UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

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

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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

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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

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February 2010

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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

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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 femininism. 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, femininism was correlated with social strategies.

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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.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagi memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera (Bahasa Inggeris)

VARIASI SILANG BUDAYA DALAM BUDAYA BELAJAR DAN PENGGUNAN STRATEGI BELAJAR BAHASA

Oleh

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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

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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.

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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.

Hasil korelasi Pearson r bagi pelajar Iran menujukkan wujudnya korelasi yang signifikan antara belajar secara individu dengan strategi mengingat dan metakognitif, sementara belajar secara kolektif berkorelasi dengan strategi sosial. Nilai penghidaran keraguan yang tinggi pula berkorelasi dengan strategi kognitif, metakognitif dan afektif. Akhirnya, budaya feminin dan strategi sosial didapati berkorelasi secara signifikan. Untuk pelajar Cina Malaysia, budaya belajar secara individu berkorelasi dengan strategi mengingat, kognitif dan metakognitif. Pembelajaran secara kolektif berkorelasi dengan strategi sosial. Daya usaha yang rendah berkorelasi dengan strategi penggaantian dan daya usaha tinggi berkorelasi dengan strategi afektif. Penghidaran keraguan yang tinggi berkorelasi dengan strategi kognitif sementara penghindaran keraguan yang rendah berkorelasi dengan strategi penggantian. Akhirnya, budaya feminin berkorelasi dengan strategi sosial.

Sebagai kesimpulan, sukar untuk membuat kesimpulan tentang hubungan budaya belajar dengan strategi belajar bahasa kerana kurangnya kajian terdahulu tentang hal ini. Namun, dapatan 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

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bahasa Inggeris dengan nilaian kendiri) tetapi turut dipengaruhi oleh budaya belajar pelajar dalam kalangan budaya yang berbeza.

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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.

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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.

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Date: 16 FEBRUARY 2011

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