EFL students' perspectives on the employment of language learning strategies

Tham My Duong [a,1,*], Hang Thi Thu Nguyen [b,2]

[a] Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance (UEF), 141-145 Dien Bien Phu Street, Ward 15, Bình Thạnh District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
[b] Pham Phu Thu High School, 425-435 Gia Phu, Ward 3, District 6, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
[1] thamdm@uef.edu.vn*; [2] hangntt.168t@ou.edu.vn
* corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that language learning strategies (LLSs) are beneficial to learners' academic achievements, learner autonomy, and motivation; however, it is indicated that Vietnamese students, particularly high school students, have found it hard to employ LLSs. This paper aims at exploring language learning strategies used by high school students and underlying reasons at a high school located in Ho Chi Minh City. The study involved 238 EFL high school students in responding to a closed-ended questionnaire and twenty of them in answering the semi-structured interview questions. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were processed by SPSS version 25.0 in terms of descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were analyzed by the content-based approach. The results of the study indicated the EFL high school students' moderate use of LLSs. Remarkably, metacognitive strategies were the most commonly used category, compared to memory strategies – the least employed category. The findings may serve as a guideline for EFL teachers on facilitating high school students' English language learning. It is also hoped that the results of this study may contribute to the literature about English language learning strategies in EFL contexts.

1. Introduction

It is undeniable that the active use of language learning strategies (LLSs), language aptitude, and learner motivation play a pivotal role in optimizing the language learning process (e.g., Hardan, 2013; Nguyen, 2013; Tran, 2012; Tran & Nguyen, 2020, 2021). Aljuaid (2015) discovered remarkable benefits for EFL learners who make use of strategies in learning foreign languages, e.g., making learners' language learning efficient, self-conducted, and motivating, enabling them to be responsible and independent in using a language, and gaining higher Grade Point Average (GPA) than those with lower use of strategies. As LLSs are regarded as one of the most indispensable factors in improving learners' academic achievement, it is crucial to help learners utilize LLSs during the foreign language process (e.g., Bui & Vu, 2018; Griffiths & Cansiz, 2015; Lee et al., 2011; Lee & Heinz, 2016; Tran & Tran, 2021). In other words, if students are provided with LLSs, they are able to control their learning.

LLSs are defined with different perspectives. Cohen (2014) viewed LLSs as techniques for learners' knowledge acquisition and target language competence development. In another aspect, LLSs are a particular form of learners' observable behavior employed by learners when they cope with language learning difficulties. Furthermore, Oxford (1990) has provided quite a comprehensive definition of LLSs, which are "specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable" (p. 8) in internalizing knowledge learned, and then applying it in real situations.

With reference to the classification of LLSs, Oxford (1990) proposed a framework showing a distinction between direct and indirect strategies with six major sub-categories. Direct strategies, including cognitive, memory, and compensation strategies, refer to specific ways to use a language, while indirect strategies involving affective, metacognitive, and social strategies support language learning. Turning to the details, cognitive strategies are assumed to deal with a target language directly, e.g., taking notes, organizing ideas, and exercising activities, whereas memory strategies are composed of activities relating to storing and/or retrieving linguistic elements such as making mental connections by using pictures and sounds to enable learners to remember lessons. Learners use compensation strategies to substitute strategies associated with making a guess, switching into their mother tongue, or using gestures for the lack of linguistic knowledge. With regard to the indirect strategy group, metacognitive strategies consist of making a plan, identifying learning objectives, and assessing learners' learning performance. Meanwhile, affective strategies are related to feelings and affection, and social strategies concerning social cooperation with others may help better language learners' understanding, practice a target language in real situations, and experience new cultures.

As far as the previous studies on the use of language learning strategies are concerned, Qingquan et al. (2008) endeavored to examine differences in the LLS use by the first-year students at a Chinese university. The findings indicated that the high achievers employed a wider range of LLSs at a higher level and more various types of LLSs than the low achievers did. In another EFL context, Osman and Manan (2010) conducted a survey with 20 successful and 20 less successful language students from an urban school in Ipod, Perak, to explore the most frequently used strategies and any differences in LLS use between the successful learners and the less successful ones. Furthermore, it was shown that affective, compensation, and metacognitive strategies used at a moderate level were preferred by the participants.

In the context of Vietnam, Ngo (2019) employed the SILL questionnaire constructed by Oxford (1990) to assess the LLS use of 83 Vietnamese tenth graders. The findings demonstrated that these high school students employed a variety of LLSs at a moderate level. It was also indicated that metacognitive strategies were the most used, whereas affective strategies were the least used. At the tertiary level, Duong (2020) aimed to investigate resource management strategies (RMSs) used by non-English majors. A closed-ended questionnaire was administered to 177 students in a TOEIC class. The findings revealed that the students often used these strategies during their English learning process. More importantly, the study discovered a positive relationship between the frequency of RMSs and academic achievement. Meanwhile, Duong and Intaraprasert (2012) discovered a two-group classification, namely specific language skills with 43 strategies and general language skills with 11 strategies. This study involved 30 students from six universities in northern Vietnam in responding to the one-on-one interview. Vo and Duong (2020) conducted a study addressing metacognitive strategies at a Ho Chi Minh City-based college with the participation of 243 non-English majors. The instruments included a closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. It was indicated that the participants recognized the importance of metacognitive strategies in their English learning. However, significant differences between their perceptions and actual use of metacognitive strategies were found in this study. The study of Henno (2012) examined the relationship between Vietnamese learners' LLS use and their language proficiency. The results collected from the self-report questionnaire and the participants' course assessment reports showed that there were no relationships between the LLS use and their academic achievements. Also, no significant differences in terms of types and frequency of LLS between male and female learners were found.

It is the significance of LLSs in language education that various aspects of LLSs have been explored worldwide. In the context of Vietnam, however, there have been only a few studies in which high school students take part as research participants. At the research site – Pham Phu Thu high School, it is observed that students are unlikely to apply LLSs to facilitate their learning. Therefore, the research aims at identifying high school students' actual use of LLSs at Pham Phu Thu high

School. The research question is formulated based on this research objective." To what extent do the students at Pham Phu Thu high school employ language learning strategies (LLSs)?" The preliminary findings of the present study probably bring some theoretical and practical contributions towards facilitating students' learning through the employment of LLSs.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The research involved 238 out of 1700 students attending grades 10, 11, and 12 at a high school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. At first, forty-five respondents from six classes (i.e., two classes from each grade) were conveniently selected, i.e., the researchers chose those who were approachable and willing to take part in the study. However, only 238 responses were recorded because thirty-two students did not send their responses via Google Forms. As for the demographic information, the participants were in their fifteenth to eighteenth and had been studying English as a foreign language for at least seven years. It is noteworthy that most of the participants have not experienced official guidance in LLSs.

2.2. Instruments

The data of this study were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Firstly, the questionnaire was adapted from Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies as this is supposed to be "the most comprehensive classification" (Ellis, 1994, p. 539). The questionnaire containing six parts, namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies, was constructed based on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree). The mean scores were interpreted based on Ali and Paramasivam's (2016) classification of levels as follows: 1 - 2.4 (low level), 2.5 - 3.4 (moderate level), and 3.5 - 5 (high level).

Secondly, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted since interviews allow for a more thorough exploration of issues. The interview questions focusing on the participants' opinions on LLS employment in their English language learning were developed based upon the questionnaire. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The participants were labeled according to gender and grade, e.g., M5-G11 refers that the fifth student is male and in grade 11.

To increase reliability and validity of the instruments, the questionnaire and the interviews were translated into the Vietnamese language to ensure that the participants could understand it at ease. The researchers cross-checked the accuracy of the translated versions then. Furthermore, the questionnaire was tested through Cronbach's alpha to make sure the reliability of the questionnaire. Particularly, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the strategy categories were found from .70 to .92. This means that the questionnaire items were reliable enough to collect data. Finally, two experts were invited to check either linguistic issues or the content of the instruments.

2.3. Data Collection

Because this study was carried out in the stage of the pandemic COVID-19 outbreak, all the students were not present at the research site. As a result, the SILL questionnaire was designed online via Google Forms and delivered to the surveyed participants via students' regular contact. In particular, most of the teachers have been using Zalo – a popular social network in Vietnam to contact their students, so the researchers asked the teachers-in-charge to send the link to the participants. After that, twenty students were invited for the individual interviews through Zalo at their convenience. Each interview lasted between 5 and 10 minutes, depending on the participants' responses.

2.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS software version 25.0. Specifically, descriptive statistics (i.e., Mean & Standard Deviation) were processed to examine the overall preference of LLSs among the high school students. Six SILL categories were further analyzed for detailed information. Following this, the qualitative data gained from the interview were analyzed based on the content analysis approach with three main steps, namely

familiarizing with and organizing the data, coding and recoding the data, and interpreting and representing the results.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

Six LLS categories were statistically analyzed in terms of mean and standard deviation. It is also noted that the mean scores were ranked in descending order.

Overall, it is observed from Table 1 that the participants employed LLSs at a medium level (M=2.89, SD=0.80). The metacognitive strategies were identified as the most common strategy category (M=3.16; SD=0.86). Next, compensatory occupied second place with quite a high mean score (2.97, SD=0.81). This was followed by cognitive strategies (M=2.87, SD=0.73) and social strategies (M=2.83, SD=0.96). Meanwhile, affective and memory strategies were found as the least used strategies with quite low mean scores of 2.76 (SD=0.72) and 2.72 (SD=0.69), respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Six LLS Categories

Category	Level	n=238	
		M	SD
Metacognitive strategies	Moderate	3.16	0.86
Compensation strategies	Moderate	2.97	0.81
Cognitive strategies	Moderate	2.87	0.73
Social strategies	Moderate	2.83	0.96
Affective strategies	Moderate	2.76	0.72
Memory strategies	Moderate	2.72	0.69
Average	**Moderate**	**2.89**	**0.80**

To gain an insight into the LLS employment among the surveyed students, the descriptive statistics for each category, together with the qualitative data gained from the semi-structured interview, is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Metacognitive Strategies

Category	Item	Level	n=238	
			M	SD
Metacognitive strategies (METS)	**METS3**. I attentively listen to someone when he/she is speaking English.	High	3.66	1.04
	METS4. I explore ways to learn English better.	High	3.61	1.11
	METS2. I try to recognize mistakes to use English better.	High	3.60	0.98
	METS8. I set learning goals clearly to improve my English language skills.	Moderate	3.00	1.16
	METS7. I seek any opportunities to read English texts.	Moderate	2.99	1.13
	METS9. I think about my English learning progress.	Moderate	2.95	1.16
	METS5. I make a study plan to arrange a time for studying English properly.	Moderate	2.92	1.06
	METS1. I try to look for different methods to learn English.	Moderate	2.90	1.09
	METS6. I try to approach people that I can communicate with within English.	Moderate	2.85	1.18

Among the nine metacognitive strategies, the high school students tended to pay attention to what one is talking about in English, discover better methods to learn English, and learn from mistakes. Statistically, the mean scores of these strategies, which were 3.66, 3.61, and 3.60, respectively, were at a high level. The remaining strategies of the metacognitive category were used at a moderate level, and there were no significant differences in terms of frequency among those strategies.

The interviewees provided reasons for their substantial choice of metacognitive strategies, such as showing their respect to speakers, improving their English pronunciation and comprehension. Moreover, they were aware of the role of the English language in the digital era and attempted to discover effective ways to improve their English.

> *"I am trying to find the most appropriate methods to learn English such as joining English speaking clubs, reading English materials extensively, and talking with classmates outside the classroom."* (M5-Y11)

> *"Although I have made lots of mistakes, I keep talking in English as much as possible."* (F1-G12)

> *"At first, English was one of the subjects I did not like. Then my English teacher advised me to make a plan to learn it. Day by day, my English skills have improved. Now, I am really into this subject."* (F13-G11)

The number-one strategy in compensatory strategies in Table 3 was making guesses when the participants dealt with unfamiliar words (M=3.36, SD=1.02). Besides, they made an attempt to guess what a speaker is going to say in English (M=2.81, SD=1.17). Apart from guessing, non-verbal communication was considered a useful compensatory strategy because they employed this strategy at the second rank when they failed to figure out a proper word during an English conversation (M=3.18, SD=1.10).

Table 3. Compensation Strategies

Category	Item	Level	n=238	
			M	SD
	COMS1. I try to guess unfamiliar English words.	Moderate	3.36	1.02
	COMS2. When I fail to figure out an English word, non-verbal communication is used.	Moderate	3.18	1.10
	COMS6. When I fail to figure out an English word, a word or phrase that has a similar meaning is replaced.	Moderate	3.05	1.17
Compensation strategies (COMS)	**COMS5**. I make a guess about what someone will say in English.	Moderate	2.81	1.17
	COMS3. I make up new English words when I do not remember the right ones.	Moderate	2.74	1.18
	COMS4. I do not look up every word when I do not know the meaning in an English text.	Moderate	2.65	1.06

The qualitative data gained from the interviews confirmed the above-mentioned quantitative results. The interviewees reported that guessing was the most common strategy they used in case they were struggling with unknown words. According to M13-G11, his teacher taught him how to make a guess based on a speaker's behavior and intonation, and prior knowledge when he dealt with difficult words in spoken communication. Meanwhile, M17-G11 preferred using non-verbal communication (e.g., movement of hands, facial expression, body language, eye contact, etc.) to overcome breakdowns in communication.

Of the fourteen cognitive strategies in Table 4, practicing was a frequent cognitive strategy reported by the participants. More specifically, watching English language TV shows in English headed the list with the highest mean score (M=3.29, SD=1.11), making it slightly more frequent than practicing English pronunciation (M=3.27, SD=1.04) and using the English words in different ways (M=3.20, SD=1.05). However, they showed hesitation in initiating a conversation in English (M=2.38, SD=1.21) and reading extensively (M=2.29, SD=1.02).

Qualitatively, the interviewed participants were likely to be reluctant to start a conversation in English as they had little chance to do so (F4-G12 & M6-G11), or they were not good at getting their ideas across (F1-G12). Most of the interviewees would rather watch English TV shows, movies or listen to English music than read books or newspapers in the target language.

> *"I do not read the newspaper or magazine in English for pleasure, instead I watch English movies or listen to US-UK music. In my opinion, this way is easy for me to*

learn English, and I can relax. If I like any song or movie, I can remember the words, the structures easier and longer." (F4-G12*)*

"I read bilingual books. However, I prefer watching movies or music videos in English or joining a chat room to communicate with foreigners. Accordingly, they can help me to correct my spelling mistakes, and I practice my speaking skill." (M5-G11)

Table 4. Cognitive Strategies

Category	Item	Level	n=238 M	n=238 SD
Cognitive strategies (COGS)	COGS6. I watch movies/ TV shows in English to practice English language skills.	Moderate	3.29	1.11
	COGS3. I practice pronunciation by reading English words aloud.	Moderate	3.27	1.04
	COGS4. I use new words in different ways.	Moderate	3.20	1.05
	COGS1. I learn new words by saying or writing them repeatedly.	Moderate	3.19	0.99
	COGS13. I try not to use the word-by-word translation approach.	Moderate	3.14	1.16
	COGS9. I first read through an English text and then reread it carefully.	Moderate	3.10	1.25
	COGS2. I try to speak native-like English.	Moderate	2.91	1.15
	COGS10. I relate words in my mother tongue to those in English.	Moderate	2.90	1.09
	COGS14. I summarize the information I have listened to or read in English.	Moderate	2.85	1.08
	COGS11. I try to identify English patterns to memorize the lessons.	Moderate	2.65	1.17
	COGS12. I try to understand an English word by dividing it into smaller parts.	Moderate	2.55	1.13
	COGS8. I practice producing writing pieces, e.g., messages, notes, reports, or emails in English.	Moderate	2.41	1.04
	COGS5. I start a conversation in English.	Low	2.38	1.21
	COGS7. I read English texts extensively.	Low	2.29	1.07

Finally, all of the six social strategies in Table 5 obtained medium-level mean scores, ranging from 3.10 to 2.50. These strategies included asking interlocutors to slow down (M=3.30, SD=1.23), initiating questions in English (M=2.88, SD=1.12), practicing English with other students (M=2.84, SD=1.12), exploring native speakers' cultures (M=2.81, SD=1.27), and asking native speakers for correction and help (M=2.64, SD=1.29; M=2.50, SD=1.22).

Table 5. Social Strategies

Category	Item	Level	n=238 M	n=238 SD
Social strategies (SOCS)	SOCS1. In case of misunderstanding something in English, I ask my speaking partner to slow it down or repeat it.	Moderate	3.30	1.23
	SOCS5. I try to make questions in English.	Moderate	2.88	1.12
	SOCS3. I practice English with my classmates.	Moderate	2.84	1.12
	SOCS6. I explore native speakers' cultures before talking with them.	Moderate	2.81	1.27
	SOCS2. I ask native speakers to correct my mistakes when necessary.	Moderate	2.64	1.29
	SOCS4. I need help from native speakers when I have communication breakdowns.	Moderate	2.50	1.22

When being asked reasons for the infrequent use of social strategies, most of the interviewees admitted that anxiety and learning habits were the common causes.

> *"I dare not approach native speakers, even my English teachers because I am not confident about my English skills."* (M3-G12)

> *"I prefer learning alone, so when I have learning problems, I just deal with them on my own. I do not ask anyone for help. I think it is not a good way, but I am familiar with that."* (M6-G11)

For effective strategies in Table 6, the surveyed students usually encouraged themselves to speak English, although they were worried about making mistakes (M=3.16, SD=1.15), notice if they were tense or nervous when using English (M=3.12, SD=1.12), and tried to lower their anxiety (M=3.06, SD=1.08). Noticeably, they did not note down their feelings relating to English language learning in the diary (M=1.81, SD=1.02).

Table 6. Affective Strategies

Category	Item	Level	n=238	
			M	**SD**
Affective strategies (AFFS)	**AFFS2**. I make an effort to speak English despite the fear of making mistakes.	Moderate	3.16	1.15
	AFFS4. I notice whether or not I am under pressure while I am using English.	Moderate	3.12	1.12
	AFFS1. I endeavor to relax when I feel worried about using English.	Moderate	3.06	1.08
	AFFS3. I reward myself for doing English tasks well.	Moderate	2.76	1.20
	AFFS6. I share my feelings with my classmates in my learning process.	Moderate	2.68	1.24
	AFFS5. I jot down my feelings in a learner diary.	Low	1.81	1.02

The informants reported that they made a great effort to speak up despite their fear. However, most of them did not write down their daily experiences in a diary due to learning habits and low level of proficiency.

> *"I do not know what I should write in the diary. I am not good at literature or writing in both languages. Moreover, I am not confident in my vocabulary size and grammatical structures to write in English*." (F1-G12)

> *"I see no point in writing a diary. I am not a person who likes to write a diary even in either English or Vietnamese. If I want to practice my writing skills, I will write an essay with a particular topic."* (M7-G10)

> *"I prefer sharing with my friends how I feel and find solutions together to writing down my thoughts*." (F15-G11)

Top of the list in the memory category in Table 7 was reviewing English lessons regularly (M=3.06, SD=0.90). Linking the previous knowledge and new things while studying (M=2.98, SD=0.93) came next, followed by learning new vocabulary by relating them to pictures and places (M=2.96, SD=1.07; M=2.82, SD=1.19; M=2.76, SD=1.08). Remarkably, the high school students used flashcards to learn new vocabulary at a low level (M=2.06, SD=1.13).

The results from the interview also confirmed that reviewing English lessons regularly was employed by almost all the interviewed participants. Therefore, this strategy is regarded as one of the best ways to enhance language knowledge as well as all language skills, e.g., listening, reading, speaking, and writing. As one informant (M7-Y10) said, "memory strategies helped to create a habit of using new vocabulary, and I can also use them for a long term." Outside the classroom, they tried to remember new vocabulary, grammatical points, and expressions in different ways.

> *"I always note down the new vocabulary during the lesson or when I find out new words in English movies and music. Then I put them around my house. I also use*

new words in the conversation with my friends, so I can remember them longer."
(F4-G12)

"I sometimes make connections between new vocabulary with the real subjects and situations. Imagination helps me a lot in learning English." (M5-G11)

When being asked about the reason for the low use of applying these strategies, the participants revealed that they seldom learned English using flashcards because of the following reasons.

"It is not an effective way for me as we actually do not have enough flashcards for many topics especially for discrete subjects." (M7-G10)

"Sometimes, I want to change the way of studying new words, and I will use this way. Nevertheless, I also need to write down to remember the words. In my opinion, this way is not as effective as writing down repeatedly." (M14 – G11)

"I have no idea about flashcards, it seems a strange way to learn new words for me. My teachers never explain to us how to use it." (F6-G12).

Table 7. Memory Strategies

Category	Item	Level	n=238 M	n=238 SD
Memory strategies (MEMS)	**MEMS8**. I review English lessons frequently.	Moderate	3.06	0.90
	MEMS1. I try to connect the prior knowledge with new knowledge in English.	Moderate	2.98	0.93
	MEMS3. I link the image or picture of a word to memorize the new lexical item.	Moderate	2.96	1.07
	MEMS4. I acquire a new word by relating a mental picture to a practical situation.	Moderate	2.82	1.19
	MEMS9. I memorize a new word or a phrase by locating its place such as on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	Moderate	2.76	1.08
	MEMS7. I physically enact a new English word.	Moderate	2.66	1.20
	MEMS2. I put new English words in a sentence to remember them.	Moderate	2.63	1.01
	MEMS5. I remember new vocabulary using rhymes.	Moderate	2.58	1.08
	MEMS6. I learn new vocabulary through flashcards.	Low	2.06	1.13

3.2. Discussion

It can be seen that the overall mean score of LLS use was 2.88, which indicates the students' moderate use of LLSs. Furthermore, they used most of the LLSs at a medium level, ranging from 2.72 to 3.16. This finding is consistent with those found in Nguyen et al. (2012), Nguyen and Jang (2016), Ngo (2019), who also found out that Vietnamese learners moderately used LLSs. In other words, the high school students have not fully exploited LLSs to enhance their learning outcomes. It may be because the majority of the participants have not taken any LLS-related courses yet, which leads to the reluctance to use these strategies in their learning process.

In terms of six categories listed in Oxford's (1990) SILL, metacognitive strategies were the high school learners' first priority. This result is supported by the previous studies (e.g., Kunasaraphan, 2015; Nguyen, 2007; Nguyen et al., 2012; Tabeti, 2017; Vo & Duong, 2020). However, this finding contradicts Ngo's (2015) conclusion that metacognitive strategies were not used as frequently as social and affective strategies. More specifically, Duong et al. (2019) found out that cognitive and affective listening learning strategies were the most commonly used while metacognitive and social strategies and compensation and memory strategies were used at moderate and low levels, respectively. It is assumed that when metacognitive strategies were the first choice for managing their learning process, the high school students became more aware of their own English language learning because they had an obvious target. More specifically, Βρεττού (2011) affirmed that this awareness helps learners hold

positive attitudes towards their learning, identify learning objectives, create a study plan, self-evaluate their learning performance, and seek opportunities to practice the target language, which may lead to life-long learning (Duong, 2015).

On the contrary, memory strategies were in the last place on the list, which means the students used this category least of all. The result is in line with Oxford's (1990) viewpoint that "even though memory strategies can be useful to enhance English learning, the students simply do not use memory strategies" (p. 40). Memory strategies are essential in the language learning process since a lot of knowledge needs to be acquired. In a similar vein, Hong-Nam and Leavell's (2006) study conducted in the context in which college students had various cultural as well as linguistic backgrounds showed that the college students used metacognitive strategies as the first priority, compared to affective and memory strategies, which were the least employed ones. However, this finding is different from Nguyen and Ho's (2013) results indicating that affective and memory strategies were preferred by the female students while compensation and social strategies were preferably selected by the male counterparts. This finding probably arises from the gender difference, which is excluded from the focus of the present study.

The top three strategies frequently used by high school students include paying attention when someone is speaking in English, finding out how to be a better learner of English, and noticing English mistakes. This means that the high school participants paid a lot of attention to look for opportunities to enrich the vocabulary and improve pronunciation and become better language learners. These findings are similar to those found in some previous studies (e.g., Nguyen et al., 2012; Ngo, 2019; Phan & Tran, 2020). Meanwhile, the high school students seldom wrote down their daily experiences in a diary, used flashcards to memorize new English lexical items, read extensively, and initiate a conversation in English. Despite the benefits of free reading and writing activities, these activities were not viewed as the favorite strategies among Vietnamese high school students. In fact, Ngo (2019) also discovered that extensive reading and writing tasks were not usually employed by the participants to develop their language proficiency. Writing in English is known as the most challenging skill for either Vietnamese EFL learners or other EFL learners. The low frequency in writing English of EFL learners may be attributed to the insufficient practice of freewriting activities even though the free reading experience is of great advantage to language learners such as developing vocabulary size, reading comprehension, spelling, and writing.

4. Conclusion

The research was carried out to scrutinize the frequency of LLSs employed by Vietnamese high school students. The results of the study demonstrated that the students utilized the six categories of LLSs at a medium level. Particularly, the metacognitive strategies were identified as the most commonly used category, whereas the memory strategies were selected least. It can be inferred that the Vietnamese high school learners seemed to be aware of the importance of learning English, thus applying strategies to facilitate their own learning; however, the frequency of LLSs is not high.

Based on the findings of this research, some pedagogical implications are made as follows. It is assumed that LLSs may contribute to learner autonomy development and teaching methodology enhancement. To achieve the effective use of language learning strategies, LLSs should be introduced in each language lesson because learning strategies are teachable. It is suggested that language teachers should consider the following steps for applying LLSs in a language classroom. First, the teaching context consisting of learners' behavior, learning goals, and learner motivation should be analyzed by language teachers. Moreover, teachers are supposed to clarify, demonstrate and exemplify possible strategies, organize discussions in groups or the whole class about LLSs, and integrate the hands-on strategies into everyday lessons in a typical LLS-based classroom. It is advisable to give learners a lot of opportunities to enact the new strategies through language assignments and counsel them to flexibly use LLSs in various contexts. Finally, language teachers should notice the influence of students' use of strategies on their academic achievements. Teachers are expected to provide learners with a chance to choose LLSs for their learning practices and to guide them how to be autonomous learners through evaluating their own progress.

Declaration

Author contribution	: The first author was in charge of most of the sections. The second author collected the data and searched for some previous studies relating to the topic.
Funding statement	: The research is funded under no research project.
Conflict of interest	: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Additional information	: No additional information is available for this paper.

REFERENCES

Ali, H. H., & Paramasivam, S. (2016). Language learning strategies across proficiency levels among EFL pre-university students. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 3*(4), 135–148.

Aljuaid, H. T. (2015). *Language learning strategies used by a group of Saudi Arabian EFL learners* (Doctoral dissertation, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia). Retrieved from https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10072/366841/Aljuaid_2015_02Thesis.pdf?sequence=1

Βρεττού, A. (2011). *Patterns of language learning strategy use by Greek-speaking young learners of English* (Doctoral Dissertation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece). Retrieved from https://thesis.ekt.gr/thesisBookReader/id/24616#page/1/mode/2up

Bui, G. T. K., & Vu, T. V. (2018). Language learning strategies of Vietnamese EFL freshmen. *Arab World English Journal*, *9*(3), 61–83. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no3.5

Cohen, A. D. (2014). Strategies in learning and using a second language. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315833200

Duong, T. M. (2015). *A portfolio-based learner autonomy development model in an EFL writing course* [Doctoral dissertation, Suranaree University of Technology]. Retrieved from http://sutir.sut.ac.th:8080/sutir/handle/123456789/5967

Duong, T. M. (2020). The correlation of non-English majors' use of resource management strategies with their academic achievement. *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research*, *36*(4), 86–95. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4341

Duong, T. M., Tran, T. T. H., Tran, T. Q. (2019). Eleventh graders' actual use of English learning strategies at Duong Van Duong high school. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 35*(1), 114–130.

Duong, M. D., & Intaraprasert, C. (2012). Language learning strategies employed by EFL science-oriented university students in Vietnam: An exploratory study. *International Jounal of Scientific and Research Publications*, *2*(4), 232–236.

Ellis, R. (1994). A theory of instructed second language acquisition. In N. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages*. Academic Press.

Griffiths, C. (2013). *The strategy factor in successful language learning*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847699428

Griffiths, C., & Cansiz, G. (2015). Language learning strategies: A holistic view. *Studies in Second Language Leaning and Teaching*, *5*(3), 473–493. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2015.5.3.7

Hardan, A. A. (2013). Language learning strategies: A general overview. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *106*¸1712–1726. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.194

Henno, K (2012). The relationship between the language learning strategy use and language proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking learners of English as a foreign language [Master's dissertation, Stellenbosch University]. Retrieved from http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/71839

Hong-Nam, K., & Leavell, A. G. (2006). Language learning strategy use of ESL students in an intensive English learning context. *System, 34*(3), 399–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.02.002

Kunasaraphan, K. (2015). English learning strategy and proficiency level of the first year students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1853–1858. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.246

Lee, J., & Heinz, M. (2016). English language learning strategies reported by advanced language learners. *Journal of International Education Research*, *12*(2), 67–76. https://doi.org/10.19030/jier.v12i2.9629

Lee, K. R., Kim, S., Kim, S., & Lee, Y. (2011). English language learning strategy instruction in Korean English textbooks for middle school students' self-regulated learning. *Modern English Education*, *12*(1), 177–201.

Ngo, L. C. (2019). Language learning strategies among Vietnamese EFL high school students. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching, 14*(1), 55–70. https://doi.org/10.25170/ijelt.v14i1.1418

Nguyen, H. T. B. (2013). English learning strategies of Vietnamese tertiary students. [Master's dissertation, University of Tasmania]. Retrieved from https://eprints.utas.edu.au/17105/2/Whole-Nguyen-Thesis-_2013.pdf

Nguyen, T. N., & Ho, T. L. (2013). A comparison on the use of language learning strategies by male and female Vietnamese tertiary students of non-English majors. *Language in India, 13*(4), 185–210.

Nguyen, T. D., Trinh, H. T., & Huynh, M. T. (2012). Language learning strategies used by non-English major freshman at Can Tho University. *CTU Journal of Science, 23b*, 42–49.

Nguyen, T. B., & Jang, S. (2016). Strategic English learning and proficiency among vietnamese tertiary learners: Beyond passive stereotypes. *The International Journal of Learning in Higher Education, 24*(1), 19–34. https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7955/CGP/v24i01/19-34

Osman, H., & Manan, N. A. A. (2010). A study of language learning strategies (LLS) used by ESL learners of an Urban secondary school in Perak. *Constructing Contemporary Malaysia: Insight from Research Effort*. Perak: UfoRIA UiTM Perak.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know.* New York: Newbury House.

Oxford, R., & Griffiths, C. (Eds). (2014). Language learning strategy research in the twenty-first century: Insights and innovations. *System*, 43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.12.009

Phan, G. T., & Tran, T. Q. (2020). Tertiary English-majored students' perceptions toward the role of pronunciation in English language learning and their practicing strategies. *VNU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 6(*2), 266-280. https://doi.org/10.33100/jossh6.2.PhanGiaThinh-TranQuocThao

Qingquan, N., Chatupote, M., & Teo, A. (2008). A deep look into learning strategy use by successful and unsuccessful students in the Chinese EFL learning context. *RELC Journal, 39*(3), 338–358. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688208096845

Tabeti, S. (2017). *Assessing language learning strategy use: the case of the 1ˢᵗ year EFL students at the University of Mascara* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tlemcen, Tlemcen, Angeria). Retrieved from http://dspace.univ-tlemcen.dz/bitstream/112/11093/1/tabti-soumia.pdf

Tran, T. Q. (2012). Language learning strategies in foreign language teaching and learning. *Japan TESOL Journal, 3.*

Tran, T. Q., & Duong, T. M. (2013). The attitudes towards English language learning   and   use   of   self-regulated learning strategies among college non-English majors. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 3*(7).

Tran, T. Q., & Nguyen, C. H. L. (2020). The use of self-regulated language learning strategies among Vietnamese English-majored freshmen: A case   study.   VNU Journal of Science: Education Research, *36*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.25073/2588-1159/vnuer.4331

Tran, T. Q., & Nguyen, C. H. L. (2021). English-majored students' motivation in English   language learning and their use of reading strategies: Research perspectives. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 37*(1), 109–119. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4661

Tran, T.Q., & Tran, T.N.P. (2021). Vietnamese EFL high school students' use of self-regulated language learning strategies for project-based learning. *International Journal of Instruction, 14*(1), 459–474. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14127a

Vo, T. T. T, & Duong, T. M. (2020). Non-English majors' perceptions and use of metacognitive strategies at a Vietnamese EFL context. *TNU Journal of Science and Technology*, *225*(12), 131–138. https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.3703