

# NGHIÊN CỨU TỔNG QUAN VỀ CÁC CHIẾN LƯỢC HỌC KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH NHƯ MỘT NGOẠI NGỮ

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Hơn 40 năm qua, chiến lược học ngôn ngữ đã thu hút được nhiều sự quan tâm của các nhà giáo dục học. Nhiều nghiên cứu đã được thực hiện trên thế giới để tìm hiểu về chiến lược học, tuy nhiên vẫn còn nhiều vấn đề cần được nghiên cứu để làm sáng tỏ hơn, đặc biệt là về các chiến lược học kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ. Do đó, tác giả đã thực hiện một nghiên cứu tổng quan có hệ thống các nghiên cứu về chiến lược học nói tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ đã thực hiện trên thế giới để thấy được thực trạng nghiên cứu cũng như những vấn đề liên quan. Dựa trên kết quả thu được, tác giả sẽ đưa ra các kết luận cũng như một số đề xuất cho các hướng nghiên cứu tiếp theo.

**Từ khóa:** chiến lược học ngôn ngữ (LLSs), chiến lược học kỹ năng nói (SLSs), tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ (EFL).

*Language learning strategies (LLSs) have received much attention from educators for over forty years. Though many studies relating to the question of strategies have been carried out all over the world, there are still gaps to be filled, especially in the area of strategies to learn speaking skill in the context of EFL learning. This article, therefore, aims to provide a systematic review of previous studies which focused on the use of strategies in learning to speak English as a foreign language conducted worldwide in order to investigate the current status and related research issues. Then, based on the results, some conclusions and suggestions for further studies are provided.*

**Keywords:** language learning strategies (LLSs), speaking learning strategies (SLSs), English as a foreign language (EFL).

## A REVIEW ON EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING LEARNING STRATEGIES

### 1. Introduction

According to Oxford (1990), “there is no doubt that strategies can increase learners’ language proficiency, self-confidence and motivation” (p. 236). In fact, language learning strategies (LLSs) have received much attention during the last forty years. Studies about LLSs use in

general, factors affecting LLSs choice, or the use of LLSs in learning specific language aspects such as vocabulary, writing, or reading have been carried out all over the world. The fact that speaking seems to be one of the most difficult skill for EFL learners to master urged us to do a research about how to help EFL students learn the speaking skill better. Therefore, the author of the current article aimed to review previous studies on the use of strategies in learning to speak conducted

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worldwide in order to know how much attention the SLSs have been paid to until now and what to be noticed about the SLSs used by students in an EFL context like Vietnam. Then, based on the results, some conclusions and suggestions for further studies are provided.

In the next part, previous studies on LLSs in general are going to be reviewed in order to make a theoretical framework for this article. The review focuses on the LLSs definitions, classifications, aims and research methodologies. Then, SLSs studies are going to be reviewed in order to answer the following research questions.

***Research questions:***

- a. How is the current situation of SLSs research?
- b. What are some limitations of the studies conducted and suggestions for future studies?

**2. Literature review**

***2.1. Definitions***

Regarding definitions, there have been different or even controversial ways to define LLSs. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as "special thoughts and behaviours of processing information that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain information" (p. 1). According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are "steps taken by students to enhance their own learning" or "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 1). In the definitions

given by different researchers, strategies are mentioned by different names: directions, approaches, techniques, processes, methods, and so on. They can be observable or unobservable and be used consciously or unconsciously (Duong, 2012).

Then, due to "the lack of definitional and conceptual consensus" (Oxford, 2017, pp. 10-11), Dörnyei (2005) even suggested canceling all the studies on the language learning strategies because there is no strategy existing and the concept of learning strategy may be better replaced by that of "self-regulation". Another reason for the proposal is that he and his colleagues saw no direct relationship between the use of a particular strategy and the success in learning. However, the literature of four decades of research on the issue shows that strategies do exist and are good friends of language learners. Memory, for example, was proven to have helped many learners to achieve their study goals (Oxford, 1990). Moreover, as cited by Oxford (2017), Pawlak (2011) stated that "Dörnyei's criticism was based on many overgeneralizations" or Rose (2012b) said that the conceptualization of self-regulation made by Dörnyei was "as fuzzy as the strategy concept" (p.34). Acknowledging the problem, Oxford (2017) conducted a study on strategy definitions over the period of forty years in order to bring "order out of chaos" (ibid: 7) by applying a descriptive content analysis research and came to a final definition, which, according to her, "will no longer allow observers to complain that strategy definitions are totally messy, unrelated, and confusing" (ibid: 82):

*L2 learning strategies* are complex, dynamic thoughts and actions, selected and used by learners with some degree of consciousness in specific contexts in order to regulate multiple aspects of themselves (such as cognitive, emotional, and social) for the purpose of (a) accomplishing language tasks; (b) improving language performance or use; and/or (c) enhancing long-term proficiency. Strategies are mentally guided but may also have physical and therefore observable manifestations. Learners often use strategies flexibly and creatively; combine them in various ways, such as strategy clusters or strategy chains; and orchestrate them to meet learning needs. Strategies are teachable. Learners in their contexts decide which strategies to use. Appropriateness of strategies depends on multiple personal and contextual factors. (ibid: 48)

The definition shows the focus on the importance of the context and individuals, implying that different contexts require different strategies and different individuals make, definitely, different choice of strategy use. From this definition, it can be seen also that Oxford has paid attention and value to self-regulation.

## 2.2. Classifications

Along with definitions, many researchers also have tried to give classifications to the LLSs. Due to different points of view, the classifications varied a lot. This can be found in Oxford's opinion that "there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorized; and whether it is – or ever will be possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies; therefore, classification

conflicts are inevitable" (Oxford, 1990, p. 17). Among the classifications, the one introduced by Oxford (1990) has been cited more frequently (Ellis, 2008) because "it offers perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date" (Ellis, as cited in Szyszka, 2017, p. 33). There are opinions about the limitations of Oxford's taxonomy as it "has defects of immeasurable scale and unattainable interaction among variables" (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Dörnyei, 2005 and Phakiti, 2003, as cited in Yang, 2010, p. 10), it fails to "distinguish between strategies directed at learning the L2 and those directed at using it" (Ellis, as cited in Aljuaid, 2015, p. 43) or "it is sometimes difficult to assign a given strategy to a given category" (MacIntyre, as cited in Szyszka, 2017, p. 33). However, many researchers all over the world still use the Oxford's taxonomy as study their guideline. Oxford presented a new model of "Strategic-Self-Regulation" in 2011, in which self-regulation was considered as "one of the most exciting developments in second or foreign language learning" (ibid: 7).

Along with the taxonomy, Oxford's strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) is also widely used to investigate the use of strategies among learners of different language and of English as a second/foreign language. According to Amerstorfer (2018), "Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) has achieved significant fame and has become the most popular tool in LLS research" (p. 499). The first reason is that the inventory was developed basing on

Oxford's taxonomy, which is considered to be clear and comprehensive. Moreover, according to Oxford (1996), most of the inventories/ questionnaires made by other researchers and specialists before the SILL did not "have any published reliability or validity data" and "the SILL appears to be the only language learning strategy questionnaire that has been extensively checked for reliability and validated in multiple ways" (p. 30). Also according to her, "in general, the ESL/EFL SILL reliabilities have been high", ranging from .85 to .95, depending on the SILL given in the native language of the respondents or in English, its original language (ibid: 32). Amerstorfer (2018) gave three basic features of the SILL to explain why it "owes its remarkable popularity as a self-evaluation and research tool", including "its comprehensible design, its user-friendliness for L2 learners, and its user-friendliness for researchers" (p. 498). Until now, Oxford still did not have an updated version of the SILL, however, some researchers have incorporated the SILL with Oxford's new model in order to answer the call for paying more attention to self-regulation in strategy studies.

### 2.3. *Aims*

It can be seen that LLSs studies have been conducted widely and due to different aims. First studies were carried out in order to investigate how the language is learnt by good language learners (Rubin, 1975, Stern, 1975 and Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern and Todesco, 1978). Later researchers such as O'Malley (1987), Oxford (1990), Cohen (1998) and

Chamot (2001) studied whether learners used LLSs or not and with which frequency. They found out that students of all levels used different learning strategies, however, higher level students reported to have greater use of metacognitive strategies. Other studies including Oxford and Nyikos (1989), Ellis (1997a), etc. also tended to investigate strategies used by good language learners with the aim of offering a learning guide for poorer ones, and the results, in the main, implied that lower level students should use more learning strategies with more frequency. There have been also researchers that investigated to find out the relationship between the use of strategies and language proficiency like Oxford and Nyikos (1989), Intaraprasert (2000), Griffiths (2003), Prakongchati (2007), etc. Others, including Oxford, Nyikos, and Ehrman (1988), Yang (1992) and more recently, Khamkhien (2010), Aljuaid (2015) and so on, made a comparison between males and females in using learning strategies or investigated the relationship between various variables such as gender, second language proficiency, socioeconomic status, majors, learning style, motivation, among others and LLSs use. Besides, many researches moved their focus to the study of the use of LLSs to learn a certain language component such as vocabulary (Gu, 2002; Mizumoto, 2009; Zhang & Lu, 2015), pronunciation (Szyszka, 2017) or a particular skill such as writing (Mistar et al., 2014; Rose, 2017), reading (Baker & Boonkit, 2004; Nguyen & Trinh, 2011), listening (O'Malley et al., 1989; Vandergrift, 2008; Ngo, 2015), speaking (Su, 2012; Morriam, 2005). However, it

was noticed that there were still gaps to be filled. For example, still few researchers studied the LLSs used to learn speaking skills. Morriam (2005) claimed that “there have been relatively few studies investigating the use of speaking strategies of EFL learners” (p. 48). The same thing happens in Taiwan when “there is little research on SLSEs, if any” (Su, 2012, p. 43).

However, in fact, there are many studies conducted about learning strategies in a second language learning environment and the results, then, were “generalized” and “applied to EFL English curriculum creating an ineffective learning environment” (Yang, 2010, p. 3) while results from many studies show that strategies are used differently from individual to individual and from culture to culture. For Bangladeshi learners, cognitive and interpersonal strategies are more preferred than Japanese learners while Indonesian students find cognitive, metacognitive and compensation strategy more useful in learning to speak English (Prabawa, 2016). Moreover, Japanese females use more cognitive strategies than males while no gender difference was noted in any strategy category use by Bangladeshi learners (Moriham, 2005). Therefore, more recent studies aimed at investigating the learning strategy preferences reported by students in different cultural contexts since it is believed that “language is socially mediated and context dependent” (Gerami & Baighlou, 2011, p. 1568). It was also suggested that future studies focus more on individual and socio-cultural perspectives. In other words, learners’

self-regulated learning and learning contexts deserve more attention.

#### **2.4. Research methodology**

As stated above, the LLSs have the development history of about four decades. It was concluded by many studies that quantitative approach was the main research design employed by language learner strategy research and survey was the mostly chosen data collection instrument. To begin with, Oxford (1996) shared with this view, considering questionnaire as the “most efficient and comprehensive” tools in researching and evaluating the frequency of LLSs use (p. 26). Then, Chamot (2005) also had the same opinion when stating that “the most frequently used method for identifying students’ learning strategies is through questionnaires” (p. 114). Zohrabi (2013) stated that “Questionnaires are doubtless one of the primary sources of obtaining data in any research endeavour” (p. 254) or Hajar (2019), in the review of studies conducted in Arabic countries, also had the same conclusion.

However, quantitative approach and especially questionnaire faced up with various criticisms. Firstly, due to the numerous definitions and classifications as stated above, it is hard to find the best inventory for all the strategy research to capture all the strategies used by learners. Secondly, “commonly used questionnaires is susceptible to different interpretations and may lead to different findings in different research contexts, although the same questionnaire is used” (Gao, 2004, p. 4). Moreover, Hajar (2019) also concluded that the use of questionnaire showed the

lack of attention to the contextual variations impact on language learners' strategies. As a result, previous studies called for more qualitative data in language learning studies by using more qualitative data collection instruments such as interview, think-aloud protocol or diaries.

In brief, previous LLSs studies were conducted due to different research aims and used different research methods. However, there are still different aspects that deserve more attention. This paper, therefore, also aims to find out research aims and the methodological tendency in SLSs studies conducted until now. Speaking was chosen to be focused as mentioned above, speaking seems to be difficult for EFL learners then the authors would like to find ways to help them improve their speaking learning and also, there seems to have little research about SLSs.

This article adapts the definitions given by Oxford (2017) and Su (2012) and defines SLSs as complex, dynamic thoughts and actions, selected and used by learners with some degree of consciousness in specific contexts in order to make the learning-minded speaking situations as successful as possible. The reason is that the definition given by Oxford (2017) was newly developed from many existing definitions and seems to have "much greater order to the chaos" (p. 82) and the one made by Su (2012) was one of the few definitions given to SLSs. Moreover, the two definitions especially paid attention to learning contexts, which were concluded to deserve more attention by previous studies.

### 3. Methodology

This paper applied the systematic review as the research methodology suggested by Rose et al. (2018) and the study collection criteria adopted in Hajar (2019, p.243), which requires the study to:

1. contain empirical research;
2. be published in an academic journal;
3. be connected to language learning;
4. be aware of learner strategies, mentioning this construct in the paper's review of the literature or discussion.

As the focus of the paper is EFL SLSs, all the studies chosen have to focus on the strategies that EFL learners use in specific contexts in order to improve their speaking proficiency. To collect articles, we examined different databases, including ERIC, Academia, Proquest, Research Gate, Springer, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts and MLA International Bibliography, which are typical for TESOL, using key words "speaking learning strategy(ies)" or "strategy(ies) to learn to speak" to search as many relevant studies as possible. After the literature retrieval, 105 studies were gathered. However, many of them were then omitted as their focus was speaking or communication strategies, not SLSs as defined before. Others were not selected as they are master or doctoral works, which were not published or as they did not contain an empirical research. Another reason for not choosing some articles was because the studies were about Arabic, Chinese or Indonesian speaking learning strategies, not English. The last omitted group of articles was due to the fact that

they focused on ESL learning strategies, not EFL. At last, twenty-nine (29) studies were chosen and systematically put in a table for analysis.

### ***Limitations***

The study selection shows two main limitations. Firstly, there may be other valuable studies to which this paper could not get access. Secondly, the decision not to choose unpublished studies means some doctoral studies were not selected to be reviewed, which can cause a loss of “new ideas and methods of research” (Rose et al., p. 154).

## **4. Findings and discussions**

Of the short-listed studies, it can be noted that more than half of them (sixteen out of twenty-nine) were conducted in Indonesia while others were in Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, China, Colombia, Egypt and Ecuador. This fact shows that the issue was much more interested by researchers in Asia than in any other parts of the world. Those studies are going to be reviewed regarding different aspects including definitions, classifications, research aims and methodology.

### ***4.1. Definitions***

Regarding definitions, it was noted that there was only one study which provided definition to speaking learning strategies while others used definitions of LLSs. According to Yu (2013), “oral English learning strategies are complex procedures that individuals apply to tasks, consequently, they may be represented as procedural knowledge which be acquired through cognitive associative and autonomous stages of learning” (p. 1). In

this definition, strategies are regarded as “complex procedures” used by learners who are conscious of strategies and self-regulated in using strategies in learning. There was also only one more recent study (Sakka, 2016) that gave definition of self-regulation strategies as “a number of strategies the speakers use to develop their speaking and reduce their speaking anxiety” or to have better speaking performance in classes, including “elaboration strategies, rehearsal strategies, planning strategies, monitoring strategies, evaluation strategies, reflection strategies, effort management strategies, help seeking strategies, goal orientation, and self-talk strategies” (p. 23). This fact, however, can imply that recent researchers began to answer the call for being more conscious of self-regulation in studying learning strategies.

### ***4.2. Classifications***

From the table, ten studies adopted the taxonomy given by Oxford (1990) when studied speaking learning strategies in six different categories, including Memory, Cognitive, Compensatory, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies while Yu (2013) studied only Indirect strategies (Metacognitive, Affective and Social) in oral English learning and others adopted other previous constructed taxonomies such as the one given by O’ Malley & Chamot (Hanifa, 2016) and Basalama et al. (2020). This can show that more than half of the studies collected applied the frequently used taxonomy of previous studies. Meanwhile, Mistar (2014) incorporated different theories and categories to have the final taxonomy of

eleven categories, namely cognitive interaction maintenance, self-improvement, self-evaluation, fluency-oriented, metacognitive planning, time gaining, resources-based, compensation, interpersonal, affective, and memory strategies. Many of these were also taken from Oxford's taxonomy. There was only one study in the list which aimed at constructing a new model of speaking learning strategies. By using the model development of Borg & Gall (1989) consisting of six main steps and mixed methods including different data collection instruments including questionnaires, speaking test, interview, and documents, Hendriani (2013) finally developed a model of twenty four types of strategies to learn English speaking. Among them, only six types were field-tested through the experiment, "namely: (1) minimizing the feelings of stressed, anxious, afraid, worried, suppressed or other negative feelings before speaking English, (2) making particular preparations or plans before speaking English, (3) rehearsing or training one's speaking ability in performing a speech or conversing before the true performance or real conversation, (4) involving counterpart or other people to overcome the problems in speaking English, (5) imitating English sounds (pronunciation, intonation, stress, tone and others) as spoken or uttered by the native speakers or competent speakers of English, (6) overcoming the problems of limited vocabulary when speaking English" (ibid: 106).

However, there was also a new trend when more recent studies did not focus on strategy classification but chose certain

strategy(ies) to be investigated. Buitrago (2017), for example, investigated collaborative and self-directed learning strategies or Nievecela et al. (2019) chose to study only cooperative learning strategies to develop learners' oral performance. These strategies focus much on self-regulation and it can imply that newly conducted studies have managed to answer the call for paying more attention to self-regulation and learning contexts.

### 4.3. Aims

Relating the aims of study, the studies chosen can be divided into three groups. The first group, including twelve studies such as Mistar et al. (2014), Wael, et al. (2018) or Zakaria et al. (2018) investigated the use of SLSs by EFL learners in general. The second group focused on factors affecting the use of SLSs, which were gender (Mistar et al., 2014; Anum, 2019) and speaking proficiency (Mistar et al., 2014; Hadi Salehi et al., 2015; Gani et al., 2015 and Patmawati, et al., 2018). The last group studied the effect of strategies, in general, as in Yu (2013) or of a specific strategy on speaking learning competence, including the effect of self-regulated strategy training (El-Sakka, 2016), collaborative and self-directed learning strategy (Buitrago, 2017) and cooperative learning (Castillo, 2007; Nievecela et al., 2019; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Altun et al., 2020) or SLSs instruction (Lourdunathan & Menon, 2017). Though belonging to different groups, some studies also had the aim of finding out the strategies used by learners and the findings showed differences. In the



following, similarities and differences in the findings are discussed.

Firstly, concerning the use of SLSs, most of the studies confirmed the importance of strategies in learning to speak a foreign language, English in this case. Moreover, it was concluded also that each learner had different use of strategies or, in other words, strategy use depends much on individual factors. This fact was more confirmed when Wael et al. (2018) concluded that memory was the most preferred strategy by participants from the University of Muhammadiyah Sorong, Indonesia while students from the English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia chose affective strategy as their most favoured one (Dewi Patmawati et al., 2018). Although the participants were all Indonesian learning English as a foreign language, they had different choice of SLSs, which put a bigger emphasis on the individual factors importance in strategies use and research. Therefore, more studies with other population are needed in order to have a wider understanding about the issue. Moreover, Mistar et al. (2014) tried to bring about new SLSs categories by adapting Oxford's (1990) taxonomy and other items from Khan, 2010; Lopez, 2011 and Nakatani, 2006 and concluded that there were four strategies with bigger impacts, including interactional-maintenance, self-improvement, compensation and memory strategies. This can imply that recent researchers have tried not to be much dependent on the taxonomies given by previous studies, especially the one given by Oxford (1990) which is still chosen by many researchers all over the

world. The study conducted by Hanifa et al. (2016) also had the same findings with previous research when concluded that poor speaking performance students did not have consistency in using all kinds of learning strategies and they "seemed to use strategies that were not very effective" (ibid: 204).

Secondly, findings from the second group helped confirm the results of previous LLSs studies about the strategy use between high and low proficiency learners. Mistar et al. (2014) found out that successful students used the 11 categories of strategies more frequently than less successful ones; Salehi et al. (2015) said that low speaking grade learners were weaker SLSs users; Gani et al. (2015) concluded that high performance speaking learners had better balance in all kinds of SLSs and employed more SLSs consciously and appropriately or; in Patmawati, et al. (2018), proficient learners were found to use all the six types of strategies to help themselves improve their speaking learning. Regarding gender factor, the study of Mistar et al. (2014) found out that gender had significant effect on the use of six types of SLSs and females used SLSs more frequently than males. However, the result from only one study should not be generalized to other population since it was shown that there were conflict results in previous studies about LLSs use. Khamkhien (2010), for example, concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between Vietnamese male and female in the use of all of the six categories of LLSs while Tam (2013) found out that females used all of the strategies more frequently than

males. Therefore, this factor, though has been investigated by many researchers, still needs more studies. Other factors also deserve more attention such as age, learning style or socio-cultural learning context, and so on.

The last group, which includes studies on the SLSs instruction or the use of a specific strategy, has one thing in common that is the strategy(ies) had a good effect on the speaking learning of EFL learners. Therefore, they all had implication(s) that the strategy(ies) should be trained or used in order to help students improve their speaking learning. This suggestion was also made by other studies of other groups. Mistar, in the two studies conducted in 2014, said that there is a need for explicit strategies-based instruction while Gani et al. (2015) suggested that SLSs should be trained so that students aware of the importance of strategies and then they can use them more adequately, “consciously, purposefully and frequently to be more successful in developing their speaking skills” (p. 16). Furthermore, self-regulation was proved by both El-Sakka (2016) and Buitrago (2017) to be very effective strategy to the students’ achievement. This issue, then, deserves more studies to know if it has the same importance to other participants. It can be seen also that recent researchers seem to answer the call for paying more attention to the socio-cultural perspectives by choosing the effect of cooperative learning strategies to speaking competence to be investigated (Castillo, 2007; Nievecela et al., 2019; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Altun et al., 2020).

#### **4.4. Research methodology**

Relating the methodology, the majority (sixteen out of twenty-nine) applied quantitative data collection instruments in order to study the strategies that EFL learners used to learn to speak. Eight of them used merely quantitative design with questionnaire to collect the data. Mistar et al. (2014), for example, used a 70 item questionnaire of Oral Communication Learning Strategy (OCLS) & ten item self-assessment of speaking proficiency to find out the differences in the use of SLSs between males & females and the contribution of SLSs on learners’ speaking proficiency of 595 2<sup>nd</sup>-year senior high school students. Another example is Patmawati et al. (2018) who applied the SILL (Oxford, 1990) to determine the level usage of SLSs used by 47 third semester proficient students. Notably, there are five studies which were experimental research, including Hengki et al. (2017), Namaziandost, et al. (2019) or Altun et al., 2020.

Eleven studies, though used quantitative data collection instrument, applied also other qualitative instrument(s). These mixed-methods approach studies were a combination of questionnaire and interview, in general. Gani et al. (2015) incorporated questionnaires (SILL, Oxford, 1990) & self-observation interviews with the aims of studying the learning strategies used by both low and high performance speaking students in developing speaking skills and the differences between their use of SLSs. The participants of the study were 16 students from four classes of the High School No. 3 in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Another research which was similar in methodology was of Buitrago (2017) who used a survey to collect students' reflections and teachers' observation and then, grounded theory approach analysis for the qualitative data collection and frequency counts of words and hesitations per minute for each speaking task for quantitative data collection. Another study which applied mixed-methods was Nievecela et al. (2019) to investigate the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in students' oral performance at the A1 (CEFR) level of 24 seventh graders. Data for analysis was collected by speaking pre-tests and post-tests for quantitative data and group discussion and phenomenological research through observations for qualitative data.

There are five exclusively qualitative approach studies. Almost all of them used different qualitative data collection instruments. For example, the study conducted by Wael et al. (2018) used students' journals, interview and questionnaire about the role of English teachers as secondary data to explore the learning strategies used by 12 EFL students in speaking performance. Only one of the researcher (Tahang, 2018) applied merely interview as the data collection instrument and it is notably that the interview questions were based on the SILL.

In brief, though mixed-methods studies occupied about one third of the number of studies collected, there was a strong tendency of using quantitative approach to study the strategies for speaking learning, which was the same in the study of language learning strategies. It also means that more qualitative components have

been valued, in response to the critique of language learning strategy taxonomies and research instruments, emphasizing the need for sample-specific data collection techniques, and a more situated approach utilizing in-depth qualitative methods. Moreover, questionnaire was the dominant data collection instrument and the SILL was still preferred by researchers by using merely the SILL (Azmi, 2012; Gani et al., 2015 or Hanifa, 2016) or adapting it to construct his/her own instrument (Mistar et al., 2014 or Tahang, 2018). The mostly used qualitative data collection instruments were interview and teachers' observation. Moreover, the studies seem to use traditional theoretical framework while only three (El-Sakka, 2016; Buitrago, 2017 and Hengki, 2017) applied the newly raised trend of self-regulated learning theory. This fact confirms the current situation of LLSs studies and therefore, there is a need that future studies on the issue add more qualitative data to have a more appropriate and exact understanding of the use of strategies to learn to speak.

### **5. Conclusions and suggestions**

Language learning strategies have attracted attention of many researchers for over forty years and there has been a variety of definitions and classifications for LLSs. Also, the research aims and research methodologies have varied much from study to study. It can be seen that though many studies relating to the question of strategies have been carried out all over the world, there are still gaps to be filled, in the field of speaking learning strategies, for example. Though many studies were conducted, the same

ones can be done with other population as it was proved that certain participants have different use of strategies. Future studies should also choose more factors such as age, learning style or socio-cultural learning context to be investigated. Furthermore, it is necessary that they apply more qualitative instrument, including diaries or think-aloud protocols, in order to bring more qualitative data to the studies. Lastly, as it was shown that strategies play an important role in helping learners to be more proficient language users, they should be included in the teaching curriculum and be explicitly given to learners.

To the Vietnamese researchers, the fact that there seems to have little study in Vietnam researching the strategies to learn to speak English requires seemingly very first studies on the issue. Future studies can consider also to focus on only one specific strategy such as the self-regulation strategy, the collaborative study, and so on, rather than exploring all the strategies. Last but not least, it is advisable to choose mixed-methods in order to bring more complete insight about the use of strategies in EFL speaking learning.

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