UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CROSS-CULTURAL TENDENCIES IN LEARNING AND USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG CHINESE-MALAYSIAN AND IRANINA TERTIARY ESL LEARNERS

PEGAH OMIDVAR

FBMK 2011 47
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CROSS-CULTURAL TENDENCIES IN LEARNING AND USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG CHINESE-MALAYSIAN AND IRANINA TERTIARY ESL LEARNERS

By

PEGAH OMIDVAR

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

February 2011
Specially Dedicated

To my

Father
Mother
Husband
Brother

For their Love & Support
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CROSS-CULTURAL TENDENCIES IN LEARNING AND USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG CHINESE-MALAYSIAN AND IRANINA TERTIARY ESL LEARNERS

By

PEGAH OMIDVAR

February 2010

Chair: Yap Ngee Thai, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

The need for cross-cultural understanding of the relationship between culture of learning and the use of language learning strategies is becoming increasingly important because of the changing cultural mix of our classrooms and society at large. This study reports the findings on the differences between Iranian and Chinese-Malaysian learners in terms of cultural tendencies in learning, national culture and the use of language learning strategies. In addition, the relationship between cultural tendencies in learning and the use of language learning strategies is determined.

A questionnaire that measures cultural tendencies in learning was developed using Hofstede’s four dimensions of national culture. The questionnaire consists of 24 items covering four dimensions: collectivism/individualism, power distance, uncertainty
avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. In addition, Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1980) was employed to determine the use of language learning strategies. 150 Chinese-Malaysian learners of English as a second language and 150 Iranian learners of English as a foreign language participated in the study.

In terms of cultural tendencies in learning, the results showed that there were significant differences in collectivism/individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity dimensions. Chinese-Malaysian had more collectivist orientations, had lower uncertainty avoidance orientations and had more tendencies towards femininity. Regarding language learning strategies, there was a significant difference in the use of metacognitive and social strategies between the two groups. Iranian learners used more metacognitive and less social strategies than the Chinese-Malaysian learners.

The results of the Pearson $r$ correlation for the Iranian learners revealed significant correlations between individualism with memory and metacognitive strategies, and collectivism with social strategies. High uncertainty avoidance was correlated with cognitive, metacognitive and affective strategies. Finally, femininity and social strategies were correlated significantly. For the Chinese-Malaysian learners, individualism was correlated with memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Collectivism was correlated with social strategies. Low power distance was correlated with compensation strategies and high power distance was correlated with affective strategies. High uncertainty avoidance had correlation with cognitive strategies and low uncertainty avoidance was correlated with compensation strategies. Finally, femininity was correlated with social strategies.
In conclusion, it is hard to draw conclusion about the relationship of cultural tendencies in learning and language learning strategies due to the lack of previous studies on this matter. However, the findings of the current study have served as a useful reminder that not only individual background variables (e.g., academic major and self-rated English proficiency) influence the frequency and choice of language learning strategies but also, learners’ cultural tendencies in learning could be a factor in the choice and frequency of language learning strategies amongst different cultures.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera (Bahasa Inggeris)

VARIASI SILANG BUDAYA DALAM BUDAYA BELAJAR DAN PENGGUNAN STRATEGI BELAJAR BAHASA

Oleh

PEGAH OMIDVAR

February 2011

Pengerusi: Yap Ngee Thai, PhD

Faculti: Bahasa Moden Dan Komunikasi

Keperluan untuk memahami silang budaya dari segi hubungan antara budaya belajar dan penggunaan strategi belajar bahasa menjadi semakin penting kerana perubahan dalam pertembungan budaya dalam bilik darjah dan masyarakat pada umumnya. Kajian ini melaporkan dapatan tentang perbezaan antara pelajar Iran dan pelajar Cina Malaysia dari segi budaya belajar, budaya nasional dan penggunaan strategi belajar bahasa. Selain itu, hubungan antara budaya belajar dan penggunaan strategi belajar bahasa telah dipastikan.

Soal selidik untuk mengukur budaya belajar dibina dengan menggunakan empat dimensi budaya nasional yang diperkenalkan oleh Hofstede. Soal selidik ini terdiri daripada 24 item yang meliputi empat dimensi, iaitu cara kolektif/individu, daya usaha, penghindaran keraguan, dan sifat maskulin/feminin. Di samping itu, Inventori Oxford untuk Strategi Belajar Bahasa digunakan untuk menentukan penggunaan strategi belajar bahasa. Seramai 150 orang pelajar Cina Malaysia yang mempelajari bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua...
dan 150 orang pelajar Iran yang mempelajari bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing dipilih sebagai responden kajian ini

Dari segi budaya belajar bagi dimensi cara kolektif/individu, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua kumpulan pelajar, iaitu pelajar Iran dan pelajar Cina Malaysia cenderung mengamalkan cara individu dalam budaya belajar mereka. Ini berbeza dengan hasil kajian Hofstede (1980) tentang budaya nasional yang menunjukkan bahawa pelajar Iran dan Malaysia (Cina, Melayu tempatan, dan India) yang lebih banyak mengamalkan cara kolektif dalam budaya nasional mereka. Kedua-dua kumpulan menunjukkan daya usaha yang rendah dalam budaya belajar mereka, sedangkan kajian Hofstede (1980) mendapati bahawa kedua-dua kumpulan pelajar, iaitu Malaysia dan Iran menunjukkan daya usaha yang tinggi. Kedua-dua kumpulan pelajar ini, iaitu Iran dan Cina Malaysia menunjukkan nilai penghindaran keraguan yang rendah dalam budaya belajar mereka. Ini berbeza dengan dapatan kajian Hofstede yang menunjukkan ketekalan nilai penghindaran keraguan dalam budaya belajar dan budaya nasional pelajar Malaysia. Namun, bagi pelajar Iran, mereka menunjukkan nilai penghindaran keraguan yang tinggi dalam budaya nasional mereka.

Menyentuh dimensi terakhir, budaya maskulin/feminin, kedua-dua kumpulan menunjukkan budaya belajar feminin. Kajian Hofstede mendapati bahawa budaya nasional Iran lebih maskulin sementara pelajar Malaysia berada di tengah-tengah antara ciri maskulin / feminin dalam budaya nasional mereka.
Menyentuh strategi belajar bahasa, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penggunaan strategi metakognitif dan sosial antara kedua-dua kumpulan. Pelajar Iran lebih banyak menggunakan strategi metakognitif dan kurang menggunakan strategi sosial berbanding dengan pelajar Cina Malaysia.


Sebagai kesimpulan, sukar untuk membuat kesimpulan tentang hubungan budaya belajar dengan strategi belajar bahasa kerana kurangnya kajian terdahulu tentang hal ini. Namun, dapanan kajian ini boleh digunakan sebagai peringatan yang berguna tentang hakikat bahawa kekerapan dan pemilihan strategi belajar bahasa tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh pemboleh ubah latar belakang seseorang (seperti pengkhususan akademik, dan kemahiran
bahasa Inggeris dengan nilai-nilai kendi) tetapi turut dipengaruhi oleh budaya belajar pelajar dalam kalangan budaya yang berbeza.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Yap Ngee Thai for her guidance, generous assistance and valuable advice during my study and the preparation as well as completion of this thesis. Her criticism and suggestion have been most constructive and are highly appreciated. Her patience, trust and enthusiasm have left a deep impression that could not be expressed in words. Special thanks to Dr. Chan Mei Yuit and Dr. Jusang Bolong for their valuable advice, immense assistance and full support at all stages of the research work.

Last not the least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my parents and my husband for their encouragement and support throughout my whole life.

I hope anyone who is not mentioned by name may recognize my gratitude for their kindness, advice and moral support toward completion of my master’s degree at University Putra Malaysia.
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 16 February to conduct the final examination of Pegah Omidvar on her thesis entitled “Cross-cultural Variations in Learning Culture and the Use of Language Learning Strategies” 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 Master of English language.

Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

**Shivani Sivaguruna Than, PhD**
Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

**Mardziah Hayati Binti Abdullah, PhD**
Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

**Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, PhD**
Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

**Kuang Ching Hei, PhD**
Associate Professor
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
Universiti of Malaya
Malaysia
(External Examiner)

_____________________________
BUJANG KIM HUAT, PhD
Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

x
This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

Yap Ngee Thai, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Chan Mei Yuit PhD
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Jusang Bin Bolong, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

HASANAH MOHD GHAZLI, PhD
Professor / Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 14 JULY 2011
DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

____________________

PEGAH OMIDVAR

Date: 16 FEBRUARY 2011
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td></td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td></td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td></td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td></td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   1.1 Background to the Study  
   1.2 Statement of the Research Problem  
   1.3 Research Questions  
   1.4 Purpose of the Study  
   1.5 Research Objectives  
   1.6 Theoretical Framework  
   1.7 Limitations of the Study  
   1.8 Significance of the Study

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW**
   2.1 Culture  
     2.1.1 Hofstede’s Study on National Culture  
     2.1.2 Applications of Hofstede’s Framework  
     2.1.3 Review of Methods for Measuring Culture  
     2.1.4 Culture and Learning  
     2.1.5 Cultural Dimensions Based on Hofstede’s View  
   2.2 Language Learning Strategies  
     2.2.1 Importance of Language Learning Strategies  
     2.2.2 Findings Related to Earlier Researches on Language Learning Strategies  
   2.3 Culture and Language learning Strategy Use  
   2.4 Brief History of the Iranian, Chinese, and Chinese-Malaysian Cultures

3. **METHODOLOGY**
   3.1 Conceptual Framework  
   3.2 Research Design  
   3.3 Target Population  
   3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques  
   3.5 Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES 137
APPENDICES 149
BIODATA OF STUDENT 166