

A REVIEW ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY STUDIES IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

It is proven by many researchers that language learning strategies (LLSs) are very important in second/ foreign language learning and teaching and that learners might be able to learn second/ foreign language more effectively by using LLSs (Hajar, 2019; Oxford, 1990; Nguyen, 2013; Rubin, 1981). That is why this area has increasingly received more attention during the past forty years. This paper aimed to review previous research pertaining to language learning strategies (LLSs) to figure out the current directions of LLS inquiry, especially in the Vietnamese context, and propose directions for future studies on the field. Twenty-four published journal articles and dissertations containing Vietnamese learners' LLSs were cautiously selected for a systematic review, which was used for data collection and analysis in this study. Findings uncovered that such research projects have addressed the call for considering self-regulation strategies, learning context and modern technology factors, and a more mixed-methods approach. However, most Vietnamese researchers still adopt traditional definitions and classifications and excessively use questionnaires for data collection. Also, that these studies principally focus on learners' use of strategies in their writing, listening or vocabulary learning provokes a lack of research on speaking learning strategies. Finally, results from these studies cannot generalize other learner populations of different contexts. The study suggests implications for further investigations of LLS issues in future research.

Keywords: *English learning as a foreign language (EFL), language learning strategies (LLSs), self-regulated learning (SRL), language learning and teaching, language learning approaches*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past forty years, many researchers all over the world have been investigating the strategies that are used by learners to facilitate their learning. Early studies were carried out to explore how language is learned by good language learners (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). Then, researchers from many parts of the world, including Aljuaid (2015), Cohen (1998), Griffiths (2003), Gu (2002), Intaraprasert (2000), Khamkhien (2010), Macaro (2004), Mizumoto (2009), O'Malley et al. (1985), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Swan (2008), and so on conducted their research

on various aspects of LLSs in terms of the use of LLSs in learning vocabulary, writing, reading, or listening; factors affecting the learners' choice of LLSs; LLS instruction; etc. (Nguyen, 2020).

In Vietnam, English teaching and learning have experienced major changes as a result of the government policy that requires English to be taught as a compulsory subject from primary to tertiary levels (Nguyen et al., 2014), and the worldwide development of different language teaching and learning theories, shifting from Grammar Translation to Communicative Teaching (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). Accordingly, there has been a classroom paradigm shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach in which teachers should change their position in the classroom, and the students should be more active and responsible for their learning (Nguyen et al., 2014). Therefore, they have to find ways or learning strategies to facilitate or make decisions on their own language acquisition. These changes have led to the growth in LLS research. However, according to Nguyen (2013), it “may seem odd” that there has been a significant number of LLS research in the world while “surprisingly rare” studies have been conducted to investigate the use of learning strategies of EFL Vietnamese students in the Vietnamese contexts (p. 12). A similar affirmation was made by Ngo (2019) that “despite the significance of language learning strategy in language education, few LLS studies have been conducted in the Vietnamese EFL context” (p. 58). Also, a wide range of reviews have been done to capture an overall understanding of the studies on LLSs (Gao, 2004; Hajar, 2019; Oxford, 2011; Rose et al., 2018); however, to the best of our knowledge, few critical reviews on LLS research have been conducted in Vietnam.

This paper, therefore, first presents an account of existing LLS research worldwide by discussing its theoretical and methodological bases before going on with some criticism, then briefly reviews previous studies into the LLSs carried out in Vietnam to uncover the current state of LLS research, its limitations, and gives suggestions for future research directions and pedagogical applications. Specifically, this research aimed to address the following questions:

- (1) *What are the main dimensions of LLS research in Vietnam?*
- (2) *What are some shortcomings of the studies conducted in Vietnam?*

2. INSIGHTS AND CRITICISMS

Numerous studies on LLSs have been conducted worldwide and reviewed on five major dimensions, namely LLS definitions, LLS classifications, LLS use, factors influencing LLS use, and LLS instruction.

2.1. Definitions

Admittedly, LLSs have been defined in various ways by different researchers; therefore, there is a “lack of definitional and conceptual consensus” (Oxford, 2017, p. 10-11). The terms used to describe strategies and account for their goals vary a lot (Bremner, 1999). They are broadly understood as directions, approaches, techniques, processes, or methods, and can be observable or unobservable and be used consciously

or unconsciously (Minh, 2012) to help learners attain comprehension and learn new information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), or to achieve various competencies in the language (Tarone, 1983). Learning strategies are referred to as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). However, definitions provided by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990) have generally gained more popularity in LLS studies.

Research on language learning strategies encountered other obstacles when researchers even suggested that all the studies on the language learning strategies should be canceled as there is no strategy existing and the concept of learning strategy may be better replaced by that of “self-regulation” which refers to how actively the individuals participate in their learning (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 191). Interestingly, self-regulation puts stress on the learners' own “strategic efforts to manage their own achievement through specific beliefs and processes.”

Unlucky results obtained from inconsistent definitions of LLSs indicated that an area of research that once drew great attention in the academic group becoming an area that numerous new researchers are tentative to delve into (Rose, 2012). However, the literature of research in the field in the four decades uncovers that strategies do exist and are considered good friends of language learners. Memory, for example, was proven to have helped many learners to achieve their study goals (Oxford, 1990). Gu, as cited in Oxford (2017), has stated that:

The argument is clear and straightforward: if not being able to agree on the definition of a Planet until 2006 does not in any way discredit the scientific nature of astronomy, or necessitate the removal of the concept of “planet” altogether, why should we throw away a whole line of research on language learning strategies? (p. 10)

2.2. Classifications

Strenuous efforts have been made in describing, interpreting, and classifying various learning strategies. However, the classification scheme introduced by Oxford (1990) has been most widely and frequently employed to learn about LLS use as “it offers most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date” (Ellis, 1994, p. 539). The taxonomy is split into two major classes: direct strategies “that directly involve the target language” and indirect strategies that “provide indirect support for language learning” (Oxford, 1990, p. 37 & 135). The direct strategies include memory strategies which are sub-divided into four groups; cognitive strategies grouped into four; and compensation strategies, fallen into two sets whereas the indirect strategies are classified into three groups, namely metacognitive strategies with three sub-sets; affective strategies with three sub-groups and social strategies including three sub-groups (Oxford, 1990, p. 38 & 136). Even though the taxonomy with “presented strategies organized hierarchically into levels, and its appearance was comprehensive and impressive enough to be distinguished from other taxonomies of the time” (Aljuaid, 2015, p. 43), it “has defects of

immeasurable scale and unattainable interaction among variables” (Yang, 2010, p. 10), fails to make clear between the strategies directed at learning the L2 and those directed at using it (Ellis, 1994) and is sometimes not easy to decide which category to put a given strategy in (MacIntyre, 1994, cited in Szyszka, 2017).

Based on the taxonomy, Oxford (1990) constructed the SILL questionnaire which was found the most widely used research instrument to explore learners’ LLSs quantitatively for its “comprehensible design, its user-friendliness for L2 learners, and its user-friendliness for researchers” (Amerstorfer, 2018, p. 498). Nevertheless, a great number of researchers have criticised the excessive use of quantitative approach and survey methods (Gao, 2004; Hajar, 2019; Rose et al., 2018). Moreover, with the social turn in education, it has been proved that sociocultural background plays a very important role in the use of learning strategies (Su, 2012), and more importantly, “language learning takes place not just in individual learners’ minds but also in society” (Gao 2010, p. 18). Therefore, employing a survey to investigate the LLS use may help us see the whole picture of the strategy use of the population in general, however, it is difficult to “encapsulate multi-dimensionality and complexity in language learners’ strategy use, and this compromises the applicability of their findings in other contexts” (Gao, 2004, p 9). Wray and Hajar (2015) concluded that a more qualitative and contextualised method of exploring learners’ LLS use seems necessary. As a result, future studies should combine both semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaire that “fits local research contexts” (Hajar, 2019, p. 246).

2.3. LLS use

LLSs have attracted much attention from researchers all over the world during the past forty years (Su, 2018). Many research projects have focused on examining learners’ strategy use in their language learning in terms of the language aspects such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar; or a particular skill like listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and how often these strategies are used; their results, however, greatly differed. For instance, Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990) reported that learners were able to acquire a language more effectively by using LLSs, and students of all levels employed a variety of learning strategies to enhance their language acquisition. However, higher-level students were claimed to facilitate the greater use of metacognitive strategies. Other studies undertaken by Ellis (1997), and Oxford and Nyikos (1989) on strategies used by good language learners revealed that strategies applied by more successful learners were different from those applied by less successful learners and should be used by poorer ones to improve their learning outcomes. Nevertheless, Porte (1988) explored strategies adopted by poor language learners to deal with new vocabulary and the results showed that the strategies were very similar to those applied by good learners in other studies. Even though enormous studies have been carried out to uncover LLS use, still few researchers delve into the EFL learners’ employment of LLSs in learning speaking skills (Morriam, 2005; Su, 2012).

2.4. Factors affecting LLS use

A large number of previous studies have focused on the factors that affect learners' choice of LLSs. According to Oxford (1990, p. 13), degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality or ethnicity, general learning style, personal traits, motivation level, and purposes for learning a language are considered significant elements influencing learners' use of LLSs, while other researchers believe that the choice of strategies depends on individual and situational factors (Ellis, 1994; Griffiths, 2003). More recently, in her study on pronunciation learning strategies, Szyzka (2017) has divided factors exerting great effects on learners' use of LLSs into two groups: internal factors including biological (age), cognitive (language aptitude, learning styles, and learning strategies) and psychological (motivation); and external factors consisting of native language (mother tongue), exposure to the target language and instruction. In spite of the fact that a variety of factors have been discovered to have robust influences on students' LLS selection, others such as learning environment or learning background have not received sufficient attention. It is, thus, suggested that future studies should focus more on the impact of different learning contexts.

2.5. LLS instruction

A wide range of studies focusing on LLS instruction has been carried out and received growing attention so far. According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989) and Ellis (1997), LLSs are teachable; therefore, "less successful language learners can be taught new strategies, thus helping them become better language learners" (Chamot, 2005, p. 112). However, Hock et al. (2011) conducted a study on reading strategies instruction with 105 controlled and 100 experimental participants and found out that there was no significant difference between the two groups and both of them only achieved minimal gains in reading comprehension as their instructional intensity was not sufficient. In conclusion, prior studies on LLS training showed contradictory results, which suggested that inquiries on the issue should be further explored.

2.6. Shortcomings in previous LLS research

After previous studies have been thoroughly reviewed, LLSs can be divided into five subgroups. The literature reviews also show shortcomings as follows. Firstly, there is still no LLS definition consensus until now though the area has more than forty years of development. It is suggested that further research should pay more attention to "self-regulation" strategies in language learning. Secondly, due to the definitional complications, there have been numerous classifications, the most favored of which – the SILL – has also received criticisms. Results from previous studies were demonstrated to have more situational LLS categories which fit certain study contexts as it is not advisable to generalize strategy use of this population to another. Moreover, the overuse of questionnaires calls for a change in research methodology, in which it is necessary to use more qualitative data collection instruments. Then, as there was a tendency of generalizing the findings of this study to others, it is necessary to call for further research

on the LLS use in different contexts to see if the same findings are to be found, and more studies should be conducted on less investigated language aspects such as speaking skill. Moreover, factors affecting the use of LLSs, both regularly and not often investigated, also need more attention as their influences were proved to depend much on the study context. Last but not least, there is a call for more study on LLS instruction so that the learner is more conscious of LLS use and, as a result, they know how to learn to achieve the study goals.

3. METHODOLOGY

As this paper aimed at reviewing previous LLS studies on Vietnamese learners of English, the research selection should consider the participants of the studies who must be EFL learners in the Vietnamese context. Additionally, a systematic review which has been increasingly prevalent in much LLS research recently (e.g., Hajar, 2019; Ismail, 2019; Rose et al., 2018) was used as it helps limit the bias, enhance the “trustworthiness, and arguably the value of the results and recommendations of the study” (Rose et al., 2018, p. 153), and develops “awareness of the construct of LLSs” (Hajar, 2019, p. 243). More specially, criteria for a systematic review of LLS research by Rose et al. (2018) have been adopted for this paper. Reports of research should be required to:

- (1) contain empirical research;
- (2) include studies based on exhaustive and reliable searching (be published in a peer-reviewed, academic journal or a book and include also unpublished doctoral theses);
- (3) be connected to language learning;
- (4) aware of learner strategies, mentioning this construct in the paper’s review of the literature or discussion. (p. 154)

Based on the criteria, the researchers collected data for systematic review following the four-step procedure also suggested by Rose et al. (2018). Firstly, the researchers examined different databases including ERIC, Academia, Proquest, Research Gate, Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and Springer to collect articles in response to the purpose of the study by using the keywords “language learning (learner) strategy (strategies)” as well as “Vietnamese learners (students)” to search as many relevant studies as possible. Second, after the literature retrieval, a hundred articles and dissertations/theses were gathered and the researchers read all the materials thoroughly. Third, many of them were extracted due to their nature of being master theses, which do not meet the criteria given above. Others were not chosen to be analyzed as they were conducted about Vietnamese students learning English in other countries or learning Chinese in China. The final ones were omitted as they do not contain empirical research. Finally, only twenty-four studies were cautiously selected as the subject of analysis in this paper, systematically put in a table for analysis (see Appendix), and used for an in-depth review.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the elaborate analysis of twenty-four chosen studies, some major results are reported in terms of definitions, classifications, LLS use, factors influencing learners’

choice of LLSs and LLS instruction; and certain shortcomings as well as implications for future research are presented as follows.

4.1. Definitions

Generally, no study has given any new definitions to LLS but adopted those made by researchers in previous research. As a matter of fact, most Vietnamese researchers preferred existing definitions by famous researchers in the field, especially many of them adopted those given by Oxford (1990). The primary reasons for this can be explained by the fact that these definitions are truly tested with high reliability and validity in previous studies, and all the studies in Vietnam seem to have a later start than those on the list. Among the studies, the ones carried out by Nguyen (2013), and Nguyen and Terry (2017) employed definitions of both traditional LLSs and self-regulated strategies, while the others by Bui and Vu (2018), Ngo (2019), and Tran and Nguyen (2020) merely opted self-regulated strategies instead of the concept of LLSs, which shows the recognition about the importance of the new concept raised by the recent researchers who are against the term “language learning strategy”, and for the new trend.

4.2. Classifications

Regarding the LLS taxonomy, it is noted that about one-fourth of the studies chose the taxonomy given by Oxford (1990), whereas two others adopted only one group of Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy, such as memory or metacognitive. Other studies used different language learning categories given by different researchers and specialists. It was the Meta-cognitive awareness of reading strategies Inventory (MARSII) developed by Mokhtari and Richard (2002) and adapted by Nguyen et al. (2011). Then, Bui et al. (2018) adapted the questionnaire constructed by Cohen et al. (2005). Last but not least, the Motivated strategies for learning questionnaire (MSLQ) by Pintrich et al. (1991) was adopted by Ngo (2019). More noticeably, a few studies adapted different categories into his/her own taxonomy. For instance, Nguyen (2013) divided language strategies into three various groups, namely Regulating strategies, Form-based strategies, and Skill-based strategies, which were then sub-divided into Learning resources, Learning opportunities, Self-monitoring (Regulating strategies); Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation (Form-based strategies) and; Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing (Skill-based strategies).

In reference to research methodology, more than a half (13/24) are merely quantitative with no triangulation of data with qualitative results, of which four used the SILL questionnaire by Oxford (1990) as the only instrument for data collection, and the others adapted the SILL and/or other questionnaires to construct their instrument. Nevertheless, nine studies applied a mixed-methods approach, such as the SILL questionnaire, interviews, and tests to gather data. Surprisingly, no study chose other frequently used instruments in LLS research such as observations, think-aloud protocols, or diaries/ journals. In the list of twenty-four studies selected, only two studies conducted by Nguyen et al. (2017) and Truong et al. (2019) used the qualitative approach, namely semi-structured interviews. The first study was to collect LLS information from 10 teachers and

10 students while the other aimed at only two first-year non-English-majored Vietnamese college students. In brief, the use of quantitative and mixed methods in LLS studies in Vietnam differs from the other previous LLS research in the world that principally applied the quantitative approach for gathering data. In Hajar's study (2019), for example, it was found that the majority of studies conducted in Arab countries "were exclusively quantitative" (p. 244). More importantly, it has greatly contributed to addressing the gap in previous LLS studies regarding the research methodology.

4.3. LLS use

A wide range of studies has focused on investigating strategies employed by Vietnamese learners to enhance their learning of English regarding writing, reading, listening, and vocabulary. In a research project conducted by Tran (2018), the students' use of vocabulary learning strategies was uncovered via a questionnaire consisting of five major groups, namely Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies. Findings indicated that certain vocabulary strategies like guessing the meaning of the word through an object or picture, remembering the word in its context, watching movies with English subtitles, or asking friends for the meaning of a word are more preferred by the students. Also, it was revealed that the students do not highly raise their awareness of the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in learning English and sometimes adopt such strategies. Meanwhile, Ngo (2019) chose the self-regulated learning (SRL) theory in his study to find out the relation between SRL and listening competence. Participants of the study were 38 English-major students of a university in the central region of Vietnam. The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), adopted from Pintrich et al. (1991), were utilized as the data collection instrument, and then listening tests were adopted to assess the participants' English listening ability. Findings revealed that students obtained a moderate level of SRL, which was found to be associated with their L2 listening achievements. Additionally, three SRL aspects have direct influences on their listening competence in an EFL learning environment, namely metacognitive self-regulation, effort regulation, and critical thinking.

4.4. Factors affecting LLS use

Apart from numerous studies on the use of LLSs, various factors that affect the choice of Vietnamese learners' LLSs have been delved into by a large number of Vietnamese researchers, such as gender, motivation, experience, academic majors, 'perceived' class size, attitudes, proficiency, nationality, ethnicity, cultural characteristics, beliefs, attitude, learning styles, learning context, the use of technology and personal interests (Duong, 2012; Khamkhen, 2010; Le, 2017; Nguyen & Ho, 2013; Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Terry, 2017). Overall gender, academic majors, and proficiency are most frequently examined in LLS studies in Vietnam whereas less research has investigated other elements including 'perceived' class size, experience, learning context, culture, technology, and personal interests.

Khamkhien (2010) conducted a study to examine whether gender, motivation, and experience had any impact on the LLS use of Thai and Vietnamese students through the SILL questionnaire by Oxford (1990). The results showed that the most significant factor influencing the learners' use of LLSs was motivation, followed by learning experience and gender. In relation to gender, there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in the use of all of the six categories of LLSs while motivation and experience were found to have robust effects on their choice of LLSs. On the contrary, Nguyen and Ho (2013) concluded that a variation in the adoption of LLSs was figured out between males and females. For instance, indirect strategies were preferred by Vietnamese female learners while direct strategies were males' preference. It is evidently shown that different learners of different specific contexts are quite different in the use of LLSs, which means that the findings of these studies cannot be and should not be generalized to others. Then, it was claimed that not only in the study of Khamkhien (2010) but also those in Ngo (2019) or Tran (2018), participants' genders were shown to, notably, have no impact on the choice of students' learning strategies or SRL strategies. These findings differ much from those of many other previous studies conducted worldwide (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Su, 2005). In conclusion, although a variety of factors have been thoroughly investigated in order to find out their relationship with LLS use, more future studies on the effects of learning context and advanced technology on learners' choice of LLSs should be encouraged to enhance learners' language acquisition.

4.5. LLS instruction

In reference to LLS instruction, this aspect has not been received enough attention as there were only three studies in the list of twenty-four adding LLS instruction to the study to find out "the current practices in strategy training if any, the needs of the stakeholders and the best approach of strategy training in the current EFL tertiary teaching/learning context" (Nguyen, 2013, p. 75) or to investigate the effects of strategy-based instruction (SBI) on the promotion of learner autonomy (LA) (Le & Gu, 2013). In their study, Le and Gu (2013) put 37 students in an experimental group, and 54 students in two control groups. The students of the experimental group received an eight-week metacognition training package incorporated into the academic writing program. As a result, it was confirmed that "strategy-based instruction in the form of training learners in task-specific metacognitive self-regulation improved learners' autonomy in both learning and their writing ability" (ibid: 9). Particularly, their ability to plan, monitor and evaluate a writing task was shown to be better than those in the two control groups, and planning was proven to be mostly exercised skill, followed by evaluating and monitoring.

Although not being directly investigated, the importance of LLS training was highlighted by different researchers in their conclusions and/or suggestions for further studies. Duong (2012) carried out a study to examine the LLSs used by Vietnamese EFL science-oriented university students and made the implication from the research findings that the LLS instruction is needed in the curriculum. Nguyen (2013), after using

mixed methods with an adapted questionnaire and interviews as the main instruments to collect data from Vietnamese tertiary students, suggested that LLS training should be required for Vietnamese students at university. Another study conducted by Ngo (2015) applied a questionnaire and in-depth interviews with EFL learners at Tay Bac University to examine their listening strategies. The results revealed that the participants used listening strategies but did not employ a wide range of them in combination flexibly or they tended to use social/affective strategies more frequently than other kinds. In relation to strategy instruction, she concluded that training in LLSs should be conducted “to provide learners with knowledge of how to listen” (ibid: 323). In a research project undertaken by Bui and Vu (2018) on the LLSs used by 124 first-year students from Hanoi University of Business and Technology, the researchers stated that it is the teacher who knows exactly which strategy is more appropriate for their students. Therefore, it is advisable that he/she “introduces practical activities to take explicit and implicit strategy instructions” (ibid: 81) during class time.

It is evident that there was a lack of LLS training studies on different language skills in general and speaking skills in particular. It is therefore suggested additional studies should be delved into the field to address the existing gap(s).

Criticisms

In brief, recent studies carried out in Vietnam have answered the call for considering self-regulation strategies; factors influencing the learners’ employment of LLSs, such as the learning context suggested by the socio-cultural theory, and modern technology; and more mixed-methods approaches including quantitative and qualitative, which worldwide previous studies on LLSs have implied before. However, certain shortcomings have been worked out after the detailed reviews of previous studies. Firstly, the majority of LLS studies in Vietnam still follow and adopt traditional definitions and classifications. Secondly, the overuse of questionnaires and quantitative approaches was noted in studies of language learning strategies in the Vietnamese context. Thirdly, few empirical studies on LLS instruction have been conducted to enhance learners’ employment of appropriate learning strategies to improve their language learning. Finally, that these research projects principally focus on learners’ use of strategies in facilitating their writing, listening or vocabulary learning provokes a lack of research on speaking learning strategies. These findings seem to resemble those in previous studies in the world.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In brief, LLSs have attracted the great attention of researchers in Vietnam since the twentieth century, which lags behind many other countries in the world. Therefore, researchers in the field inherited much from previous studies conducted worldwide. Then, they also have had certain contributions to the existing literature.

From the analysis of some conveniently available studies, some implications for further research can be raised as follows. Firstly, it was shown that the quantitative approach was still much favored in Vietnam. Moreover, in mixed-methods approach

studies, questionnaires and interviews were used as the main research instruments. These facts suggest that future researchers use more qualitative data collection instruments such as journals or observation in combination with the two mainly applied instruments to have triangulation of the data. Secondly, more studies should be conducted on self-regulated strategies and/or self-regulated strategies in combination with LLSs to have a more complete overview of strategies for language learning. Thirdly, regarding factors that influence the use of LLSs, researchers have investigated different factors, among which some are regularly chosen while others do not. Therefore, the less studied factors need more attention in order to bring more knowledge to the literature, such as learning environment, culture, technology, and personal interests deserve more attention in future studies. Fourthly, strategy instruction was proved to be useful for EFL learners by several studies, however, how this strategy training should be planned and implemented is still a question for teachers and stakeholders. Therefore, more studies on strategy instruction are needed to foster the effectiveness of learners' language learning. Lastly, although the use of LLSs for Vietnamese EFL learners has received attention for over twenty years, there are still gaps to be filled, specifically relating to strategies to learn English speaking as, to the best of our knowledge, there seems to have no study on the topic until now.

After a systematic review of previous studies conducted about Vietnamese EFL learners, it is explicitly concluded that there are gaps to be filled, and LLS research is still a "fertile area" for researchers, not only Vietnamese but also international researchers.

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APPENDIX

SIMPLIFIED TABLE OF STUDIES FOR SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

No	Who & When	Where	Focus	Participants	Methods/ Instruments
1	Duong T. Hoang Oanh & Nguyen Thu Hien, 2006	Hue city, Vietnam	Memorization & EFL Students' strategies	70 students & 20 teachers	MIXED, Questionnaires, classroom observation & interviews
2	Attapol Khamkhen, 2010	Thailand and Vietnam	Factors affecting LLS use by Thai and Vietnamese EFL learners (gender, motivation, experience)	136 Thai & Vietnamese undergraduate	QUAN, Questionnaire (SILL)
3	Thao Nguyen & Lap Trinh, 2011	Upper secondary school located in a rural area in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam	Learners' meta-cognitive strategy use and their achievement in reading comprehension	350 grade 11 th students	MIXED, Questionnaires, reading comprehension tests, and interviews

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4	Duong Duc Minh, 2012	Vietnamese science-oriented universities	LLS used by Vietnamese EFL science-oriented university students (factors: gender, major field of study, 'perceived' class size, attitudes, levels of proficiency)	615 randomly chosen students from six science-oriented universities	MIXED, Semi-structured interview & questionnaire
5	Nguyen Trong Nhan & Ho Thi Lai, 2013	Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment in Vietnam	Comparison of the Use of LLS by male and female Vietnamese tertiary students of non-English majors	100 1 st -year students	QUAN, Questionnaire (SILL version 7.0)
6	Hoang Nguyen, 2013	Tertiary students in the context of Vietnam	English Learning Strategies among EFL Learners (factors analyzed: gender, proficiency/achievement, academic majors/fields of study, nationality/ethnicity/ culture, beliefs/ attitude)	564 questionnaire respondents	MIXED, Questionnaire (ELLSQ adapted & interview)
7	Le Thi Cam Nguyen & Yongqi Gu (2013)	A university in Vietnam	Effects of strategy-based instruction (SBI) on the promotion of learner autonomy (LA)	37 students in an experimental group, and 54 students in two control groups	QUAN, Experimental (training learners in task-specific metacognitive self-regulation improved learners' autonomy in both learning and their writing ability)
8	Luu Hoang Mai, Luu Thi Bich Ngoc & Tran Phuong Linh (2014)	Saigon Technology University	Metacognitive strategies in reading	128 first-year students	QUAN, Questionnaire & test
9	Ngo T. Hang Nga, 2015	EFL learners in Tay Bac University.	Listening strategies	30 sophomore EFL students enrolled in a public university in Vietnam	MIXED, Questionnaire and in-depth interview
10	Nguyen Viet, 2016	A public university in Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam	Compares language learning strategies (LLS) and their frequencies between Vietnamese English and non-English majors	140 Vietnamese EFL students	MIXED, Semi-structured interview & questionnaire (SILL)

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11	Dung Le Quang, 2017	Thai Nguyen University, Viet Nam - Ethnic Students	The Relationships between Language Learning Strategies (frequencies) and Learning Styles of Ethnic Students at Thai Nguyen University, Viet Nam	527 ethnic students	QUAN, Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire, adapted from SILL & Perceptual Learning Styles Preferences Questionnaire
12	Hoang Nguyen & Daniel Terry, 2017	English LLSs among tertiary students in the context of Vietnam	English Learning Strategies among EFL Learners	10 EFL teaching staff and 10 EFL students	QUAL, Semi-structured interviews
13	Le Pham Hoai Huong, 2018	A Vietnamese university	EFL university students' strategies for learning academic English words	132 EFL university students	QUAN, Survey
14	Bui Thien Sao & Duong Thu Mai, 2018	The university of languages and international studies – Vietnam National University, Hanoi	Motivation types in predicting the use of second language learning strategies by English major students	123 students	QUAN, Questionnaire
15	Bui T. Kieu Giang & Vu Van Tuan, 2018	Hanoi University of Business and Technology	Language Learning Strategies of Vietnamese EFL Freshmen	124 first-year students	QUAN, Adapted questionnaire from Cohen, Oxford & Julie Chi
16	Thao Quoc Tran, 2018	Tran Phu High School which is located in Da Lat City	The use of English vocabulary learning strategies among Vietnamese High School students	80-grade 10 th students	QUAN, Closed-ended questionnaire adapted from Boonkongsan's questionnaire (2013) and Luong's questionnaire (2014)
17	Truong Thi Nhu Ngoc & Samad Arshad Abd, 2019	Van Lang University	To find out if first-year non-English majored collegiate learners in Vietnam are passive or active	Two first-year non-English-majored Vietnamese college student	QUAL, semi-structured interviews

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18	Ta et al., 2019	A university in Vietnam	Learner autonomy level and the use of language learning strategies	163 first-year English majors	MIXED, Questionnaire & open-ended interviews
19	Ngo Cong Lem, 2019	EFL High School	Language learning strategies among Vietnamese EFL High School students	83-grade 10 th students	QUAN, Questionnaire (SILL)
20	Ngo Cong Lem, 2019	A university in the central region of Vietnam	Self-regulated learning and its relation to Vietnamese EFL learners' L2 listening achievement	38 English-major Vietnamese students	QUAN, The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), adopted from Pintrich, Smith, Garcia and McKeachie (1991)
21	Wariyaporn Tieocharoen & Sucharat Rimkeeratikul, 2019	Vietnamese and Thai university	Learning Strategies and Teaching Methods in Thai and Vietnamese Universities	Thai: 116 English majors + Viet: 174 English majors + 16 lecturers	MIXED, Questionnaire (SILL) & interview
22	Tran Tin Nghi, Nguyen Tat Thang & Tran Huu Phuc, 2021	Different universities in Vietnam	Factors affecting the uses of English prepositions	200 female and 200 male participants	QUAN, Questionnaire
23	Tran Quoc Thao & Nguyen Chau Hoang Long, 2020	A university in Bac Lieu province, Vietnam	The Use of Self-Regulated Language Learning Strategies among Vietnamese English-Majored Freshmen: A Case Study	100 English-majored freshmen	QUAN, Closed-ended questionnaire: (QESRLS – Wang & Pape, 2005)
24	Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy, 2020	TESOL postgraduates Intakes 11 and 12 at Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam	Metacognitive awareness of using reading strategies	Eighty-one TESOL postgraduates Intakes 11 and 12	MIXED, Questionnaire & interview