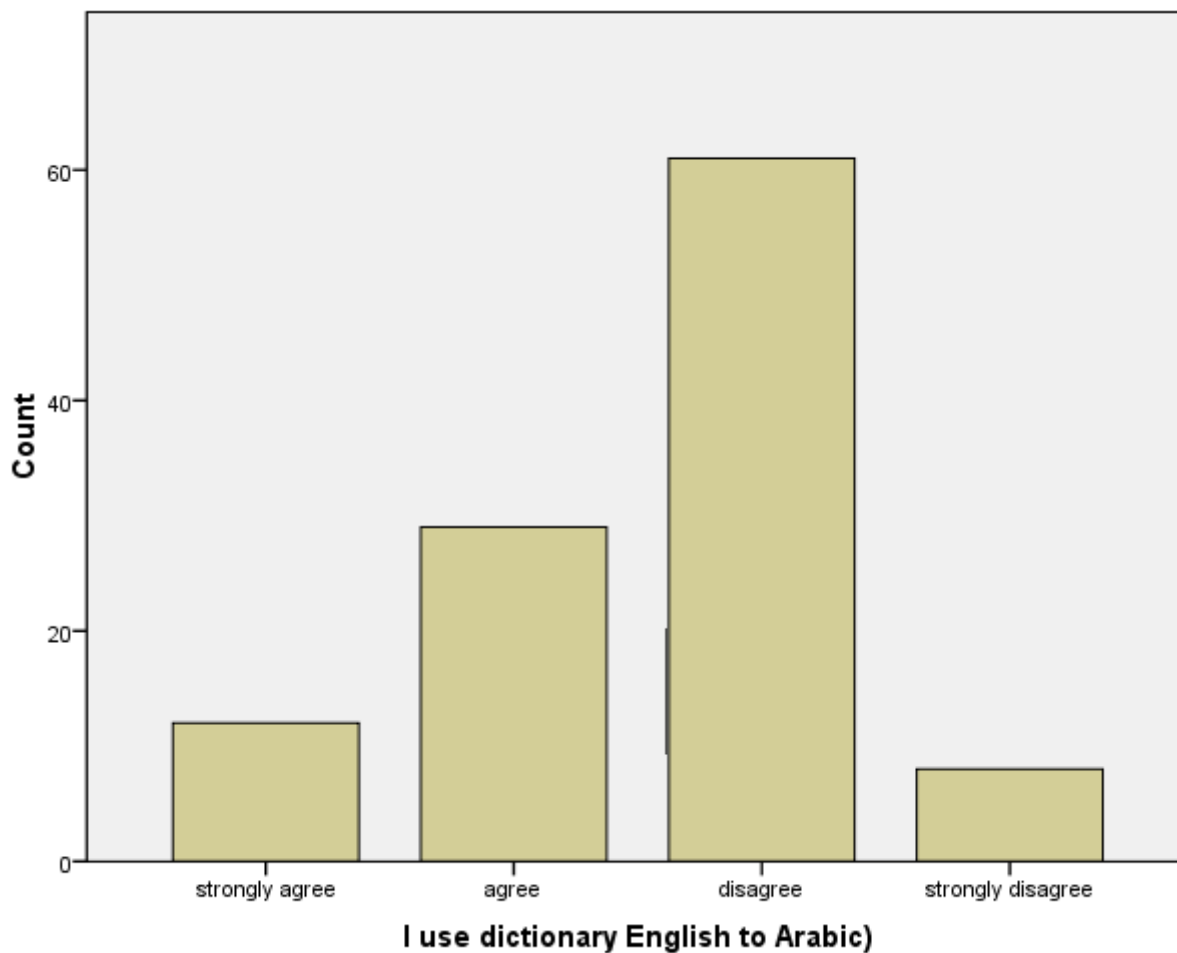
Question : 3 I use dictionary (English to English)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	agree	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
	disagree	15	13.4	13.6	15.5
	strongly disagree	90	80.4	81.8	97.3
	undecided	3	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



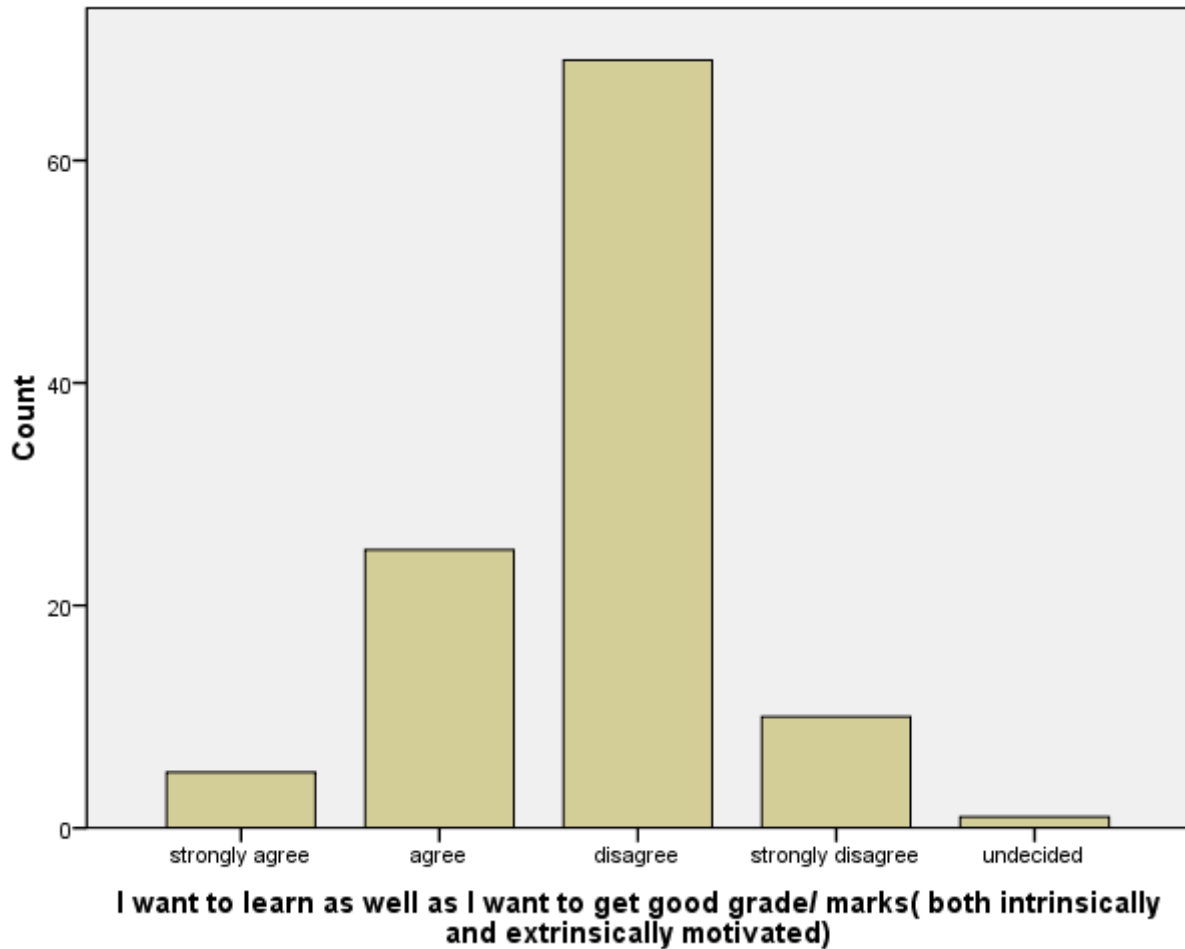
Question : 4 I use dictionary English to Arabic)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	10.7	10.9	10.9
	agree	29	25.9	26.4	37.3
	disagree	61	54.5	55.5	92.7
	strongly disagree	8	7.1	7.3	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



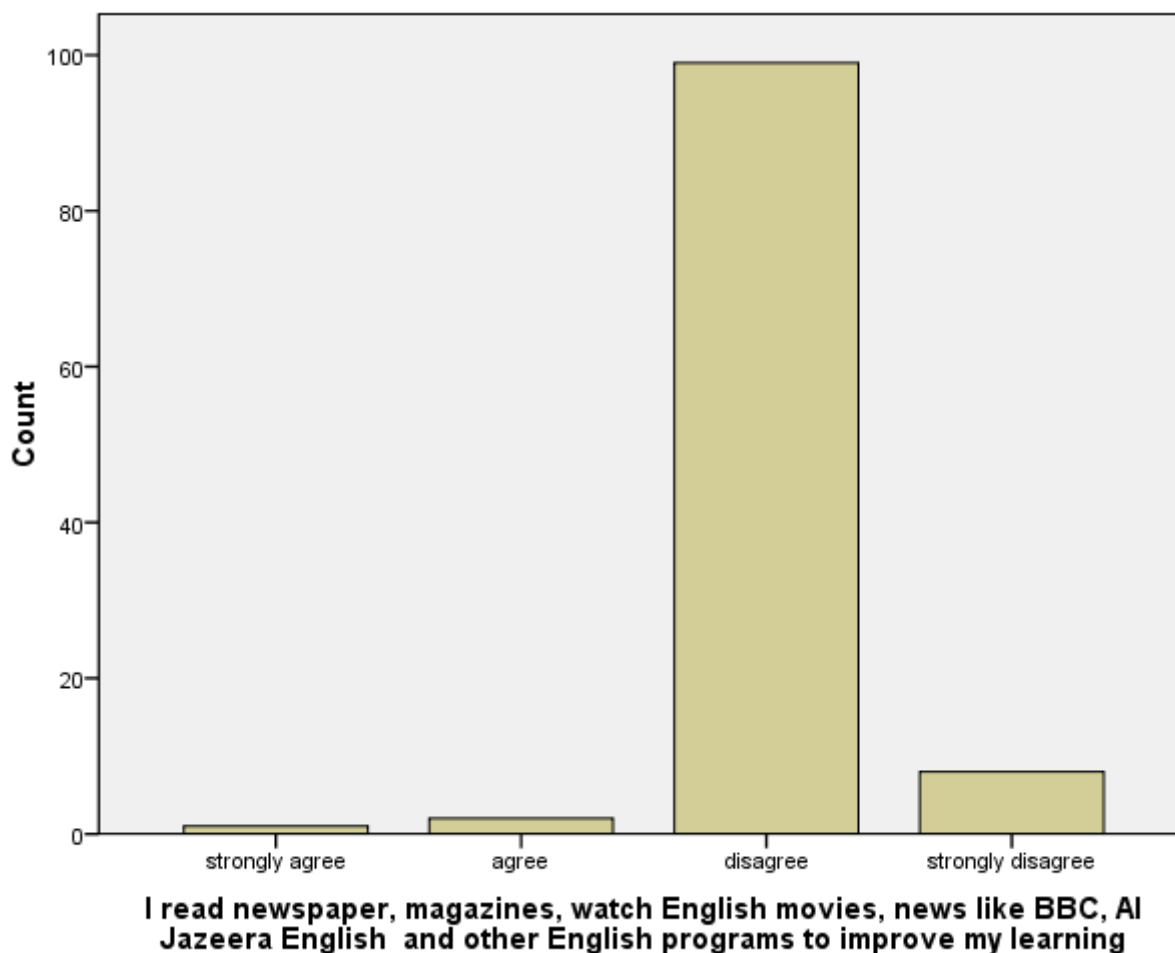
Question : 5 I want to learn as well as I want to get good grade/ marks(both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	5	4.5	4.5	4.5
	agree	25	22.3	22.7	27.3
	disagree	69	61.6	62.7	90.0
	strongly disagree	10	8.9	9.1	99.1
	undecided	1	.9	.9	100.0
Total		110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



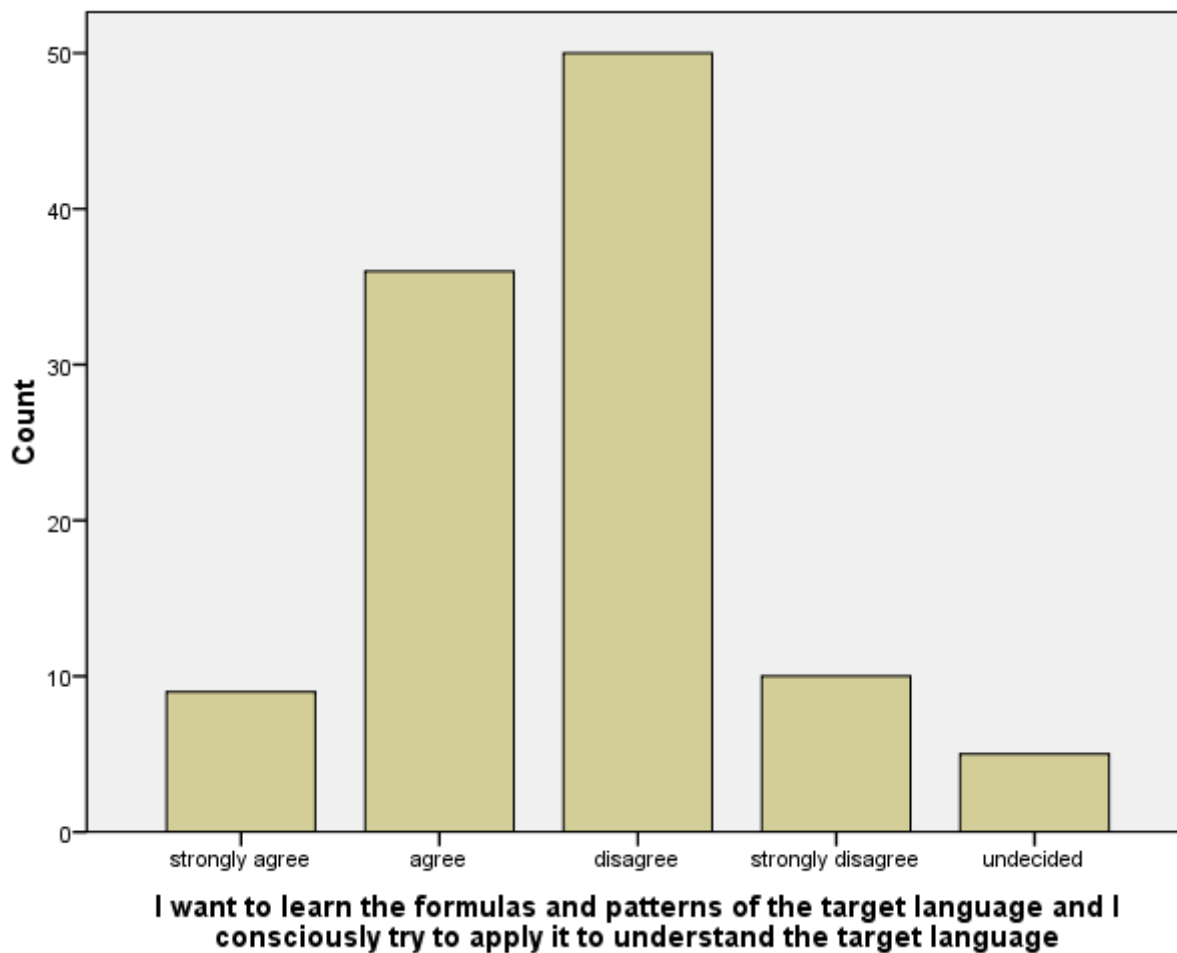
Question : 6 I read newspaper, magazines, watch English movies, news like BBC, Al Jazeera English and other English programs to improve my learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	1	.9	.9	.9
	agree	2	1.8	1.8	2.7
	disagree	99	88.4	90.0	92.7
	strongly disagree	8	7.1	7.3	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



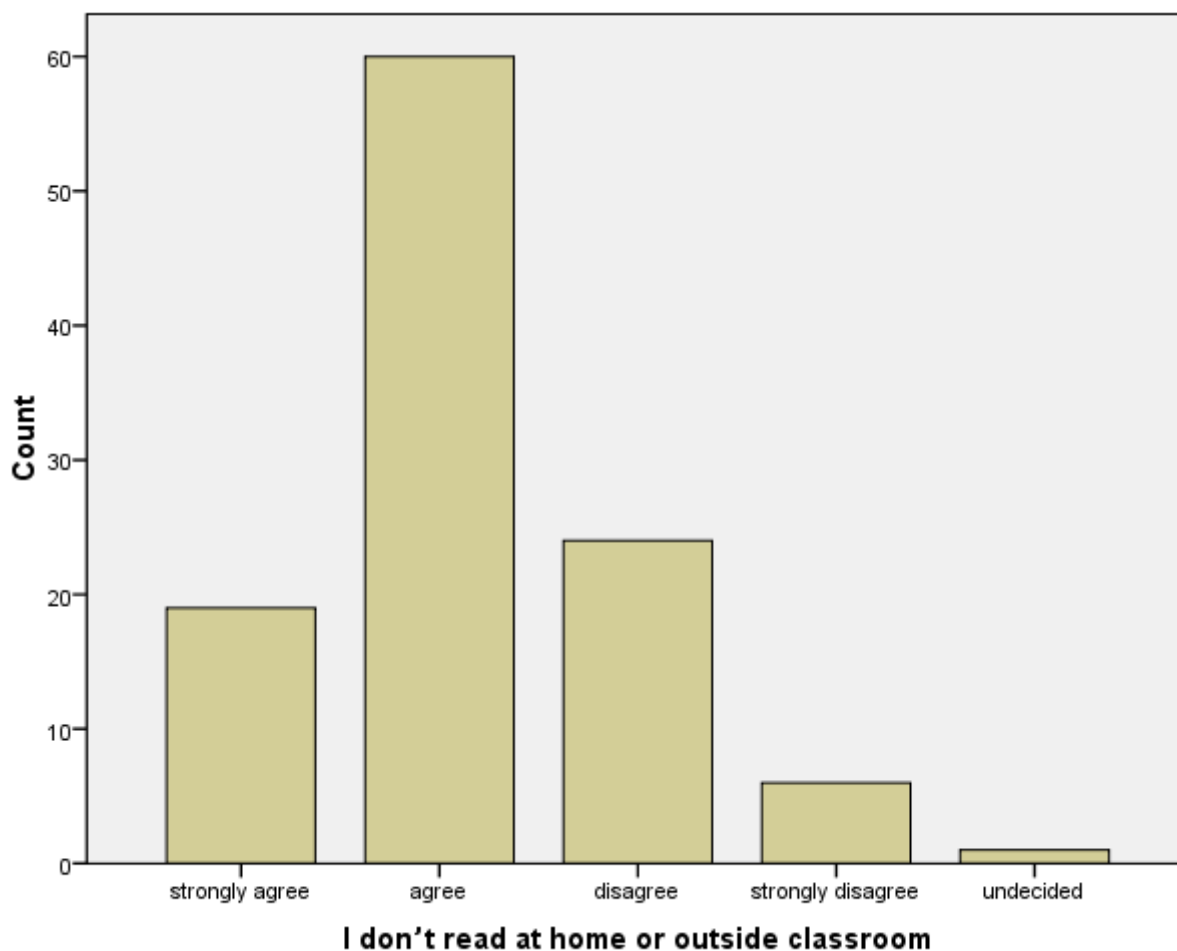
Question : 7 I want to learn the formulas and patterns of the target language and I consciously try to apply it to understand the target language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	9	8.0	8.2	8.2
	agree	36	32.1	32.7	40.9
	disagree	50	44.6	45.5	86.4
	strongly disagree	10	8.9	9.1	95.5
	undecided	5	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



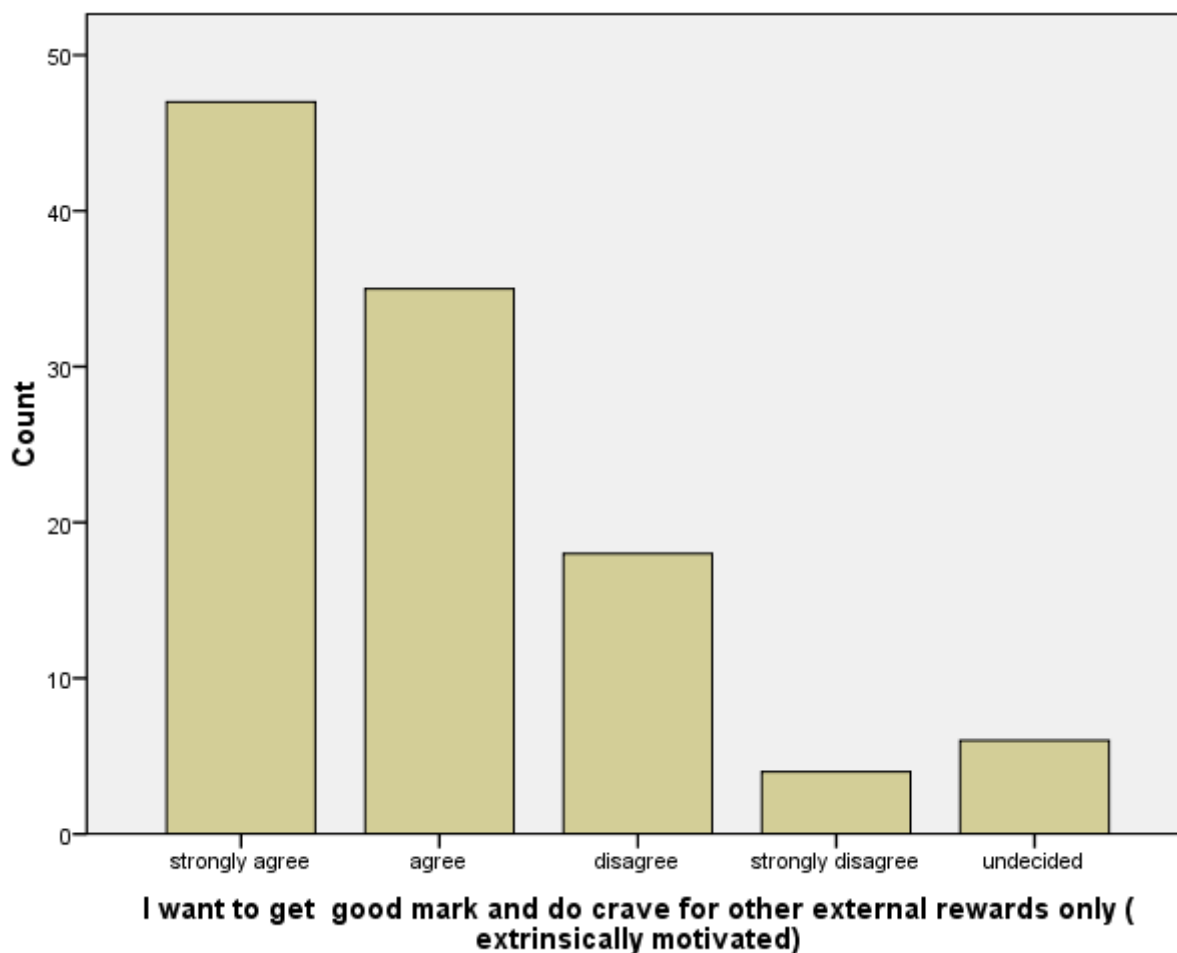
Question : 8 I don't read at home or outside classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	19	17.0	17.3	17.3
	agree	60	53.6	54.5	71.8
	disagree	24	21.4	21.8	93.6
	strongly disagree	6	5.4	5.5	99.1
	undecided	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



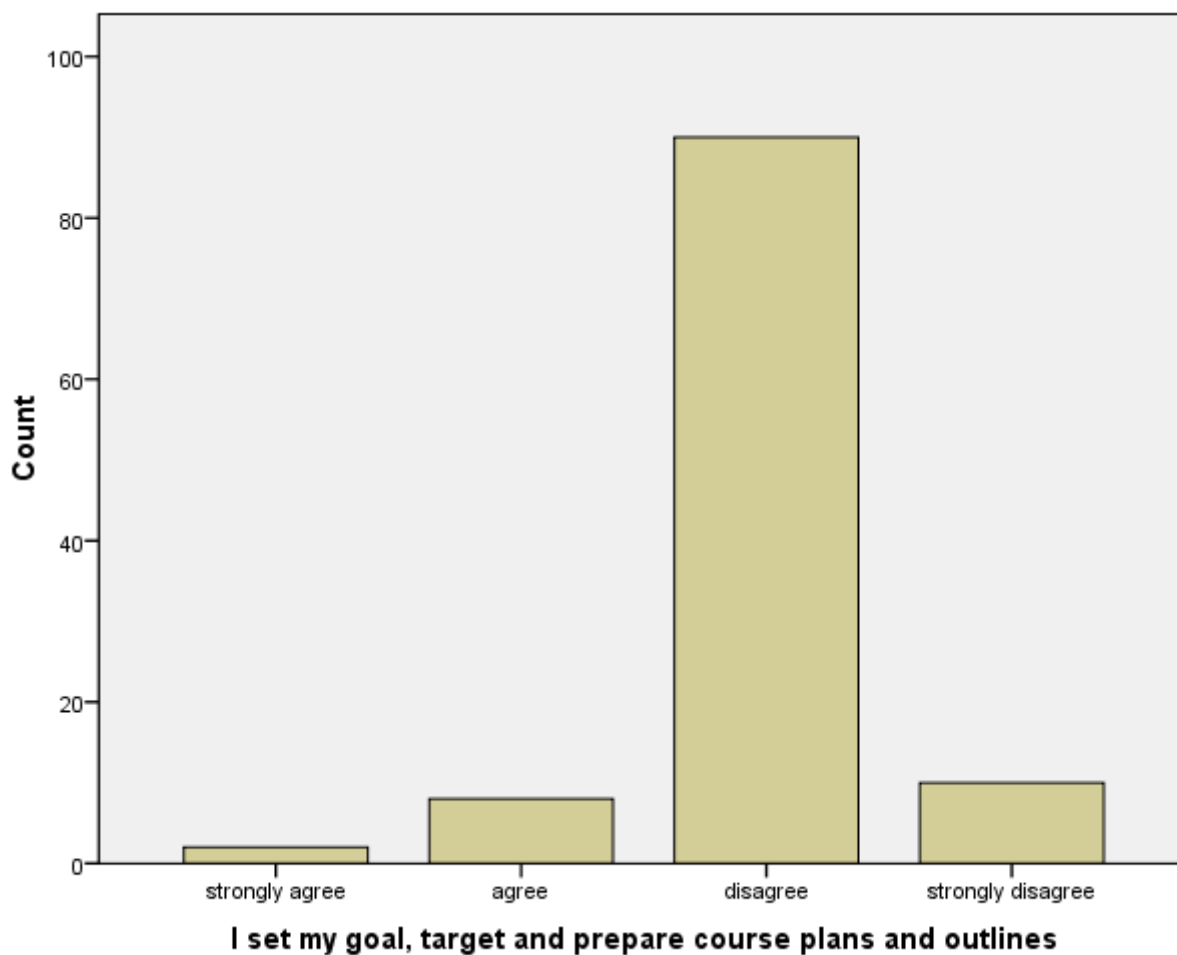
Question : 9 I want to get good mark and do crave for other external rewards only (extrinsically motivated)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	47	42.0	42.7	42.7
	agree	35	31.2	31.8	74.5
	disagree	18	16.1	16.4	90.9
	strongly disagree	4	3.6	3.6	94.5
	undecided	6	5.4	5.5	100.0
Total		110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



Question : 10 I set my goal, target and prepare course plans and outlines

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
	agree	8	7.1	7.3	9.1
	disagree	90	80.4	81.8	90.9
	strongly disagree	10	8.9	9.1	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		

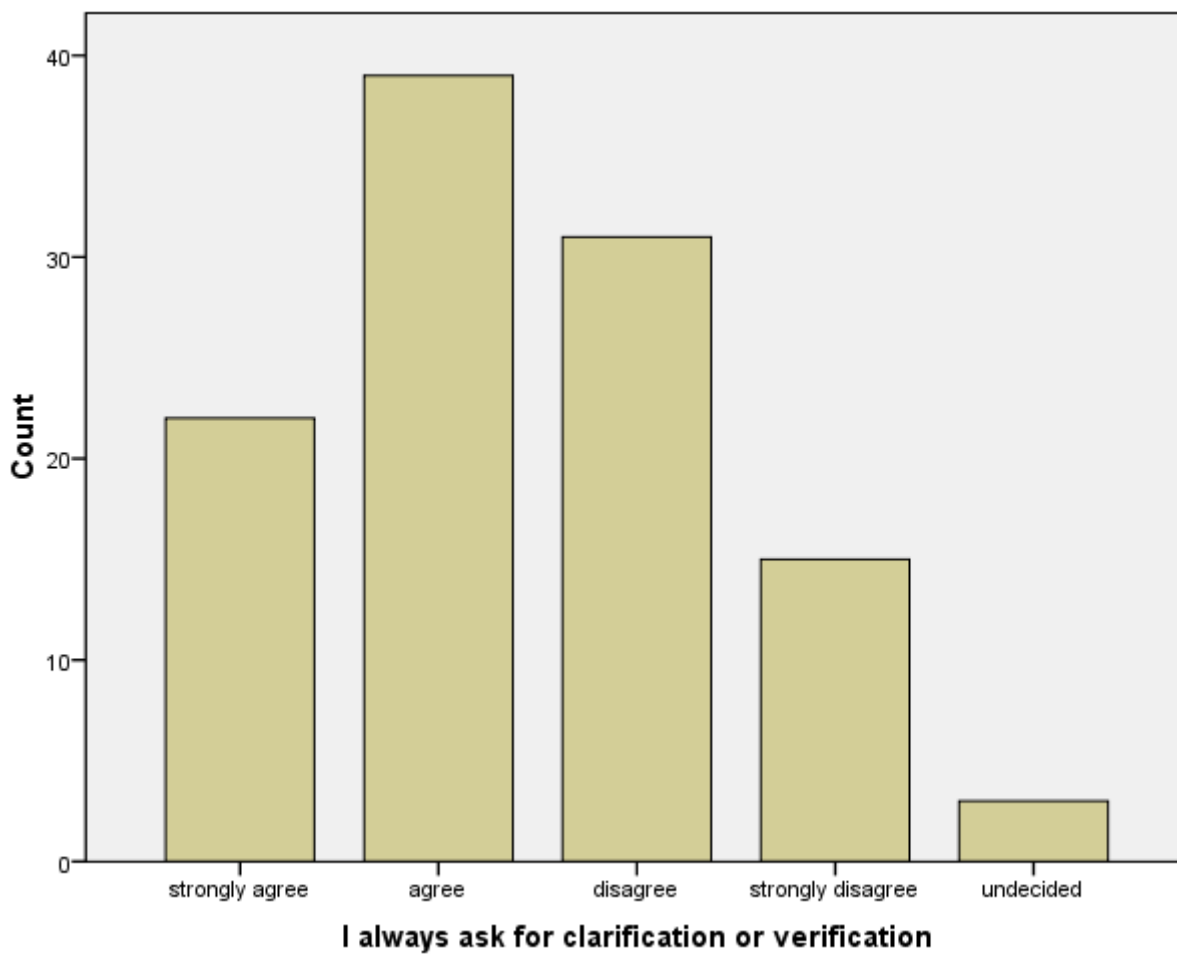


Question : 11 I identify the purpose of the skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	18	16.1	16.4	16.4
	agree	2	1.8	1.8	18.2
	disagree	80	71.4	72.7	90.9
	strongly disagree	10	8.9	9.1	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		

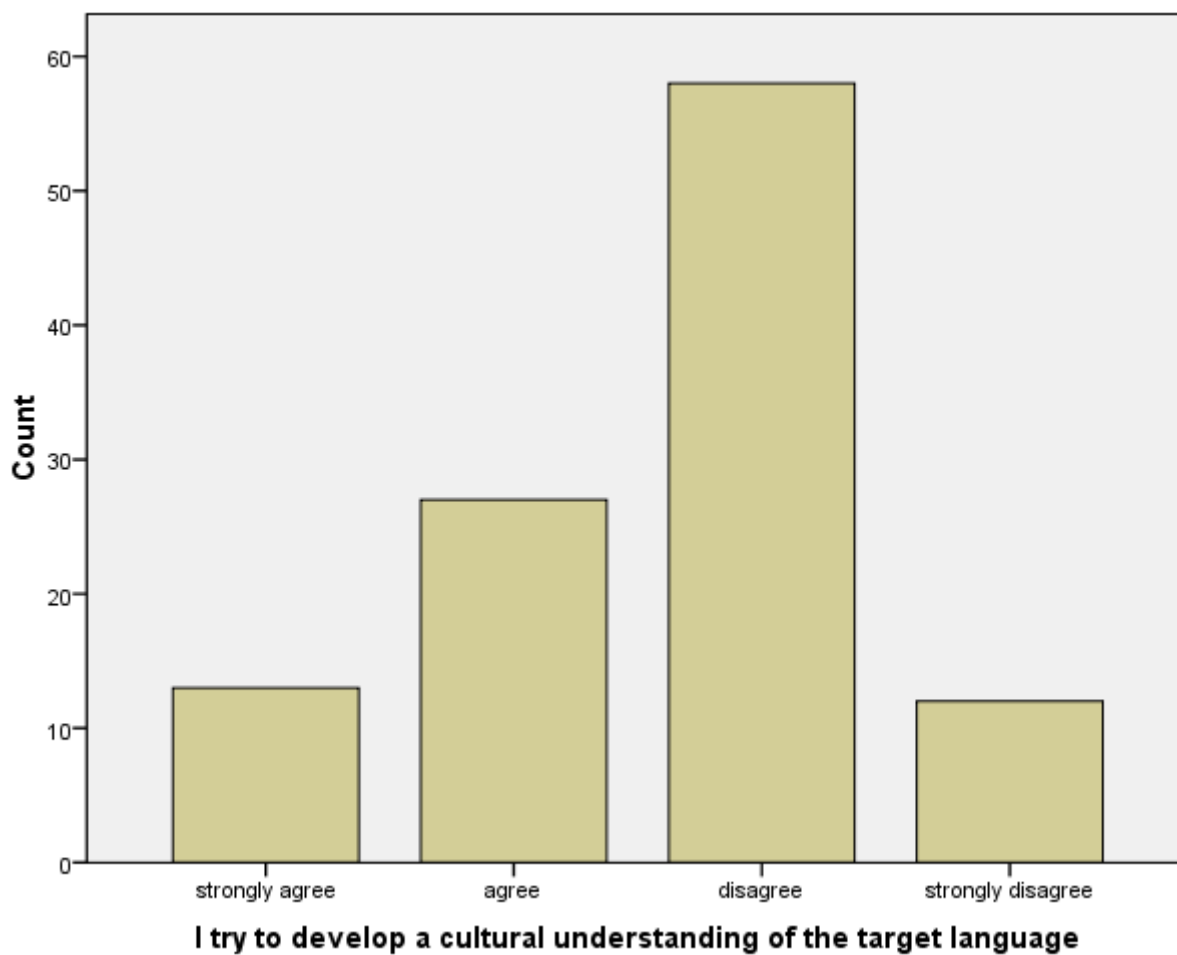
Question : 12 I always ask for clarification or verification

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	22	19.6	20.0	20.0
	agree	39	34.8	35.5	55.5
	disagree	31	27.7	28.2	83.6
	strongly disagree	15	13.4	13.6	97.3
	undecided	3	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



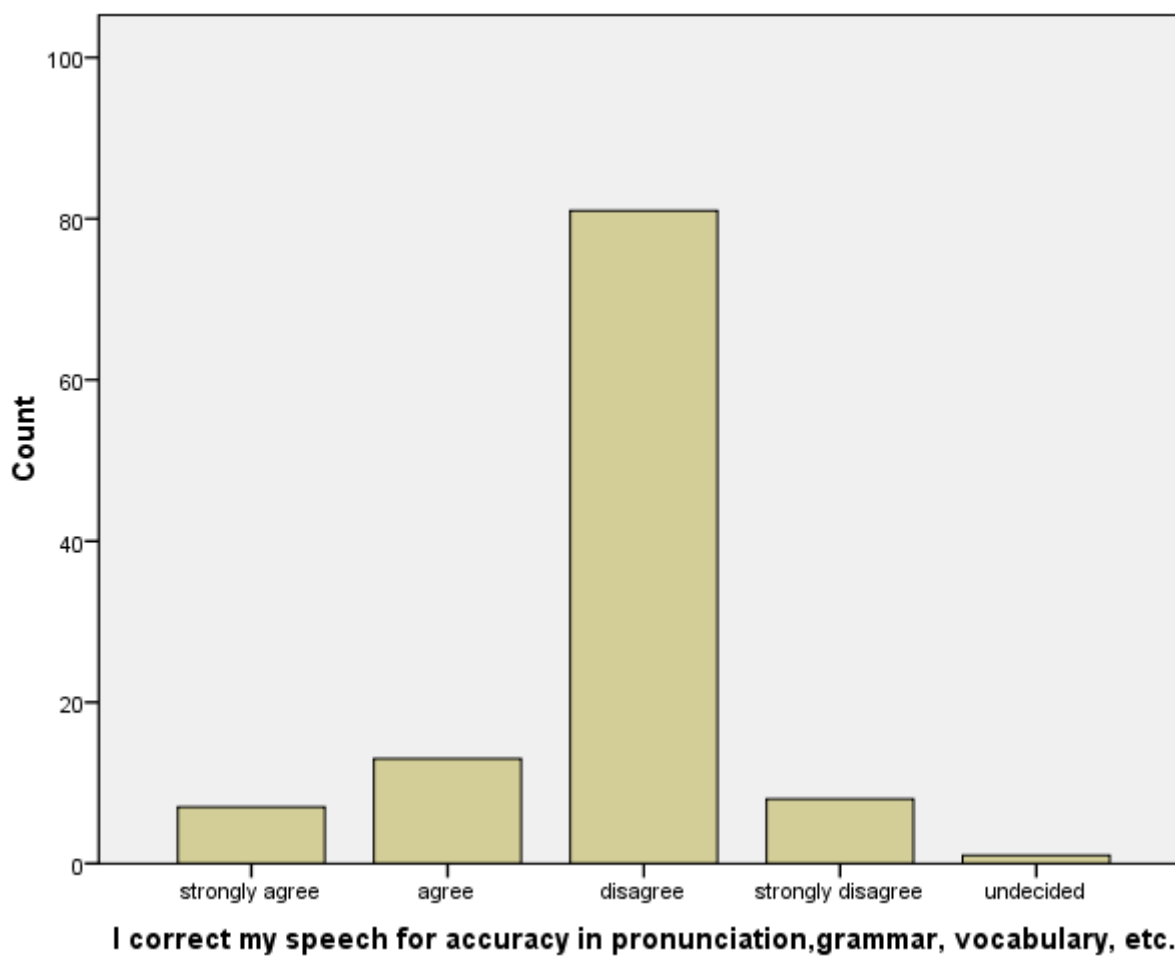
Question : 13 I try to develop a cultural understanding of the target language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	13	11.6	11.8	11.8
	agree	27	24.1	24.5	36.4
	disagree	58	51.8	52.7	89.1
	strongly disagree	12	10.7	10.9	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



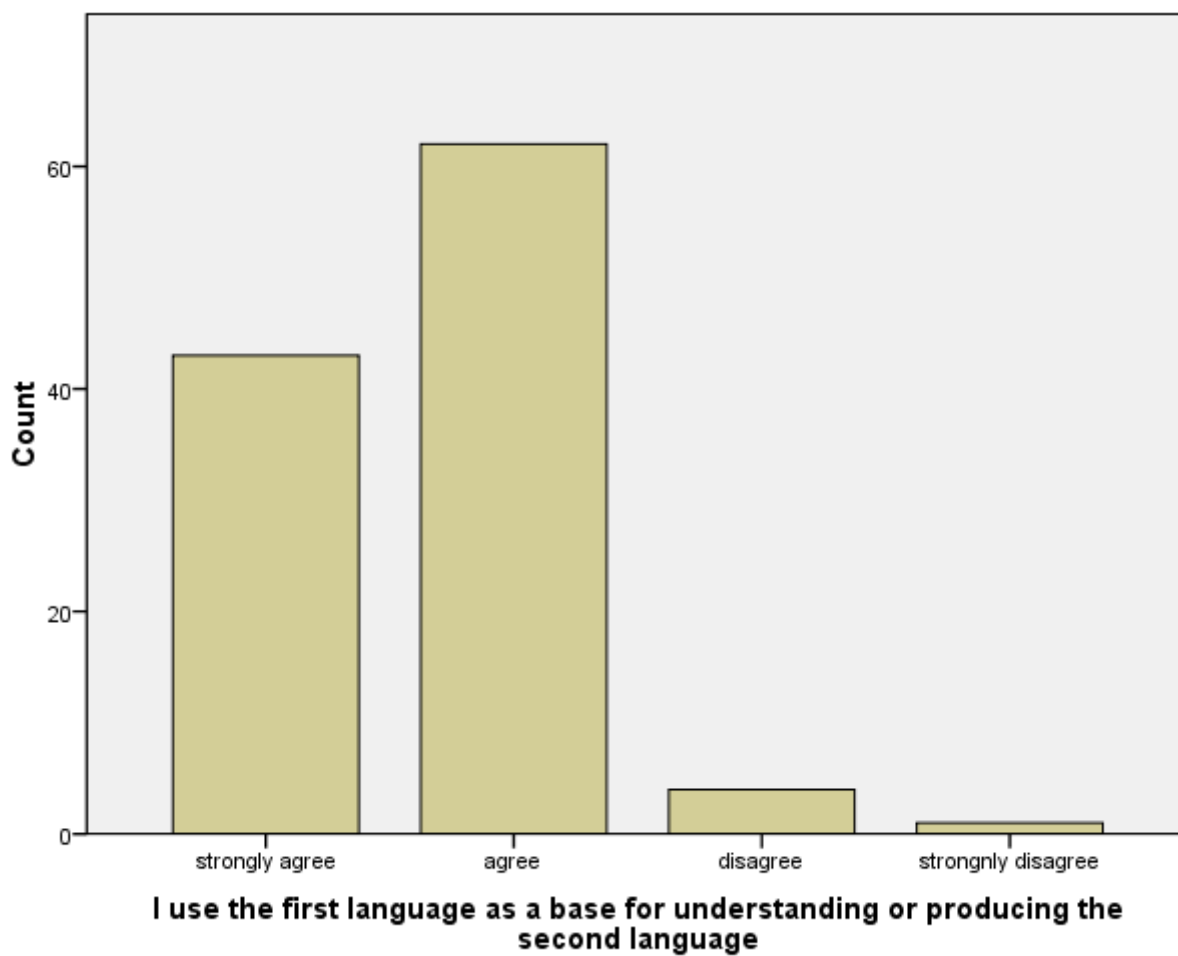
Question : 14 I correct my speech for accuracy in pronunciation,grammar, vocabulary, etc.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	7	6.2	6.4	6.4
	agree	13	11.6	11.8	18.2
	disagree	81	72.3	73.6	91.8
	strongly disagree	8	7.1	7.3	99.1
	undecided	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



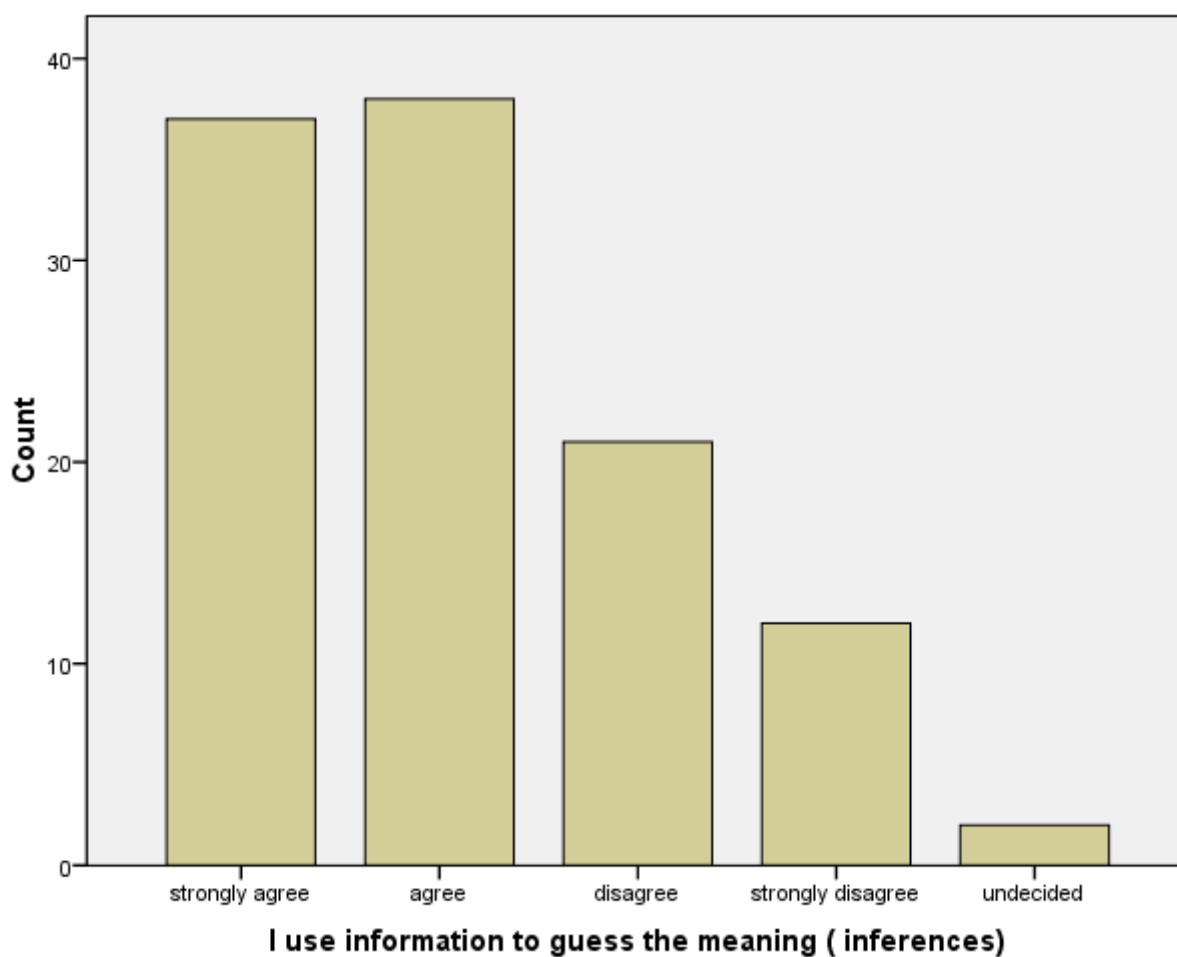
Question : 15 I use the first language as a base for understanding or producing the second language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	43	38.4	39.1	39.1
	agree	62	55.4	56.4	95.5
	disagree	4	3.6	3.6	99.1
	strongnly disagree	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



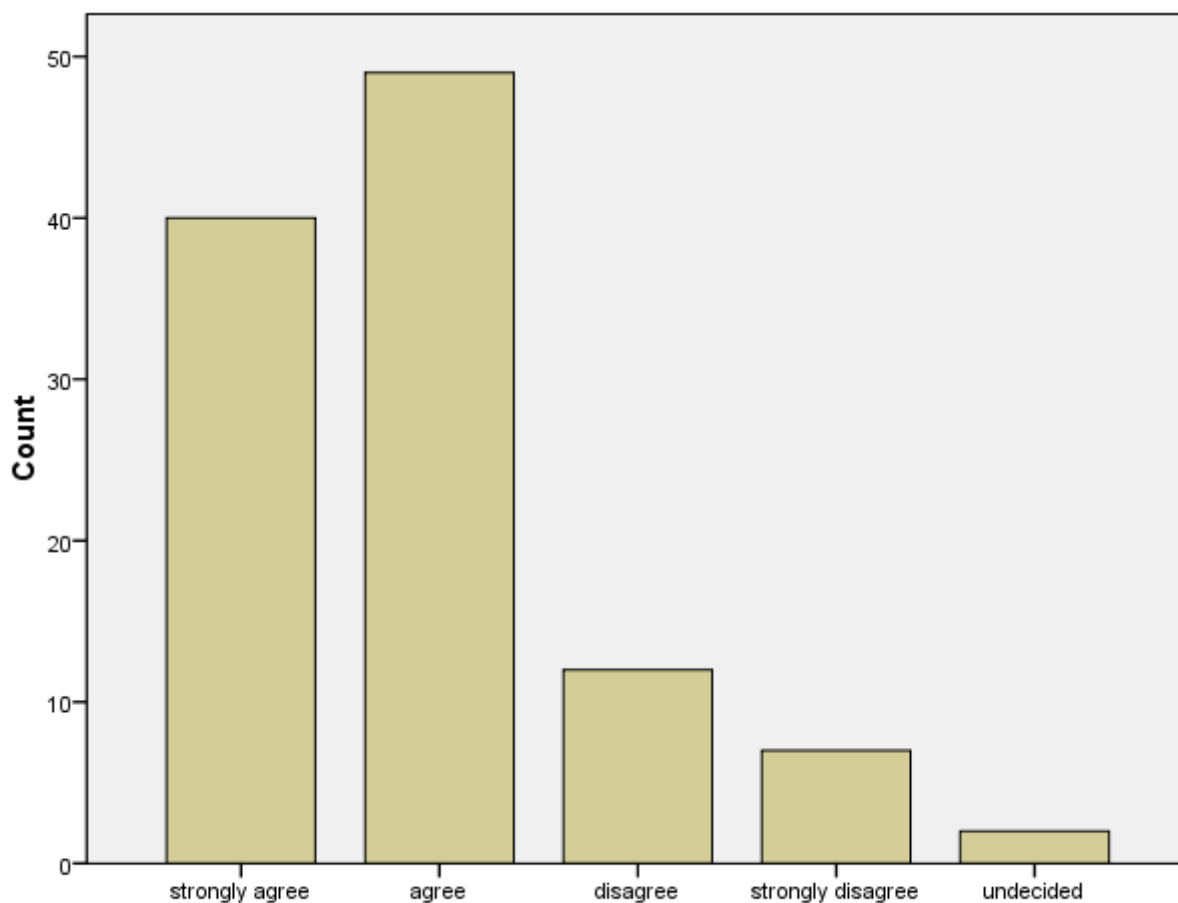
Question : 16 I use information to guess the meaning (inferences)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	37	33.0	33.6	33.6
	agree	38	33.9	34.5	68.2
	disagree	21	18.8	19.1	87.3
	strongly disagree	12	10.7	10.9	98.2
	undecided	2	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



Question : 17 I prefer fun or open activities rather than structured activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	40	35.7	36.4	36.4
	agree	49	43.8	44.5	80.9
	disagree	12	10.7	10.9	91.8
	strongly disagree	7	6.2	6.4	98.2
	undecided	2	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		

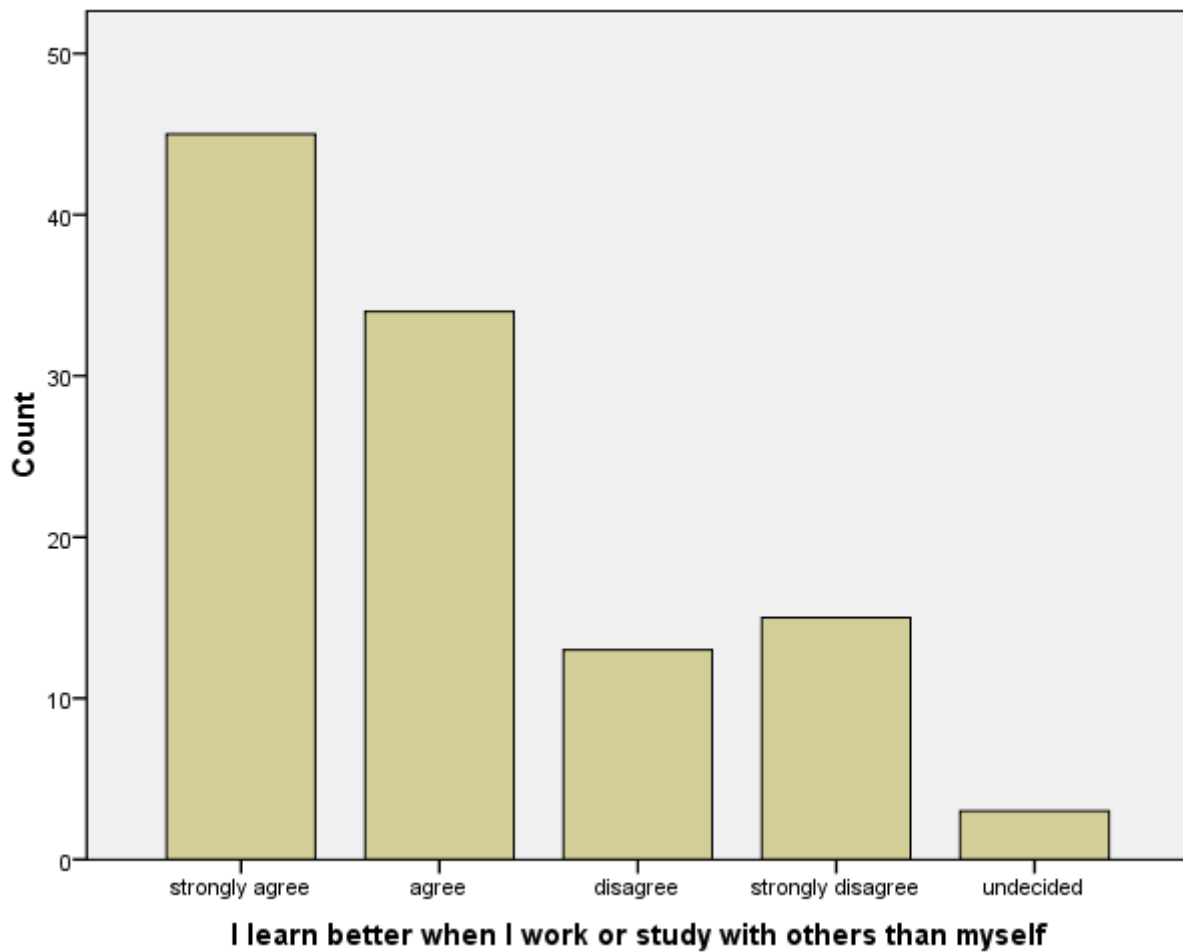


I prefer fun or open activities rather than structured activities

Question : 18 I learn better when I work or study with others than myself

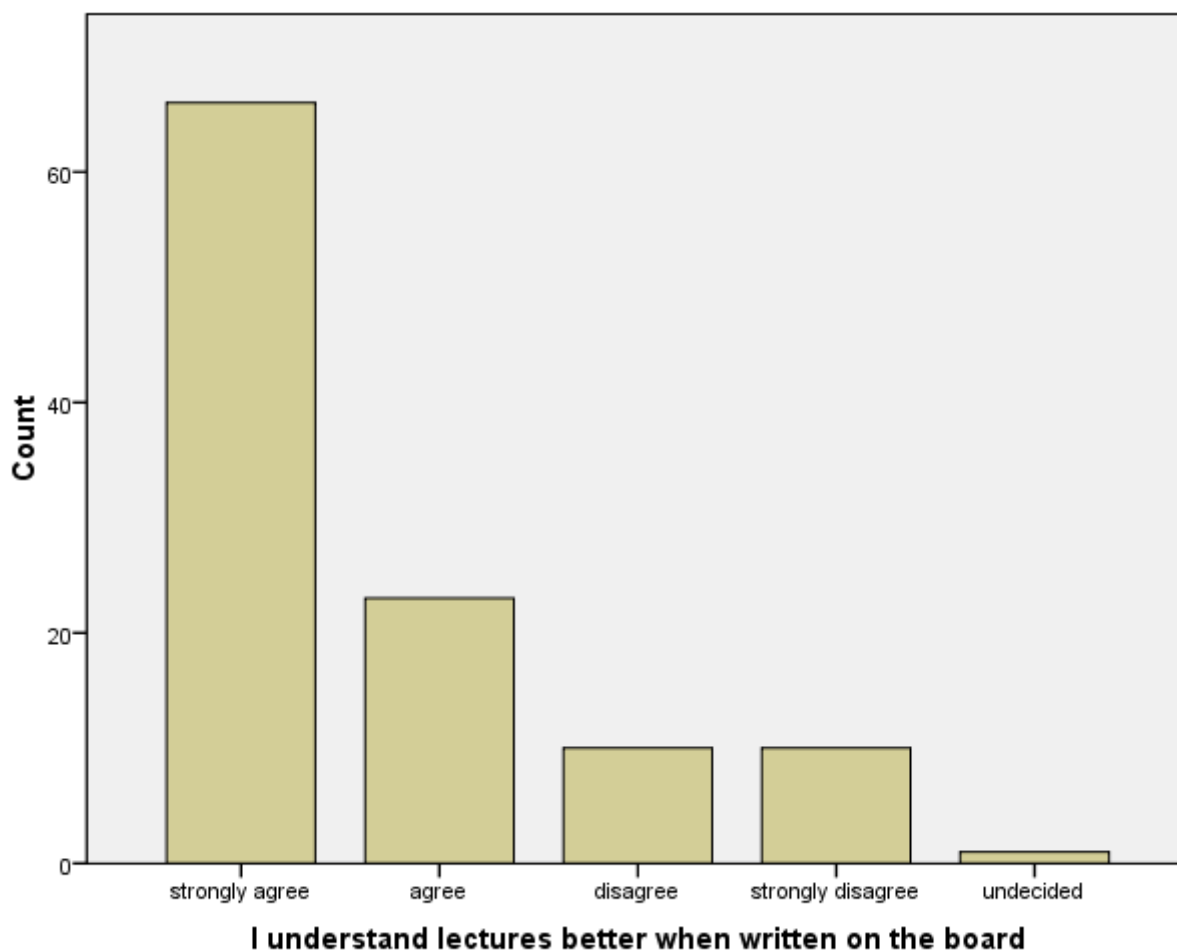
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	45	40.2	40.9	40.9
	agree	34	30.4	30.9	71.8
	disagree	13	11.6	11.8	83.6

	strongly disagree	15	13.4	13.6	97.3
	undecided	3	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



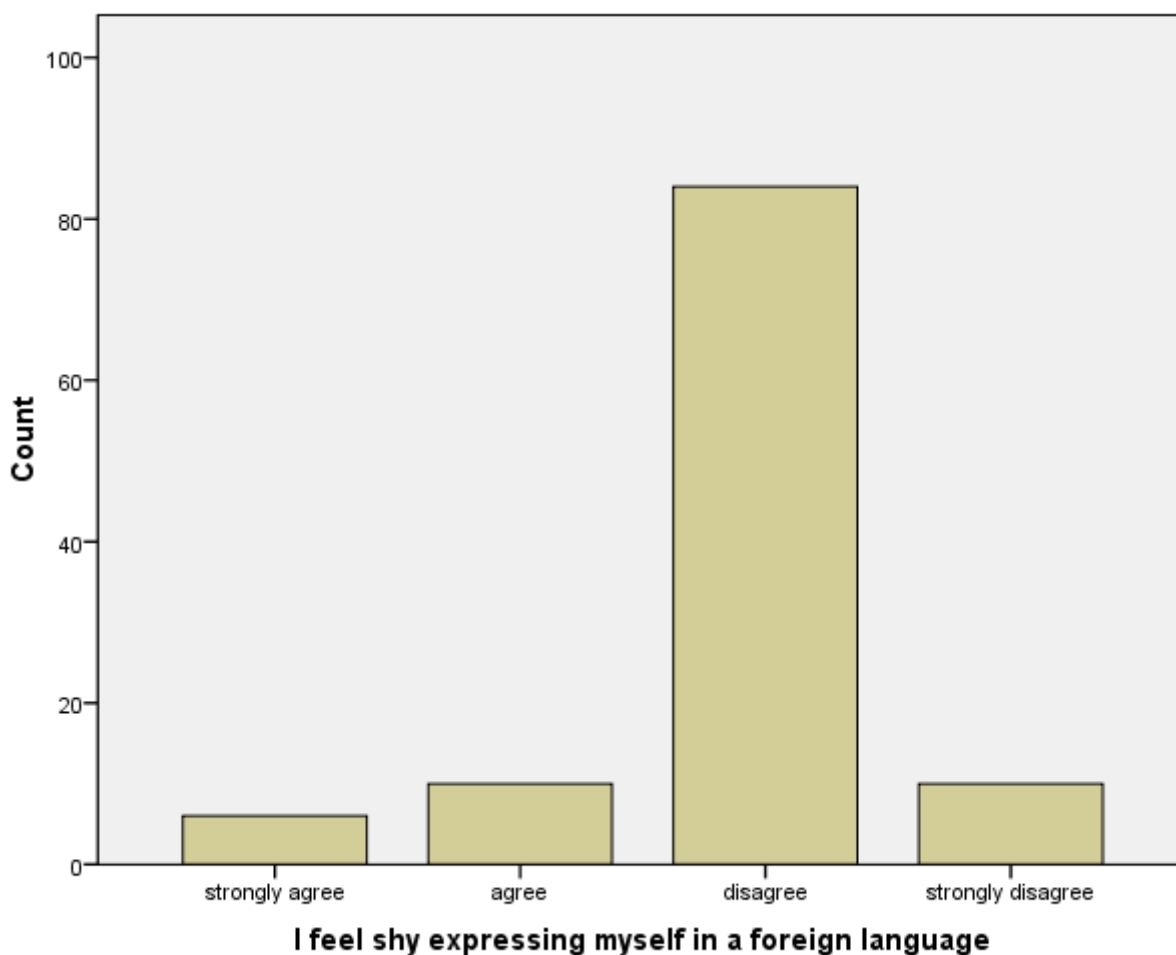
Question : 19 I understand lectures better when written on the board

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	66	58.9	60.0	60.0
	agree	23	20.5	20.9	80.9
	disagree	10	8.9	9.1	90.0
	strongly disagree	10	8.9	9.1	99.1
	undecided	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



Question : 20 I feel shy expressing myself in a foreign language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	6	5.4	5.5	5.5
	agree	10	8.9	9.1	14.5
	disagree	84	75.0	76.4	90.9
	strongly disagree	10	8.9	9.1	100.0
	Total	110	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.8		
Total		112	100.0		



I. Are the EFL students at Jazan University using strategies consciously or unconsciously?

From the research it has been found that students are using some strategies unconsciously. They don't have any prior knowledge or formal training about it.

II. What sort of strategies do they like to use?

Basically they don't have any idea about established strategies but they have come to realize that learning a foreign language is not an easy task; it's a vast and herculean job for them. So they want some easy techniques or strategies to master the language and here the strategy items mentioned in the questionnaire can be very effective and fruitful for the students of Jazan University.

III. What are the roles of the strategies?

Individual learner varies largely on strategies applied by them. One is not born brilliant rather s/he becomes gradually meritorious and these are strategies which make extra ordinary because winners don't do different things, they do things differently. So, learning a language is absolutely scientific. Conscious and unconscious studies are totally different. So, the role of strategies is unparallel.

Conclusion

It is obvious from the data that the roles of learning strategies are inevitable for the success of EFL learners at Jazan University. But it has also been found that students have little idea about different strategies to employ in the appropriate context to be successful. So, in this context instructors can play a pivotal role to teach students about learning strategies and can make students aware about its implementation. Actually learning strategies are nothing but conscious skills which students should possess since students are not merely empty vessels that will need to be filled by the wise words of the teacher; rather they have certain characteristics which determine how fast and how well students are likely to master the target language.

Bibliography

Ellis, R. 1986. *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Brown, D. J. 1988. *Understanding research in second language learning: A teacher's guide to statistics and research design*. Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press

Brown, H. D. 1994. *Principles of language learning and teaching (third edi.)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents

Richard, J. Et al. 1985. *Longman dictionary of applied linguistics*, UK: Longman Group limited

Chamot, A. U., & Kupper, L. 1989. Learning strategies in foreign language instruction. *Foreign Language Annals*, 22, 13-24

Chamot, A., & O'Malley, M. 1994. *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Chamot, A.U. 1987. *The learning strategies of ESL students*. Prentice Hall : Englewood Cliffs

Cohen, A. D. 1987. Studying learner strategies: How we get the information. In A. L

Wenden, and J. Rubin (Eds); *Learner Strategies in Language Learning* (pp. 31-42). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice- Hall

Cohen, A.D. 1990. *Language learning: Insights for Learners, teachers, and Researchers* Boston: Heinle and Heinle

Faerch, C. and Kasper, G.1982. Procedural knowledge as a component of foreign language learners' communicative competence. *Kommunikation im (Sprach) Unterricht*. Utrecht: H. Boete and W. Herrlitz

Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., Stern, H. H. & Todesco, A. 1976. *The good language learner*. Research in Education Series No. 7. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Nunan, D.1991 *language teaching methodology:A text book for teachers, English language Teaching* ,Prentice Hall international (UK) Ltd

Oxford, R. 1990a. *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New york: Newbury House Publishers

Oxford, R. 1990b. *Styles, strategies, and aptitude: Connection for language learning*. New York: Newbury House Publishers

Oxford, R. 1992/1993. Language learning strategies in a nutshell: Update and ESL suggestions
TESOL Journal, 2(2), 18-22

Schmitt, N. Ed. (2002). *An introduction to Applied Linguistics*. London: Arnold

Oxford, R. 1989. The Role of styles and strategies in second language learning. *Eric Digest*
ED317087

Appendix-1

The Questionnaire

The Questionnaire is designed for the survey of 'The Role of Learning Strategies for the Success of EFL/ESL Learners: An Evaluation in the Context of Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The privacy of the information given here will be maintained strictly and will be used for research purposes only.

The questionnaire is prepared on the basis of 'Oxford Strategy Classification System(1990)' ; 'taxonomy of learning strategies(O' Malley et al.1985b:582-584)' ; 'classification of Communication strategies(Tarone 1981: 286)' and from other sources.

Personal Information

Name and ID.....
Age.....College/ Dept.....Level.....Year.....
Name of the University:
Program: Sex: Male: ☐ Female: ☐
Result/grade (previous):Date.....

The Questionnaire

الاستبيان

Please ✓ the most appropriate response

ضع علامة (✓) في المكان المناسب أدناه:

SL	Item الموضوع	Strongly Agree أوافق بشدة	Agree أوافق	Disagree لا أوافق	Strongly Disagree لا أوافق بشدة	Undecided لم أقرر
1.	I decode or read every word perfectly أترجم أو أقرأ كل كلمة بدقة					

2.	Rather than decoding each symbol, I reconstruct the meaning, form hypothesis etc. بدلا من تحليل كل رمز أكون المعنى فرضيا					
3.	I use dictionary (English to English) أستخدم قاموس إنجليزي إنجليزي					
4.	I use dictionary English to Arabic) أستخدم قاموس إنجليزي عربي					
5.	I want to learn as well as I want to get good grade/ marks(both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated) أريد الحصول على درجات جيدة					
6.	I read newspaper, magazines, watch English movies, news like BBC, Al Jazeera English and other English programs to improve my learning أقرأ الصحف و المجلات. أشاهد الأفلام بالإنجليزية و الأخبار كالبني بي سي. الجزيرة الإنجليزية و برامج أخرى لتحسين اللغة الإنجليزية.					
7.	I want to learn the formulas and patterns of the target language and I consciously try to apply it to understand the target language و أريد أن أتعلم الصيغ و الأنماط التقليدية للغة المستهدفة (الانجليزية) لتطبيقها بوعي لفهمها.					
8.	I don't read at home or outside classroom لا أقرأ خارج الفصل و لا في المنزل.					
9.	I want to get good mark and do crave for other external rewards only (extrinsically motivated) أريد الحصول على درجات جيدة و أثار لمحفزات خارجية فقط. (حفزت عرضا)					
10.	I set my goal, target and prepare course plans and outlines. أوضح أهدافي و اعد خططي.					
11.	I identify the purpose of the skills و احدد الهدف المهارات.					
12.	I always ask for clarification or verification أسأل دائما عن التوضيح و التحقق.					
13.	I try to develop a cultural understanding of the target language أحاول تنمية المفهوم الثقافي للغة المعنية بالدراسة.					
14.	I correct my speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc. أصحح كلامي للحصول على الدقة في القواعد النحوية والنطق و العبارات.					
15.	I use the first language as a base for understanding or producing the second language أستخدم لغتي الأم لفهم اللغة الأجنبية.					
16.	I use information to guess the meaning (inferences) أستخدم المعلومات لتخمين المعنى.					

17.	I prefer fun or open activities rather than structured activities أفضل المرح أو الأنشطة المفتوحة على الأخرى الإنشائية.					
18.	I learn better when I work or study with others than myself. أتعلم أفضل عندما أعمل أو أدرس مع الآخرين.					
19.	I understand lectures better when written on the board. أفهم المحاضرات أكثر عندما تكون مكتوبة على السبورة.					
20.	I feel shy expressing myself in a foreign language أشعر بالخجل عند التعبير عن نفسي باللغة الإنجليزية.					

iafor

