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Estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas empleadas por estudiantes universitarios vietnamitas: una comparación de género

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Resumen. El propósito de este estudio fue investigar la frecuencia de las estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas empleadas por estudiantes universitarios vietnamitas de primer año. También examinó la relación entre el género y las estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas. Para recopilar y analizar datos para este estudio, se utilizaron enfoques de métodos mixtos, que incorporaron datos tanto cuantitativos como cualitativos. En la fase cuantitativa participaron un total de 100 estudiantes de primer año de una universidad vietnamita (50 mujeres y 50 hombres). Veinte estudiantes participaron en la fase de entrevista del estudio durante la fase cualitativa. Se utilizó una guía de entrevista semiestructurada para recopilar datos cualitativos, mientras que en la fase cuantitativa se utilizó un cuestionario adaptado del Strategies Inventory of Language Learning de Oxford (1990). Los hallazgos demostraron que, con la excepción de las estrategias compensatorias, las estudiantes utilizaron estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas con mucha más frecuencia que los estudiantes varones. En comparación con los hombres, las mujeres emplearon tácticas más indirectas. Además, la técnica social fue la estrategia de aprendizaje de idiomas más utilizada tanto por estudiantes masculinos como femeninos. Los hombres tendieron a emplear tácticas de memoria con más frecuencia que las mujeres, mientras que las mujeres utilizaron estrategias compensatorias con menos frecuencia. Los hallazgos mostraron que, con respecto a la utilización de cada tipo de estrategia, las diferencias de género no fueron estadísticamente significativas en las tres categorías de estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas: afectiva, compensatoria y cognitiva.

Palabras clave: género, estrategias de aprendizaje, influencias de género, estudiantes universitarios, lengua extranjera.

Language learning strategies employed by Vietnamese university undergraduates: a gender comparison

Abstract. The purpose of this study was to look into the frequency of language learning strategies employed by first-year Vietnamese university undergraduates. It also examined the relationship between gender and language learning strategies. In order to collect and analyze data for this study, mix method approaches were used, which incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 100 first-year students from a Vietnamese university—50 females and 50 males—were involved in the quantitative phase. Twenty students participated in the study's interview phase during the qualitative phase. A semi-structured interview guide was utilized to gather qualitative data, while a questionnaire adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategies Inventory of Language Learning was the instrument used in the quantitative phase. The findings demonstrated that, with the exception of compensatory strategies, female students considerably more frequently used language learning strategies than did male students. Compared to males, females employed more indirect tactics. Furthermore, social technique was the most often utilized language learning strategies by both male and female students. Males tended to employ memory tactics more frequently than females, whereas females used compensatory strategies less frequently. The findings showed that, with regard to the utilization of each strategy type, gender differences were not statistically significant in the three language learning strategy categories: affective, compensating, and cognitive.

Keywords: gender, learning strategies, influences of gender, undergraduates, foreign language.

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to use in order to study a new language effectively. Past studies on second language learning reported that students' performance can be improved by using various strategies in order to learn effectively and efficiently (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, Boonkongsan, 2014, Oxford, 2013). One of the best ways is using learning strategies, which are defined as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques -- such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 63). It is also proposed that learning strategies are transferable in terms of these potentially advantageous effects of language learning strategies (LLSs), which means they can be taught and learned.

In addition, a great number of studies showed that there are many learner-related factors that influence language learning, and one of those factors is gender. Several researchers in the fields of language education have discussed the impact of gender on access to linguistic and interactional tools, on the complexities of classroom engagement, and on language learning outcomes, moving further into the student's investigation. The impact of gender on ESL and EFL learning, along with language learning techniques and other variables were sought in this regard. Nonetheless, the essence of the relation between gender and learning a foreign or second language remains unclear, or rather, various researchers are approaching it from several different viewpoints.

According to Nguyen (2013), there have been several studies using either quantitative or qualitative methods with respect to research methodology in the field of LLSs. However, there are not many studies which combine both methods to optimize the results of study. Since LLSs are very complicated with many inter-related problems, it is highly recommended that more mixed approaches to the exploration of LLSs among language learners should be used in the exploration of LLSs among language learners. Another gap in the field that needs to be addressed is that the relationship has not been firmly defined between learner variables and the use of LLS. There are cases of contradictory outcomes provided by studies of the same interests, which can be confusing for researchers and practitioners alike.

Studies conducted in Vietnamese teaching and learning contexts are remarkably uncommon considering the increasing research activities worldwide in the field of LLSs. Significant issues such as LLSs have such an obvious significance that they can seem odd in their rarity. Currently, with just a few published articles, Vietnamese context-specific research into various facets of LLSs is still in its infancy stage. This lack of relevant publications suggests a scarcity of practices focused on research or a lack of interest about this topic and poses a significant awareness gap that needs to be filled.

This particular study will use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to have a mostly complete insights into the topic. The previous studies focusing on the use of LLSs and the role of gender only used questionnaires to collect data and evaluate the frequency of use, while the current study used both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to examine whether there are differences between male and female students in term of LLSs use.

Research questions

The following questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the language learning strategies used by first-year male and female students?
2. Is there any difference in terms of language learning strategies used by the students based on gender?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of language learning strategies

LLSs play a crucial role in the learning process and have been defined differently by many researchers. According to Wenden (1987a), LLSs can be defined from the aspect of language learning behaviors, such as learning and regulating the meaning of a second or foreign language, cognitive theory, such as learners' strategic knowledge of language learning, and the affective view, such as learners' motivation, attitude, etc. It is argued that three points of views can improve language learning.

From the cognitive perspective, LLSs are defined by many scholars as techniques, methods, or procedures used by learners to deal with the information they receive. The earliest definition is provided by Rubin (1975) as "techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge" (p. 43). In the same line, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) define learning strategies as "methods or techniques that individuals use to improve their comprehension, learning, and retention of information." Similarly, Chamot and Kupper (1989) also acknowledge that LLSs are "techniques which students use to comprehend, store, and remember new information and skills" (p. 13). Chamot (2008) considers learning strategies as "techniques for understanding, remembering, and using information and skills" (p. 1).

From the aspect of learning behaviors, many scholars have provided different definitions of LLSs. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) view learning strategies as “the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (p. 1). Weinstein and Mayer (1983) consider learning strategies as “behaviors and thoughts in which a learner engages and which are intended to influence the learner’s encoding process” (p. 3). More specifically, according to Anderson (1985), these thoughts and behaviors constitute organized plans of action designed to achieve a goal. These definitions capture the features and the purposes of LLSs. Mayer (1988) defines LLSs as “behaviors of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information” (p. 11).

Taking one step further, Stern (1975, p. 311) states “the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques.” In addition, Oxford (2008, p. 41), claims that L2 learning strategies are “the goal-oriented actions or steps (e.g., plan, evaluate, analyse) that learners take, with some degree of consciousness, to enhance their L2 learning.” Similarly, Chamot (2004) suggests that learning strategies are “the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take in order to achieve a learning goal” (p. 14).

In general, throughout the years, many researchers gave their own definitions about LLSs. Thus, it is rather difficult to generalise all the definitions provided by different scholars. The following table is a summary on the definitions of LLSs from many different researchers.

TABLE 1. Definitions of language learning strategies

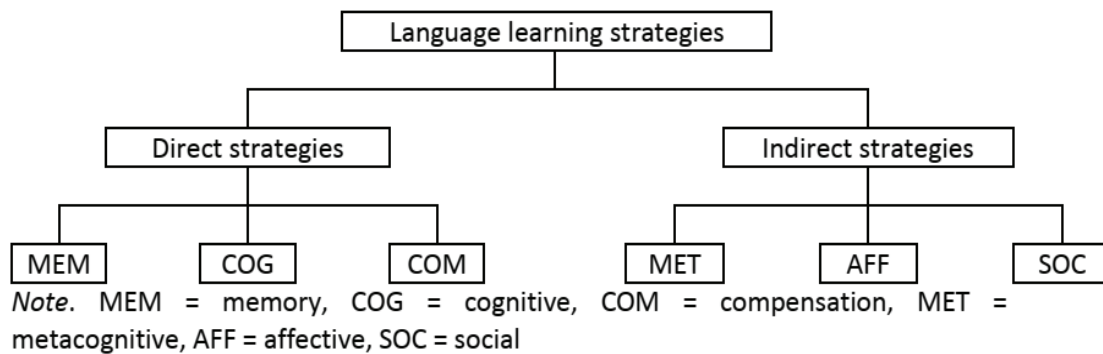
| Source | Definition |
|----------------------------|--|
| Tarone (1981) | An attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language. |
| Rubin (1987) | What learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning. |
| Chamot (1987) | Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate learning, recall of both linguistic and content information. |
| Wenden (1987) | The term refers to language behaviours learners engage in to learn and regulate the learning of L2, to what learners know about the strategies they use (i.e. strategic knowledge), and to what learner know about aspects of L2 learning. |
| Weinstein and Mayer (1986) | Behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner’s encoding process |
| Oxford (1990) | Behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. |
| Ellis (1995) | Generally, a strategy is a mental or behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the process of language acquisition or language use. |
| Ridley (1997) | Broadly speaking, the term strategy denotes procedures which are sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious used by a person as a way of reaching a goal. |
| Cohen (1998) | Processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a L2, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language. |
| Purpura (1999) | Conscious or unconscious techniques or activities that an individual invokes in language learning, use or testing. |

The definitions of language learner strategies mentioned proves that learning strategies can help learners to control their own learning and become more proficient. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to make their students aware about these learning strategies and how to use them in learning foreign languages. The following section is devoted to present the main features related to LLSs.

Oxford's taxonomy of language learning strategies

Oxford's classification is regarded as the most comprehensive classification and has been used by many researchers (Ellis 1994, as cited in Tam 2013) Oxford (1990) has classified LLSs into two categories: direct and indirect strategies as shown in Figure 1. Direct strategies consist of memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies whereas indirect strategies comprise metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies.

Figure 1. Strategy system according to Oxford (1990, p. 16)



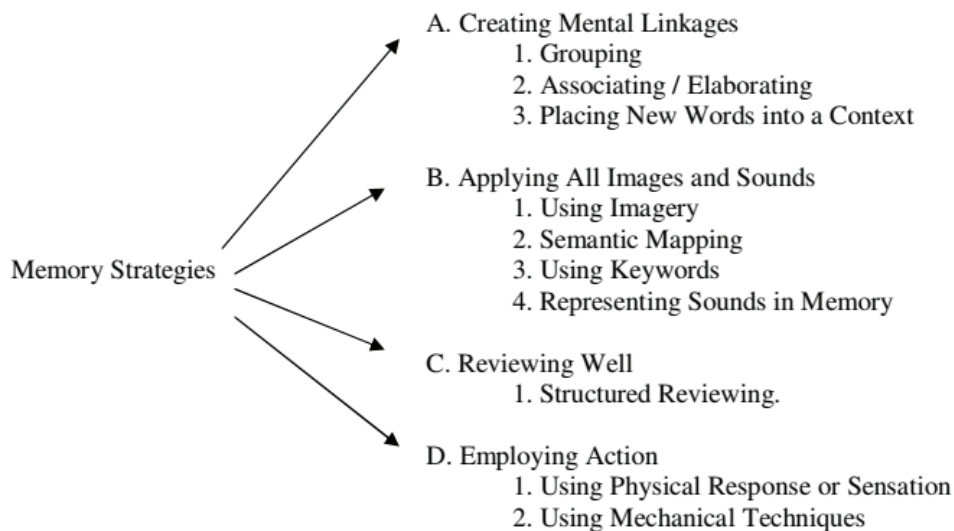
Direct Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), direct techniques are LLSs that directly involve the target language. The main characteristic of all direct strategies is that they involve the mental processing of the language. Direct strategies are further categorized into three groups: memory strategy, cognitive strategy and compensation strategy.

Memory Strategies

Memory strategies are defined as methods to help learners store and retrieve new information. Oxford (1990) classifies memory strategies the four categories: creating mental linkage, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action. The following diagram shows the clusters of the memory strategies.

Figure 2. Diagram of the Memory Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 18)

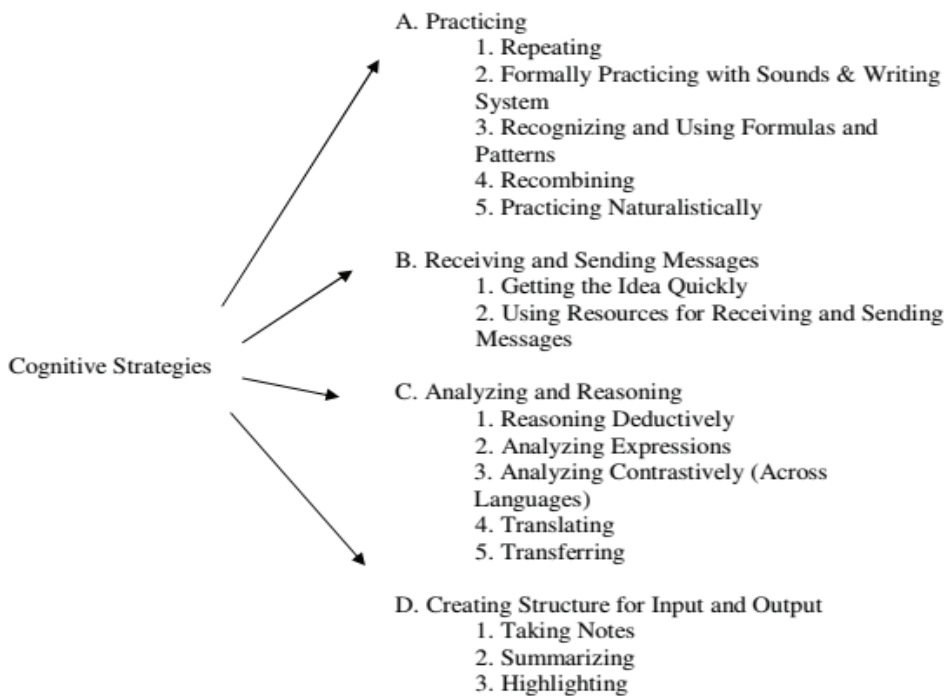


Cognitive Strategies

For Oxford (1990), cognitive strategies enable learners to manipulate or transform the target language. In other words, they enable learners to understand and produce new language through many different means.

Cognitive strategies are grouped into four categories: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. The following diagram shows the clusters of the cognitive strategies.

Figure 3. Diagram of the Cognitive Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 18-19)

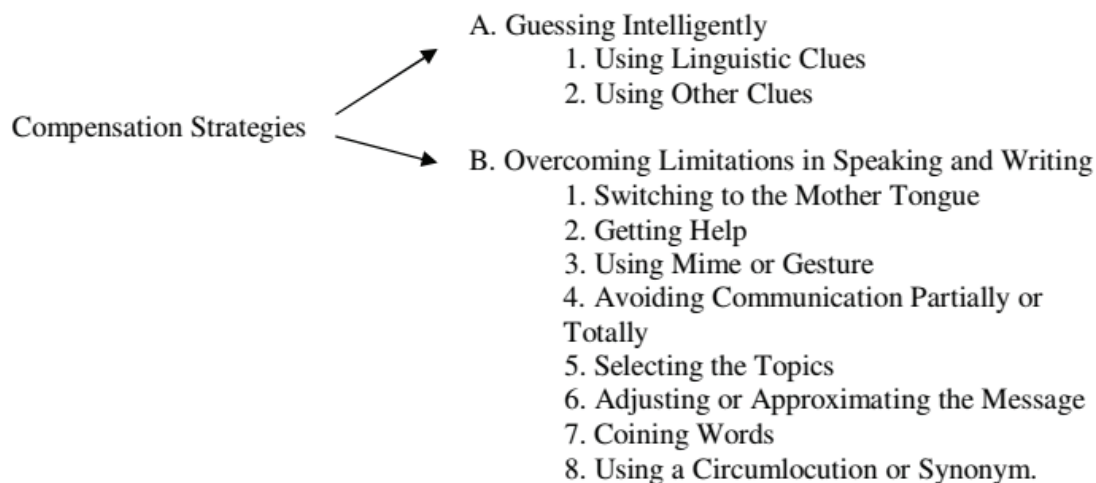


Compensation Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), compensation strategies are the strategies that enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production in spite of limitations in knowledge. As compensation is present both in comprehension and in production, these strategies let learners produce both spoken and written expressions in the target language. Compensation strategies for production are used to compensate and make up for a lack of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Besides, some of these strategies help learners become more fluent in their prior knowledge. Oxford (1990) states that learners who reported to use more compensation strategies sometimes communicate better than learners who are not.

There are ten compensation strategies listed under two sets of strategies: guessing intelligently and overcoming limitation in speaking and writing. The following diagram shows the clusters of the compensation strategies.

Figure 4. Diagram of the Compensation Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 19)



Indirect Strategies

The second major group of LLSs in Oxford's taxonomy is called indirect strategies because they support and manage language learning, in many instances, without directly involving the target language (Oxford, 1990). The indirect strategies work together with the direct strategies to help learner regulate the learning process. Thus, the indirect strategies are useful in practically all language learning situations and are applicable to the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) (Oxford, 1990)

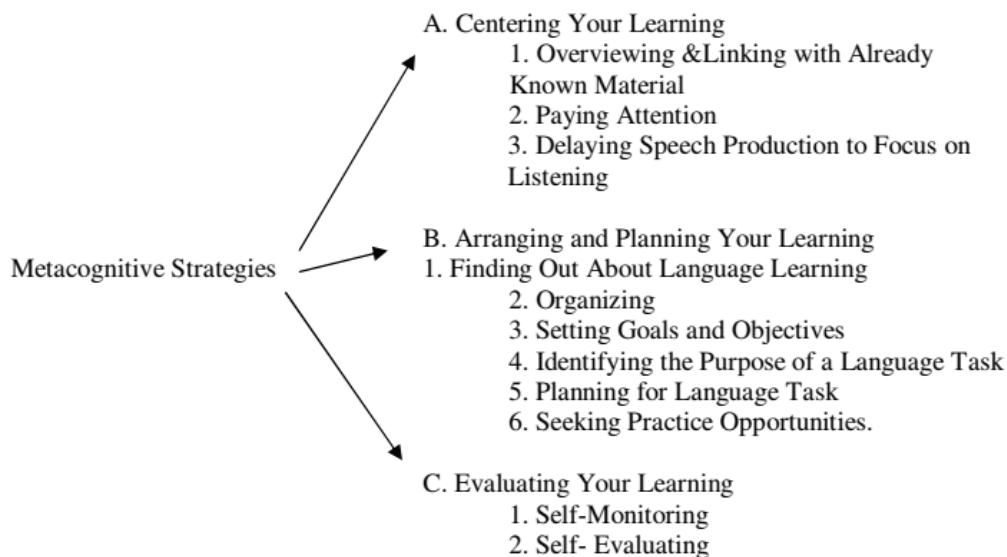
Indirect strategies are separated into three subgroups: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies.

Metacognitive Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies are actions that go beyond cognitive devices and enable learners to control their own cognition and to coordinate their own learning process. She believes that metacognitive strategies are very important for successful language learning. Nevertheless, despite the importance of metacognitive strategies, learners rarely or unconsciously use these strategies.

Metacognitive strategies include eleven skills listed under three groups of strategies: centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning and evaluating your learning. The following diagram shows the clusters of the metacognitive strategies.

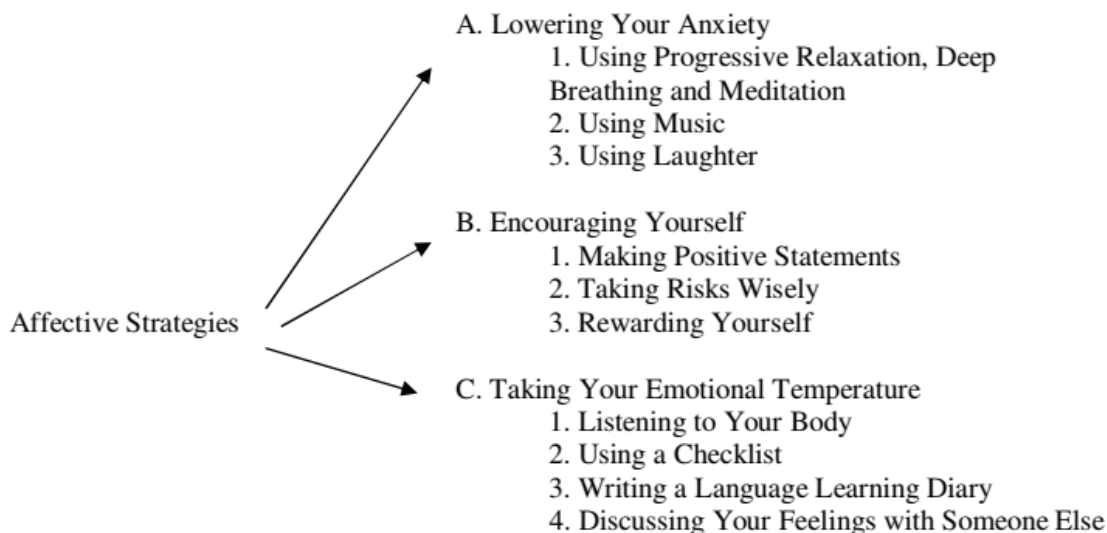
Figure 5. Diagram of the Metacognitive Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 20)



Affective Strategies

Having a positive feeling will help language learners to archive better performance in language learning. Oxford (1990) refers the term “affective” to emotions, attitudes, motivation and values. The use of affective strategies will enable learners to gain control over factors related to emotions, attitudes, motivations and values through the use of affective strategies. There are ten skills listed under three sets of affective strategies. They are lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, and taking your emotional temperature. The following diagram shows the clusters of the affective strategies.

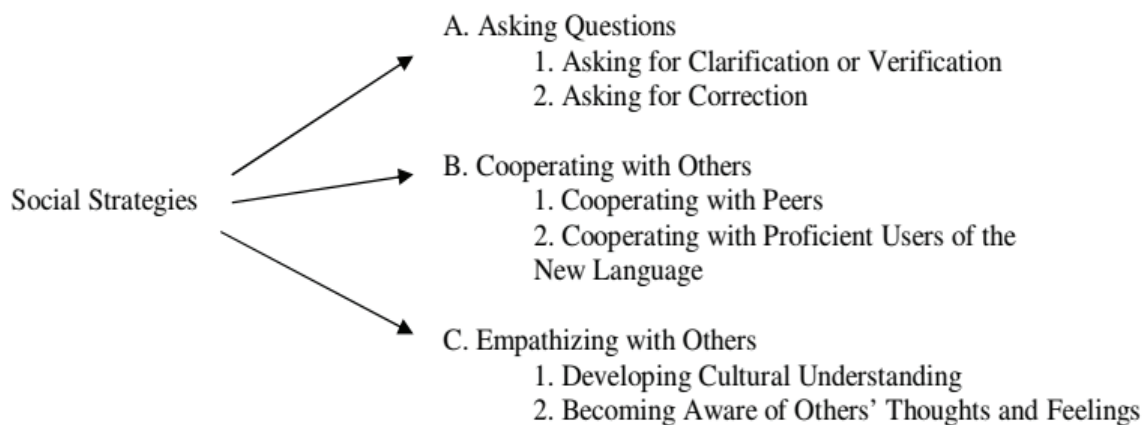
Figure 6. Diagram of the Affective Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 20)



Language learning is not only learning about language but also to understand the target culture. Using social strategies will help learners to work with others and understand the target culture as well.

There are six skills listed under three sets of social strategies. They are asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. The following diagram shows the clusters of the social strategies.

Figure 7. Diagram of the Social Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 21)



Research methodology

Research design

This study aims to investigate the LLSs used by the male and female undergraduates at a university in Vietnam. For the research design, this study utilized mixed method approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data for collection and analysis procedures to understand a research problem more complete and strengthen the study's conclusions (Creswell, 2017).

For the quantitative method, the study collected data from the participants by adapting a questionnaire list of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7 by Oxford (1990). The data collected then were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted the mean. In qualitative research, a semi-structured interview was conducted to explore in depth the students' use of LLSs and verifying whether students' perception of gender influence on LLSs use. According to Dornyei (2007), mixed method research increases the strengths of the study while eliminating the weaknesses, improves the validity of the research, and usually reaches a larger audience than a monomethod study would.

Participants

In the quantitative phase of the study, a total of 100 first-year students (50 females and 50 males) took part in the study. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22. Since they had already passed the placement test and study in the same course, they were considered as at the same English proficiency level. We used stratified sampling method to select the male and female participants who were asked complete a questionnaire about their LLSs. The qualitative phase of the study involves 10 students (5 females and 5 males) randomly selected from among the

questionnaire respondents. The male and female students had previously expressed their willingness to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

Research instruments

This study employed a mixed method combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a more complete picture and a voice of the participants. The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire while a qualitative data were collected based on the participants' responses in semi-structured interviews. This section aims to describe the research instruments used in this study which consist of the questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide.

The quantitative instrument

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two parts. Part 1 was for the demographic data such as gender, age and student code. Part 2 was the SILL used in this current study which consisted of 48 items classified into six sections. The brief details of SILL are given in Table 2

TABLE 2. Strategies, number of items within each section, and one sample item for each section

| Strategies | Items | Sample items |
|---------------|-------|--|
| Memory | 9 | I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them |
| Cognitive | 13 | I say or write new English words several times. |
| Compensation | 6 | To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses. |
| Metacognitive | 9 | I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English. |
| Affective | 6 | I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake. |
| Social | 5 | I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk. |

The items are assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. For each statement, they had to decide whether that statement was (1) Never true, (2) Usually not true, (3) Somewhat true, (4) Usually true, or (5) Always true of them.

The qualitative instrument

As it is a semi structured interview design, the researcher asked more supplementary questions. The interview guide included the guiding questions and additional prompts. The prompts were used to get deeper insight if the interviewee did not answer the questions by themselves. The interview guide consisted of 5 parts.

Part A of the interview guide was the introduction. The main purpose of this part was to introduce the purpose of the interview, inform about audio taping and assure the interview confidentiality.

Part B consisted of opening questions to explore the background of the students.

Part C focused on how the students use the six categories of LLSs and the influence of their gender perception on LLS use. The data collected will be analyzed to answer the third research question and also to get a deep understanding on the students' responses in quantitative data.

Part D was supplementary questions in order to get more insights into the influence of gender identity on their language learning strategy.

The final part E closed the interview. The interviewer thanked the participants for participating and asked him/her for additional comments.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Quantitative phase

The questionnaire data collected from 100 male and female students were processed using SPSS. The frequency of each individual strategy of the six categories of LLSs was calculated on the basis of the mean scores for male and female participants. Descriptive statistics of language learning strategy use were computed in order to answer the first and the second research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the most/least frequent language learning strategies used by first-year male and female students?

TABLE 3. Means, standard deviations and ranks of the six categories of LLSS used by male and female students

| Type of strategies | Male | | | Female | | | Overall Mean | | |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Rank</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Rank</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Rank</i> |
| Memory | 3.58 | .59 | 6 | 3.91 | .57 | 3 | 3.75 | .60 | 4 |
| Cognitive | 3.67 | .51 | 4 | 3.84 | .48 | 4 | 3.76 | .50 | 3 |
| Compensation | 3.70 | .59 | 3 | 3.61 | .65 | 6 | 3.66 | .62 | 6 |
| Metacognitive | 3.96 | .65 | 2 | 4.25 | .49 | 2 | 4.11 | .59 | 2 |
| Affective | 3.63 | .83 | 5 | 3.78 | .71 | 5 | 3.71 | .77 | 5 |
| Social | 4.03 | .75 | 1 | 4.31 | .52 | 1 | 4.17 | .66 | 1 |
| Total Average | 3.76 | .52 | | 3.95 | .42 | | 3.86 | .48 | |

As we can see from the table 3, the most preferred strategy category of all the students was social strategy with the overall mean of (4.17), followed by metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, memory strategy and affective strategy while compensation strategy ranked the least frequently used with the overall mean of (3.66). It should also be noted that the mean scores of strategy categories are close to each other.

In regard to the rank order of the strategies according to their frequency of usage between male and female students, there was a similarity in their first and second frequent LLSs. Both males and females preferred to use social strategies mostly with the mean score of (4.03) and (4.31), respectively. Metacognitive strategies were their second favored ones with mean of score of (3.96) for males and (4.25) for females. However, the major difference in their LLS usage lied on the third and the sixth strategies. While compensation strategies were ranked in the third place of the used strategies by males, they were the least frequent strategy used by females. Similarly, a reverse order was found for memory strategies, which leads them to the least frequent strategies used by males.

In general, the descriptive statistics showed that female students used strategies with greater frequency than male students in all categories, except for the compensation strategies. The most frequent LLSs used by both male and female students were social strategy. While memory strategies were the least used strategies of males, compensation strategies were the least used by females.

Research Question 2: Is there any difference in terms of language learning strategies used by the students based on gender?

This research question aims at identifying the effect of gender variable regarding the use of LLSs. The independent T-test was run in order to test if there was a difference in use of LLSs between females and males. Table 4.2 shows differences between male and female students regarding direct and indirect strategies.

TABLE 4. Independent sample t-test showing students differences regarding direct and indirect strategies according to gender variable

| Strategies | Gender | N | M | SD | df | t | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------|--------|----|------|-----|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Direct | Male | 50 | 3.65 | .48 | -1.44 | 98.00 | .15 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.79 | .46 | | | |
| Indirect | Male | 50 | 3.87 | .62 | -2.16 | 98.00 | .03 |
| | Female | 50 | 4.11 | .48 | | | |

Table 4 showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.48$) and female students ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.46$) in the means of using direct strategies ($Sig = .15$, $P > 0.05$). However, there was a statistically significant difference in the means of using indirect strategies ($Sig = .03$, $P < 0.05$) between male students ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.62$) and female students ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.48$). The results indicated the fact that females, on average, employed more indirect strategies than males was significant. In order to provide a more detailed answer to the research question 2, an independent sample t-test was used to analyze any significant differences in the use of six categories of LLSs between male and female students. The results were shown in Table 5.

As we can be seen in table 5, there was statistically significant difference in the overall means of using English learning strategies ($Sig = .049$, $p < 0.05$) between male students ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.52$) and female students ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.42$), which indicated that females reported higher overall strategy use than males and they were significantly superior to male students in using LLSs. It could be concluded that a significant difference did exist between genders in the students' language learning strategy use.

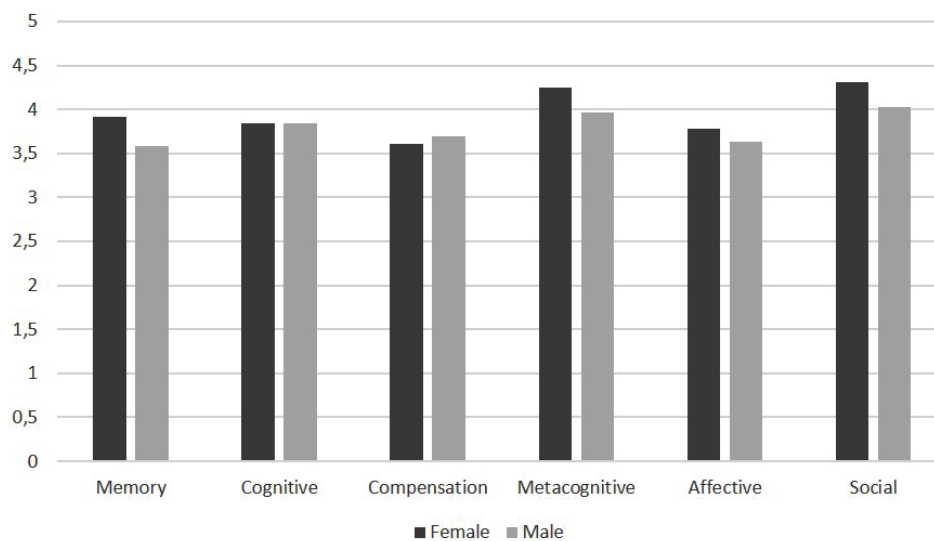
When each strategy category was considered separately, the statistics showed that there were statistically significant differences between male and female students in favor of females in the means of using memory strategies ($Sig = .006$, $p < 0.05$), metacognitive strategies ($Sig = .015$, $p < 0.05$) and social strategies ($Sig = .034$, $p < 0.05$).

A comparison among the means of the six categories of LLSs regarding gender variable listed in Table 5, given above, are graphically presented in Figure 8.

TABLE 5. Independent sample t-test showing students' differences regarding six categories of LLSs use according to gender variable

| Strategies | Level | N | M | SD | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------|--------|----|------|-----|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Memory | Male | 50 | 3.58 | .59 | -2.83 | 98.00 | .006 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.91 | .57 | | | |
| Cognitive | Male | 50 | 3.67 | .51 | -1.77 | 98.00 | .079 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.84 | .48 | | | |
| Compensation | Male | 50 | 3.70 | .59 | .77 | 98.00 | .441 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.61 | .65 | | | |
| Metacognitive | Male | 50 | 3.96 | .65 | -2.49 | 90.38 | .015 |
| | Female | 50 | 4.25 | .49 | | | |
| Affective | Male | 50 | 3.63 | .83 | -1.00 | 98.00 | .321 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.78 | .71 | | | |
| Social | Male | 50 | 4.03 | .75 | -2.16 | 98.00 | .034 |
| | Female | 50 | 4.31 | .52 | | | |
| Whole Instrument | Male | 50 | 3.76 | .52 | -1.99 | 98.00 | .049 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.95 | .42 | | | |

Figure 8. Means of the Six Categories of LLSs regarding gender variable



As we can see from table 4.3 and chart 4.1, there were no significant differences on cognitive strategies (Sig = .079, $p > 0.05$), compensation strategies (Sig = .441, $p > 0.05$) and affective strategies (Sig = .321, $p > 0.05$) between male and female students in their use of LLSs. The findings revealed that although males reported higher strategy use than females for compensation strategies, this difference was not significant.

In conclusion, the statistic results for research question 2 showed that females significantly used higher overall LLSs than males. For each strategy category use, the results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between male and female students in their use of memory, metacognitive and social; however, gender differences were not significant in the three LLS categories: cognitive, compensation and affective.

Qualitative phase

Interviews conducted on 20 students including 5 males and 5 females to investigate students' perception of gender in order to address the third research question.

Gender and the use of Memory strategy

The students' responses through the interview confirmed the findings collected from the questionnaire that the male students seemed to use fewer memory strategies than female students. Most of the male students reported that they did not like to use gestures or body language to remember information. In addition, they only read the old materials when they had to take the exam. Here is an example of the responses:

"I remember by myself or I often use new words to make sentences in real context. Also, I did not use body language. About review lesson, hmmm, I just do it when the test is coming". (Male 1, English translation)

In contrast, all of five female students said they have to remember what they learnt in English. Their ways to remember information were abundant, including making sentence with new words, reviewing the old materials, using notebooks, using sounds, images and sensation, etc.

"I usually make a humorous sentence with a new vocabulary that smartly helps me to memorize vocabularies. When we want to effectively study, we should combine sounds, images and sensation". (Female 2, English translation)

"I usually use images and make sentences into a real context to memorize new words. Besides, I have my own note book to write words which I will review after class". (Female 4, English translation)

When researchers asked about the differences between males and females in the ways of memorizing information, all of the participants agreed on the difference. They said that females studied harder and reviewed the lesson more regularly while males were more interested in entertainment, especially games. Some selected responses from participants are quoted below.

"To my view, females usually take note then they can review it at home because they personally believe if they cannot answer teachers' question, they will be underated and criticized". (Female 3, English translation)

"Men usually go home to play games and when they come for exams, they will begin to practice. On the contrary, the girls study harder". (Female 5, English translation)

"Men are often confident of their English skills, so they seldom look at the lessons, while the girls will study hard and regularly review the lessons". (Male 1, English translation)

Gender and the use of Cognitive strategy

Male and female students both successfully used cognitive strategies. Their most common strategies to learn English were listening to music and viewing movies in order to develop their listening skills. Both male and female interviewees had confirmed these.

"I talk to my friends sometimes. And to practice listening, I also watch English movies". (Male 2, English translation)

"I practice English by watching films, listening to music and reading book. I also look up words on Cambridge and Oxford dictionary of which I repeat voice interpretation. It helps me to remember longer". (Female 1, English translation)

To answer the question "Do you think males and females practice English differently from each other?", the students said that females had the greatest potential to summarize and highlight details. The fact was that 5 of females responded they all highlighted important information. Females preferred to point out vital information using striking colours while males did not create structures for input by that way.

"To me, highlight pens can set off information that helps I remember with no difficult. In addition, females will take care of details so they will be good at using color to highlight information". (Female 3, English translation)

"Males thinks using multicolored pens is fussy, time consuming and expensive". (Male 1, English translation)

In addition, in the manner they conveyed their thoughts, there was a disparity. Males mostly found and generated opportunities for speaking and listening skills by attending class activities. In contrast, females tended to express ideas on the interactive platform of social media due to their characteristics of being shy and girly.

"Since I don't have close friends who can read and comment in English, I know that they would like to ignore. Second, my English is not adequate for me to openly publish". (Male 2, English translation)

"The boys actively participate in activities in the class because they want to experience, the girls are shy and lack confidence". (Male 4, English translation)

"Men are more active and less afraid at crowded, but women are thoughtful and shy that makes they inactive". (Female 1, English translation)

Gender and the use of Compensation strategy

The results revealed that females often used intelligent guessing when they didn't know what the other said. The reason was that they were ashamed of being judged by other people. However, males often instantly filled their gap by asking other people for help.

"I'm trying to guess myself if it's incorrect, then someone else is going to fix it. I am afraid to inquire again, because I think that I will disrupt the conversation flow and be judged poorly". (Female 2, English translation)

"I will usually ask the friend to stop and ask. Because I want to understand at that moment, I will understand the words and situation applied. And the girls will guess the meaning by themselves and ignore it because of politeness and shyness". (Male 1, English translation)

Both males and females used synonyms, simple terms and body language to solve and clarify difficulties when they do not really know in English. Since males had a confidence in their skillful speaking capacity, they rarely switched to mother tongue in speaking. On the other hand, females preferred to switch to mother tongue when they faced difficulties in expressing their ideas.

“I will use simple words and synonyms to describe them incorporating body gestures.” (Male 3, English translation)

“I will use similar words and combine with body language. If I talk in class, I will switch to Vietnamese because the language is used to understand each other. Or I ask you for help.” (Female 4, English translation)

Another difference between males and females in their use of compensation strategies was that males did not change the topic even an unfamiliar task while females totally neglected complex and unfamiliar topics and just involved in whatever they had an interesting.

“I won’t be afraid to talk about strange topics, I’ll try to describe as much as I can. I think the girls won’t listen and move on to another topic on their own if it’s a topic you don’t care about.” (Male 1, English translation)

“Of course I will change the subject, since I don’t have much knowledge. When I say the topics I don’t like, I won’t have anything to say. Instead, I should turn to the topics I already know.” (Female 1, English translation)

Gender and the use of Metacognitive strategy

In arranging and planning education, both males and females were successful. When they were studying English, they often set a goal, then they intended precisely to accomplish it. In comparison with males, females found more opportunities to communicate with other people to learn English, such as peers and native populations. Even though teachers did not require them to do this, they wished to develop their ability to speak.

“I often set big goals then I make detailed plans for each day.” (Male 5, English translation)

“I will set a long-term goal by year. I then will plan each month. I have found mechanics to practice English with foreign teachers. I tend to talk to them to improve speaking skills and go places where native people usually come to talk with them.” (Female 1, English translation)

In order to check the understanding in English learning process, females were recorded as a good self-monitor and self-evaluator. They then could understand and enhance their weaknesses. While some men were too confident about their knowledge, their learning process were rarely assessed.

“I do not often analyze my own study because I know I do not have many problems. I also do not evaluate my own progress.” (Male 3, English translation)

“I often analyze the difficulty and progress of learning a foreign language that helps me improve better.” (Female 3, English translation)

In terms of concentrating, arranging and measuring their learning, most of them stated that females worked hard to prepare and review lessons at home and males scarcely and hardly prepared before class.

“Preparing the lesson, reviewing the article and finding out more information that the female will stand out. Men will only find out information when he does not know it, if he only knows a little, he will ignore it.” (Male 1, English translation)

“Women will often prepare lessons such as translating homework or taking notes for new lessons. And the boys come to the class to sit and listen.” (Female 3, English translation)

Gender and the use of Affective strategy

Most females had committed that they felt nervous in English communication while males did not feel the same. Besides, females also asked other people for recommendation.

"If it is a normal conversation, I do not worry. I only worry if the topic is difficult and I have to present in crowded. When I am stressed, I usually reassure myself, listen to music and be alone". (Male 3, English translation)

"I do feel nervous when I speak English. I usually reassure myself". (Female 4, English translation)

"I has concern with communicate in English. And often I will share and ask others for advice. I love listening to music and sleeping to reduce stress". (Interview 2)

Furthermore, all students tended to promote themselves, such as self-motivation. However, they were less self-rewarded.

"I will reward myself when I get good results and feel I deserve it and help me grow". (Male 4, English translation)

"If I achieve something, I will reward myself. For example, I told myself that if I could reach the aims, I would buy myself a dress. If not, I will be punished". (Female 1, English translation)

"I do not reward myself when I get good results. I just use the goal as the motivation". (Male 1, English translation)

For the differences in regulating their emotion for minimizing their anxiety, males had more self-control. They had the ability to control the nonverbal language and the face expression. Meanwhile, females freely shared their nervousness with other individuals. Females also shared their emotions on social media.

"I think men are good at controlling anxiety, and women will show their nervousness through gestures, attitudes and sharing". (Male 5, English translation)

"Females often share feelings through social networks and often share personal stories to their best friends. But few men do it". (Male 4, English translation)

"Male worry, but they hides personal feelings. Women often share feelings on social network such as photos and captions related to feelings". (Female 2, English translation)

Gender and the use of Social strategy

Generally, both male and female students interactively and consciously asked teachers and friends to repeat, slow down, explain and provide input throughout the learning process. Besides, they could work with whether familiar and unusual friends.

"If I do not understand what my teacher says, I will ask him to repeat". (Male 1, English translation)

"I can cooperate with both inside and outside class and with strangers". (Female 1, English translation)

However, in the way they cooperated with other individuals, there were significant differences. Most women would prefer to work in opposite sex groups, so they could get more ideas from multiple backgrounds.

"I want to cooperate with men. I think men will focus on making it more effective when cooperating, while the female friends are usually procrastinating. Because of the opposite sex, the ideas will be more diverse". (Female 1, English translation)

"I want to work with men because they don't get distracted". (Female 5, English translation)

For male students, they had different viewpoints on this issue. Some of them preferred to work in groups with women because of different frames of reference while some liked to collaborate with the same gender because of matching thought. Some of males only cooperated with other people in addition as teachers require.

"I like working in groups because working with many people will learn many things. I prefer to work with girls because I'm a man so I learn from female friends". (Male 3, English translation)

"I like to work in pair, because the group has too many people and many distracting ideas. And girls are difficult and have conflicting so I prefer work with same gender." (Male 5, English translation)

In communication, both of males and females considered feelings or thoughts of others. Females gave implicit feedback to other people because they respected their opinions and did not want to hurt emotions of other people. They want to empathize with their mates, so they usually use tenderhearted words when they make a statement. In contrast, male provided other people with direct feedback but also care for the feelings of others.

"When you are willing to absorb what I point to, I will continue to help you. If not, I won't help anymore". (Male 1, English translation)

"... I will indirectly, they just say the same matter so they know. Because speaking out too bluntly will easily offend and hurt friends". (Female 3, English translation)

All of them agreed that gender affected on the ways they collaborated with other people. Here were some evidences:

"I think working with women will have many new ideas, but there will be many disagreements. Man can normally work with someone who they do not like, but woman cannot."

"Gender does affect teamwork. Men will give direct opinions, while women will give more indirect opinions". (Female 1, English translation)

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of LLSs among first-year undergraduates at a university in Vietnam and explored the significant differences in the use of LLSs based on gender. In addition, this study also found out whether the students' perceptions of gender influenced their LLSs or not. Generally, the descriptive statistics revealed that in all categories of LLSs, except for the compensation strategies, female students significantly utilized LLSs with much greater frequency than male students. In other words, there was a wide disparity with the use of LLSs among students between genders.

Additionally, the results also showed that the most frequent LLSs used by both male and female students were social strategy. While memory strategies were the least used strategies of males, compensation strategies were the least used by females. Females used more indirect strategies than

males. Regarding each strategy category use, the results indicated that gender differences were not significant in the three LLS categories: cognitive, compensation and affective; however, there were statistically significant differences between male and female students in their use of memory, meta-cognitive and social. In addition, the findings from the interview also revealed that the students' gender perceptions had a great influence on their use of LLSs

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