

Language Learning Strategies in the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces: A Case Study: On Effective Methods for Language Proficiency

Shaden Mohammed Aljarbou

Translator and researcher in English Language and Its Literature

(Submitted to the journal on 03/06/2025 AD and accepted for publication on 04/02/2026 AD)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore and investigate the language learning strategies used by the Diplomatic Security Special Forces in Saudi Arabia to achieve high levels of language proficiency in a second or a foreign language, and the strategy's adaptivity for use in academic educational institutions. This study has value to the enhancement of language education in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study utilizes a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data analysis method approach, where multiple-choice questions, perspective questionnaires, and open-ended questions were used on a sample size of 44 Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces officers learning a second or a foreign language. This study discovers that language heavy classes that include audiovisual media, group language activities, and conversing opportunities with native speakers, are the ideal and most effective methods for second or foreign language learning in class like environments. Therefore, this study recommends academic educational institutions to consider implementing these strategies within its language curricula, which could assist in enhancing language education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is recommended for future studies to have larger samples, and to include more varied questions in its questionnaire.

Keywords: Communication skills, Security sectors, Military English, Adult language learners, Audiovisual media.

استراتيجيات تعلم اللغة في القوات الخاصة للأمن الدبلوماسي السعودي: حالة دراسية عن الطرق الفعالة للكفاءة اللغوية

شادن محمد الجربوع

باحثة ومترجمة في اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها

المستخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث الى الاستكشاف والتحقق من إستراتيجيات تعلم اللغة في القوات الخاصة للأمن الدبلوماسي السعودي لتحقيق مستويات عالية من كفاءة اللغة الثانوية أو الأجنبية، وإمكانية استعمال هذه الطرق في المؤسسات الأكاديمية التعليمية. لهذه الدراسة أهمية في تطوير وتحسين من إستراتيجيات تعلم اللغة في المملكة العربية السعودية، وتستخدم خليطاً من الطرق التحليلية للمعلومات العددية والنوعية؛ حيث تم استخدام أسئلة اختيار من متعدد وأسئلة منظورية والأسئلة المفتوحة على 44 من الضباط السعوديين في القوات الخاصة للأمن الدبلوماسي المتعلمين للغة ثانوية أو أجنبية. وجدت هذه الدراسة بأن الحصص التي تركز كثيراً على اللغة وتوفر مواد السمع بصرية ونشاطات لغوية بين المجموعات وفرص الحديث مع متحدثين أصليين للغة هي أكثر الطرق الملائمة والفعالة لتعلم لغة ثانوية أو أجنبية في البيئات المشابهة للفصول؛ ولذلك تقترح هذه الدراسة على المؤسسات التعليمية الأكاديمية النظر في وضع هذه الإستراتيجيات في مناهجها اللغوية؛ مما قد يحسن التعليم اللغوي في المملكة العربية السعودية. توصي هذه الدراسة للدراسات المستقبلية بأن يكون لها حجم عينة أكبر وضمن عدد أكثر من الأسئلة المتنوعة في استباناتها.

كلمات مفتاحية: مهارات التواصل، القطاع الأمني، الإنقلزية العسكرية، متعلمو اللغة الرشد، المواد السمع بصرية.

1. Introduction

Language may not have a set definition that is agreed upon worldwide by language experts. However, it is agreed on that communication is in its core. Merriam-Webster dictionary (2025) defines communication as “A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour.” Eaton et al’s. (2022) study argues that languages can break down barriers, increase understanding between people, and implement ecological solutions. Communication is a delicate and an incredibly important soft skill to develop, especially for those working in sensitive areas and fields where it relies on social interactions, such as security, which may require frequent communication with non-native speakers.

Graduates are likely to serve in at least one foreign country and interact with military personnel and civilians whose native language is not English. As such, military academies place a primary emphasis on developing cadets’ ability to communicate in their target foreign language. (Miller & Crowther, 2020, p. 2).

Officers in the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces (SDSSF) may develop a high language proficiency in various languages such as English, Russian, Chinese, etc. Such proficiency is necessary for the officers to become responsible with the sensitive task of ensuring diplomats’ safety. According to a study by Jinawong (2023), mastering English skills is essential for global military personnels and for regular military officers to be able to participate in international missions, to a point where Military English (ME) has emerged as a specialized branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Language proficiency serves great purposes for the Diplomatic Security Force’s officers to fully understand what native and non-native language speakers are communicating, which requires familiarity with both the target language and of the target culture. According to (Aljarelah, 2024, p. 144) “An individual’s comprehension of the foreign culture’s context improves in proportion to their proficiency in the target language.” This is critical for an officer whose job dictates them to ensure the security and safety of diplomats in foreign language speaking territory, and of foreign language speaking diplomats inside the country.

Diplomatic Security Force officers have many skills to obtain, such as martial arts, marksmanship, technology, and communication; the latest of which might rank high importance, since it requires proficiency in multiple set of skills that are all operating well with one another. For example, in order to ensure successful communication, the officer must have established soft skills in public speaking, emotional intelligence, and leadership and teamwork skills, etc. According to Albostan (2012) in embassies and consulates, bilateral and multilateral relations are conducted using various languages to be able to negotiate with foreign missions. Therefore, high language proficiency and clear communication is required. Officers in The Diplomatic Security must certainly learn one or more foreign languages to ensure a positive interaction with important international individuals. In 2009, when Barack Obama was president of the United States of America, which has the strongest military in the world according to the SABQ online newspaper (2024), Obama expressed the following in one of his speeches: “in the 21st century, military strength will be measured not only by the weapons our troops carry, but by the languages they speak and cultures they understand” (The White House. (2009) This highlights the levels of importance language learning, clear communication, and culture understanding is for a nation’s strength and security. In Montesinos’s (2013) study about English as an international language, a number of 416 Spanish armed forces military officers participated in a questionnaire. One of the questions asked about the officer’s opinion regarding the levels of importance the English language has on their military pro-

profession. This question can be answered with four options, not important, not very important, important, and very important. 89.50% of the participant officers chose the options, important or very important, for their military profession. Also, in a different study conducted by Khocharatana (2017), it explains that lack of linguistic competence for security officers would restrict them from participating in multi-national missions or even training exercises.

The importance and care placed by security forces for language learning should attract the attention of civilian academic language teaching institutions; since student's learning performance reflects on the quality of the institution they attend, analysing the successful strategies and methodologies that the SDSSF use for language teaching would interest academic institutions and encourage them to apply the appropriate teaching strategies in their curricula. However, according to Al-Johani et al's (2009) study, the Saudi government is concerned about the low levels of the students' achievement in the English language curriculum in schools and universities, and that the level of English proficiency is unsatisfactory and below expectations. In contrast, language learning programs in the military, defence, and security are highly effective. For example, in Algofaili's (2019)'s study of English teaching in the Saudi military, a number of 109 students from King Abdulaziz Military Academy (KAMA) were able to enhance their English language skills within a period of three months. Since the methods used by the Diplomatic Security Force enabled its officers to develop effective language proficiency, it would be highly beneficial to implement such methods in the academic realm, which would significantly assist language learners in Saudi Arabia to develop their language and communication skills.

Unfortunately, despite the urgency and benefit of the matter, especially for those in the academic field, there are insufficient studies focusing on the language learning strategies in security sectors. Even more so in regards of the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces. Especially when it comes to the methods and strategies utilized for the officers' language learning journey. Therefore, this study is necessary to bridge these gaps to address major questions regarding the nature of the strategies and methodologies of achieving high levels of language proficiency, and its potential applicability in academic realms, and to address the more minor questions of the officers' attitude and feedback towards such methods.

There are numerous studies that tackle the topic of the language learning methods used in sensitive, stressful, or tense environments, such as in the field of diplomacy and security. There are also varied studies focusing on language learning strategies in normal educational settings like schools and universities. However, there is a notable lack of research investigating the methods and strategies used in high-stakes environments for officers to learn various languages efficiently and how these approaches might be applicable to general educational contexts.

This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the specific strategies employed in high-stakes language learning and their potential transferability to broader educational settings.

1.1. Research aim

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the language learning strategies used by the officers in the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces to achieve high levels of proficiency in a second or foreign language, and to investigate how these methods can be adapted for use in educational institutions, to enhance language learning for Saudi citizens. Thus, this study aims to bridge the gap between practical lan-

guage learning strategies used in specialized contexts and their potential application in broader educational settings, fostering a culture of effective language learning throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

1.2. Research questions

The following are key questions that will be answered while handling the main issue:

- What are the key language learning strategies employed by the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces to achieve high proficiency in a second or foreign language?
- How can the language learning methods used by these officers be adapted and implemented in educational settings to improve language learning among Saudi students?

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study explores the effectiveness of the language learning strategies employed by the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces, which would be beneficial for several key groups, academic language students, non-academic language learners, language teachers, and Saudi security and defence sectors. For academic language students, to whom this study holds particular significance, can use this research to add to the strategies that they exercise in their academic institutions and help them to study and learn languages more effectively, and enhance their motivation and engagement in the learning process. To non-academic language learners, this study will help them discover more accessible, rewarding, and efficient language learning methods, which may in return increase the number of new language learners. For language teachers, the insights that they can gain from this study will provide them with practical and evidence-based strategies that streamline teaching practices, which would as a result, reduce stress and time spent managing various students' needs. Finally, this study could hold importance to Saudi security and defence which would help them with the development of their officers' linguistic capabilities that are necessary for successful international engagements.

1. Theoretical Frameworks

This section examines the concept of language learning strategies, explains the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces sector, analyses the connection between the two, and mentions other related studies. The following includes definitions, theoretical frameworks, and examples, etc.

2.1 Language Learning Strategies

This study tackles the topic of language learning strategies in the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces (SDSSF). And, in order to fully comprehend this subject, the following must first be examined: language learning and its key differences from language acquisition, learning strategies, and the differences between adult and young learners.

According to a study by Hussain (2017) language acquisition is more natural, innate, happens sub-consciously, is more formal, and leans towards an oral dynamic. In the other hand, language learning is an entirely conscious and a deliberate process. It is a predefined action of equipping a certain proficiency, it is informal, casual, and leans towards a written dynamic. Additionally, In Nor & Rashid's (2018) study, it argues that language acquisition happens during early childhood and refers to the first or native tongue of the individual. Whereas language learning is the process of developing the next language following the acquisition of the first. After analyzing the differences between language learning and

language acquisition, referred to by both the above studies, the following can be deduced. Language learning is a process that an individual awaresly decides to actively follow in order to obtain a language. However, language acquisition is the ongoing process an individual unawaresly goes through to obtain language during their very first years. Therefore, since this study revolves around adults, it will explore the language learning strategies that they follow, instead of their language acquisition.

The term “Learning Strategies” according to (Gavriilidou & Joycey 2009, p. 12) “remains controversial, since scholars have variously interpreted strategies respectively in a broad or narrow sense”

Therefore, many definitions may vary but complement each other. For example, The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (2009, p. 1) defines Language Learning Strategies as “a person’s approach to learning and using information”. While Mayer (1988, p. 11) define it as “the behaviors of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information”. And the British Council website (2025) defines it as “tools and techniques that learners develop as they learn”

It is important to note that language learning strategies also vary depending on the individual’s preferences. According to Hashim et al (2018) each language learner has a different learning style and preference when it comes to their learning strategies. So, if a certain learning method worked well for someone, it might not work as well with another. For instance, the style of group language learning, which relies on interacting with others in the target language, might work best for those who prefer interactive learning methods. Whereas, the style of individualistic language learning, which relies on language input, might appeal to those who favor non-interactive learning. Therefore, schools tend to make effort to apply the teaching methods that are appropriate for the greater majority of students in the class. Hence, the influence of second or foreign language learning strategies used by the SDSSF on academic institutions might prove beneficial.

When it comes to adult language learners, such as the officers in this study, they usually learn and obtain languages in an entirely different context than that of younger learners. For example, young language learners obtain the second or foreign language in academic settings, like school, for approximately 12 years; but during these years, language classes are neither the sole nor the main subject of focus. Whereas adults would find other sources for language learning, as in college or language institutions, which, may take far less years to graduate than in school, but during these few years, language classes are the sole and the main subject of focus. Additionally, a study by Alhasov et al (2020) concludes that there are four language learning barriers among adult learners: Cognitive-communicative, which is associated with stereotypical thinking, as in young people are better language learners than adults. Negative perceptual, which is a negative perception of the English language and fear of making mistakes. Organisational, which focuses on the teaching system itself, as in if the teaching materials are out of date. Finally, behavioral barriers, which is concerned with both time availability and organization, and self control and organization. However, even though the language teaching strategies of the SDSSF is designed for its adult officers, its key language teaching methods are applicable towards younger language learners, and other language teaching techniques can be modified to suit the style of young language learners.

2.2 The Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces

This section discusses in depth The Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces (SDSSF), the importance of language learning for its officers, and the applicability of its language learning strategies on civilian language teaching institutions.

The Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces (SDSSF) are, according to Ali's (2023) study, is the Saudi security branch that is responsible for many sensitive diplomatic matters, like the security of the consulates, embassies, diplomats, and Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs in the kingdom, and the safety of Saudi embassies and its representatives abroad. This security branch belongs to The Saudi Public Security sector in The Ministry of Interior. In The Arabian Blog (2025) it mentions that the SDSSF obtained organizational independence in 2008 and became an independent special force shortly after. As a result, Mohammed bin Naif Academy of Diplomatic Security was established; it specializes in training and qualification of cadres in the diplomatic security sector.

According to the official website of the U.S Department of State (2020), the responsibilities of diplomatic security forces may include the following: leading and managing diplomatic missions, protecting diplomats and their associates across the world, conducting counterintelligence and counterterrorism investigations, implementing programs that safeguards classified information, assessing security threats, and more. Cusumano & Kinsey (2019) argue that for diplomatic activities to be conducted, security is a crucial element to have for state-building and conflict resolution. This is where language and communication skills plays a pivotal role in this field. Since, without it, as Jinawong's (2024) study explains, it would be impossible to have interactions that lead to information exchange, cultural understanding, learning of perspectives, and maintain international relationships. Therefore, the use of language in security fields have grown significantly to a point where not only did various governments established language learning institutions to provide courses specifically for military personnel, but also, due to its wide use Military English (ME) has emerged as a specialized branch of English for Specific Purpose (ESP). Jinawong's (2023) study shows that language learning is especially important for officers in diplomatic security sectors, since their duties relate deeply with international affairs. Diplomatic security sectors may use language learning strategies that differ from the ones being used in civilian language learning institutions, for example, according to the various videos published on Youtube by the official social media channel of the U.S. Military, *Life is a Special Operation* (2022) soldiers and other military personnel in The United States of America, can choose and learn one of the assigned languages, like Spanish, Korean, and Chinese, based on the military current and future needs; as seen happen during the American's invasion of Iraq, where many of the American soldiers there were assigned to learn the Iraqi Arabic language. Even though defense, security, and other military sector's language learning strategies differ from the civilian's, in which civilians can learn whichever language they prefer, whenever they see fit, and in a safe stress-free environment, there are still key language learning strategies used by security and defense sectors that can be implemented or modified to suit academic settings, which would improve the language proficiency of Saudi students, and increase their number. Unfortunately, there are a significant lack of studies surrounding this topic, especially when it comes to the language learning methods and strategies used in the SDSSF and whether it is applicable in civilian academic and educational settings. Therefore, this study is necessary to fill these gaps.

2.3 Related Studies

This section includes various studies relating to the topic of language learning in defense and security sectors, their relevance to this study, the similarities and differences the studies have with each other, and the gaps they leave to which this study aims to fill.

In Alqahtani's (2017) quantitative study on the language learning motivation of Saudi military ca-

dets, it reveals that there are a number of factors that affects the cadet's level of motivation to learn a second or a foreign language: parental encouragement, cultural interest, national interest, and religious interest, etc. The goal of the study was to analyze and examine the English language learning motivational self of 194 young male military cadets at King Abdulaziz Military Academy (KAMA) in global contexts. By using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, the study found that the religious interest of the participants has had scored the highest points in terms of language learning motivation; while national interest scored the second highest and intended learning effort being the third. The findings imply willingness from the cadets to make further effort in language learning to represent a positive image of their Islamic faith and Saudi identity in international communities. The relevance of Alqahtani's (2017) study to this study lies in the apparent motivational aspects of religious and national identity on the language learning process of Saudi citizens, which is an applicable motivational technique that can be utilized in academic educational institutions for better language learning strategies.

In Montesinos's (2017) study about the intercultural communication in military specific language learning programs, it explains that Spanish soldiers are required to develop linguistic and intercultural communication competence to operate effectively. The study examines the strategies that are used to assist the Spanish soldiers' effective and efficient methods of language learning. A number of 20 learning tasks were arranged in three learning areas. The first, was about identity, appearance, race, gender, culture, nation, and food. The second, focused on workplace military culture, workplace protocol and etiquette, verbal and nonverbal communication, and cross-cultural communication. The third and final learning area, tackled the topics of fitness and sport, crime and crime fighting, deployment, world description, the existing dangers in the world, the rich and the poor, and martial arts. The aim of the study was to select texts to design tasks that foster critical thinking skills, promote awareness of intercultural communication challenges, and to develop the language teaching methods used in the Spanish Armed Forces. The focus of the study are the soldiers in the Spanish Armed Forces working in organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The study used a genre and task-based approach. A number of 421 questionnaires were completed, and 15 follow-up interviews were conducted. The key findings of the study confirmed not only the strategic role of the English language as a means for communication in the military profession, but also the strategic importance of intercultural communication for the military to show cultural awareness and sensitivity to the local people and cultures. The findings of Montesinos's (2017) study assists the current study's aims at exploring the benefits of language learning for security and defense officers to develop cultural understanding and better communicational skills; both of which are also beneficial for civilian language learners to further assist in their daily, academic, and professional lives.

A qualitative study by Cusumano & Kinsey (2019) on the topic of diplomatic security, explores the United States of America's history of Diplomatic Security, its role and purpose, its effects on media, its value to other governments, and more. The study emphasizes the necessity of the existence of a task force specialized in the security of diplomats, ambassadors, and other government officials around the world, due to the rise in terrorism, and assassinations of officials worldwide. The aim of the study was to serve as a bridge between theory and policy, and as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue and epistemological pluralism. It also aimed to fill the gaps found in other studies regarding three interrelated research questions. The first was in the nature of investigating the matter of world states's understanding

and enhancement of diplomatic security. The second revolved around the underlying reasons behind the diplomatic security policy development and its variations across countries. The third tackled the examination of the capabilities security policies has to deter attacks, which revealed its process in responding to major incidents, and the time response to a changing threat scenario. The study mentioned the argument that diplomacy presents the cornerstone of interstate relations and a key institution in the international system. It had also mentioned that America lost more ambassadors than generals between 1977 and 2014. Hence, there is a need for a diplomatic security special force to enable diplomatic activities. The study relates to the current study's implications of the language teaching quality the officers in the diplomatic security special forces receive to better cope with foreign contexts, and the importance of effective communicational skills for their sensitive line of work.

Algofaili's (2019) study examines the attitudes of both Saudi teachers and their students towards English for a Specific Purpose (ESP) at King Abdulaziz Military Academy (KAMA). The goal of the study was to enhance KAMA's ESP courses to further develop cadets' English language skills, which would assist them to communicate with other foreign military staff. The aim of the study was to assess the effectiveness of the (ESP) programs used at KAMA, and whether it qualifies students to reach English proficiency. The study examines the used textbooks and teaching methods of the English language at the academy, it investigated the opinions of which the students held regarding their teachers' methods of teaching ESP, and it explored the views of both the students and their teachers on the assigned textbooks. The study used a triangulation mixed methods approach, which includes a quantitative questionnaire for the students, and qualitative interviews for the teachers. The sample of the study are 109 adult male Saudi high-school graduates, and six English teachers. The study finds that the majority of the students viewed the assigned language textbooks provided by KAMA and the utilized language teaching methods have had helped them significantly with their language learning process. However, the majority negatively viewed the assigned time period to study the textbooks, which they thought to be insufficient. Additionally, the majority of the teachers had insufficient ESP teaching approaches, which could have added to the language learning experience of the students. Therefore, the teachers preferred to follow the grammar-translation method in their classes. In terms of the textbooks provided by KAMA, the majority of the participants were mostly satisfied with the language teaching methods the textbooks included. Regarding the recommendations of the study, its investigation is restricted to teachers' and students' attitudes towards the textbooks, students' preferred learning activities, and the language teaching methods. The study did not include an investigation to the perspectives of diverse stakeholders such as the administrators. Also, it would be beneficial for other future studies to compare the results from two different Saudi military academies that follow the same curriculum, which could have revealed valuable information surrounding the textbooks and the learning strategies. The relevance between Algofaili's (2019) study with this study is in the attitude of language learners regarding the assigned English textbooks and teachers, which highlights the importance of choosing highly rated and reliable English textbooks, like that of KAMAs and assigning the most suited and capable language teachers and instructors. While time plays a significant role, efficient textbooks and teachers play a larger and a more effective role.

Miller and Crowther's (2020) study explores the Foreign Language Learning Motivation in a U.S. military academy. It compared two prior-service cadets' techniques at dealing with aspects regarding foreign language learning in military contexts. The study uses two methods of data collection: question-

naire and semi-structured interview; and it found that there were three key components that contributed to the formation of the cadets' foreign language learning motivational selves: the cadets's personalities and backgrounds, the academy's language learning environment, and the quality of the language learning tasks. There were other minor components to note that influenced the cadets's motivation for language learning, such as their language goals, military experience, and military aspirations. Despite the study's interesting findings, it is heavily based on the experience of only two cadets; a larger sample would certainly give it more weight. Also, using more extensive data collection methods, like grades, test results, and notebooks, would provide better insights into the learners' motivational foreign language selves. The study findings relate to the current study's exploration of the quality of the language learning strategies that security and defense officers receive compared to the civilian's, which further demonstrates the potential benefits of applying such strategies in civilian academic language institutions, despite the differences of the students' personality and background in school or other similar environments.

study by Jinawong (2023) investigates the need of enhancing the English language proficiency of military officers in the Thai Ministry of Defense. The study uses a questionnaire of two types: close-ended statements, and level of agreement rating. The sample were 84 adult Thai military officials. The study argues that the English language has positive effects on the likelihood of gaining more and better job opportunities. Despite this, the main findings of the study show that 95% of the participants had never travelled abroad, 4.30% of them had never participated in joint exercises or missions with foreign troops or interacted with foreigners, and 41.67% of the participants rarely used English for work. However, the study emphasizes on the need for developing English language skills for Thai military personnel for future career advancement. Since, the use and need of the language has increased globally.

The use of English in military affairs has been growing. Therefore, Thai government has attempted to improve the English skills of the personnel. Language institutes were established in the military to provide English courses and English proficiency test for Thai military personnel.

The study highlighted the weak-points the participants had in their English language skills, which revealed the following: Speaking skills scored the highest. Followed by, Listening. Then, Writing. And finally, Reading being the weakest skill the participants possessed. It is recommended for the study to be more relevant to the experiences of the Thai officials. Also, the study relies entirely on a close-ended questionnaire, with a few short open-ended questions. More varied data collection methods would provide better insight into the participants' language learning journey. The relevance of Jinawong's (2023) study lies in the apparent importance that English language learning has for better future opportunities in the military world, which also holds true for the civilian life. Since the English language is the current Lingua Franca of the world. The levels of care that the defense and security sectors has for language learning should inspire academic sectors for that reason.

The above studies, while varied, reveal many shared similarities that are related to language, security, and academia. However, they also share important differences, which is the gap they create for this study to fill. The main similarity and differences of these studies will be further tackled and analyzed.

When it comes to the shared similarities, all the mentioned studies focus on the combined realms of linguistics and military, and how they build on each other. Also, all the studies tackle the inward and/or outward motivational aspects for language learning. Moreover, all the above studies were conducted on at least high school graduates, who are considered as adult language

learners. Additionally, the studies acknowledge the importance of learning a second or a foreign language for military, defense, and security personnel. The studies also share the idea that discovering and applying more effective language learning methods would be highly desirable

However, when it comes to the shared differences the studies have from this study, it appears that none of the above studies explicitly tackles the potentials that the language learning in the military, defense, and security sectors have for academic sectors. There are also no mentions of the linguistic side of the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces. These two differences are considered as gaps, which this study aims to explicitly fill. After understanding what the studies found and discussed, this study can further evolve this realm of research, by noticing where it previously stood, and go beyond it. Also, this study benefits greatly from the offer-mentioned studies; since they include many important insights that are related to this scope of research, which enables this study to build upon, and be built upon. For example, when the previous studies acknowledged the importance of language learning for security sectors to increase their levels of success with international tasks, this study further adds to the pool of knowledge regarding the intertwined relationship between linguistics and security, especially more so when it comes to the Diplomatic Security Special Forces; this study can also add to the realm of linguistics by tackling missing information from other studies, which would help people, especially in Saudi Arabia to obtain new and better strategies for language proficiency.

2. Method

This section includes essential information on this study's methodology. It covers this study's research design, its participants, the data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, and the ethical considerations. All of which will be further analysed.

1.1 Research Design

This descriptive study includes quantitative and qualitative data. By using three methods of data collection (multiple choices questions, perspective questionnaire, and open-ended questions) It gathers information regarding the background information of the participants, reveals their personal experiences regarding language learning, and investigates the language learning strategies used in the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces.

1.2 Participants

For a more convenient sampling technique, a number of 44 Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces officers participated in this study: (serving currently and formerly) (37 males and 6 females) (ranging from 26 to 54 years old). All participants have served in this sector for at least one year, (81.4% of participants have served for more than 10 years), which allows for a more accurate reflection on their experiences of language learning in the SDSSF

1.3 Data collection instruments

The primary research instrument used for this study is a questionnaire, it aims to collect information regarding the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces officers' language learning strategies. The data collection instruments are designed by the researcher based on the related literature, and on the study's questionnaire, which includes three main sections: multiple choices questions, perspective questionnaire, and open-ended questions. The first consists of ten questions (See Appendix A). The second con-

sists of three questions (See Appendix B). The third consists of two questions (See Appendix C). And the total number of all questions is fifteen.

In terms of clarity and relevance, an initial version of the questionnaire has been reviewed by a specialist in the field (a professor in applied linguistics)

1.4 Data Collection Procedures

After designing multiple questionnaire versions to be reviewed and checked, a final and complete version of the questionnaire was designed on Google Forms; after measuring its validity, the link of the questionnaire along with an invitation message that explains both the aim of the study and the questionnaire, was sent to the participants via their ‘WhatsApp’ groups and phone numbers. The form was open for two weeks, for two reasons: One, to allow the participants to find a suitable time in their busy schedule to participate. Two, so that the questionnaire can reach a sizeable number of respondents. After the two weeks, the form was closed to initiate the work of downloading and calculating the data in ‘Microsoft Excel’

1.5 Data analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires were checked for incomplete responses and outliers, and is consistent, the data was then analysed using descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage) on Microsoft Excel, to provide accurate and full answers to the research questions.

1.6 Ethical considerations

Following the ethical principles and guidelines regarding human participants, this research considers the following:

- 1- Purpose and goals: Participants were informed of the questionnaire’s main purpose, its importance to this study, and its significance to the development of language education in Saudi Arabia
- 2- Confidentiality and privacy: Participants’ privacy is important and is taken into consideration. Therefore, no personal information was collected. The participant’s data is protected and can only be accessible to the research team to conduct the study.
- 3- Informed consent: Participants were informed that their participation is completely voluntary. An initial consent was also sent along with the link to the questionnaire.
- 4- Participants’ answers: Participants were informed that their answers will only be used for academic research only.

3. Results and discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings from the questionnaire administered to the participants. The aim is to explore the language learning strategies utilized by the Saudi officers in the Diplomatic Security Special Forces and assess how these methods can be adapted in the language educational institutions in Saudi Arabia.

4.1 Participant’s Profile and Language Learning Experiences

Table 1 provides valuable information about the participants, their backgrounds, their second/foreign language learning experiences, and the language learning nature within the Diplomatic Security Special Forces. It also offers insights into the impact of educational institutions in Saudi Arabia on language learning, and outlines the period required to effectively learn a foreign language.

Appendix A : Multiple choices questions

Table 1

Participant’s Profile and Language Learning Experiences

N	Question	Choices	Result’s percentage
1	Gender	Female / male	86% male 14% female
2	Service period	1-5 years / 6-10 years / +10 years	81.4% +10 years 16.3% 1-5 years
3	Was learning the English language part of your studies to work in this job?	Yes / No	46.5% Yes 53.5% No
4	Was your English language learning process happening outside the job’s framework? (Courses)	Yes / No	74.4% Yes 25.6% No
5	Did your language learning process happen inside or outside the Kingdom?	Inside / Outside / Inside & Outside	50% Inside 36.4% Inside & Outside 13.6% Outside
6	Do you think that learning the English language during the early stages of the officer’s life has a positive effect on doing their diplomatic work abroad?	Yes / No / Maybe	90.9% Yes 9.1% Maybe
7	Have school during your academic years help ease the process of learning the current language?	Yes / No / Slightly	45.5% Yes 45.5% Slightly 9.1% No
8	Have your English language learning process during the language teaching courses boost your desire of learning other languages?	Yes / No / Slightly	56.8% Yes 27.3% Slightly 15.9% No
9	How long was your required period of learning English or other languages?	Less than a year / One year / More than a year	63.6% More than a year 25% One year 11.4% Less than a year
10	How long is the time period that you suggest for learners to become proficient in the foreign language?	Less than a year / One year / More than a year	56.8% More than a year 43.2% One year

Table1 shows that the overwhelming majority of the 44 participants are males (86%) which is expected since the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces has only been recently open for women. Also, most of the participants (81.4%) have served more than 10 years which is beneficial for this study to find the most reliable language learning methods according to those with long experience.

Interestingly, the data reveals that nearly half of the Diplomatic Security Special Forces officers (53.5%) who participated in this study were not required to have an established level of language proficiency to join this sector, and a significant portion (74.4%) pursued language courses independently, and even though most participants learned the language inside the Kingdom (86.4%), they think and

believe that learning abroad where they are often surrounded by native speakers would provide them with a better language learning experience.

A notable 90.9% of participants concur that early language learning positively impacts their current diplomatic roles. However, less than half of the participants (45.5%) feel that their formal schooling facilitated their language learning. This aligns with the findings of Alrashidi and Phan ‘s (2015, P.38) study, where it noted serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of English language instruction in Saudi schools, highlighting that “serious concerns have been expressed by the Saudi Arabian government and educationists about the low level of achievement in English among students in schools”.

Finally, table 1 highlights that only 11.4% of participants were required to learn a foreign language in less than one year, and all of the participants advocate for a longer duration to achieve language proficiency.

4.2 Favored Tools and Methods for Language Learning

This section presents the findings related to the tools and methods that the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces officers found effective in their language learning journey. The insights gathered from these responses not only illuminates successful strategies but also provide valuable recommendations for enhancing language education in formal settings.

Appendix B : Perspectives questionnaire

Table 2

Favored Tools and Methods for Language Learning

N	Question	Result’s percentage
1	What were the secondary tools used in your language learning process which helped you learn the language?	79.5% Movies/Series in the target language 25% Games/Outdoor activities 15.9% Songs/Poetry/Other Auditory Inputs 27.6% Other (Engaging with native speakers. Browsing the internet/social media. Practicing the language with others. Traveling abroad. The work environment. Befriending native speakers. Studying language teaching books)
2	What are the methods do you most recommend for educational departments to use for more rapid and better language teaching strategies for its students?	65.9% Engaging with native speakers 43.2% Not allowing the use of the mother tongue (Arabic) while learnin in class. 27.3% Field trips to places where the target language is mainly spoken 11.5% Other (Practicing the language with others. Studying in language institutions abroad or locally. Providing scholarships to countries/cities with low percentage of Arabic speakers)
3	What were your favorite language learning strategies which exceedingly helped you obtain the language?	45.45% Practicing the language by engaging with native speakers 15.91% Watching media in the target language 13.64% Listening to media in the target language 11.36% Traveling to foreign countries 9.09% Reading media in the target language 6.82% Attending language training programs/courses 2.27% Looking up and memorizing new vocabulary words

Table 2 highlights that approximately 80% of the 44 participants agree that watching movies, series, and other similar audiovisual entertainment contents in foreign languages was the most effective secondary tool provided in their language courses to learn a foreign language. It is not only academic educational institutions who could greatly benefit from this information, but also audiovisual entertainment

creators, by advocating for their content as educational and beneficial for those who seek to develop their language proficiency, but as indicated by Suwanarak’s (2019) study, while movies can enhance language comprehension, they may not sufficiently develop speaking skills. Hence, more than half of the participants (65.9%) highly recommend language learners to attempt to speak with native speakers. Additionally, a notable proportion of participants recommend prohibiting the use of their mother tongue during language classes, since they believe immersion in the target language is crucial for effective learning. These insights highlight the importance of integrating varied interactive methods into language curricula to foster a more effective learning environment for students.

4.3 Open-Ended Questions Results

This section presents and discusses the findings derived from the open-ended questions in the study’s questionnaire. These questions provide information regarding the participant’s age and experience with the key language learning strategies employed in the SDSSF

Appendix C: Open-ended questions

Table 3
Open-Ended Question Results

N	Question	Responses
1	Age	Mean (40) years old. Standard Deviation (8)
2	What were the main methods used during your official language learning process?	(56.8%) Attending heavy language focused lectures (43.1%) Reading media written in the target language (22.7%) Group exercises and activities conducted in the target language (13.6%) Watching audiovisual media in a foreign language (9%) Practicing the language by engaging with native speakers (6.8%) Traveling abroad (6.8%) Using online applications, programs, and websites in the target language

Table 3 reveals the mean of the participant’s age (40 years of age), which further proves that language learning is as possible for adults as it is for children. The table also illustrates that the main strategies used for the participants in their language learning courses heavily depended on regular classes, lectures, and textbooks, which imitate regular language classes in school. However, participants also experienced other methods, such as group exercises, watching movies, and conversing with native speakers, which enriched their learning experience.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to bridge the gap between practical language learning strategies employed in specialized security sectors context and their broader application in academic educational settings, ultimately fostering a culture of effective language learning throughout the Kingdom. The study aimed to explore the language learning strategies used by the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces to achieve proficiency in a second or a foreign language, and to investigate how such methods could be adapted in educational institutions to enhance their language learning strategies in Saudi Arabia.

The results addressed key research questions regarding the strategies employed by the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces to achieve high proficiency in a second or a foreign language. It became

evident that the participants primarily engaged in language teaching classes and lectures, which included the use of audiovisual media, group language exercises, net browsing, auditory media, books, and conversing opportunities with native speakers, etc.

The findings must shed light on how these methods could be implemented in academic settings. For example, most participants emphasized the importance of communication with native speakers, a process now possible thanks to the Internet and social media. Almost half of the participants (43.2%) suggest that during language classes, the use of the mother tongue should be non-existing, instead, students should be encouraged to lean on their comprehension and communication skills in the target language. Additionally, (11.5%) of participants recommended schools and universities to offer scholarships opportunities and/or organized field trips to regions where the participant's native tongue is rarely present.

It is recommended for academic educational institutions to consider these strategies and implement them when possible. As revealed in this study, there is a pressing need for schools and other similar educational institutions to innovate their language teaching methods. Learning from those who excel in communicating with foreigners under pressure, as the SDSSF could provide valuable insight for improving language education in Saudi Arabia.

As any study, this too has limitations that must be noted. The study focused specifically on the Saudi Diplomatic Security Special Forces, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to other contexts or countries. The sample size of 44 participants, while adequate in the context of opportunity and availability, could have been larger to further strengthen the findings, unfortunately however, reaching a larger sample size at the time of making this study posed a challenge, since most participants were invited to this study thanks to other fellow officers that were available to contact with at the given time. Additionally, the size of the questionnaire posed in the study is relatively small; future researchers may benefit from more detailed inquiries that could yield deeper insights into this topic.

References:

- Algofaili, S. (2019) A Study of Saudi Teacher and Students Attitudes Towards the Use of ESP at A Saudi Military Academy Towards The Use of ESP at A Saudi Military Academy. <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd2407/>
- Alhasov, Y. Verbytska, A. Kolenichenko, T (2020) TEACHING ENGLISH TO ADULT LEARNERS WITHIN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT UNIVERSITY: BARRIERS AND MOTIVATION FACTORS <https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.195696/>
- Ali, A (2023) What Are the Requirements for the Diplomatic Security Forces in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Saudi Services. <https://saudia-service.com/news70.html>
- Alqahtani, A (2017) A Study of the Language Learning Motivation of Saudi Military Cadets. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v6.n4.p163>.
- Alrashidi & Phan (2015. Vol 8. No 5. P38) Education Context and English Teaching and Learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: An Overview DOI (10.5539/elt.v8n5p33) <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n5p33>
- British Council (2025) Learning Strategies <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/teaching-knowledge-database/d-h/learning-strategies>
- Cusumano, E & Kinsey, C (2019) Introduction: What is Diplomatic Security? <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503608986-001/>
- Eaton, et al (2022) Advancing the scholarship and practice of stakeholder engagement in working landscapes <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42532-022-00132-8>
- Gavriilidou & Joyce (2009) Language Learning Strategies: An Overview https://www.researchgate.net/publication_353044181/LANGUAGE_LEARNING_STRATEGIES_AN_OVERVIEW
- Hashim, H, U. Yunus, M. Hashim, H. (2018) Language Learning Strategies used by Adult Learners of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1244116.pdf>
- Hussain, I (2017) Distinction Between Language Acquisition and Language Learning: A Comparative Study https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/61237117/L120191116-3772-129fc4k-libre.pdf?response-content_disposition=inline3%B+filename3%DDistinction_Between_Language_