

# **The Relationship between the Language Learning Strategy Use and Language Proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking Learners of English as a Foreign Language**

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### **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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December 2012

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## Summary

Research into the variables which affect second language (L2) learning has shown varying results. The relationship between one of these factors, language learning strategies (LLSs), and language proficiency has been studied extensively in the English as a second language (ESL) setting, often with inconclusive results. Other variables which have been shown to influence the type and frequency of LLS use include gender and length of exposure to the L2. There has however been a dearth of studies focusing on the relationship between LLSs and these variables, including language proficiency, in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context, and especially in East-Asian and South-East Asian tertiary settings. Against this backdrop, this study sets out to investigate the relationship between the LLSs and language proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners in Vietnam in an attempt to add to the body of literature in this field.

This study begins by discussing various prominent classification systems of LLSs and provides a definition which will be used in this investigation. This is followed by a discussion of the existing LLS literature, focusing on the variables to be tested, and LLS research in the Asian setting. To test whether there is a significant relationship between the participants' LLS use and their language proficiency, and also whether gender and length and type of exposure to the L2 influenced their LLS use, data was collected quantitatively. Firstly, data was gathered on the students' type and frequency of LLS use by means of a commonly implemented self-report questionnaire, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and on their language proficiency by means of their course assessment results. A background questionnaire was used to collect information on the other variables to be tested. The participants were found to be medium to high frequency LLS users overall, with their reported use of certain LLS categories contradicting the general stereotype that Asian students are passive and rote learners. No significant correlations were found between frequency of LLS use and language proficiency. Furthermore, no significant difference was found between the reported frequency and type of LLS use of female and male participants, nor any correlation between additional exposure to English outside of high school and LLS use. These results are then discussed in the socio-cultural context of Vietnamese-speaking learners in a tertiary EFL setting, followed by conclusions drawn from these results, and suggestions for future research.

## Opsomming

Navorsing rakende die faktore wat die verwerwing van 'n tweede taal (T2) beïnvloed, het verskillende resultate opgelewer oor die afgelope paar dekades. Die verhouding tussen een van hierdie faktore, naamlik taalleerstrategieë (TLSe), en taalvaardigheid is reeds uitvoerig ondersoek in die konteks van Engels as tweedetaal (ET2), dikwels met onbesliste resultate. Ander faktore wat volgens navorsing ook 'n invloed blyk te hê op die tipe en gereeldheid van TLS-gebruik, sluit in geslag, sowel as lengte van blootstelling aan die T2. Daar is egter 'n tekort aan studies wat fokus op die verhouding tussen TLSe en hierdie veranderlikes, insluitend taalvaardigheid, in die konteks van Engels as vreemdetaal (EVT), spesifiek in Oos-Asiese en Suid-Oos-Asiese tersiêre instansies. Teen hierdie agtergrond het hierdie studie ten doel om die verhouding tussen die TLS-gebruik en taalvaardigheid van Viëtnames-sprekende EVT-leerders in Viëtnam te ondersoek, ten einde by te dra tot die literatuur in hierdie veld.

Hierdie studie begin met 'n bespreking van verskeie prominente TLS-klassifikasiesisteme en die uiteensetting van die definisie van "TLS" wat in hierdie ondersoek gebruik sal word. Daarna volg 'n bespreking van die bestaande TLS-literatuur. Ten einde te toets of daar 'n beduidende verhouding is tussen die deelnemers se TLS-gebruik en hulle taalvaardigheid, en ook of geslag en die lengte en tipe blootstelling aan die T2 die deelnemers se TLS-gebruik beïnvloed, is kwantitatiewe data ingesamel. Data rakende die tipe en gereeldheid van die deelnemers se TLS-gebruik is deur middel van 'n wyd geïmplementeerde self-rapporteringsvraelys, naamlik die sogenaamde "Strategy Inventory for Language Learning" (SILL), ingesamel. Die deelnemers se kursusassesseringsresultate is geïnterpreteer as 'n aanduiding van hulle taalvaardigheid. Die gerapporteerde gebruik van sekere TLS-kategorieë weerspreek die algemene stereotipe dat Asiese studente passiewe leerders is wat staatmaak op blote memorisering. Geen beduidende korrelasies is gevind tussen taalvaardigheid en die gereeldheid waarmee TLSe gebruik word nie. Verder is geen beduidende verskille gevind tussen die gerapporteerde gereeldheid of tipe TLS-gebruik van manlike teenoor vroulike deelnemers nie. Daar is ook geen beduidende korrelasie gevind tussen TLS-gebruik en addisionele blootstelling aan Engels wat deelnemers gedurende hulle hoërskooljare buite skoolverband ontvang het nie. Hierdie resultate word geïnterpreteer en bespreek met inagnome van die sosiokulturele konteks van Viëtnames-sprekende leerders in 'n tersiêre EVT-omgewing. Daarna word gevolgtrekkings gemaak op grond van die resultate, en voorstelle vir verdere navorsing gebied.

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## List of Abbreviations

BICS	basic interpersonal communication skills
CALP	cognitive academic language proficiency
CHC	Confucian heritage culture
EAP	English for academic purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
EOC	end-of-course assessment
ESL	English as a second language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IEP	Intensive English Program
L2	second language
LLS	language learning strategy
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
OGA	ongoing assessment
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SILL-V	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (adapted for Vietnamese learners)
SLA	second language acquisition
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this introductory chapter, some background is provided to the study reported in this thesis, focussing on the development of language learning strategy (LLS) research. This is followed by a statement of the research questions and hypotheses of the study, and finally the thesis layout is provided.

### **1.1 Background**

In recent decades, there has been a move towards a more learner-centred approach in second language acquisition (SLA) studies. This approach entails the examination of individual learner differences in second language (L2) learning. Since the 1970s, numerous studies have addressed the question of what makes a so-called “good learner”, or what factors are involved in making certain L2 learners more successful at acquiring a language than others (see, for example, Rubin 1975; and Stern 1975). At the forefront of what has become known as “learning-to-learn” studies has been the endeavour to identify these individual factors which make certain learners more effective at language learning than others, with one of these variables being LLSs. In this thesis, LLSs are defined as consciously employed ways a learner makes learning faster, more enjoyable and more effective and which manifest themselves through specific tactics differently in different contexts; however, as is explained below, a substantial amount of research has been devoted to accurately defining this concept.

Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, many researchers in this area of SLA embarked on studies to define, classify, and identify LLSs through various methodologies. For example, researchers such as O’Malley and Chamot (1990) investigated LLSs from a cognitive processing perspective to identify the strategic processes involved in L2 learning. Other researchers collected as much data as possible through a number of different research methods, such as observations, self-report questionnaires, learner diaries and interviews, in an attempt to determine the influence of LLSs on SLA. Among the first of these researchers were Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978), who found empirical evidence for the significance of LLSs in L2 learning, especially in terms of language proficiency (Nambiar 2009: 134).

Since much support has been found for the significance of a relationship between LLSs and L2 learning, this field of investigation has been an increasingly popular focus for researchers trying to understand how languages are acquired, although the precise number of strategies and how they should be classified and defined are still points of disagreement (Hsiao and Oxford 2002: 368). Oxford (1990: 1) notes that appropriate LLS use leads to a more confident and proficient L2 learner, and researchers in this field generally agree that LLSs and language proficiency are significantly related, a relationship which has been found in various studies (see, for example, Park 1997).

Subsequently, correlations between a number of other variables and LLS use have been noted. Variables which have been shown to affect LLS use include socio-cultural factors such as cultural background, and setting in terms of the learning environment (see, for example, Deneme 2010; Griffiths 2003; and Khamkhien 2010), as well as learner factors (i.e. factors related to the individual learner) such as age, gender and years of study (see, for example, Liyanage and Bartlett 2011; Green and Oxford 1995; Oxford and Nyikos 1989; and Griffiths 2003). Learner factors also include affective factors such as aptitude and self-efficacy (see Magogwe 2007), personality type (see Oxford and Ehrman 1995), anxiety, self-esteem, attitude and motivation (see, for example, Rahimi, Riazi and Saif 2004; and Oxford and Nyikos 1989), as well as institutional factors such as teaching methods and the course type and level (Oxford and Nyikos 1989).

While LLS research has developed through the years, the underlying purpose has generally remained the same. Central to LLS research is the goal of creating more effective and autonomous learners. Wong and Nunan (2011: 244) state that over the last two decades, the incorporation of LLSs and learning-to-learn instruction in language curricula has been of increasing interest to researchers. Due in part to the relationship between increased LLS use and language proficiency, certain studies have also looked at the practical classroom applicability of LLSs and its effectiveness, with varying results. While certain studies have shown LLS instruction to be effective (see, for example, Flaitz, Feytner, Fox and Mukherjee 1995), other investigations could not support this finding (see, for example, Jurkovic 2012). Nevertheless, researchers interested in LLS instruction generally concur that strategies are teachable, although there is disagreement as to what the best method of instruction is and how significant a difference this instruction makes to language proficiency.

## **1.2 Research questions and hypotheses**

As an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher specialising in teaching English for academic purposes (EAP) to Vietnamese-speaking learners for the last six years, I have been specifically interested in the role of independent factors, specifically LLSs, in their L2 development. While looking for studies in this field, I noticed a dearth of research pertaining not only to Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners in Vietnam, but to Asian EFL learners in general (see section 2.3.4). This lack of extensive research has, I believe, strengthened assumptions such as that Asian learners generally resort to rote learning and are passive in the classroom environment. This is, of course, an assumption that deserves to be challenged in empirical research. Against this background, I set out to investigate the relationship between the LLS use and language proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking learners of EFL in a tertiary education setting. The research questions of this study, as well as the related hypotheses, are stated below. The hypotheses are based on a large body of previous studies concerning factors which influence LLS use, as well as the correlation between LLSs and language performance (see chapter 2 for a detailed overview of previous research in this field).

### **Research question 1**

What types of LLSs do Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners in an academic setting use, and with what frequency?

### **Hypothesis 1**

Vietnamese-speaking EFL students use a large variety of memory LLSs highly frequently and use affective LLSs less frequently.

### **Research question 2**

What is the nature of the relationship between the LLS use and the language proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners, as measured by the learners' end-of-course assessment results?

### **Hypothesis 2**

There is a significant correlation between overall LLS use and language performance, i.e. more successful learners use LLSs more frequently.

### **Research question 3**

Is there a significant difference between male and female LLS use?

### **Hypothesis 3**

Overall, females use LLSs more frequently than males.

### **Research question 4**

Is there a significant relationship between additional English instruction outside of school and LLS use?

### **Hypothesis 4**

Learners who have been exposed to more English instruction outside of the formal setting of school use more LLSs more frequently.

To test these hypotheses, data was collected from 102 Vietnamese-speaking EFL students studying in an upper-intermediate, intensive English program (IEP) at an international university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The pre-admissions IEP primarily focuses on providing EAP and the majority of students enrol in the programme with the intention of entering the university's degree or diploma program.

The data collection for this study was two-fold. Firstly, data regarding the students' LLS use was gathered by means of a commonly employed self-report questionnaire (see chapter 3 for a detailed description of the data collection instruments). Secondly, their end-of-course assessment (EOC) scores were collected to serve as a measure of their English proficiency. A background survey accompanied the self-report questionnaire and was used to collect data regarding the participants' age, gender, and length and type of exposure to English.

The study therefore collected information regarding students' reported LLS use, language proficiency, gender and exposure to English outside of school. Some of the relationships between these variables were then investigated, guided by the research questions set out above. Of course, a number of social, contextual and affective variables referred to in section 1.1 but not assessed in this investigation, in all likelihood also influenced the students' L2 learning and LLS use. Although a

detailed investigation into these variables does not fall within the scope of the study reported in this thesis, I did keep these additional variables in mind in discussing the results of the study.

### **1.3 Thesis layout**

This thesis consists of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 provides a thorough discussion of previous literature regarding LLSs, their definition and classification, and their relationships with other variables. The chapter also provides an overview of LLS research in the Asian context and discusses the problems and limitations associated with LLS research. Chapter 3 presents the research design of the study, including a discussion of the data collection methods and the participants. The results of the study are reported in Chapter 4, and a thorough analysis and discussion of these results is provided in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 examines the strengths and limitations of the study, proposes some future research possibilities, and provides a brief conclusion.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

There has been a growing body of literature on LLSs since the inception of what have become known as the “good learner” studies. There are, however, numerous unresolved issues regarding LLS research, such as how to best define and classify LLSs. This chapter first discusses the various issues involved in defining LLSs and also presents a definition which will be used in the study reported in this thesis (section 2.1). This is followed by an overview of different classifications of LLSs (section 2.2), and previous research on LLS use (section 2.3), describing first the early studies in the field, and then subsequent studies on the relationship between LLSs and other variables, highlighting the factors which are relevant to the current study, namely, language proficiency, gender, duration of study, and, specifically, the Asian context. Finally, LLS instruction is briefly discussed (section 2.4) before the chapter is concluded with a summary of relevant issues (section 2.5).

### 2.1 Defining LLSs

One of the few constants in LLS research has been the lack of agreement regarding the precise definition and classification of the concept ‘language learning strategy’. Oxford (1990: 17) notes that in the few decades during which LLSs have been studied, there has been “no complete agreement on what exactly strategies are, how many strategies exist, how they should be defined, demarcated and categorised”. This section will look at some of the issues in defining LLSs, attempt to identify some generally agreed upon features of LLSs, and finally provide a definition for the concept which is specific enough for the purpose of the current study, yet general enough so as not to exclude important general features.

One point of discord regarding LLSs which stands out is the number of conflicting issues with defining the concept ‘LLS’. Firstly, there is a lack of clarification of whether LLSs are mental processes or learner behaviour or both. This is still a point of contention, as certain researchers regard observable, i.e. behavioural, aspects of LLSs only as manifestations of mental cognitive and metacognitive processes (see, for example, Macaro 2006). This makes LLSs difficult to define, or at least more difficult to reach a consensus on the definition. Furthermore, Macaro (2006) comments on the interchangeability of the term “strategy” and other similar terminology, such as “technique”, “tactic”,

“step”, “operation” and “action”. This type of inconsistency is a setback for any kind of research which attempts to be more generalisable across settings and cultures. For consistency and clarity, this thesis will use the term “strategy”, and because, as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991, in Griffiths 2004: 1) remark, the term “strategy” is probably the most commonly and widely used term. They point out that the term “strategy” was also used in Rubin’s 1975 study, “What the ‘good learner’ can teach us”, a seminal piece of research in the LLS field (see section 2.3.1 below).

Despite this lack of consensus regarding the use of the term “strategy” and its precise definition in L2 learning, there are certain features of LLSs which are generally agreed upon. One key feature that defines LLSs is that they are goal-driven. An illustration of this is O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990: 1) definition which presents LLSs as specific thoughts, actions or behaviours that learners employ in the comprehension, retention and learning of information or the achievement of a learning goal (Chamot 2004: 14). Weinstein and Mayer (1986, in O’Malley and Chamot 1990: 43) further entrench the concept of purpose in LLSs by stating that the goal of LLSs is the facilitation of learning. It is important to note, however, that the objective of strategy use is to “learn the target language rather than the desire to communicate”, thus distinguishing LLSs from language production and communication strategies (O’Malley and Chamot 1990: 43; Tarone 1981).

Along with the goal-driven nature of LLS use, another aspect of LLSs which enjoys general consensus amongst researchers is the aspect of ‘self’. This means learners employ these strategies individually to make their own learning more effective. This autonomy is referred to by Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005: 82) who note learners often have some degree of conscious control over LLSs. When these conscious actions become unconscious or automatic, they move from the sphere of LLSs to that of learning styles. This unconscious employment is what distinguishes learning styles from LLSs. They are also more general than LLSs, and provide a broad direction to learning, whereas LLSs are more specific and learners tend to be more aware of using them (Oxford 2003: 273-274).

In more recent literature, Oxford (2011: 12) defines the concept of L2 learning strategies as self-regulated, “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn the L2”. She (2011: 14) lists several characteristics of LLSs.

Self-regulated LLSs:

- are employed consciously, involving four elements of consciousness (awareness, attention, intention, and effort);
- make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more effective;
- are manifested through specific tactics in different contexts and for different purposes;
- reflect the whole, multidimensional learner, not just the learner's metacognitive or cognitive aspects;
- are often combined into strategy chains, i.e., groups of strategies working together; and
- are applied in a given situation but can be transferred to another situation when relevant.

For the purposes of this study, a combination of aspects of Oxford's later (i.e. 2011) and earlier (1990) definitions will be used. That is, LLSs are consciously employed ways in which a learner makes learning faster, more enjoyable and more effective and which manifest themselves through specific tactics differently in different contexts. These LLSs reflect the whole learner, are transferrable to different situations, are most effective when combined into strategy chains and can be taught.

The reason for using Oxford's definitions and features is that in Oxford's model LLS use is seen as goal-driven and the learner is put consciously in charge of their own LLS use; thus, these definitions acknowledge the autonomous nature of language learners and the relationship of their LLSs with affective variables such as motivation and self-efficacy. This combined definition also includes both mental and behavioural aspects, which justifies the use of the self-report data collection method used in this study (as observations cannot be used for identifying mental processes). The fact that students can use LLSs in different situations (i.e. that LLSs are transferrable to different contexts) means that researchers can study them cross-culturally and in various settings, such as the Asian English for Academic Purposes (EAP) EFL setting of this study. Another reason for opting for this definition is that it also recognizes the concept that LLSs can be taught and are influenced by other factors. This has significant implications for not only research but also LLS instruction (see section

2.4). This definition provides a more holistic view of LLSs than many other definitions and addresses a number of the pertinent questions previously raised in defining LLSs.

## 2.2 Classification of LLSs

In an attempt to identify and standardise the notion and classification of LLSs, various leading researchers in the field of LLS studies have created extensive classification systems to group individual strategies into categories. These classification systems have stemmed from numerous academic fields, such as cognitive psychology and first language research, and include a wide range of identified LLSs. This section will provide a brief overview of some of the major LLS frameworks to date and the LLSs they include.

In early studies on LLSs, researchers predominantly focused on identifying and classifying the LLSs which good language learners used, mostly through observation and self-report mechanisms. An illustration of this is Naiman et al.'s (1978) system, which identified five overarching LLSs that all successful language learners reported using and various secondary LLSs which only some of the successful learners used (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Naiman et al.'s (1978) Classification of LLSs (in O'Malley and Chamot 1990)**

<b>Primary strategy classification</b>	<b>Representative secondary strategies</b>	<b>Representative examples</b>
Active task approach	<p>Responds positively to learning opportunity or seeks and exploits learning environments.</p> <p>Adds related language learning activities to regular classroom program.</p> <p>Practises.</p>	<p>Student acknowledges need for a structured learning environment and takes a course prior to immersing him/herself in target language.</p> <p>Reads additional items.</p> <p>Listens to tapes.</p> <p>Writes down words to memorise.</p> <p>Looks at speaker's mouth and repeats.</p>

Realisation of language as a system	Analyses individual problems. Makes L1/L2 comparisons. Analyses target language to make inferences. Makes use of fact that language is a system.	Reads alone to hear sounds. Uses cognates. Uses what is already known. Uses rules to generate possibilities. Relates new dictionary words to others in the same category.
Realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction	Emphasises fluency over accuracy. Seeks communicative situations with native speakers of the target L2.	Does not hesitate to speak. Uses circumlocutions. Communicates whenever possible. Establishes close personal contact with native speakers. Writes to pen pals.
Management of affective demands	Finds socio-cultural meanings. Copes with affective demands in learning.	Memorises courtesies and phrases. Overcomes inhibition to speak. Is able to laugh at own mistakes. Is prepared for difficulties.
Monitoring L2 performance	Constantly revises L2 system by testing inferences and asking native speakers for feedback.	Generates sentences and looks for reactions. Looks for ways to improve so as not to repeat mistakes.

Three years later, Rubin (1981) created an alternative classification scheme using research conducted through interviews and learner diaries. It was the first such study which divided learning LLSs into two general groups – namely, those which affect learning directly, such as clarification and memorisation, and those which contribute indirectly to learning, such as creating opportunities for practice (see Table 1.2). This system was a forerunner of similar classification systems proposed thereafter. For example, Dansereau (1985) also divided LLSs into two groups, namely primary LLSs, which are directly employed by language learners, and the less direct supporting LLSs, such as those pertaining to concentration.

**Table 1.2 Rubin's (1981) Classification of LLSs (in O'Malley and Chamot 1990)**

<b>Primary strategy classification</b>	<b>Representative secondary strategies</b>	<b>Representative examples</b>
Strategies that directly affect learning	Clarification/verification Monitoring Memorisation Guessing/inductive inferencing Deductive reasoning Practice	Asks for an example of how to use a word or expressions, repeats words to confirm understanding. Corrects errors in own/other's pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar and style. Takes notes of new items, pronounces out loud, finds a mnemonic, writes items repeatedly. Guesses meaning from key words, structures, pictures, context, etc. Compares native/other language to target language. Groups words. Looks for rules of co-occurrence. Experiments with new sounds. Repeats sentences until pronounced easily. Listens carefully and tries to imitate.
Processes that contribute indirectly to learning	Creates opportunities for practice Production tricks	Creates opportunities to converse with native speakers. Initiates conversation with fellow students. Spends time in language lab, listening to TV, etc. Uses circumlocutions, synonyms or cognates. Uses formulaic interaction. Contextualises to clarify meaning.

Both Rubin and Naiman's systems, however, were subject to criticism by two leading LLS researchers in the early 1990s, specifically O'Malley and Chamot (1990). The first pertinent criticism made by these researchers against both frameworks is that neither system has adequate grounding in

cognitive or SLA theory. Further criticisms include a lack of identification regarding a number of issues, including which of the LLSs are crucial for learning, which can be taught to other learners, and which can be used in combination to make the most use of learning efficacy (O'Malley and Chamot 1990: 7). To address these issues, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 42-43) devised a system grounded in Andersen's (1983) cognitive information-processing theory, postulating that it is not possible to understand SLA without considering the interplay of language and cognition, and such a theory can be extended to depict LLSs as "complex cognitive skills" or processes. With data collected by means of think-aloud protocols, questionnaires, observations and retrospective interviews conducted with ESL learners, the researchers grouped the LLSs into three distinct categories, namely cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective LLSs (O'Malley and Chamot 1990: 42-46; see Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3 O'Malley and Chamot's (1990: 119) Classification of LLSs**

<b>Generic strategy classification</b>	<b>Representative strategies</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Metacognitive strategies	A. Advance organisers B. Directed attention C. Functional planning D. Selective attention E. Self-management F. Monitoring <i>Self-monitoring</i> G. Evaluation <i>Self-evaluation</i>	A. Previewing the main ideas and concepts of the material to be learned, often by skimming the text for the organising principle. B. Deciding in advance to attend in general to a learning task and to ignore irrelevant distractors. C. Planning for and rehearsing linguistic components necessary to carry out an upcoming language task. D. Deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of input, often by scanning for key words, concepts, and/or linguistic markers. E. Understanding the conditions that help one learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions. F. Checking one's comprehension during listening or reading or checking the accuracy and/or appropriateness of one's oral or written production

		<p>while it is taking place.</p> <p>G. Checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against a standard after it has been completed.</p>
<p>Cognitive strategies</p>	<p>A. Resourcing            B. Repetition            C. Grouping            D. Deduction            E. Summarising            F. Imagery            G. Auditory representation            H. Keyword method            I. Elaboration            J. Transfer            K. Inferencing            L. Note-taking            M. Summarising            N. Recombination            O. Translation</p>	<p>A. Using target language reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias or textbooks.</p> <p>B. Imitating a language model, including overt practise and silent rehearsal.</p> <p>C. Classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their attributes or meaning.</p> <p>D. Applying rules to understand or produce the L2 or making up rules based on language analysis.</p> <p>E. Intermittently synthesising what one has heard to ensure the information has been retained.</p> <p>F. Using visual images (either generated or actual) to understand and remember new information.</p> <p>G. Playing back in one's mind the sound of a word, phrase, or longer language sequence.</p> <p>H. Remembering a new word in the L2 by: (a) identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word, and (b) generating easily recalled images of some relationship with the L1 homonym and the new word in the L2.</p> <p>I. Relating new information to prior knowledge, relating different parts of new information to each other, or making meaningful personal associations</p>

		<p>with the new information.</p> <p>J. Using previous linguistic knowledge or prior skills to assist comprehension or production.</p> <p>K. Using available information to guess meaning of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information.</p> <p>L. Writing down key words or concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form while listening or reading.</p> <p>M. Making mental, oral, or written summary of new information gained through listening or reading.</p> <p>N. Constructing a meaningful sentence or larger language sequence by combining known elements in a new way.</p> <p>O. Using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language.</p>
<p>Social/affective strategies</p>	<p>A. Questioning for clarification</p> <p>B. Cooperation</p>	<p>A. Eliciting from a teacher or peer additional explanations, rephrasing, examples or verification.</p> <p>B. Working together with one or more peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity, or get feedback on oral or written performance.</p>

Cognitive LLSs act directly on input, processing information in a way that facilitates and improves learning, while metacognitive LLSs are “higher order executive skills” used for the organisation, monitoring and evaluation of the learning activity (O’Malley and Chamot 1990: 44). These researchers’ third classification group – social/affective strategies – incorporates LLSs dealing with control over affect and emotions as well as interaction with others. The two researchers later broadened their classification system to include academic content and language skills, developing a

new framework known as the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman 2005: 247). At this stage, it is useful to note the important distinction that Cummins (2008) makes between what he refers to as “cognitive academic language proficiency” (CALP) and “basic interpersonal communication skills” (BICS). According to Cummins (2008: 72), CALP refers to “the students’ ability to understand, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success at school, or in this case university, while BICS refers to everyday conversational fluency in social settings. Notably, a high level of BICS does not imply or necessarily lead to a high level of CALP, and vice versa (Cummins 2008: 72). With respect to Leaver et al.’s (2005) CALLA, CALP is thus more relevant than BICS.

Around the same time that O’Malley and Chamot designed their LLS taxonomy, another LLS researcher, Oxford (1990), created a LLS system derived from previous classifications as well as her own LLS research (see Table 1.4).

<b>Table 1.4 Oxford’s (1990) Strategy System</b>		
<b>Direct Strategies</b>		
I. Memory Strategies	A. Creating mental linkages B. Applying images and sounds C. Reviewing well	A. 1. Grouping A. 2. Associating A. 3. Placing new words into a context B. 1. Using imagery B. 2. Semantic mapping B. 3. Using keywords B. 4. Representing sounds in memory C. 1. Structured reviewing

<p>II. Cognitive strategies</p>	<p>A. Practising          B. Receiving and sending messages          C. Analysing and reasoning          D. Creating structure for input and output</p>	<p>A. 1. Repeating          A. 2. Formally practising with sounds and writing systems          A. 3. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns          A. 4. Recombining          A. 5. Practising naturalistically          B. 1. Getting the idea quickly          B. 2. Using resources for receiving and sending messages          C. 1. Reasoning deductively          C. 2. Analysing expressions          C. 3. Analysing contrastively (across languages)          C. 4. Translating          C. 5. Transferring          D. 1. Taking notes          D. 2. Summarising          D. 3. Highlighting</p>
<p>III. Compensation strategies</p>	<p>A. Guessing intelligently          B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing</p>	<p>A. 1. Using linguistic clues          A. 2. Using other clues          B. 1. Switching to the mother tongue          B. 2. Getting help          B. 3. Using mime or gesture          B. 4. Avoiding communication partially or totally          B. 5. Selecting the topic          B. 6. Adjusting or approximating the message          B. 7. Coining words          B. 8. Using circumlocution or synonym</p>

<b>Indirect Strategies</b>		
<p>I. Metacognitive strategies</p>	<p>A. Centring your learning                      B. Arranging and planning your learning                      C. Evaluating your learning</p>	<p>A. 1. Overviewing and linking with already known material                      A. 2. Paying attention                      A. 3. Delaying speech production to focus on listening                      B. 1. Finding out about language learning                      B. 2. Organising                      B. 3. Setting goals and objectives                      B. 4. Identifying the purpose of a language task                      B. 5. Planning for a language task                      B. 6. Seeking practice opportunities                      C. 1. Self-monitoring                      C. 2. Self-evaluating</p>
<p>II. Affective strategies</p>	<p>A. Lowering your anxiety                      B. Encouraging yourself                      C. Taking your emotional temperature</p>	<p>A. 1. Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation                      A. 2. Using music                      A. 3. Using laughter                      B. 1. Making positive statements                      B. 2. Taking risks wisely                      B. 3. Rewarding yourself                      C. 1. Listening to your body                      C. 2. Using a checklist                      C. 3. Writing a language learning diary                      C. 4. Discussing your feelings with someone</p>

III. Social strategies	A. Asking questions B. Cooperating with others C. Empathising with others	A. 1. Asking for clarification or verification A. 2. Asking for correction B. 1. Cooperating with peers B. 2. Cooperating with proficient users of the new language C. 1. Developing cultural understanding C. 2. Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings
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As can be seen in Table 1.4, this system shares a number of features with previous schemata; however, Oxford (1990: 14) claims this system links LLSs with the four language skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading in a more systematic, comprehensive and detailed manner than previous frameworks. Similar to Rubin's earlier model, Oxford's taxonomy divides LLSs into direct and indirect LLSs. Direct LLSs require mental processing of the target language and are directly involved with this language (Oxford 1990: 37). These LLSs incorporate memory, cognition and compensation and involve the direct storage, retrieval and processing of the target language information as well as compensation for missing knowledge. By contrast, indirect LLSs support and manage language learning and do not involve the target language directly. These two main categories are sub-divided into metacognitive, affective and social LLSs which coordinate and manage learning processes, control emotions, motivations and attitudes, and involve interactions with other people (Oxford 1990: 135-140). Oxford (1990: 14) notes that these LLSs are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as the direct and indirect LLSs support each other. Additionally, it is possible for the individual categories to connect with and assist each other.

In recent years, Oxford (2011) has expanded her classification system to create a Strategic Self-Regulation (S<sup>2</sup>R) Model. This model classifies self-regulated L2 strategies into eight metastrategies (comprising of metacognitive, meta-affective and metasocio-cultural-interactive LLSs), six strategies in the cognitive dimension, two strategies in the affective dimension and three strategies in the socio-cultural-interactive dimension (Oxford 2011: 16). All of these LLSs are in dynamic interaction with each other and the L2 learning process. The S<sup>2</sup>R model refines Oxford's earlier system with regards to

the concept of primary, or overarching, LLSs into which individual LLSs can be grouped, as well as advancing the notion of self-management in LLS use.

Another recent framework of note is that of Macaro (2006), which is also based on cognition. He developed a new theoretical cognitive framework for LLSs, claiming LLSs are only mental processes which occur in the brain and that the categories into which they fall need to be reduced to only cognitive and metacognitive categories. This model addresses a number of issues regarding classification of LLSs, especially what Macaro (2006: 320) terms a lack of “theoretical rigour”. Macaro suggests that instead of trying to devise an all-encompassing taxonomy, a list of the essential features of LLSs may be of more use.

As can be seen, numerous LLS taxonomies have been designed; however, the earlier frameworks of Naiman et al. (1978), Rubin (1981), O’Malley and Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990) described in this section are some of the most widely used and referenced to date. Some of the primary reasons for this are the extensiveness of their descriptions, as well as the purported validity and reliability of these systems. This is especially true for Oxford’s framework. For example, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) compared Rubin, O’Malley and Chamot, and Oxford’s (1990) classification theories with LLS use data from 517 EFL learners by means of hypothesis testing through confirmatory factor analysis. They conclude that Oxford’s six-factor LLS taxonomy “is the most consistent with learners’ strategy use” (Hsiao and Oxford 2002: 368). Other researchers have also acknowledged the extensiveness of Oxford’s taxonomy. To illustrate, in a review conducted by Ellis (1994: 539), the researcher concludes that this system is “perhaps the most comprehensive classification system to date”. In addition, it is also the system around which Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) – the self-report student questionnaire used in this study – was created and with which it correlates. The various qualities of the SILL are discussed in detail in section 3.2.1. For all of the reasons stated above, the Oxford Strategy System is the classification system which is used in this study on LLSs.

## **2.3 Previous research on LLSs**

This section presents an overview of the general development of LLS studies which focus on individual differences, such as gender and age, starting with what is generally termed “good learner studies”, or the studies of the late 1970s and 1980s which tried to identify the characteristics which make certain learners more successful at learning languages than others. This is followed by a review of other major studies looking at the relationship between LLS use and language proficiency as well as a number of other variables which are examined in the current study, including, gender, type and length of exposure to English, cultural background and setting. Finally, this section examines previous studies using Oxford’s SILL to investigate LLS use in the Asian context and briefly discusses other variables which have been shown to affect LLS use.

### **2.3.1 LLSs and “Good Learner” studies**

LLS studies emerged from research undertaken in the mid-1970s to determine what constitutes a good learner, i.e. what attributes make some learners more successful than others – see, for example Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975). One of the characteristics identified as being conducive to effective learning was LLS use. Thus, many of these early studies were constructed around the hypothesis that effective language learners use a greater number of LLSs more frequently and more appropriately than less effective learners, and numerous researchers set out to validate this hypothesis (Oxford 1989: 235). Similar research into good learning behaviour was also initiated in the field of cognitive psychology around the same time, and various studies focused on identifying the cognitive processes involved in SLA and tying in the factors, including LLSs, which have an impact on L2 learning (O’Malley and Chamot 1990: 98; Norton and Toohey 2001: 310). However, Nambiar (2009: 132) notes that these early works were of a developmental nature, mostly descriptive, and not theoretically well-grounded.

In an effort to ground LLS research in a more empirical base, Naiman et al.’s (1978) influential study known as “The Good Language Learner”, was conducted and published. This groundbreaking research tested the hypothesis that good learners have different learning capabilities or use certain activities to facilitate their language learning. Through interviews, self-report questionnaires and classroom

observations of 34 adult and child L2 learners, the researchers identified five primary LLSs which good learners use (see Table 1.1) , and found evidence for the hypothesis that particular characteristics of L2 learners, such as the LLSs they use, their attitudes and their motivation, correlated significantly more with L2 learning success than other factors. After the publication of “The Good Language Learner”, multiple researchers set out to identify LLSs used by successful and unsuccessful learners. One such study was conducted by Hosenfeld et al. (1981), who were amongst the first researchers to employ “think aloud” protocols so as to identify the metacognitive LLSs used in reading by successful and unsuccessful learners. This type of data collection involves the learner verbally expressing their LLSs use and thoughts during the process of performing a language task (Anderson and Vandergrift 1996: 4). This type of data collection instrument is discussed in more detail in section 3.1. Think aloud protocols were employed in this case due to the fact that many LLSs are cognitive, i.e. mental, processes and do not involve observable behaviour. Further early studies on LLSs include that of O’Malley et al. (1985), which involved interviewing 70 ESL students and 22 teachers to identify the type and frequency of LLS use associated with classroom-based tasks and activities. They found that LLSs proved easy to categorise when using their three-part classification system of metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies (see table 1.3; and O’Malley et al. 1985: 575).

Looking at LLSs and SLA from an inverse perspective, Vann and Abraham (1990) studied the LLS use of unsuccessful learners in an attempt to clarify conflicting results regarding these learners’ LLS use, or often asserted lack thereof. They used two unsuccessful language learners as case studies and through the introspective think-aloud technique, as well as an analysis of the learners’ language production, they found counterevidence challenging the claim that unsuccessful learners are inactive LLS users. Their two case studies were in fact perceived to be active LLS users. What distinguished them from good learners, however, was that they employed these LLSs inappropriately at times – an important finding also observed by other researchers, such as Park (2010).

During these early years, most LLS researchers were mainly preoccupied with identifying and classifying strategies as well as investigating the effectiveness of the strategies (see, for example, Bialystok 1981; Politzer and McGroarty 1985; and O’Malley et al. 1985). Thus, as Nambiar (2009: 135) observes, the LLS studies during the 1970s and early 1980s concentrated mostly on strategy use of successful and unsuccessful adult learners in formal settings and, while very insightful into the L2

behaviour of good learners, did not take into account the influence of other variables such as motivation, age, setting, and cultural background. However, thanks to these pioneering studies, researchers have gained a general understanding of the learning behaviour of effective language learners. One important finding was that good learners use a variety of LLSs; for example, effective L2 learners use their opportunities to practise effectively, are willing to guess and often do so accurately; they can manage their emotions in language learning; they can monitor their speech production; and they develop the language being learned in a conscious, meaningful and structured way (see, for example, Green and Oxford 1995: 262; Stern 1975; Rubin 1975; and Naiman et al. 1978). These are just some of the characteristics of good learners identified to date, and by no means create an exhaustive list, as richer and more complex relationships between different variables are constantly being discovered.

### **2.3.2 LLSs, L2 learning and proficiency**

As LLS research gained momentum, the field was further advanced by studies testing the effect of LLSs on language proficiency. If support for such a relationship between LLSs and L2 proficiency could be established, it would have significant implications for classroom teaching and LLS instruction. One such study was Bialystok's (1981) analysis of the role of conscious strategies in L2 proficiency. This study identified different types of LLSs used by learners according to the type of knowledge needed by the learner: implicit linguistic knowledge or general knowledge. She distinguished between "formal practice" LLSs, or language form LLSs, and "functional practice" LLSs, or language use LLSs (Nambiar 2009: 134). Through correlational techniques she found LLSs used in functional settings, as opposed to formal settings, have a stronger relationship with proficiency across tasks (O'Malley and Chamot 1991: 108). Further research into the subject was conducted by Politzer and McGroarty (1985), who attempted to relate LLS use to language learning by means of a 51-item questionnaire and pre- and post-test listening, grammar and speaking proficiency measures. Their group of intermediate L2 learners, with roughly half being Asian and half Hispanic, showed significant improvement on these proficiency measures over the course of eight weeks, but these improvements were found to be unrelated to the general LLS categories. They were, however, associated with ten individual LLSs represented by the questionnaire items (O'Malley and Chamot 1990: 109; and Politzer and McGroarty 1985: 115). Interestingly, this was also one of the earlier studies to find that cultural

background may have a significant impact on LLS use. The researchers found that Asian students showed fewer of the “good” behaviours – i.e. used fewer LLSs – expected of successful language learners than Hispanics – an important implication for the current study which focuses on Vietnamese-speaking students.

Over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of studies examining the relationship between LLSs and language proficiency. One pioneering study involved 374 ESL students in Puerto Rico, and was conducted by Green and Oxford (1995), using the SILL and a general proficiency test. They found that there was a significant correlation between LLS use and language proficiency, and a strong relationship between “active, naturalistic practice” and L2 learning success, similar to Bialystok’s findings in 1981. Dreyer and Oxford’s (1996) examination of 305 Afrikaans-speaking ESL students in South Africa found LLSs to be a strong predictor of language proficiency. Their results showed that 45% of variation in an ESL proficiency test could be predicted by LLS use, as measured by the SILL. A very similar outcome was that of Kaylani’s (1996) study, in which it was found that language proficiency accounted for 30% of the variation in the LLS use frequency of 255 Arabic-speaking EFL learners in Jordan. Other studies in ESL settings have found especially strong correlations between cognitive LLSs and language proficiency, including two studies by Oxford and Ehrman (1995a and 1995b). Further investigations into the relationship between language proficiency and LLSs are described in section 2.3.4, which focuses on the Asian EFL context.

### **2.3.3 LLSs and other factors**

Besides the relationship between LLSs and language proficiency, numerous other individual and socio-cultural factors have been shown to affect LLS use and language learning success. The current study examines the relationship between the LLS use reported by Vietnamese-speaking L2 learners at a tertiary institution in an EFL setting and language proficiency, gender and additional exposure to English outside of school. For these reasons, this section describes studies conducted around the world which have analysed the relationship between LLS use and these variables and also briefly discusses other individual factors which influence and are influenced by LLSs.

### 2.3.3.1 LLSs, setting, cultural background

Until the mid-1990s, most strategy research was conducted in ESL settings, i.e. countries where the language is the primary medium of daily communication (Oxford 2003: 272). Later studies recognised the effect of different settings on LLS use. LLS research has been much enriched by the number of studies conducted in various settings around the world. Settings could refer to various contexts, such as ESL or EFL settings, or the environment in which a foreign language is studied. For example, an EFL setting would be a country where the language being learned is not the primary medium of interaction, it is not necessary for survival purposes, and input in this language is limited (Oxford 2003: 272). However, setting can also refer to different education levels as well as various other factors involving the place, time or purpose of studying a language.

While many LLS studies have been conducted in a wide variety of settings worldwide in roughly the last twenty years, there is still a need for more contextualised studies, as Chamot (2004: 17) observes that the educational and cultural values of the society where L2 learning occurs, shape the learning context. In combination with the learners' goals, this context strongly influences the type and acceptability of LLSs used. Thus, LLSs cannot be studied without factoring in the influence of cultural background. Oxford, Hollaway and Horton-Murillo (1992: 441) highlight the fact that "although culture is not the single determinant ... culture often does play a significant role in the learning styles and strategies ... adopted by many participants in the culture." Various other researchers have emphasised the importance of cultural values, nationality and background on L2 learning, and more specifically LLS use. To illustrate, in a study of 348 learners from 21 different countries, Griffiths (2003) found statistically significant differences in the frequency of LLS use according to nationality. Similar findings of significant correlations between nationality and LLS use were also reported by Deneme (2010), who studied Jordanian, Spanish and Turkish EFL students. While these studies have proven beneficial to this field of research, Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995: 19) call for the replication of studies to increase the body of research regarding how learners from different backgrounds and countries use LLSs. A study with contrasting results, however, was that of Gan (2009), which examined the effect of culture on the LLSs, attitude and motivation of two groups of Chinese learners. The findings suggested that, while cultural traditions played a role, students' LLS use,

attitudes and motivation were more likely to be shaped by the social context and institutional pedagogy of their studies, calling for a re-examination of Asian learner stereotypes (Gan 2009: 53).

Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that cultural values, background and setting influence LLS use, either directly or indirectly through, for example, motivation (Oxford 1996: 248). However, the extent to which these variables are related is yet to be adequately determined, although a number of studies have examined the nature of the relationship. Bedell and Oxford (1996: 47) observe that there is a close relationship between language and culture and that one's first language both influences and reflects one's culture. Similarly, LoCastro (1994: 410) remarks that language learning methods reflect the social system of values embedded in an educational context. Thus, it can be assumed that LLS use will also mirror the language learning beliefs of a certain culture. The prediction follows that the LLS use of Asian learners in an EFL context will probably differ from that of, for example, European learners in an ESL context. To illustrate, some LLS studies (see, for example, Politzer and McGroarty 1985) have shown that memorisation is a preferred LLS for Asian students partly because, as Scarcella (1990, in Bedell and Oxford 1996) observes, a number of Asian cultures consider textbooks as containing all the necessary knowledge; thus, memorisation of the book is believed to be the best method of internalising this knowledge. Therefore, it is vital to augment LLS research with studies in as many different cultural and pedagogical settings as possible to ascertain the nature of the relationship between LLSs and L2 learning.

### **2.3.3.2 LLSs and gender**

Besides showing that there is a significant relationship between LLSs, language proficiency, and socio-cultural variables, research in the field of LLSs has also shown gender to influence the choice and application of LLSs. The relationship between gender and LLSs has been thoroughly examined by a variety of researchers with many finding noteworthy results. Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995: 14) point out that ESL/EFL LLS frequency studies that involve gender generally reveal females to be more frequent LLS users, an observation also made by Erhman and Oxford (1995: 68), especially regarding metacognitive, affective and social LLSs. Their observations are based on a number of studies examining the correlation between gender and LLSs. For example, in perhaps one of the largest LLS studies to date, with more than 1200 tertiary-level English-speaking L2 learners of Spanish, French

German, Russian and Italian, Oxford and Nyikos (1989: 294) found significant gender differences through factor analysis. They found that females reported more frequent LLS usage in formal, rule related practice LLSs, general study strategies and conversational input elicitation strategies than males. Similarly, in Green and Oxford's (1995) study conducted in Puerto Rico with 374 ESL learners, they observed significantly higher levels of LLS use among females for 14 of the 51 individual SILL LLSs, with male participants only using one LLS significantly more than females. Gender was also found to be significantly related to LLS frequency in Kaylani's (1996) study of 255 Arabic-speaking ESL students in Jordan. Female students were found to use memory, cognitive, compensation and affective LLSs at a higher frequency than male students, although the total variation in LLS use caused by gender was quite low, at only 11%. Erhman and Oxford (1989: 8) examined gender differences in another exploratory LLS study with 78 ESL participants, with the results showing women reporting a significantly higher frequency of LLS use than men.

As can be seen, a variety of LLS studies show women as more frequent LLS users, which is the case in most areas of SLA (Kaylani 1996: 80), although this is not always the situation. To illustrate, one study which revealed contradictory results was Tercanlioglu's (2004). This researcher employed the SILL in a study of 184 tertiary level Turkish-speaking EFL learners in Turkey, and found that males actually used LLSs significantly more frequently than females. Similarly, Liyanage and Bartlett's (2011) study conducted with 948 high school ESL students in Sri Lanka, according to three ethnic groups, yielded very mixed results. Generally, females showed more frequent LLS usage than males in the three categories tested: metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective LLSs. However, when analysing individual strategy use and not the categories themselves, the researchers found no significant gender effect for 10 of the 26 strategies, and males reported using a number of the other LLSs more frequently (Liyanage and Bartlett's 2011: 9).

There may be a number of conceivable reasons for the contradicting results of the studies referred to above regarding the relationship between gender and LLSs. These contradictions could be due to the way in which LLS use is reported (Oxford 1996: 247-248); for example, there may be discrepancies between males' and females' reported LLS use and their actual LLS use, which in turn may be caused by a number of factors, some of which are discussed in Chapter 3. Another possibility is that specific LLSs may be related to gender in some contexts but not in others, causing observed or reported LLS

use by males and females to differ according to these contexts (such as in Liyanage and Bartlett 2011). Likewise, perhaps the influence of gender on LLS use is affected by an interaction with other factors such as cultural background or setting (Khamkhien 2010); for example, gender differences in terms of LLS use might be significant in some cultures but not in others (Oxford 1996: 247). The mixed results may even be due to a combination of all of these factors or other yet to be identified factors. Thus, more research into the nature of the relationship between gender and LLSs needs to be conducted in order to cross-validate findings and, as Tercanlioglu (2004: 191) succinctly states, to “elucidate the influence of L2 learners’ cultural background and of the educational settings in which they learn the target language on the choice of their learning strategies by gender”. For these reasons, the current study examines Vietnamese learners’ reported LLS use according to gender to identify whether there are any significant differences between males and females and to contribute to the picture which “is beginning to emerge about differences in strategy use among male and female language students worldwide” (Kaylani 1996: 75).

### **2.3.3.3 LLSs and exposure to the L2**

Although not as widely researched as other individual differences, another independent variable that can affect strategy use is length of exposure to the target L2, which encompasses both the number of years a learner has been studying a language and their course level. Duration is a predictor of language proficiency and a number of researchers have found length of exposure to a language to influence LLS use in different ways (Oxford 1989: 236). For example, Oxford (1989) observes that LLS use generally correlates positively with language proficiency and changes as students become more proficient and progress to higher course levels. This sentiment is echoed by Griffiths (2003: 381), who found students at a higher course level made more and highly frequent use of a large number of sophisticated and interactive LLSs, while Oxford and Nyikos (1989: 294) found years spent studying a L2 significantly affected the use of functional practice strategies and communicative strategies. Specifically, learners who had studied the L2 for at least four or five years used these LLSs more than learners who had less study experience. A similar result was reported by Purdie and Oliver (1999), who examined the LLS use of 58 bilingual school children in Australia. They found that the students who had been living in the country for four years or more reported greater use of cognitive and memory LLSs than those who had only been living there for three years or less.

While all of these studies mentioned show linear relationships between LLS use and course level, certain studies show other types of interplay between these two variables. Phillips (1991), for example, studied the LLS use of ESL learners at three levels of language proficiency (high, medium and low) and found a curvilinear, bell-shaped relationship between their proficiency levels and their LLS use, with the middle group learners using more LLSs than the high and low proficiency level groups. In Hong-Nam and Leavell's (2006) LLS study of 55 ESL learners of differing cultural backgrounds, the results showed the same curvilinear pattern.

Related to exposure to the L2 is the learner's age at the onset of acquisition (Ehrman and Oxford 1995: 8). Oxford and Erhman (1995: 363) found that older learners use more analytical LLSs due to more developed abstract thinking skills. It is important to note that most studies involving children make use of observation methods while adult studies often rely on self-report data; therefore, differences found in LLS use may, in part, be due to methodology (Nambiar 2009: 141). Although age has been shown to be related to learning success, the degree to which age plays a role in differing LLS use has thus not been clearly identified.

These findings are all pertinent to the study reported in this thesis. The participants in this investigation are all of a similar age, with the majority being 18 or 19 years old, and have generally been exposed to English for the same amount of time in the formal setting of school (roughly from the age of twelve or the start of secondary school). Although individual differences in age and exposure to English are taken into account, they are not analysed in terms of their relationship with LLS use in this investigation. Although the Vietnamese learners in the study are in an upper-intermediate level course, which presupposes the fact that they are generally of equal proficiency, the study examines the learners' LLS use according to any additional exposure which they have received to English outside of the formal school setting, for example with a private tutor or at a language centre, to investigate whether this additional L2 exposure influences their LLS use at all.

#### 2.3.3.4 LLSs and other influences

Other variables which affect LLSs and their use are generally of an affective nature. These include motivation, which interacts not only with LLSs but also with other variables, such as gender (Oxford 1989). Many researchers believe motivation, along with attitude, to be one of the strongest influences on LLS use and to have an interdependent relationship with LLSs, whereby a higher level of motivation leads to increased LLS use *and* increased LLS use leads to a higher level of motivation (see, for example, Oxford 1989; and Oxford and Nyikos 1989). Other individual factors relating to emotions which have been shown to correlate with LLS preferences and use include personality type, attitude towards the L2 and language learning in general, learning style, learner autonomy, self-efficacy, learning goals, anxiety and ego boundaries (see, for example, Oxford 1989; Oxford and Nyikos 1989; Oxford and Erhman 1995; Erhman and Oxford 1995; Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford 2003; Griffiths 2004; and Magogwe and Oliver 2007).

Individual variables which impact on LLS use can also be of a socio-cultural and pedagogical nature. For example, researchers have shown factors such as institutional teaching methods, expected learning outcomes, course status, career choice and educational background all to have varying influences on LLS use (see, for example, Ehrman and Oxford 1989; Oxford and Nyikos 1989; LoCastro 1994; Nambiar 2009; and Chamot 2004). Thus, it is clear that there is a very complex interplay between LLS use and a number of variables, leading many researchers to call for LLS studies examining as many variables as possible so as to render a more complete picture of LLS research.

In the Asian context, researchers have also studied these individual differences and their relationship with LLSs. For example, Jie and Xiaoqing (2006) found learning styles to have a significant influence on the strategy use of Chinese EFL students, while Wong and Nunan (2011) identified attitudinal factors as influencing LLS use and effective learning significantly in their study of university-level Chinese EFL students in Hong Kong. There are numerous other studies looking at the relationship between LLSs, language learning success and individual factors in the Asian EFL context – see, for example, (Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons 2004), (Rahimi et al. 2004), (Lee and Oxford 2008), (Gan 2009) and (Khamkhien 2010). Of course, the current study cannot take into account all of these variables and their relationships with LLSs due to logistical, methodological and scope constraints. The individual

factors referred to here will however be kept in mind and taken into account when analysing the data and discussing the results of the research.

#### **2.3.4 LLSs and the SILL in the Asian context**

While a few LLS studies in the Asian context have been mentioned thus far, this section will examine studies in this context in more detail, focussing largely on investigations conducted using the SILL in East Asian and South-East Asian tertiary-level EFL settings.

Although the current study focuses on EFL students in Vietnam, which is a South-East Asian nation, the country is widely considered to fall in the East Asian cultural sphere, or what Matisoff (1990) refers to as the “Sinosphere”, which also includes Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia. These countries are also known as Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHCs). This is due to the long-standing historical influence which China has had over these countries, not only socio-politically and geographically, but also in an educational, linguistic and religious sense. Although the majority of the studies reviewed in this section will be within the East-Asian context, they are pertinent to the Vietnamese context and thus this study.

A number of other studies in East Asia have employed Oxford’s SILL to assess learners’ LLS use and have investigated this usage in terms of students’ language proficiency, measured in different ways. One such study was conducted by LoCastro (1994) with successful EFL learners from five Asian countries in Japan by means of the SILL and group interviews to examine the students’ learning beliefs regarding English and LLS use. The students were identified to be average or medium LLS users, according to Oxford’s (1990: 300) scale of one to five (see table 3.2 in the following chapter for a breakdown of this scale). Although LoCastro’s study only involved 28 tertiary-level students, her findings that certain reading and vocabulary LLSs were rarely used were consistent with O’Malley et al.’s (1985) previous findings of LLS use and Asian learners in that they do not exhibit the characteristics of what is considered a “good learner”. She also observed that the learning context influenced their beliefs, values and LLS use and called for further research of LLS use in different learning environments.

Assorted studies have found significant correlations between LLS use measured by the SILL and language proficiency in the East Asian context. For example, Wen and Johnson (1991) identified strong correlations between tertiary Japanese EFL students' proficiency and groups of LLSs from the SILL, while Takeuchi (1993) found that eight LLS items on the SILL accounted for more than half the variance in proficiency test scores amongst 78 Japanese first-year EFL students.

In Korea, Gi-Pyo Park has conducted extensive research on the relationship between language proficiency and LLSs. One of Park's earlier studies (1997) compared the LLS use, by means of the SILL, of 332 Korean university EFL students with their proficiency levels, as measured by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The students were found to be medium level LLS users on average, using metacognitive LLSs the most and affective LLSs least (Park 1997: 214). An analysis of the results revealed a linear relationship with the TOEFL scores and, while all six LLS categories were significantly related with the proficiency results, cognitive and social LLSs were most predictive of language proficiency (Park 1997: 211).

Another study by Park (2010) compared the LLS use of more effective and less effective Korean tertiary-level EFL students through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data collection was conducted with the SILL and the Test of English for International Communication, while think-aloud protocols with a listening text were used for the qualitative data collection. Through analysis of the quantitative data, more successful learners were shown to use a wider range of LLSs than less successful learners, with a significant yet low correlation with language proficiency (Park 2010: 3). Park speculates that the low correlation may be due to the influence of other variables on LLS use. The qualitative data also exhibited a significant, if low, correlation of LLS use with language proficiency. Importantly, both types of learners (i.e. more successful and less successful) actively used listening LLSs, often using various LLSs concurrently, or as strategy clusters (see section 2.1), although more effective learners employed their LLSs more appropriately and correctly (Park 2010: 7-8); for example, while completing a listening task and using the LLS of prediction, effective learners were mostly able to accurately predict what they would hear based on vocabulary and pronunciation cues, while less effective learners would often predict incorrectly due to misunderstanding previous sentences (Park 2010: 8).

Numerous LLS studies using the SILL have been conducted in China, including the mainland and Hong Kong, as well as in Taiwan. Qinquan, Chatupote and Teo's (2008) studied 184 first-year students at a Chinese university and observed that successful learners used a wider range of LLSs more frequently than their less successful counterparts. The more effective learners often made use of deep, L2-based LLSs (such as picking up words from context or inferencing), they were active participants and they exhibited positive learning attitudes. In contrast, the less successful students tended to use surface LLSs, such as memorisation of vocabulary through repetition, as well as LLSs transferred from the L1, such as word-for-word translation.

Mingyuan (2001) conducted a study of 130 Chinese high school students learning in an Intensive English Program (IEP) using the SILL as LLS assessment instrument which resulted in similar findings to those reported by Qinquan et al. (2008). In Mingyuan's study, there was a strong correlation between language proficiency and LLS use. Furthermore, the learners' proficiency increased as a wider range of LLSs were reportedly used. Overall, the students used compensation LLSs the most, followed by metacognitive, cognitive, social affective and memory LLSs, in this order.

These results were very similar to those found in other studies examining LLS use and language proficiency in the Chinese EFL setting (see, for example, Zhou 2010). Likewise, Yang's (1993a, 1993b) research also revealed high use of compensation LLSs, followed by affective, metacognitive, social and cognitive and memory LLSs. This study comprised of 505 undergraduates at six Taiwanese universities and the data was collected using a Chinese translation of the SILL. The results also revealed that females used significantly more social LLSs than males.

Nisbet, Tindall and Arroyo (2005) also employed the SILL in a LLS study in a tertiary EFL setting in China. They compared LLS use with language proficiency, assessed by means of the TOEFL, of 168 third-year English major students. The researchers' investigation yielded a number of interesting findings. Firstly, metacognitive, cognitive and compensation LLSs fell within the high usage level while students reported using the other three LLSs at a medium level on average (Nisbet et al. 2005: 102). A second point of interest is that only the metacognitive LLS category was significantly correlated with students' TOEFL scores. These results lead the researchers to call for closer analysis of the

interplay between LLSs and language proficiency and possibly other factors such as learner autonomy (Nisbet et al. 2005: 106).

Besides investigating the interplay between students' LLS use and language proficiency, many of these studies in East Asia and South-East Asia also looked at the influence that gender has on LLS use. These investigations have yielded quite varied findings, leading some researchers to hypothesise about the influence of cultural background on LLS choice by gender. While Zhou's (2010) examination of 150 high school ESL learners in China found female students using LLSs more frequently than males, a number of other studies have yielded contrasting outcomes. For example, Nisbet et al.'s (2005) study did not find any significant differences according to gender for any of the primary LLSs on the SILL. Other studies regarding gender and LLS use have resulted in different outcomes again, some of which are discussed below in the South-East Asian context.

There have been fewer LLS studies in the South-East Asian EFL context than in the East Asian context, although there have been several significant studies conducted with students from this geographical area in the ESL context (see, for example, Oxford, Talbott and Halleck (1990); Hon-Nam and Leavell 2006; and Phillips 1991). One notable study performed in an EFL setting in South-East Asia was that of Mullins (1992, in Oxford 1996: 50), who employed the SILL with 110 Thai-speaking tertiary students studying English as their major in Thailand. The students were found to use three LLSs, namely, compensation, cognitive and metacognitive LLSs, at high or near-high levels, whereas the other three primary LLSs were used at a medium level. These results generally matched the findings of many of the previously mentioned LLS studies conducted in China (see, for example, Zhou 2010; and Yang 1993a, 1993b). Mullins used three different proficiency measures to test the correlation between LLS use and English proficiency. Notably, the overall SILL score did not correlate significantly with any of these proficiency assessments, although the measures did correlate with certain specific LLS categories.

In a similar setting to that of Mullins' study – i.e. Thai-speaking students at a tertiary institution in Thailand – Baker and Boonkit (2004) examined the LLSs used in reading and writing by high proficiency and low proficiency ESL learners. Employing a triangulated data collection approach of questionnaires (based on the SILL), structured interviews and learning diaries, the researchers found

that overall LLS use was of a medium level, although the students in general used significantly more compensation, cognitive and metacognitive LLSs than memory, social and affective LLSs. These results were very similar to Mullins' (1992) findings as well as certain other East-Asian LLS studies. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between the successful and less successful learners, either overall or when examining the reading and writing LLSs separately (Baker and Boonkit 2004).

As can be seen from the overview provided in this section, a large corpus of LLS research has developed over the last two decades in the Asian EFL setting. However, very few of these studies have focused on the LLS use of Vietnamese EFL learners in a tertiary setting. One study which does stand out is that conducted by Khamkhien (2010), who investigated the relationship between the LLS use and gender, motivation and language learning experience of 136 Thai-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking tertiary EFL learners studying in Thailand. Analysing results from the SILL, it was found for both nationalities that compensation LLSs were used at high levels. The Vietnamese students also used metacognitive LLSs at a similar level, and male Vietnamese students were high level users of affective LLSs as well (Khamkhien 2010: 78). Both countries' learners were shown to be medium level users of the other LLSs and, generally, there was no significant difference in LLS use between males and females of either nationality.

Nguyen (2009) also studied Vietnamese learners' LLS use, attempting to identify writing strategies used by successful and less successful Vietnamese-speaking university students in Vietnam. Replicating Baker and Boonkit's (2004) triangulation methodology, and despite using only a small group of nine learners, Nguyen found (2009: 79) that, in general, the effective learners used LLSs, specifically, metacognitive, memory, compensation and cognitive LLSs, more frequently in their writing than the less effective learners. There is thus clearly a dearth of LLS research in the Vietnamese EFL setting, especially concerning students at a tertiary level, studying EAP in an IEP. The current study attempts to contribute to LLS research by studying learners in this context and thus adding to, and hopefully enriching, the body of knowledge of LLS use in different settings.

## 2.4 LLS instruction

Central to LLS research is the assumption that LLSs play an important role in enhancing learner autonomy as well as increasing learners' potential and overall success (Riviera-Mills and Plonsky 2007: 538). A further theoretical assumption is that these LLSs can be taught to less successful learners and that teachers can assist in this process and raise awareness of LLSs (Griffiths and Parr 2001: 249). Of course, these hypotheses have significant pedagogical implications and various studies have set out to examine if LLS training is indeed effective and, if so, how LLSs can be taught in an optimal manner. While a few studies have not found LLS instruction to have a significant influence on language progress or success (see, for example, Jurkovic 2010), the majority of studies have indeed found LLS instruction to be successful in enhancing learning to varying degrees – see, for example, (O'Malley and Chamot 1990), (Brown and Perry 1991), (Ayaduray and Jacobs 1997), (Flaitz et al. 1995) and (Lam 2009).

Thus, Chamot (1995: 122) notes there is reason to be “cautiously optimistic about the effectiveness” of LLS instruction. A number of researchers agree, however, that for this type of instruction to be most beneficial to students, it needs to be explicitly integrated into the regular language class (see, for example, Jurkovic 2010; and Chamot 2005). Moreover, a wide variety of the studies conducted on LLS instruction indicate that, for LLS training to be successful, students also need to be explicitly informed of the LLS (i.e. awareness raising) and convinced of its efficacy in aiding learning. Oxford (1989: 244) asserts that the most effective type of LLS instruction explicitly teaches the learner why and how to: (1) use a specific LLS, (2) determine the relative strengths of different strategies, and (3) decide on the appropriateness of transferring certain LLSs to new situations. Furthermore, teachers need to ascertain students' LLS needs and usage, and both teachers and learners need to agree on which LLSs are most effective, as a mismatch between type of LLS taught and the learners' LLS needs can have negative effects, such as learner demotivation (Riviera-Mills and Plonsky 2007: 537; Chamot 2005: 121). Therefore, establishing the students' LLS use and needs is cardinal if LLS instruction is to be optimised in the classroom. This is also one of the principal underlying motivations behind the study reported in this thesis, i.e. to better inform pedagogical methodologies and to offer practical suggestions regarding LLS instruction in the EFL classroom.

## 2.5 Issues in LLS research

As can be seen from the preponderance of LLS studies already discussed, there are a number of points of contention and dispute in this field of research. Some of the issues regard the classification and identification of LLSs and methods of data collection, while others draw attention to contradictory findings and to the unclear nature of the relationship between LLSs and other variables.

First of all, the definition of LLSs remains fraught with difficulty. Rees-Miller (1993, in Macaro 2006: 322) regards strategies as possibly being defined too broadly, while Macaro (2006: 325) notes that there is no consensus about what they actually are, and that their definitions “are arrived at through the use of equally undefined terms”. Another issue is the classification of LLSs, and the methods involved in these classifications. Some researchers have bemoaned the lack of consensus regarding a general, organised taxonomy of LLSs. As Oxford (1990: 17) points out, disagreement regarding classification is unavoidable in that there is no clear demarcation between categories due to the interrelatedness of the strategies. The various data collection instruments used in LLS research have also been criticised – the relative strengths and limitations of these instruments are discussed in chapter 3.

Numerous critics of LLS research have drawn attention to the fact that the supposed causal relationship between learning success, implied by proficiency, and LLSs has not been sufficiently proven. Proponents of LLS theory have argued that it may actually not be a case of cause and effect; as Oxford (1992: 30) notes, “simple cause and effect relationships are rare in language learning”. The relationship may indeed not be causal. For example, Griffiths (2003) postulates that effective LLS use may help students develop greater language proficiency, which in turn may cause higher levels of strategy use – continuously reinforcing and enhancing each other in an upward spiral relationship she terms the “tornado effect”. It is probable that other individual factors, such as self-efficacy beliefs, also influence this complex equation. Nambiar (2009: 144) declares that there may also be a cyclical relationship between strategy use, beliefs, motivation and greater learning success. For example, higher levels of motivation may lead to better strategy use and more successful learning. While it seems to still be a worthwhile endeavour to investigate the causal relationship between LLSs and other variables, researchers should keep in mind that this type of relationship may not actually be

verifiable due to the complex nature of the interrelationships. To add to this complexity, Ehrman, Oxford and Leaver (2003: 325) admit that what researchers thought were individual factors or characteristics, such as aptitude, are now showing themselves to possibly be “ambiguous composites of multiple factors”.

Despite the obvious limitations and criticisms of LLS research, most researchers agree that this area of study is still valuable. Nambiar (2009: 144) claims that strategy research is adding to a more holistic picture of L2 learning, and is helping teachers and researchers refine pedagogy for the classroom. In the same vein, Ellis (1994: 558) professes that this area of study has much potential, not only for teaching but also for the identification of individual L2 differences. Oxford and Crookall (1989: 415) observe that: “If the results so far have indicated anything, it is that LLS research is a double-edged sword. It has provided us with many intriguing insights into how learners struggle with learning or help themselves learn. But it has also revealed how much still remains to be discovered”. Thus, strategy research in the SLA domain seems to be a worthy endeavour with not only theoretical implications but significant pedagogical implications as well.

It is against this rich and extensive background that the study reported in this thesis was conducted. The following chapter looks at the design of the study as well as the LLS data collection methods used. The results of the study are then presented in chapter 4.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

As set out in chapter 1, the focus of the study reported in this thesis is the nature of the relationship between the LLS use and language proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners in an EAP setting. This chapter begins by describing the research methods typically used to investigate LLSs (section 3.1), and then leads to a description of the methods and data collection instruments used in the current study: an adapted version of the SILL (section 3.2.1), in-course (EAP) assessments (section 3.2.2), and a background questionnaire (section 3.2.3). Some details are provided regarding the participants of the study (section 3.3), before concluding with a description of the research design of the study (section 3.4).

#### **3.1 LLS research methods**

Assessing the frequency of LLS use is fraught with difficulties and, although various methods have been incorporated into strategy research, they have had varying degrees of success and have been met with varying degrees of criticism. This is in part due to the fact that not all assessment methods are useful or very effective in every culture (Oxford 1996: 247). Thus, a broad range of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods have been used in LLS research in different contexts. Earlier groundbreaking studies tended to focus more on qualitative techniques such as observations, interviews and diaries in an attempt to list LLSs used by successful learners (see, for example, Naiman et al. 1978), while later research started incorporating more quantitative methods, such as surveys and questionnaires (Park 2010: 4). Brown and Rodgers (2002: 12, 15) argue that survey research should not, in fact, be defined as solely qualitative or quantitative as questionnaires can involve both types of investigation and the line dividing these types of research is not always clearly definable. More recently, numerous researchers have argued for a combined or triangulated approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods that are context specific (see, for example, Boonkit and Baker 2004).

One of the most commonly employed qualitative data collection methods is observations. This is because observation allows researchers to identify and list LLSs used by learners in context and while the learner is actually engaged in an activity. Oxford (2003: 273) distinguishes between a language learning “task”, which refers to “a set of instructions concerning what students are expected to do” and a language learning “activity”, or what students really do while engaged in the task. Another purported advantage of observations is that they can often be conducted easily and efficiently in normal class-time without disruption (Oxford 2001: 148). These assessment methods are therefore valuable in LLS research, yet not without limitations. For instance, observations are limited by the type of LLSs they can assess. According to the definition used in this study, LLSs include observable behaviours as well as unobservable mental cognitive processes. While observations are useful in identifying perceivable LLSs used by learners, they are not sufficient for identifying unperceivable or “mentalistic” LLSs such as guessing intelligently or elaborating (Oxford and Crookall 1989: 405; Oxford 1990). For this reason, it is reasonable to argue that observations are best used in conjunction with other data collection methods in LLS research to provide a more holistic understanding of learning strategies.

In part due to the limitations of observations, many researchers apply a more introspective form of data collection. This often takes the form of “actual-task verbal protocols”, or more specifically, the “think aloud” method, whereby learners report their thoughts as they are performing a task. These reports can be either prompted by the researcher or spontaneous and allow for detailed data gathering on learners’ mental processes and usage of LLSs (Oxford 2010: 147). Verbal protocols also have the added advantage of permitting researchers to link task demand to LLS use, allowing for more contextualised insight into the discrepancies between the application of LLSs in a certain task by successful and unsuccessful learners (Vann and Abraham 1990: 190). A drawback of this method, however, is that it asks learners to multitask (complete the task at hand and report on their strategy use simultaneously), which can be difficult to manage (Oxford 2010: 150). Verbal protocols also do not usually reveal much about the metacognitive LLSs of planning or evaluating (Chamot 2004: 16). Hence, it seems as though these types of verbal report are most efficient when used to assess specific task-related LLSs, as opposed to general LLS use.

Alternatively, many researchers have made use of retrospective interviews when assessing learners' LLS use. Similar to verbal protocols, these interviews can be based on a specific activity, whereby learners are asked to describe the LLSs used, and their thoughts or actions, during a recently completed learning task. These interviews can provide rich feedback and do not interfere with student task completion due to their retrospective nature; however, Kuusela and Paul (2000, in Oxford 2010: 151) observe that this type of strategy assessment provides less reliable information than reporting concurrently while engaged in a learning activity, and Chamot (2004: 15) notes students not remembering their thought processes accurately or describing what they believe to be the "right" answer, i.e. social desirability, as further limitations. To counteract these possible limitations, researchers often employ a task-based interview method known as "stimulated recall protocols", through which the learner watches a video of their task completion and is prompted to give their thoughts or recall LLSs at specific moments. Chamot (2004: 15) states that this type of interview is more likely to reveal accurate LLS use than retrospective interviews. Nevertheless, all of these verbal response mechanisms are somewhat limited by the learners' language proficiency, vocabulary range and ability to express themselves, and the possibility that learners' responses are affected by their knowledge of what is socially desirable, always remains.

Not all strategies though involve performing a specific learning activity, and thus not all interviews are task-specific. Oxford (2010: 153-155) identifies three main types of individual interviews which are not based on immediate tasks. These are: (1) structured or semi-structured individual interviews, (2) semi-structured individual interviews based on a grid of daily activities, and (3) open-ended individual interviews. These types of interviews can be less time consuming than think-aloud protocols and occur on the spectrum of research from more qualitative (open-ended interviews) to more quantitative (structured interviews), depending on the context, need and available resources. These interviews can also occur in group settings or through discussion to assess general strategy use (Oxford 2010: 155).

Although observations, verbal protocols and interviews are some of the more commonly used data collection methods in LLS research, there are other data collection options available. Other types of self-report LLS assessment methods include note-taking, learners' diaries, journals and narratives, yet the degree to which they will successfully assess LLS use depends on a number of factors, such as

how well they are structured or guided, the culture they are set in and how open and free learners feel to express themselves (Oxford 1996: 247).

By far the most frequently employed data collection methods in LLS research are strategy questionnaires. These self-report mechanisms can take the form of actual-task strategy questionnaires (Type A) which are task specific, hybrid strategy questionnaires (Type B) which involve hypothetical scenario-based questions, or structured general strategy questionnaires (Type C) (Oxford 2010: 156-158). All of these techniques have their own strengths and limitations. Type A questionnaires have the benefit of being immediate; thus, students forgetting is not an issue. An added advantage is that they assess specific LLSs in a particular setting, and Hsiao and Oxford (2002) highlight their importance and relevance in adding to a more contextualised categorising of LLSs as opposed to just adding to a general taxonomy. A drawback due to their task-specific nature, as noted by Chamot (2004: 16), is that the tasks used in this type of assessment have not been standardised nor have the follow-up questionnaires, therefore making cross-study comparisons impossible.

Perhaps the most common questionnaire type in LLS research is the Type C questionnaire, which tends to take the form of a structured, student-completed summative rating scale (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995: 2). The relative strengths and limitations of this self-report method are summarised in Table 3.1, which is based on discussions in (Oxford and Crookall 1989), (Vann and Abraham 1990), (Oxford 1990, 2011), (Locastro 1994), (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995), (Ehrman and Oxford 1995), (Chamot 2004), (Woodrow 2005) and (Park 2010).

**Table 3.1 Advantages and Limitations of Structured General Strategy Questionnaires**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Efficient, cost effective and easy to administer and score	Not detailed or contextualised enough nor task-specific
Comprehensive and can be used with large number of students	Retrospective – student may not accurately recall LLS use
Provide a general assessment of learners' LLSs across tasks	Possible misunderstanding of strategy item descriptions

Can be standardised, allowing comparability	Possibility of social desirability biases
Can be correlated with other variables	Different interpretation of rating scales by students
Can provide immediate learner feedback – raising awareness	Transferability across all learning environments not proven
Non-threatening if administered confidentially or anonymously (pencil and paper or computerised)	Results may be influenced by other contextual factors, such as culture or gender
Many questionnaires proven to be highly valid and reliable	Questionnaires may not address specific skills, such as listening

As can clearly be seen from Table 3.1, this type of strategy assessment not only has a number of benefits but also various limiting characteristics, resulting in many theorists calling for a combination of research methods to be used to assess learners' LLS use more accurately and comprehensively. Brown and Rodgers (2002: 243) remark that if one examined data in at least two different ways, "the possibility of getting credible findings by cross-validation" will be maximised. For example, Baker and Boonkit (2004) successfully used a triangulation approach involving a Type C questionnaire (quantitative) as well as a learning journal and interviews (qualitative) in their assessment of students' LLS use. Another illustration of successfully implemented combined research methods is Woodrow's (2006) study of 275 EAP students, which attempted to overcome the issues involved with Type C questionnaires by using follow-up semi-structured interviews to allow participants to comment on questions raised in the questionnaire.

Through trial and error, as well as the identification of the relative strengths and shortcomings of the various data collection techniques involved in LLS assessment, a general picture of research methods in LLS research has emerged. That is, while none of the strategy elicitation techniques are flawless, all contribute, to certain degrees, to a more holistic picture of LLS use. Macaro (2006: 321) observes that questionnaires "provide the broader picture" while "verbal reports effectively yield insights into skill-specific or task-specific strategy use". The use of various strategy research methods, of course, also depends on the scope, time-frame and various resources available to the researchers. In the current study, the participants' LLS use was assessed solely by an adapted version of Oxford's (1990) SILL (see

section 3.2.1.4 below). Reasons for this are that the researcher was limited by the size of the participant group, the time-frame of roughly six months, and the limited resources available to complete qualitative research, such as task-based verbal report analysis or interviews. Instead of utilising a variety of data collection methods, the researcher triangulates his investigation with other studies which have used other LLS assessment techniques in an attempt to validate and support his findings and to inform the subsequent interpretations of the results.

The choice of data collection methods in this study was guided by (i) the research questions and nature of the study, (ii) the specific participant group, and (iii) the limitations, in terms of scope and resources, of the study.

### **3.2 Data collection instruments**

Before turning to the data collection instruments, the research questions that informed the choice of these instruments are repeated below:

#### **Research question 1**

What types of LLSs do Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners in an academic setting use, and with what frequency?

#### **Research question 2**

What is the nature of the relationship between the LLS use, measured according to Oxford's (1990) classification system, and the language proficiency of Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners, as measured by the learners' end-of-course assessment results?

#### **Research question 3**

Is there a significant difference between male and female LLS use?

#### **Research question 4**

Is there a significant relationship between additional English instruction outside of school and LLS use?

### 3.2.1 The SILL

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is based on Oxford's (1990: 291-300) earlier classification system, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The EFL/ESL version 7.0 of the SILL is a 50-item structured survey, operating on a Likert scale of 5 points. The range is stated below (Oxford 1990: 294):

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

The SILL was designed to provide an overall picture of individual students' LLS use, as opposed to LLS use in specific contexts. The items are divided into two overarching groups: direct strategies (29 items) and indirect strategies (21 items), and six subcategories with individual items according to LLSs identified through factor analysis, namely: memory (9 items), cognitive (14 items), compensatory (6 items), metacognitive (9 items), affective (6 items), and social (6 items) LLSs. To obtain students' reported LLS use scores, individual scores for items in each subcategory are added, and then divided by the number of items in each group, resulting in an average for that strategy type. To determine students' overall score, the students' individual item scores are tallied and then divided by 50. Oxford (1990: 300) provides a key for interpreting averages, replicated in Table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2 Key for Interpreting SILL Averages**

Frequency of Use	Evaluation	SILL Average
High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Generally not used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

As mentioned in Chapter 2, multiple studies have been conducted using the SILL to investigate the relationship between LLS use and language proficiency, amongst other variables. Many of these studies have shown either significant linear or curvilinear relationships between LLS use and language performance with the SILL proving an effective LLS use gauge (Oxford 2011: 160). The SILL has also been adapted for various settings and has been employed with over 10 000 learners worldwide. Oxford's (1996) "Language Learning Strategies Around the World: Cross-Cultural Perspectives" summarises numerous studies which have successfully applied this strategy assessment method in different cultures worldwide, including East Asian and South-East Asian EFL settings. Importantly for this study, the SILL has also been applied successfully as a research instrument in academic EFL settings (see, for example, Dadour and Robbins 1996; and Baker and Boonkit 2004). Furthermore, the questionnaire has been translated into more than twenty languages (Oxford 2011: 159). However, this researcher has found no evidence that it has been translated into Vietnamese, the L1 of the students who participated in the current study, to date.

The SILL has been a driving force in LLS research since its inception. Park (2011: 21) acknowledges that many LLS advances have at least in part been due to the SILL and the majority of descriptive LLS studies to date have used this LLS assessment tool (Chamot 2004: 16). The questionnaire has also been used successfully to correlate learners' LLS use with other variables, such as learning styles, motivation, gender, and language proficiency – as discussed previously and in Chapter 2 – resulting in a large corpus of new LLS knowledge and opening multiple avenues for further L2 and LLS investigations.

### **3.2.1.1 Psychometric qualities of the SILL**

In determining which type of research method to employ in a specific study, assessing the method's validity and reliability is essential. Validity can be defined as the "degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure" and the degree to which "the results can be accurately interpreted and effectively generalised" (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995: 7; and Brown 1997, in Brown and Rodgers 2002: 241). The SILL has been shown through various methods to have very high content-, criterion-related-, and construct-validity (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995: 7-8). Content

validity of the SILL has been determined by independent strategy experts, while criterion-related validity has been confirmed through numerous studies analysing and relating LLSs to other key variables, such as language performance (see, for example, Wen and Johnson 1991). Construct validity is established if a theoretical construct is shown to be correctly defined by the items on the measurement instrument (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995: 8). Certain statistical tests, such as factor analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) can measure construct validity and a number of key studies, using one or more of these tests, have proven the SILL to be a valid LLS assessment instrument (see, for example, Dreyer and Oxford 1996).

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the accuracy and consistency of scores on an instrument (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995: 6; and Brown and Rodgers 2002: 241). In other words, if an instrument has high reliability, the study can be replicated (external reliability) or reanalysed by another researcher (internal reliability), yielding very similar or the same results. A measure of internal reliability is the coefficient Cronbach's alpha, which measures the relation between two sets of items, and is commonly used on Likert-type scales like that employed in the SILL, with results of 0.80 or above generally regarded as reliable. Multiple studies across different cultures using this self-report LLS tool, both in English and translated into learners' L1s, have shown high levels of reliability with Cronbach's alpha scores of around 0.89 and higher (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995: 6; Hsiao and Oxford 2002; and Oxford 2011: 161). For these reasons, the SILL questionnaire is generally considered a reliable LLS assessment instrument.

Other statistical tests have investigated the rigour of SILL's underlying theoretical framework, and Oxford's (1990) six-category taxonomy upon which the questionnaire is based has also been shown to be the most consistent with students' actual LLS use (Hsiao and Oxford 2002: 368). In a comparison of fifteen LLS models by means of confirmatory factor analysis and using the SILL with over 500 EFL learners, Hsiao and Oxford (2002: 376-377) showed that the six-category classification model is more consistent than the other models tested in predicting learners' reported use of the 50 strategies, despite not being a completely adequate fit. Oxford (2011: 160) states that "the SILL has been successfully applied for discerning factor analytic profiles of strategy use" among a culturally diverse sample of L2 learners. Thus, while not being a perfect theoretical testing instrument, which is in

reality not actually possible, the SILL has proven itself to be a valid, reliable and superior data collection method in a large number of empirical LLS tests worldwide.

### **3.2.1.2 Limitations of the SILL**

This self-report research method is not without limitations, however. The SILL falls within the scope of criticism summarised in the limitations of Type C questionnaires in Table 3.1 above. Firstly, this questionnaire is not task-based, and can only provide general strategy feedback as opposed to context-specific strategy assessment. Furthermore, certain theorists have pointed out that the SILL, and the classification upon which it is based, does not offer enough insight into certain specific skills strategies such as writing and listening skills (Baker and Boonkit 2004: 319; and Locastro 1994: 412).

A second criticism against the SILL regards the mitigating factor of “Social Desirability Response Bias”, or the instance whereby students answer in a way they think the researcher would like them to, or to make themselves seem socially acceptable (Ehrman and Oxford 1995: 72). Social desirability response bias is often an issue with self-report research methods, yet it can be minimised effectively by conducting the test in a neutral, non-threatening setting while clearly stating the confidentiality of the results and anonymity of the respondents (Oxford 1996: 247). A general lack of this bias has been established with regards to the SILL, as shown by several large-scale studies testing for the presence of this factor (for example, Yang 1992, in Hsiao and Oxford 2002).

Some researchers have also questioned the psychometric qualities of the SILL. For example, Woodrow (2005: 91) criticises the six-category classification of the SILL, arguing that different studies incorporating factor analysis to identify the underlying structure of strategy use have produced contradictory results. In other words, the classification of six categories did not match the factor models created by these studies. This criticism was supported by Park (2011), who performed a confirmatory factor analysis applying the SILL with over 900 Korean EFL students. Using a variety of psychometric assessments, Park tested Oxford’s overarching two-strategy (direct and indirect) model as well as the six-category classification to see how well these models represented the SILL’s structure. The results showed that both these taxonomies provided unacceptable fits for the structure of the SILL, although this may have been due to other variables such as the large participant

group or the strong correlations between the six categories, which, Park (2011: 21-24) argues, calls for further research.

Finally, theorists have also questioned the SILL's transferability across cultures. In her study of Asian EFL students in Japan, Locastro (1994: 413) found evidence that the appropriateness and transferability of the SILL across cultures are questionable. Furthermore, Macaro (2006: 322) challenges the theoretical rigour of the SILL's classification system, claiming there is a greater need for clarity regarding the relationship between the classification system and the underlying theory. Therefore, it is fair to say that this self-report research instrument is not without shortcomings; yet, as explained in the previous section and detailed in the next section, there are several justifications for using it in the current study.

### **3.2.1.3 Rationale for using the SILL**

Despite its shortcomings, there are numerous reasons, stated below, why the SILL was chosen as the strategy assessment instrument to be used in the current study.

The SILL:

- is a valid and reliable research instrument;
- is a valid predictor of language performance and certain other variables;
- provides a superior account of learners' reported LLS use compared to many other classifications;
- shows consistent and significant differences between gender in certain settings;
- can be conducted confidentially and anonymously, resulting in low or no social desirability response bias;
- has been applied effectively in academic EFL settings (specifically the South-East Asian EAP context);
- is easy and efficient to conduct with a large number of participants; and
- is adaptable to make the items easier to understand, is amenable to culture-specific adaptations and can be computerised.

#### 3.2.1.4 Adapting the SILL to the SILL-V

In an attempt to make the SILL as appropriate to the specific context and as efficient to administer as possible, a few steps were taken to modify the questionnaire and the adapted version has been named “SILL-V”. Firstly, the researcher had to decide whether to keep all the items or to remove certain ones from the 50-item questionnaire. As the learners’ reported LLS use would be correlated with language proficiency as measured by the course assessments of four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – it was decided to keep all the items from the original SILL version 7.0 (Oxford 1990). A second justification for this decision was the fact that the questionnaire would be delivered digitally by means of an online survey, allowing for efficient administering to and completion by participants, as well as efficient data collection and analysis of questionnaire responses when compared with a pencil and paper version.

Secondly, as previously mentioned, the SILL has been criticised for not being socio-culturally transferrable or appropriate (i.e. being too standardised) and researchers occasionally need to adapt it slightly to meet the contextual needs of the study. Oxford (2011: 162) notes that tests in various cultures have shown that “major overhauls of the SILL have not been necessary to meet cultural needs”. Nevertheless, to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the questionnaire, the researcher used his experience of teaching EFL to Vietnamese students in academic settings to, firstly, decide whether or not to translate the inventory into Vietnamese and, secondly, identify any items which might cause difficulty or misunderstanding for Vietnamese-speaking learners at the upper-intermediate level of language proficiency. The questionnaire was also scrutinised by two colleagues of Vietnamese descent – one a fellow English educator fluent in Vietnamese, and the other a native Vietnamese-speaking administrative staff member with an advanced level of English proficiency. It was this researcher’s opinion that existing, standardised tests should only be modified as far as this is absolutely necessary in order to ensure maximum comparability of findings of different studies utilising the test. It was thus decided not to translate the SILL into Vietnamese because this was not a necessary change – the English version of the SILL was appropriate for participants at the upper-intermediate proficiency level, although certain items needed adapting (see Appendix B for notes on all adaptations). All other components, including the instructions, examples and Likert scale of 1-5

remained the same on the SILL-V. The answer worksheet which accompanies the original SILL was incorporated into the digitised questionnaire for ease of use and data collection. A short background questionnaire described in section 3.2.3 below was also added (see Appendix A for SILL-V).

### **3.2.2 Course assessments**

#### **3.2.2.1 Assessment and curriculum**

Participants in this study were students studying in the upper-intermediate level of a pre-admissions program leading to diploma or degree studies at one of the Vietnamese campuses of an Australian-based international university. The second data set involved the students' results following assessments at the end of the ten-week English course. This course forms part of the international educational institution's English pathways program, which has recently undergone a comprehensive overhaul to accommodate a focus on task-centred learning following the communicative approach to teaching, and the curriculum framework is based on the four elements of tertiary study requirements, the course, the students and the assessment (RMIT English Worldwide 2011).

The English pathways program is what Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) term an "IEP" (recall: "intensive English program"). Students in each course are required to complete four hours of daily classroom study for a total of two hundred hours per course. Classroom sizes vary between 12 and 20 students per class, with students encouraged to work in groups as often as possible. The IEP course is designed to not only improve the learners' general English proficiency, or BICS (recall: "basic interpersonal communication skills"), but also their CALP (recall: "cognitive academic language proficiency") in preparation for tertiary studies in English (Cummins 2008). The distinction between these two types of proficiency is discussed in section 2.2.

It is important to highlight the fact that LLS instruction is not a formal component of this IEP curriculum, although there are numerous opportunities for teachers throughout the programs to introduce and raise awareness of these strategies, either implicitly or explicitly. Classroom situations may arise where it is appropriate to highlight the benefits of specific LLSs, yet this instruction is at the teacher's discretion. For example, some teachers may instruct students on how to skim or summarise

a text (cognitive strategies) to improve their reading accuracy, speed or comprehension, when such an opportunity arises in context in the classroom. In addition to not being taught explicitly, LLS use is, of course, also not formally or explicitly assessed at all.

### **3.2.2.2 Assessment principles and model**

Assessments at all levels of this pathways academic English program follow rigorous quality assessment and are based on, among others, the following principles (RMIT English Worldwide 2011):

Assessment:

- is based on objectives and outcomes directly related to the courses and tertiary study;
- is valid and reliable;
- meets industry standards; and
- follows current L2 learning theories.

The assessment model is based on two integral components, namely, ongoing or formative assessment (OGA) and end-of-course or summative assessment (EOC) which comprises a student's course result. For the purposes of this study, the students' EOC and course total scores were used as an indication of their English proficiency.

### **3.2.2.3 Validity and reliability of assessments**

There are a number of quality assurance measures in place to ensure the validity, reliability and security of tests. Trialling and analysis of tests are imperative parts of the assessment production process. Firstly, tests are written according to the assessment specifications and are based on course outcomes and course content. These are moderated, modified and trialled several times with both L1 English speakers and EFL/ESL learners. Following the second pilot with a minimum of 50 students, scores are collected, analysed and compared with a benchmark test. The benchmark correlation is determined by Pearson's  $r$  coefficient which measures the correlation between two continuous variables (Brown and Rodgers 2002: 170; and RMIT English Worldwide 2011: 8). Table 3.3 provides a summary of internal test standards. Reliability is measured by Cronbach's alpha, while an item

discrimination measure of larger than 0.4 means a student with a high overall test score is likely to provide the correct answer for that specific item (RMIT English Worldwide 2011: 9). The lower the  $p$  score, the more difficult the item is, and vice versa. Unfortunately, these analyses have only been run on the reading assessments and certain versions of the listening tests to date.

**Table 3.3 Internal test standards set for test characteristics  
(RMIT English Worldwide 2011: 8)**

Measure	Desired score
Cronbach's Alpha	> 0.8
Item discrimination	> 0.4
Difficulty	$0.4 < p < 0.9$
Benchmark correlation	> 0.3
Sample size	Min. 30; ideal > 80

#### 3.2.2.4 Conducting, weighting and marking of assessments

The OGAs are conducted in weeks four or five of the ten-week course and incorporate all of the four macro skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Similarly, the EOCs test all four skills based on the course curriculum, and occur in the final week of the course. Unfortunately, as all the tests used in this study are still active and used with current students, copies of the assessments are not included as an appendix as this could jeopardise the security and confidentiality of the exams.

Both types of assessments are paper and pencil tests, except for the speaking assessment, and are administered under examination conditions (RMIT English Worldwide 2011: 5). (See Appendix C for a summary of the assessments for the upper-intermediate course.) Listening and reading tests are marked according to a provided answer sheet by the class teacher, and double-marked by another examiner if a student fails, in other words, scores under 60%. The writing and speaking tests are assessed by two independent examiners according to established criteria (see Appendix E). Similarly, the speaking exam is assessed by one or two individual examiners, and recorded. If there are discrepancies regarding marks with speaking or writing, or for any reason there is a need for another, independent examiner, an internally-accredited key assessor scores the test a third time. Scores are entered into class result Excel spreadsheets, after which they are checked carefully by level leaders and the assessment coordinator, before being filed, and the results are released to students via

email. To pass the upper-intermediate course, students need an overall score of more than 60%, and cannot score below 60% on any of the EOCs. These examinations are very important for the students, as passing them can ensure entry into a concurrent English and diploma studies program, or the possibility to continue along the IEP pathway.

### 3.2.3 Background questionnaire

Another data collection instrument used in this study is a background questionnaire designed to determine the participants' gender and length of English study, if any, outside of secondary and high school (see Appendix A, questions 7-14). While some questions regarding background were optional, such as questions about the student's age, name, and previous place and method of English instruction, the questions regarding English learning experience and gender were compulsory so as to address research questions four and five (repeated above at the beginning of section 3.2) about the relationship between LLS use and these variables. The questionnaire was developed to be highly structured, so as to provide another form of quantifiable data which can be easily analysed and correlated with the LLS data. Thus, students could only choose between certain close-ended options, except for one open-ended question, the answer to which was not necessary for the data analysis but only of interest to create a more general understanding of the students' English learning backgrounds and to inform the discussion of the results in Chapter 5. An example of two of the questions is given below. If the student answered "Yes" for question 12, question 13 would drop down. This question was specifically designed with five options so as to correlate with the five-point Likert scale of the SILL-V.

**Figure 1. Example of SILL-V background question**

<p><b>12. Have you studied English outside of secondary/high school?</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p> <p><b>13.</b></p> <p><b>How long have you studied English outside of secondary/high school?</b></p> <p>1) 0-6 months</p> <p>2) 6-12 months</p> <p>3) 1-2 years</p> <p>4) 2-4 years</p> <p>5) More than 4 years</p>
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### 3.3 Participants

As can be seen from previous research discussed in Chapter 2, numerous LLS investigations have been conducted in East Asia and South-East Asia. Many of these studies have been in tertiary EFL environments and many have analysed language performance or proficiency in terms of LLS use (see, for example, Mingyuan 2001; and Qingquan, Chatupote and Teo 2008). To this researcher's knowledge, very few LLS investigations in tertiary EFL environments have been conducted in Vietnam. Nguyen's (2009) study, mentioned in section 2.3.4, investigated the writing LLSs used by a small group of successful and less successful Vietnamese-speaking learners in Vietnam, while Khamkhen's (2010) research involved Vietnamese-speaking university learners in Thailand. To this researcher's knowledge, no studies analysing the relationship between students' overall LLS use and language proficiency in Vietnam have been published to date. Thus, the choice of participants and setting for the research reported in this thesis should add original insights to the growing body of LLS research being conducted in countries across the world.

As previously mentioned, participants in this study were all students studying in a ten-week upper-intermediate course in the academic English pathways program at an international university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A vast majority of the students study in the English pathways program with the aim of entering the university's tertiary programs, most of which offer business and finance degrees and diplomas. It is generally believed in Vietnam that the students who attend this university come from wealthy backgrounds, due to the high study fees and because scholarships and student loans are not common practises in Vietnam (Huynh 2012). To illustrate, the course fees for a ten-week EAP course at the university are nearly double the average annual income per capita in Vietnam, with many students completing three or four such courses a year before being eligible to enter the university diploma or degree programs (RMIT International University Vietnam 2012; and International Monetary Fund 2012). Through interviews with numerous students at this university regarding their reasons for studying here, DeBrot (2012) reported that, although perceptions are shifting, the Confucian paradigm of education still prevails. That is, high scores in exams are the key to future status and earning power. Furthermore, all of the interviewed students believed the primary reason for studying was to gain the relevant qualifications and skills to obtain high-earning

jobs, although other societal factors, such as family pressure and expectations, and practical considerations, such as chosen career type, were also mitigating factors.

Since the economic reforms brought about by the Vietnamese policy of Doi Moi (Renovation) of the late 1980s and early 1990s, English has been taught as a foreign language at secondary and high school level. Khamkhen (2010: 71) observes that English is the most common foreign language taught in Vietnam and “has become a passport to a better paid job ... in many enterprises”. This partly accounts for the proliferation of English language teaching centres throughout the country, especially in the capital city Hanoi and the economic capital of Ho Chi Minh City. Thus, it was expected that the majority of the students who participated in the study would have received English instruction in a formal educational setting from lower secondary school (grades six to nine) through high school (grades ten to twelve), as set out by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (2006). Some of the participants had received instruction in English from an earlier age, in a formal English learning setting at primary school (which students generally start at age six), by attending English centres, through private tutors, or by attending international schools with some of, or the entire, curriculum being provided in English.

In total, there were 102 participants in the study – with an even number of males (51) and females (51). The demographics related to gender and age are presented in Table 3.4. The average age of the 74 participants who reported their age (which was optional) was 19.43 years, with a maximum age of 26 and a minimum age of 18. The average age at which the participants in this study started learning English was 10.7 years, with a minimum age of four and a maximum age of 19.

**Table 3.4 Participants' age and gender (where indicated by participants)**

Gender		Age
Male	N	40
	Mean	19.58
	Std. Deviation	1.500
	Minimum	18
	Maximum	26
Female	N	34
	Mean	19.26
	Std. Deviation	.666
	Minimum	18
	Maximum	21
Total	N	74
	Mean	19.43
	Std. Deviation	1.195
	Minimum	18
	Maximum	26

### 3.4 Research design and analysis

As mentioned previously, this study primarily took the form of a quantitative investigation into Vietnamese speaking students' reported LLS use and its relationship with other variables. The first main data intake occurred in week eight of the ten week course. This week was chosen as the students had already completed their OGAs and had two weeks before their final examinations. Thus, they had already invested a lot of time and effort into their studies and the chances of dropping out of the course were much lower than if the questionnaire had been administered in week two; in this way the data collection from all intakes was maximised. Participants in the upper-intermediate program were emailed the link to the online SILL-V survey a few hours before their computer laboratory lesson to ensure they all completed it under the same conditions. In this lesson, students each have access to their own computer and the internet. Teachers were asked to leave the class and the researcher guided the students through the questionnaire. Students were informed both through the email and by the researcher at the beginning of the session that their answers were confidential, that their teachers would not see the results, and that providing their names was optional. The students were required to provide their student numbers so that their LLS use and other variables

could be correlated. They were also informed that it was not a test and were urged to answer the questions honestly and not in the way they thought their teachers would like them to answer. This was done to remove, or at least minimise, the influence of social desirability response bias.

In total, 110 students answered the questions on the SILL-V. Of the 110 respondents, eight were removed because they did not fit the profile; specifically, the criteria to be included in the study were that learners had to be of Vietnamese cultural background and not significantly older than the average age of the cohort (18-19 years old). For these reasons, seven were taken out of the study group as they did not fit the cultural background criterion, and one was removed as she was significantly older than all of the other participants. This was to ensure some homogeneity and stability with regards to variables which were not measured in this study (i.e. age and cultural background), leaving a total of 102 participants. Thus, data was collected on the participants' overall and individual reported LLS use, as well as essential background information regarding gender, and also whether students had studied English outside of the formal school setting and the length of these studies. Optional information was also gathered on the students' age and English study settings. All the data was then analysed by another researcher by means of the statistical analysis computer program SPSS 18 to assess overall LLS use, validity and reliability, and to identify possible significant correlations between the relevant variables. The individual LLSs related to memory and cognition were later also analysed for a more in-depth look at student LLS use and these LLSs' relationship with each other (see section 4.1.2).

The next data intake was conducted after the students had completed their EOC tests in week 10 of their course and once the results spreadsheets had been checked and results authorised for release to students (see Appendix E for EOC assessment specifications and criteria, and Appendix F for the participants' assessment scores). The scores used in this study were the EOC scores, with a weighting of 60%, and the overall course score, which included the OGA exam scores (with a weighting of 40%) and the EOC scores. The results were then analysed by a researcher through SPSS 18 and correlated with the LLS data to check for significant relationships between the variables.

The results of the study are reported in chapter 4 and discussed in chapter 5.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This chapter presents the results of the study described in chapter 3, with specific focus on the four research questions posed in Chapter 1. Section 4.1 focuses on the types and frequency of the overall LLS use of the 102 participants as well as the results of an investigation into the participants' use of individual memory and cognitive LLSs, more specifically. Section 4.2 presents findings regarding the nature of the relationship between the students' assessment results and their reported LLS use, while section 4.3 reports on the correlation between gender and LLS use. The correlation between students' English instruction outside of school and their reported LLS use is reported in section 4.4. These results are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

### **4.1 Participants' reported LLS use**

As mentioned above, this section reports on the types and frequency of the participants' LLS use, as reported in response to the SILL-V (see section 3.2.1). First, the students' reported overall LLS use is presented, followed by their memory and cognitive LLS use.

#### **4.1.1 Overall LLS use**

The first research question regards the type and frequency of Vietnamese learners' LLS use in an academic EFL setting as determined by means of the SILL-V questionnaire. Recall from Chapter 3 that the SILL-V is based on Oxford's (1990) SILL questionnaire, following the same six-category LLS classification. In both the SILL and the SILL-V, Part A of the classification refers to memory LLSs, Part B to cognitive LLSs, Part C to compensation LLSs, Part D to metacognitive LLSs, Part E to affective LLSs and Part F to social LLSs. This study follows Oxford's (1990) methodology whereby students are asked to score their own LLS use for each individual item on a Likert scale from one to five, with one being "never or almost never used" and five being "always or almost always used". The scores are then added to obtain the average LLS use per category, as well as overall. These results are presented for

the group as a whole in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, as well as in Figure 2. Scores under 2.5 are classified as “low LLS use”, between 2.5 and 3.5 as “medium LLS use” and between 3.5 and 5 as “high LLS use”.

**Table 4.1 Individual six-category LLS use**

		Memory average	Cognitive average	Compensation average	Metacognitive average	Affective average	Social average
Total	N	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Mean	3.164488	3.341036	3.570261	3.504357	3.124183	3.648693
	Std. Dev.	.5168545	.4671365	.5874729	.5940815	.6792081	.6388189
	Min.	1.8889	2.1429	2.1667	1.6667	1.0000	2.3333
	Max.	4.4444	4.5714	4.8333	4.8889	4.6667	5.0000

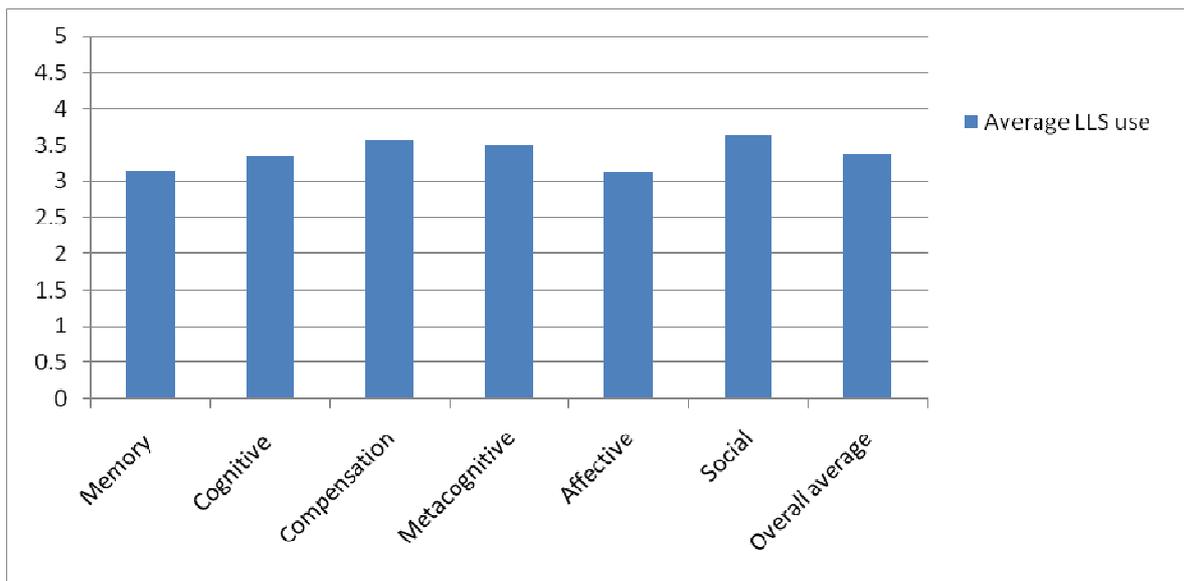
N = total participants

**Table 4.2 Total LLS use average**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Total	102	3.3771	.38699	2.46	4.60

N = total participants

**Figure 2. Category and overall LLS use averages**



As can be seen from Table 4.1 and Figure 2, students in this study mostly reported medium to high LLS use across the six LLS categories. Three LLS types are reported as being used at a high frequency (“usually used” to “always or almost always used”) and three at a medium frequency (“sometimes used”). LLSs reported as being used at a high frequency are social (3.64), compensation (3.57) and metacognitive (3.50) LLSs. In general, medium LLS use is reported for cognitive (3.34), memory (3.16) and affective (3.12) LLSs and overall LLS use is at a medium level (3.37) as shown in Table 4.2. The difference between the LLSs with the highest and lowest mean usage is only 0.52. The average of the total LLS use reported in this study was 3.37, which falls within the top end of the medium use range.

Another analysis was performed on the data to test the strength of association between the different LLS types. This was done by measuring the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which is an appropriate measure for variables or numbers on a continuous scale such as the LLS use data collected in this study. The results are shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 Correlations between average LLS use for the six categories**

		A	B	C	D	E	F
A (Memory)	r-value	1	.501	.235	.468	.338	.307
	p-value		.000**	.018*	.000**	.001**	.002**
	N	102	102	102	102	102	102
B (Cognition)	r-value		1	.409	.529	.343	.320
	p-value			.000**	.000**	.000**	.001**
	N		102	102	102	102	102
C (Compensation)	r-value			1	.194	.207	.175
	p-value				.050	.037*	.079
	N			102	102	102	102
D (Metacognitive)	r-value				1	.404	.410
	p-value					.000**	.000**
	N				102	102	102
E (Affective)	r-value					1	.317
	p-value						.001**
	N					102	102
F (Social)	r-value						1
	p-value						
	N						102

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, i.e. if  $p \leq 0.01$ .

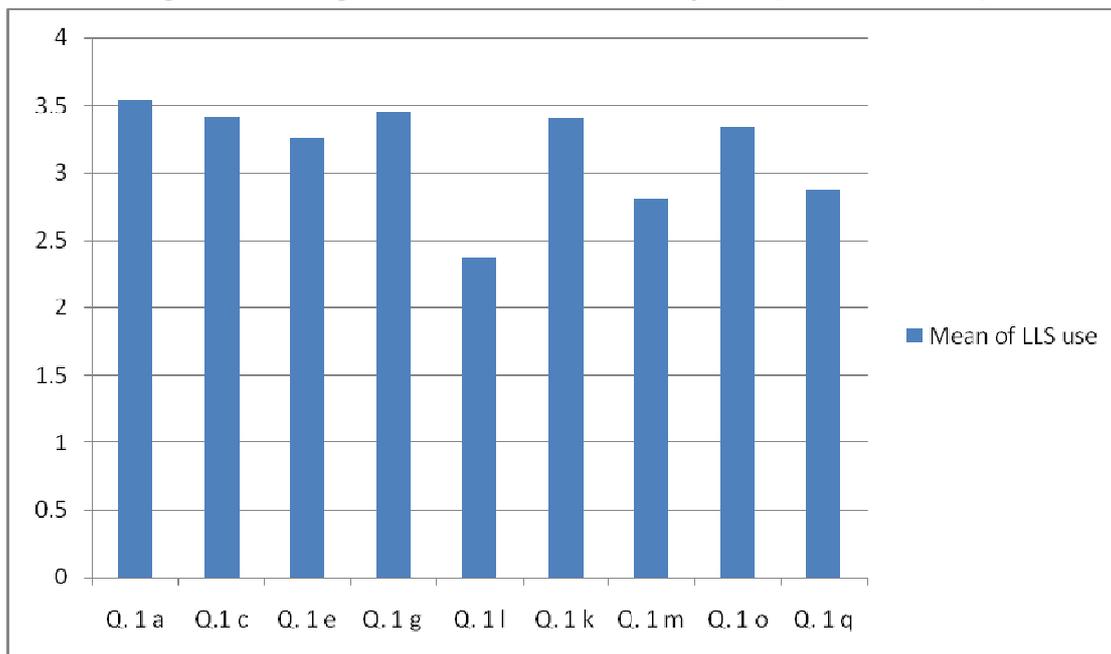
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, i.e. if  $p \leq 0.05$ .

From the data presented in Table 4.3, it is clear that there is a significant correlation between nearly all pairs of the six LLS categories. For example, memory LLSs correlate significantly with all five other LLS types. In other words, if a student reports frequent use of memory LLSs, there is a strong likelihood of frequent use of any or all of the other LLSs. Similarly, a student reporting seldom using memory LLSs would probably report seldom using the other LLSs as well. This type of relationship with all five other categories also holds for affective LLSs and cognitive LLSs. The strongest individual relationships, all significant at  $p < 0.01$ , can be found between the LLSs of cognition and metacognition ( $r = .529$ ,  $p = .000$ ), followed by the correlation between memory and cognition ( $r = .501$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and, finally, memory and metacognition ( $r = .468$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The only correlations that were not significant were those between compensation LLSs and metacognitive LLSs ( $r = .194$ ,  $p = .050$ ), and between compensation LLSs and social LLSs ( $r = .175$ ,  $p = .079$ ).

#### **4.1.2 A closer look at memory and cognitive LLS use**

School and tertiary students from CHCs are characterised as being rote learners and as passive and social participants in class, a topic which is discussed in more detail in chapter 5. It follows that these learners are generally expected to report high frequency usage of memory LLSs and low frequency usage of social and affective LLSs. In contrast, in the study reported here, the participants' use of memory LLSs was of medium frequency and of the six LLS types, it was the second least frequently used (with affective factors reported as being used least frequently). It was decided to analyse the individual items in Part A – memory LLSs – of the SILL-V. This decision was based on a previous study by Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) which found similar discrepancies between expected and reported use of memory LLSs and found that investigating the individual items shed light on these initially surprising results. The decision was also made to look at the individual items in Part B – cognitive LLSs – as seemingly significant overlaps do occur between LLS categories, and certain individual items related to memory are found in Part B (Oxford 1990: 16). The individual item results are presented in Figures 3 and 4, while the SILL-V questions to which they relate are repeated in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

**Figure 3. Average use of individual memory LLSs (Part A of SILL-V)**



**Table 4.4 Individual LLS items for Memory LLSs (Part A of SILL-V)**

Q.1.a. I connect new things I learn in English with what I already know.

Q.1.c. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.

Q.1.e. I connect the sounds of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.

Q.1.g. I remember a new English word by imagining situation in which the word might be used.

Q.1.i. I use rhymes (*đồng âm*) to remember new English words.

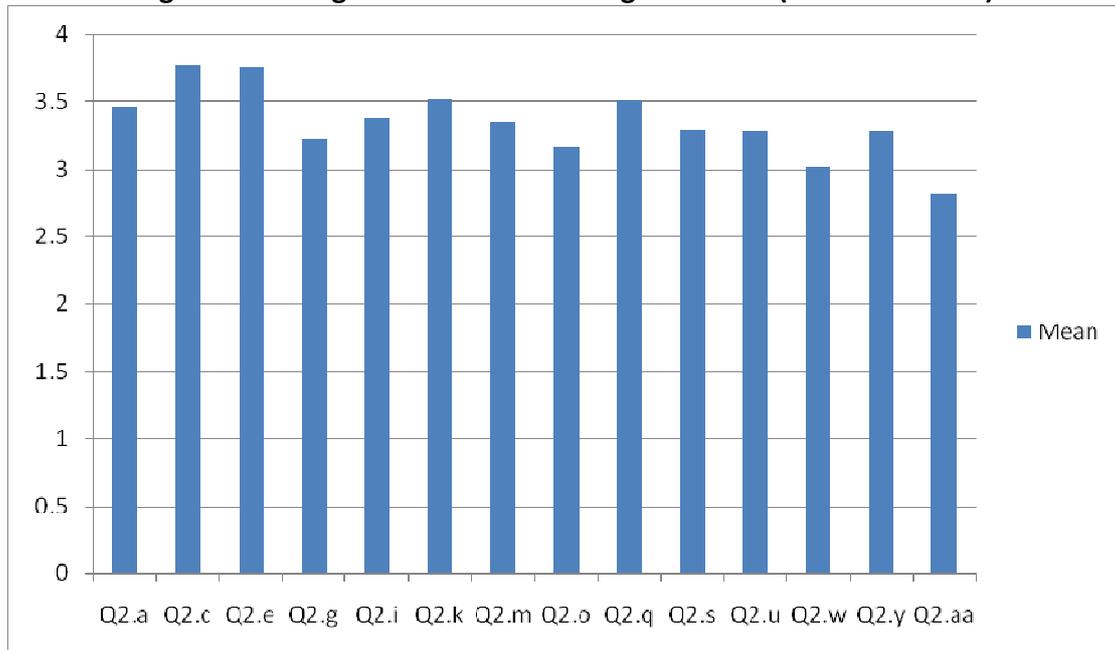
Q.1.k. I use notes or pictures to remember new English words.

Q.1.m. I physically act out new English words.

Q.1.o. I review English lessons often.

Q.1.q. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering where I first saw them.

**Figure 4. Average use of individual cognitive LLSs (Part B of SILL-V)**



**Table 4.5 Individual items for Cognitive LLSs (Part B of SILL-V)**

Q.2.a. I say or write new English words several times to learn or remember them.
Q.2.c. I try to talk like native English speakers.
Q.2.e. I practise the sounds of English.
Q.2.g. I use the English words I know in different ways.
Q.2.i. I start conversations in English.
Q.2.k. I watch English language TV shows in English or go to movies spoken in English (without looking at subtitles).
Q.2.m. I read for pleasure or fun in English
Q.2.o. I write notes, messages, letters or reports in English.
Q.2.q. I first skim an English text (read over it quickly) then go back and read it carefully.
Q.2.s. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
Q.2.u. I try to find patterns ( <i>mãucâu</i> ) in English.
Q.2.w. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
Q.2.y. I try not to translate word-by-word
Q.2.aa. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

The results generally indicate medium to high reported use of the individual LLSs related to memory and cognition, ranging from the lowest mean of 2.37 (Q.1.i) to a high of 3.77 (Q.2.c). According to the student responses, participants prefer LLSs which are used for remembering language by connecting it with prior language knowledge (Q.1.a) or imagining how they would use it in a future situation (Q.1.g). The results also show that this participant group makes frequent use of memory LLSs related to *active practice*, such as watching English TV or movies (Q.2.k), using new language in sentences (Q.1.c), practising the pronunciation of English and trying to replicate native speaker pronunciation (Q.2.e and Q.2.c) as well as repetition (Q.2.a). Less frequent use was reported for *more abstract* LLSs related to memory. For example, students reported comparatively low use of incorporating rhymes to remember vocabulary (Q.1.i), physically acting out new English words (Q.1.m), and relating new vocabulary to specific previous contexts in order to remember them (Q.1.q).

#### 4.2 LLS use and language proficiency

The second research question concerns the relationship between LLS use and language proficiency, measured by the students' overall test scores for the four macro skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each skill was tested by an individual assessment, except the writing skill which was tested by two different assessments (the scores for which were added up to obtain the students' overall writing score) (see Appendix C for descriptions of these assessments). The overall total score was obtained by adding up students' EOC and OGA results. As can be seen from the information provided in Table 4.6, students fared best in reading assessment and worst in listening assessment, the highest overall average was 91% and the lowest was 46%. Individual assessment scores, as well as the students' overall percentages, are presented in full in Appendix F.

**Table 4.6 Participants' EOC and overall scores according to skill**

	<b>LISTENING</b>	<b>SPEAKING</b>	<b>READING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>	<b>OVERALL</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	18%	50%	36%	50%	46%
<b>Highest score</b>	100%	95%	100%	92.5%	91%
<b>Mean</b>	67.5%	73.5%	76.1%	72%	69.3%

Using Oxford's proposed classification of low, medium and high strategy usage (see Table 3.2), participants were categorised according to their reported LLS use. The participants' assessment scores, representing their language proficiency, were then correlated with these groupings. In other words, the relationship between each of the assessment scores (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and frequency of LLS use (low, medium, high) was then determined for each of the six LLS categories. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA), which are statistical procedures testing for significant interrelations and differences between two or more variables, were conducted to test the relationship between these two variables (language proficiency, on the one hand, and LLS use according to frequency grouping, on the other). The results are presented for each of the six LLS categories in Tables D1 to D6, respectively, in Appendix D.

Presented below in Tables 4.7 to 4.12 are the participants' LLS use according to category and grouped according to frequency. Generally, the relatively small differences between the assessment averages of the different LLS frequency groups suggests that there may not be significant differences or correlations between LLS use according to frequency and language proficiency represented here by the assessment averages. This was confirmed by the MANOVA analyses presented in Tables D1 to D6 in Appendix D.

#### **4.2.1 Language proficiency and memory LLSs**

The relationship between the use of memory LLSs and language proficiency (as indicated by the four skill assessments) was investigated. As can be seen in Table 4.7, the medium LLS use group had by far the largest number of total participants with 70 and the low LLS use group the least with only eight students. This trend was repeated throughout the analysis due to the overall averages for LLS use falling within the medium to medium high range (see Figure 2) – the results of this distribution are discussed in the next chapter. Interestingly, students who reported the lowest use of memory LLSs performed the best in all four EOCs – 69% for listening, 75% for speaking, 75% for reading, and 71% for writing – although, as mentioned, this group only included eight students (see Table 4.7). The students who reported using memory LLSs at a medium frequency fared second best in the listening (68%), reading (73%) and writing EOCs (71%), and third best in the speaking assessment (72%).

Finally, the high LLS use group had the second highest scores for speaking (74%) and third highest for listening (66%), reading (71%) and writing (69%). After performing a MANOVA test with the averages for the four skills and the three memory LLS groupings, no significant differences or correlations were found (see Appendix D, Table D1). Note that whenever no significant correlations are found between the frequency of the use of a particular type of LLS (here: memory LLSs) and the average scores for the four skills assessments, this means that the frequency with which a participant uses the particular type of LLS does not predict his L2 proficiency in terms of listening, speaking, reading or writing.

**Table 4.7 Memory LLS usage level and the four assessment averages**

	LLS use grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Low	8	69%	.190863
	Medium	70	68%	.175543
	High	23	66%	.192461
	Total	101	68%	.179056
Speaking	Low	8	75%	.088641
	Medium	70	72%	.086141
	High	23	74%	.111094
	Total	101	73%	.092324
Reading	Low	8	75%	.169031
	Medium	70	73%	.144785
	High	23	71%	.161065
	Total	101	73%	.149157
Writing	Low	8	71%	.033630
	Medium	70	71%	.065373
	High	23	69%	.075503
	Total	101	70%	.065743

#### 4.2.2 Language proficiency and cognitive LLSs

When comparing the averages for the assessment scores with reported cognitive LLS use, it was found that the group which reported high frequency use, consisting of 38 students, performed the best in three areas, namely, speaking (75%), reading (73%) and writing (71%), and second best in listening (67%). The medium LLS use group (59 students) scored the highest in listening (68%), but third highest in speaking (71%) and ranked second in the other two skills (72% for reading and 70%

for writing). The low frequency LLS group, comprised of only four students, ranked third in all assessments, with averages of 65% for listening, 72% for reading and 69% for writing, except in speaking, where they scored the second highest marks (71%). These results are presented in Table 4.8 below. Again, after performing a MANOVA analysis no significant differences or correlations were found between the three frequency levels of cognitive LLS use and the average scores for the four assessments (see Appendix D, Table D2).

**Table 4.8 Cognitive LLS usage level and the four assessment averages**

	LLS use grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Low	4	65%	.195493
	Medium	59	68%	.178663
	High	38	67%	.182540
	Total	101	68%	.179056
Speaking	Low	4	75%	.129099
	Medium	59	71%	.084476
	High	38	75%	.096526
	Total	101	73%	.092324
Reading	Low	4	72%	.185592
	Medium	59	72%	.159841
	High	38	73%	.131411
	Total	101	73%	.149157
Writing	Low	4	69%	.031180
	Medium	59	70%	.067979
	High	38	71%	.065005
	Total	101	70%	.065743

#### 4.2.3 Language proficiency and compensation LLSs

As can be seen in table 4.9, for compensation LLSs, the high LLS use group was comprised of 62 students, while the low usage group only consisted of three students. The high LLS use group scored highest in speaking and writing assessments (73% and 70%, respectively) and second highest in listening and reading (68% and 72%, respectively), while the medium LLS users (36 students) showed an inverse trend, scoring highest in listening and reading (69% and 73%, respectively) and ranking second in the speaking and writing assessments (72% and 71%, respectively). The low LLS use group,

comprising three students, scored lowest on all four assessments (58% for listening, 68% for speaking, and 71% for both reading and writing). Note that the 58% they scored in listening is a failing average, meaning that the students failed to pass this assessment and thus failed to pass the upper-intermediate course (recall that students need to achieve 60% in each EOC as well as overall to pass the level). Similar to memory and cognitive LLSs, there were no significant correlations between language proficiency and the frequency of compensation LLS use, or significant differences between the three LLS frequency groups (see Appendix D, Table D3).

**Table 4.9 Compensation LLS usage level and the four assessment averages**

	LLS use grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Low	3	58%	.176383
	Medium	36	69%	.168000
	High	62	68%	.186686
	Total	101	68%	.179056
Speaking	Low	3	68%	.104083
	Medium	36	72%	.093563
	High	62	73%	.091700
	Total	101	73%	.092324
Reading	Low	3	71%	.221944
	Medium	36	73%	.134164
	High	62	72%	.156573
	Total	101	73%	.149157
Writing	Low	3	71%	.048829
	Medium	36	71%	.066252
	High	62	70%	.066651
	Total	101	70%	.065743

N = total participants

#### 4.2.4 Language proficiency and metacognitive LLSs

Table 4.10 shows the results of the participants' reported frequency of metacognitive LLS use, according to the three groupings, and their language proficiency represented by the average of the four EOCs. Similar to the compensation LLS grouping, the high frequency LLS use group consisted of the largest number of students – 56 in this case. As was the case with the other five LLS categories, the students who reported low use of metacognitive LLSs were in the minority with only six students

in this LLS category due to the overall medium to high reported use of these LLSs, while 39 students fell into the medium frequency use group.

Regarding the individual skills assessment results, the low LLS use group scored the highest average percentage in listening (81%), speaking (75%), and reading (77%), yet the lowest in the writing assessments (71%). The medium LLS use group scored the second highest in listening (68%), and reading (72%), and the lowest of the three groups in speaking (72%) and writing (70%). The high LLS use group ranked first in writing (71%), second in speaking (73%) and last in listening (66%) and reading (72%). These results are presented in Table 4.10 below. After performing a MANOVA analysis, the results again showed there were no significant differences or correlations between the three groups' frequency of metacognitive LLS use and their language proficiency (see Appendix D, Table D4).

**Table 4.10 Metacognitive LLS usage level and the four assessment averages**

	LLS use grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Low	6	81%	.077220
	Medium	39	68%	.171571
	High	56	66%	.187553
	Total	101	68%	.179056
Speaking	Low	6	75%	.077460
	Medium	39	72%	.096392
	High	56	73%	.091732
	Total	101	73%	.092324
Reading	Low	6	77%	.216453
	Medium	39	72%	.138859
	High	56	72%	.150352
	Total	101	73%	.149157
Writing	Low	6	71%	.067837
	Medium	39	70%	.055462
	High	56	71%	.072573
	Total	101	70%	.065743

N = total participants

#### 4.2.5 Language proficiency and affective LLSs

The students' reported affective LLS use was the most evenly spread amongst the low, medium and high groups, with 17, 53 and 31 students, respectively. Nevertheless, this is still not an ideal distribution for analysis, due to the large discrepancies between cohort numbers and the lower reliability and validity which accompanies small study participant numbers.

As can be seen in Table 4.11, the low LLS use group scored the highest marks on average for the listening, reading and writing assessments – 72%, 79% and 73%, respectively. They also ranked second highest in speaking (74%). The high LLS use group only scored slightly higher marks in the speaking assessment (74%), and the second highest in both reading (72%) and writing (70%), but ranked last of the three groups in listening (65%). The medium LLS use group scored the second highest marks for the listening test (68%), yet ranked third for the other three skills with 72%, 71%, and 70% for the speaking, reading, and writing tests, respectively. A MANOVA analysis showed no significant differences between the four assessment scores and different frequencies of affective LLS usage (see Appendix D, Table D5).

**Table 4.11 Affective LLS usage level and the four assessment averages**

	LLS use grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Low	17	72%	.165714
	Medium	53	68%	.172311
	High	31	65%	.197972
	Total	101	68%	.179056
Speaking	Low	17	74%	.112867
	Medium	53	72%	.086843
	High	31	74%	.091464
	Total	101	73%	.092324
Reading	Low	17	78%	.167132
	Medium	53	71%	.146853
	High	31	72%	.139096
	Total	101	73%	.149157
Writing	Low	17	73%	.076088
	Medium	53	70%	.065490
	High	31	70%	.058151
	Total	101	70%	.065743

N = total participants

#### 4.2.6 Language proficiency and social LLSs

Similar to the other five LLS groupings, the three levels of frequency regarding social LLS use showed an unequal distribution of students across the groups, with 67 students reporting high LLS use, 29 students in the medium use category and only five students in the low LLS use group. The high affective LLS use group scored the highest marks for listening and speaking, with averages of 69% and 74%, respectively, and the second highest marks for the reading (73%) and writing EOCs (71%). While attaining the highest average marks for writing (72%), the low LLS use group ranked last in the other three skills, with 68% for speaking, 69% for reading and a failing average of 59% for listening. The medium affective LLS use group ranked first in reading (73%), second in listening (67%) and speaking (71%), and third in writing (69%), as presented in Table 4.12 below. After a MANOVA analysis of the data, no significant differences were found between the frequency LLS use groupings and any of the average assessment scores reflecting proficiency (see Appendix D, Table D6). This was a prevailing result for all six LLS categories, and the implications of these findings are discussed in the following chapter.

**Table 4.12 Social LLS usage level and the four assessment averages**

	LLS use grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Low	5	59%	.226875
	Medium	29	67%	.177078
	High	67	69%	.177405
	Total	101	68%	.179056
Speaking	Low	5	68%	.130384
	Medium	29	71%	.086318
	High	67	74%	.090553
	Total	101	73%	.092324
Reading	Low	5	69%	.215510
	Medium	29	73%	.124315
	High	67	73%	.155617
	Total	101	73%	.149157
Writing	Low	5	72%	.084245
	Medium	29	69%	.058019
	High	67	71%	.067340
	Total	101	70%	.065743

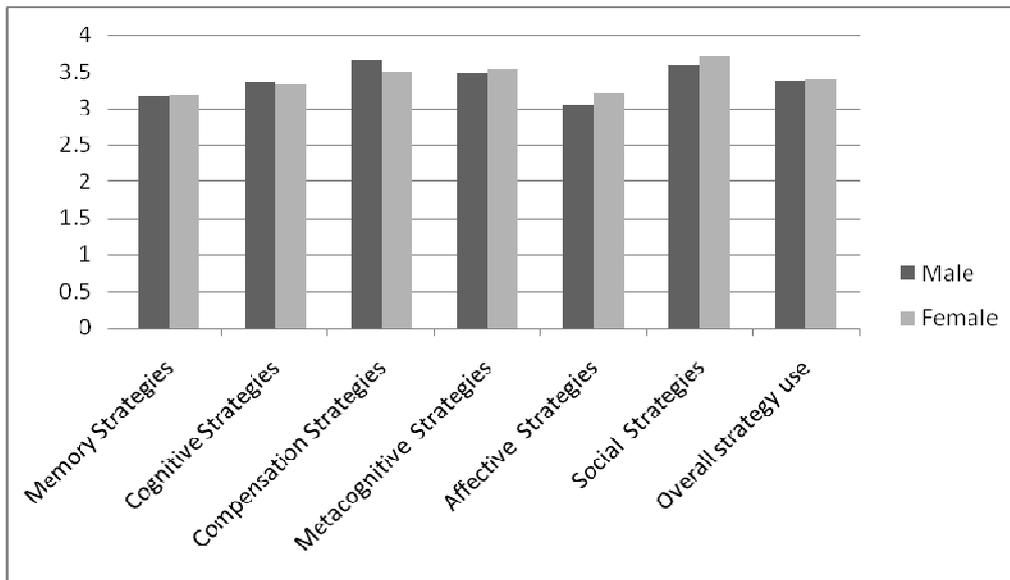
N = total participants

### 4.3 LLS use and gender

Research question three concerns the relationship between reported LLS use and gender, with the hypothesis that females generally report using LLSs more frequently than males, as found by a number of other LLS studies (see section 2.3.3.2). In this study, there was an even spread of 51 males and 51 females who completed the questionnaire, allowing for a more valid and reliable indication of the effect of gender on LLS use. The participants' reported LLS use is presented according to gender in Table 4.13 and Figure 5 below.

**Table 4.13 LLS category averages according to gender**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
A (Memory)	Male	51	3.163399	.4850114
	Female	51	3.165577	.5517078
	Total	102	3.164488	.5168545
B (Cognition)	Male	51	3.355742	.4331871
	Female	51	3.326331	.5026978
	Total	102	3.341036	.4671365
C (Compensation)	Male	51	3.653595	.5300347
	Female	51	3.486928	.6340725
	Total	102	3.570261	.5874729
D (Metacognitive)	Male	51	3.466231	.5854278
	Female	51	3.542484	.6059976
	Total	102	3.504357	.5940815
E (Affective)	Male	51	3.052288	.6637354
	Female	51	3.196078	.6933861
	Total	102	3.124183	.6792081
F (Social)	Male	51	3.594771	.7073070
	Female	51	3.702614	.5640269
	Total	102	3.648693	.6388189

**Figure 5. LLS use according to gender**

A clearly recognisable trend in Figure 5 is the relatively similar average reported usage of LLS categories as well as overall LLS use, for the two groups. This is also demonstrated by the small variance between the genders, with the largest discrepancy occurring in compensation LLSs, at only 0.16 (see Table 4.13). Both genders reported two types of LLSs as being “usually used” – for males, they were compensation and social LLSs, while for females they were metacognitive and social LLSs. All other LLSs were reported at a medium level of frequency for both genders. From the apparent parity of reported LLS use by both genders, it is therefore not surprising that a MANOVA analysis did not reveal any significant differences between the gender groups, neither in terms of individual categories nor in terms of overall LLS use (see Appendix D, Table D7). These results are not entirely surprising, given that certain studies report having found an effect for gender on LLS use, while others report not having found such an effect. The results presented above are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

As can be seen in Figure 5, overall, male and female students reported using LLSs at a medium level, with females reporting marginally higher usage at 3.39 compared with the males’ average of 3.37. Regarding the individual categories, females reported using memory, metacognitive, affective and social LLSs at a higher level than males, while males reported higher levels of cognitive and

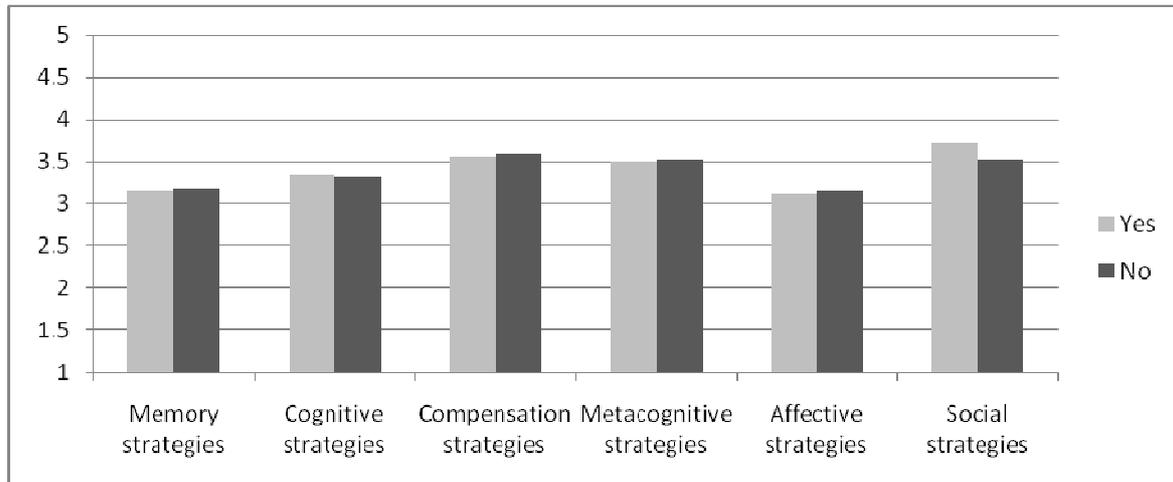
compensation LLS use. Finally, females reported social LLSs as the most frequently used, whereas males reported compensation LLSs as the most frequently used.

#### 4.4 LLS use and English learning experience outside of high school

The final research question of this study addresses the students' use of LLSs according to their English language experience. In question 12 of the background questionnaire attached to the end of the SILL-V students were asked whether they had received any English instruction outside of their formal school setting. This question was based on the hypothesis that students who had experience studying English outside of school would use LLSs more frequently. The majority of the respondents – 67 students – answered “yes” to the question, and 35% answered “no”. Table 4.14 and Figure 6 present the frequency of LLS use, in terms of the six LLS types, for participants who had versus those who had not received English instruction outside of school.

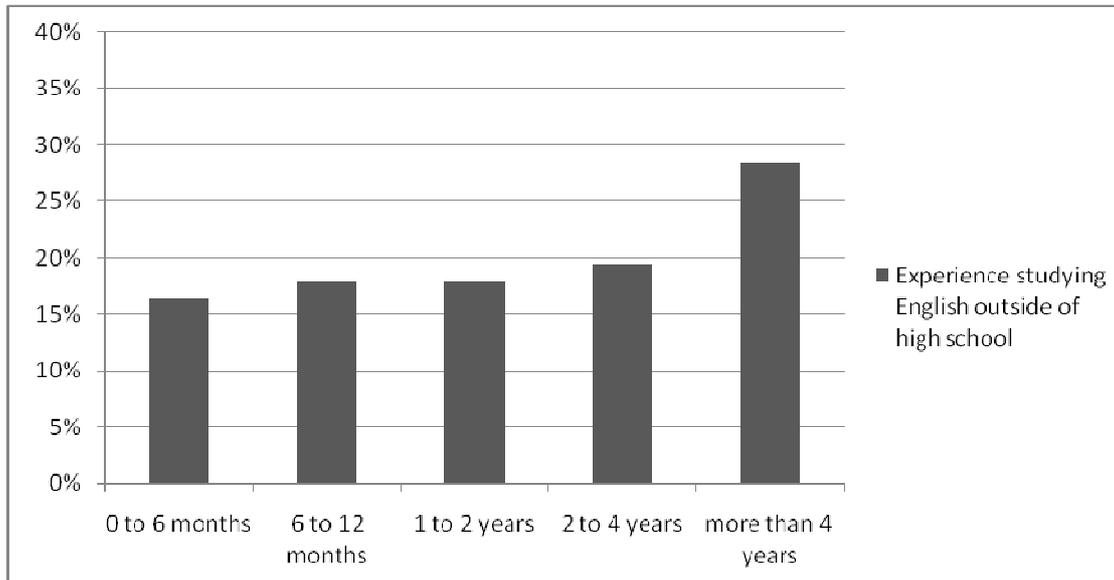
**Table 4.14 LLS category use and studying English outside high school**

Eng studied outside school		Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Meta-cognitive	Affective	Social
Yes	N	67	67	67	67	67	67
	Mean	3.152570	3.349680	3.562189	3.495854	3.116915	3.718905
	Std. Deviation	.5171347	.4486864	.6408090	.5993912	.6902489	.6250986
	Minimum	2.0000	2.1429	2.1667	1.6667	1.0000	2.3333
	Maximum	4.4444	4.5714	4.8333	4.8889	4.3333	5.0000
No	N	35	35	35	35	35	35
	Mean	3.187302	3.324490	3.585714	3.520635	3.138095	3.514286
	Std. Deviation	.5230847	.5069573	.4772118	.5921119	.6672616	.6522603
	Minimum	1.8889	2.2143	2.5000	2.2222	2.0000	2.3333
	Maximum	4.4444	4.2857	4.5000	4.8889	4.6667	5.0000
Total	N	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Mean	3.164488	3.341036	3.570261	3.504357	3.124183	3.648693
	Std. Deviation	.5168545	.4671365	.5874729	.5940815	.6792081	.6388189
	Minimum	1.8889	2.1429	2.1667	1.6667	1.0000	2.3333
	Maximum	4.4444	4.5714	4.8333	4.8889	4.6667	5.0000

**Figure 6. Frequency of LLS use according to English learning experience outside of school**

The results presented in Table 4.14 and Figure 6 are interesting, and do not support the hypothesis for research question four that learners who have been exposed to English instruction outside of school use more strategies more frequently. To illustrate, as can be seen in Figure 6, for four of the six categories – memory, compensation, metacognitive and affective LLSs – students who had had no English instruction outside of school reported higher LLS use than those who had received outside instruction. With regards to cognitive and social LLSs, students who answered “yes” to the question of whether they had studied English outside of school reported higher LLS use. As should be clear from Figure 6, though, the difference between the two groups was very small for all six categories, with the maximum difference being 0.03. All of the LLSs in both groups again fell within the medium to high frequency range. For these reasons, it is not surprising that there was no significant effect of instruction on frequency of LLS use.

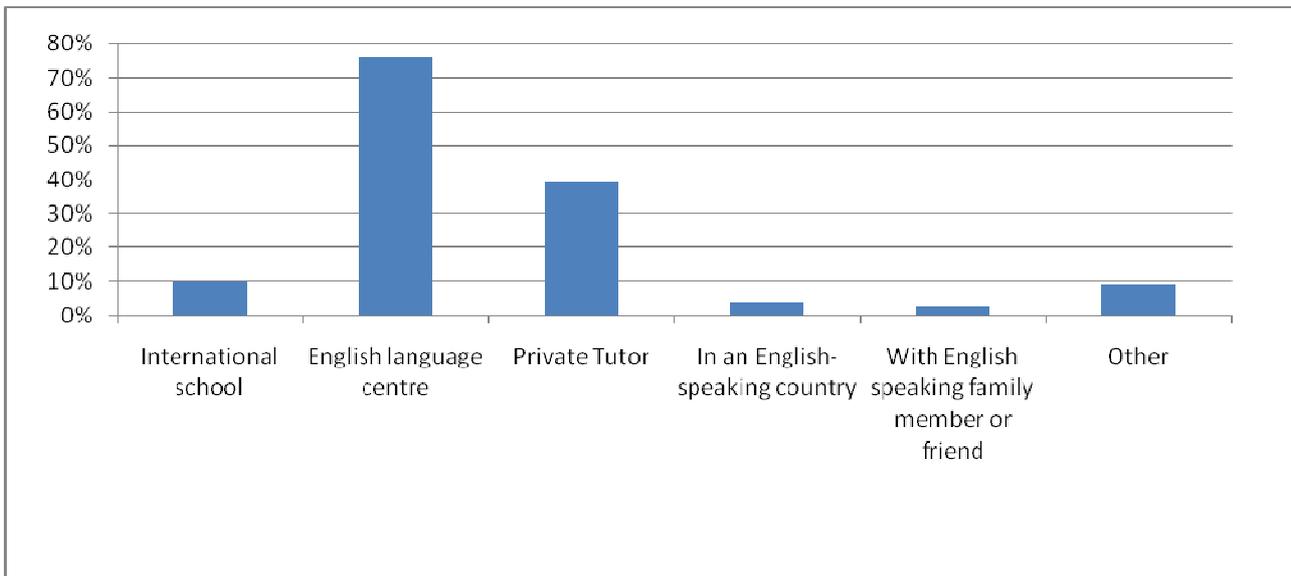
Students’ length of English learning experience outside of school was examined by question 13. This optional information gleaned from the background questionnaire attached to the end of the SILL-V also yielded some noteworthy results and may provide further information regarding the discussion of the lack of significant correlation between frequency of LLS use and exposure to English outside of school. The participants’ responses to this question are presented in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7. Length of experience studying English outside of high school**

Regarding the length of experience reported by those students who had received English instruction outside of high school, nearly half the respondents had studied English for two or more years. More than a quarter of these students (28%) had studied English for over four years, 19% for two to four years, and 18% had received instruction for both one to two years and six to twelve months. The lowest percentage – 16% – belonged to the group who had learned English outside of school for less than six months.

Question 14 of the SILL-V asked those students who had English learning experience outside of high school to state in which setting this instruction occurred. The results of the data collected from this question are presented in Figure 8. The large majority of these students (76%) stated their experience was at an English language centre and the second most frequent source of instruction was a private English tutor, at 39%. The other four options were all chosen by seven or fewer students, ranging from studying at an international school (10%) to learning with an English-speaking family member or friend (3%). It should be noted that for this question on the SILL-V, students could choose more than one option. A discussion regarding the implications of these data for research question four follows in the next chapter.

**Figure 8. Setting of English instruction outside of high school**



This chapter presented the results of a study on Vietnamese-speaking learners' reported LLS use and investigated whether there is any significant correlation between this variable and three other variables, namely language proficiency, gender and length of study outside of school. The following chapter offers a discussion of these results and possible reasons for these outcomes.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter along with possible reasons for these results. The chapter begins by considering plausible explanations for the students' reported overall LLS use in section 5.1, then discusses the individual LLS type outcomes in section 5.2, before considering the relationship between LLS use and language proficiency in section 5.3. Finally, a number of probable reasons for the lack of significant correlations between gender and LLSs as well as between (length and type of) exposure to English outside of school and LLSs are presented in the last sections (sections 5.4 and 5.5) of this chapter.

### 5.1 Reported overall use of LLSs

While certain results of the data collected via the SILL-V were surprising, other results were quite consistent with previous studies in similar contexts, in other words, East-Asian and South-East Asian tertiary EFL settings. Recall from section 4.4.1 that students' reported overall LLS use fell within the medium usage category (at 3.37) and that social, compensation, metacognitive and cognitive LLSs were used most frequently, whereas memory and affective LLSs were used least. These findings are very similar to the patterns found in other studies conducted in the East-Asian and South-East Asian academic EFL context. For example, Nisbet et al. (2005) reveal similar LLS use in their study of the LLSs and language proficiency of Chinese EFL university students. Their findings indicate that learners used metacognitive, cognitive, compensation and social LLSs highly frequently and made less use of memory and affective LLSs, which is very similar to this current study's findings.

A small number of other studies in similar contexts have also resulted in comparable LLS use findings. For instance, Hong-Nam and Leavell's (2006) investigation into the LLSs of mostly East-Asian ESL students in IEPs at different levels of proficiency shows a similar LLS use pattern to that found in the current study. In their study using the SILL, learners reported employing metacognitive, social and compensation LLSs at high frequency levels (above 3.5) with cognitive LLS use only slightly lower at 3.44. Memory and affective LLSs were reported as being utilised at a much lower level of around

3.00. This pattern of lower memory and affective LLS usage is consistent across numerous studies involving East-Asian and South-East Asian students (see, for example, Phillips 1991).

The study with perhaps the most similar results to the current investigation's is Wharton's (2000) assessment of the LLS use of bilingual Singaporean learners of other languages. These students reported exactly the same pattern of LLS use, albeit at a slightly lower frequency, with social LLSs used most frequently at 3.16 and affective LLSs the least at 2.67. While these findings show considerable congruence with the outcomes of the current study, the context of Wharton's study is quite different. For example, possible mitigating factors include different settings (ESL versus EFL), different languages being studied (French and Japanese as opposed to English) and a different version of the SILL. Nevertheless, the similar findings are notable due the similar context of South-East Asian students at a tertiary institution, which could mean the learners in both investigations possess similar types and levels of motivation.

Learner motivation may also be a contributing factor to a feature of this study which has been noted in other research; specifically, the high LLS use average reported in this study. Motivation refers to the learners' will and desire to learn the L2 (Oxford 2003: 275). Various forms of motivation have been defined in a number of ways. Perhaps one of the more common classifications of motivation in SLA is Gardner's (2001, in Woodrow 2006: 297) distinction between an integrative orientation, which refers to focusing on the L2 and its culture, and an instrumental orientation, which is more reward- or goal-focused. An example of instrumental motivation would be a learner studying English to improve his career prospects. The students studying at the institution where this research was conducted exhibited typically instrumental motivational behaviour, as discussed in section 3.3. As motivation has been shown to be significantly related to LLS use in a number of studies (see, for example, Oxford and Nyikos 1989), it seems quite likely that the high reported LLS use in the current study may be influenced by the participants' high motivation levels, although this is a hypothesis which would need to be tested in future research.

The high reported mean for the six-category LLSs may also be partly accounted for by the overall proficiency level of the learners in this study. Oxford (1989) contends that a learner's LLS use does not remain constant; rather, it progresses along with the student's proficiency, and Griffiths observes

that students at higher proficiency levels use LLSs to a greater extent. A handful of other studies using the SILL found a curvilinear relationship, with students at the intermediate level showing greater LLS use than at the lower and higher levels – see Phillips (1991) as an example. Recall from section 3.4 that the SILL-V was conducted near the end of an upper-intermediate course with 102 participants studying in a pre-admissions IEP. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that they were at the higher end of the intermediate proficiency scale. This relatively high level of English proficiency may explain the medium to high overall LLS use reported by these students.

Another plausible reason for these findings is that the majority of these students had progressed along the university's English pathways program from lower levels and, while most of these LLSs are not explicitly taught in the curriculum, many of the LLSs referred to in the SILL-V are implicit to the course. For example, it is possible that some of the students had studied in this IEP for up to 500 hours before answering the questionnaire. In all of these levels, students are given vocabulary booklets to record new words and are shown various ways to record their vocabulary. Implicit in this activity is raising awareness of different ways of remembering new vocabulary, which are memory LLSs. For this reason, students' awareness of certain LLSs may have increased and they may have adopted a higher use of these throughout the courses in this IEP.

Overall, the difference between the LLS types reportedly used most and least frequently was only 0.52. This narrow distribution may in part be due to the language proficiency level mentioned above; however, other factors such as cultural background may also go some way to explaining this outcome. For instance, studies have shown that students from different backgrounds report different levels of LLS use and those from the same background show preference for the same types of LLSs (see, for example, Politzer and McGroarty 1985). Thus, the fact that the participant group is homogenous in terms of culture renders the differentiating influence of cultural background on LLS use ineffectual in the current study. The same could be argued in terms of age, which impacts on LLS choice, yet in this case would not have had much effect on producing distinguishable results due to the general uniformity of the participant group's age, with a large majority of the learners being 18 and 19 years old with a standard deviation of only 1.195 (see table 3.4).

It should be noted that, aside from language proficiency level, researchers have identified a number of other factors which influence LLS use. These include the previously mentioned variable of motivation, as well as nationality, career orientation and affective variables such as attitude (Oxford and Nyikos 1989). Although this means that the reasons for students' LLS use cannot really be accurately determined based on one or two variables alone, it is, of course, impossible to take into account all variables in any single study.

## 5.2 Reported use of individual LLS types

### 5.2.1 Social LLSs

The results of this study reveal that students use social LLSs at the highest level (3.64 on the SILL-V) when compared with the five other LLS types. This finding is significant in that only a few LLS studies have found this pattern of use in similar settings. In fact, a number of other LLS studies using the SILL in the East-Asian context have found social LLSs to be used the *least* of all six types (an example being Park 1997). Nonetheless, a previously-mentioned study conducted by Wharton (2000) in Singapore displayed the same pattern in terms of reported LLS use as the current study. Wharton (2000: 229) claims such a high average for social LLS use "is unique for language learning studies conducted with samples of Asian students in Asia and generally so for most SILL studies conducted worldwide". Despite the supposed paucity of studies showing high social LLS use, Phillips' (1991) findings also showed a high use of social LLSs by Asian students in an ESL setting. These results strongly contradict what Phillips (1991: 62) refers to as "the popular belief that Asian students generally resist using participation in social interaction as a means to improve their second language proficiency".

One possible reason for the contradiction of the stereotypical Asian learner regarding social LLS use may be related to the learning context. To illustrate, similar to the current study, Phillips and Wharton's research was conducted with Asian university-level students. At this education level, students are often asked to work in groups to complete tasks and assignments. This could mean that university students are aware of the need to interact, ask questions and communicate in order to be successful at learning the language and using it in their academic studies, which would then be reflected by their frequent employment of social LLSs.

More support for the high social LLS scores of this study may be found by investigating students in the participant group's previous learning experiences. Wei (2012) surveyed Vietnamese students enrolled at the same institution as the participant group of the current study regarding their high school experiences and found that these previous school experiences greatly shaped students' learning and expectations for university. In terms of studying English at high school, priority is given to reading, vocabulary and grammar in teacher-centred classes, with preparation for examinations also a major focus, and there is little emphasis or time spent on social and communicative activities in class. Littlewood (in Gan 2006: 44) conducted a large-scale survey of over 2600 students from both European countries and CHCs and found that most students inherently question the authority structure of the classroom, regardless of their background. It seems plausible then that once students graduate from high school, they may want to depart from this teacher-centred, didactic approach to learning and teaching and instead embrace a more social and interactive attitude to studying when attending an international university where the English programs are built around a communicative approach to English teaching. As mentioned, the majority of these students have also studied at the lower levels in this IEP, or in other intensive English courses at language centres in Vietnam, where they would have been exposed to the communicative approach and where social interaction is fostered, encouraged, and often assessed.

Students' proficiency level may also influence their frequent use of social LLSs significantly. Oxford (1990) believes social LLSs to be higher order LLSs and thus related to advanced proficiency. Various other researchers have found higher levels of interactive and communicative LLS use to be related to higher proficiency levels (see Griffiths 2003; and Oxford and Nyikos 1989). An example is Hong-Nam and Leavell's study (2006: 247), which identified social LLSs as the most frequently used LLS type amongst their advanced level learners. It seems quite likely then that the upper-intermediate level students in the current study are probably more confident in their language skills than students at lower levels of proficiency and hence are more likely to employ social LLSs, such as seeking out native speakers to practise their English with, asking for corrections of their own speech from English speakers or practising their English with others outside of class.

It may also be assumed that the cultural context influences social LLS use to a certain degree. The participating learners study in an EFL environment where there is a dearth of opportunities to speak English outside the classroom. This is because English is not commonplace in Vietnam: even though it has become a compulsory school subject in recent years, the majority of Vietnamese do not speak the language. It seems likely then that when students learning English get the opportunity to practise their English in a social context, both with native speakers and other students in and outside the classroom, they make full use of this opportunity. The factors mentioned above do not exist completely separately from each other and, for this reason, it is most probable that the high level of social LLS use reported by this group of students is based on a combination of the reasons proposed above.

### **5.2.2 Compensation LLSs**

LLSs which serve to compensate for missing knowledge were reportedly used the second most frequently. This type of LLS is usually reported to be employed more frequently by lower level or less successful students (Mingyuan 2001: 56). This is not always the case, however, as Oxford (1990: 47-48) observes that advanced learners and even native speakers occasionally use compensation LLSs, such as guessing intelligently, when confronted with missing knowledge. Nevertheless, the extent to which the participants in this group reported using compensation LLSs is surprising given their relatively advanced proficiency level. It seems likely therefore that additional variables were influential in terms of reported compensation LLS use.

Firstly, the curriculum of the English courses in which these students are enrolled may be an influencing factor. One of the vocabulary skills taught in this IEP is that of guessing new vocabulary from the context in which it occurs, especially in the context of assessments, as students are not allowed to use dictionaries. Students are also often made aware of the fact that they do not need to understand every new word or look it up in a dictionary when reading, and are instead taught to guess the meaning. This type of LLS instruction may have had a significant impact on the students' use of compensation LLSs.

Secondly, it is possible that there is a slight gap between the students' proficiency level and what is being taught in their course, which may be due to the quick progression through the course levels. To illustrate, a student could pass from the lower-intermediate course, through the intermediate course and into the upper-intermediate course in only 20 weeks of study. This would mean that some learners would find what is being taught slightly above their proficiency level and quite challenging, thus resorting to LLSs to compensate for missing knowledge more frequently (Chatupote and Teo 2008: 344).

### **5.2.3 Metacognitive LLSs**

A number of studies investigating LLS use in a South-East Asian academic EFL setting have found students to frequent metacognitive LLSs at a relatively high level, which is very similar to this current study's findings (see Mullins 1992; and Baker and Boonkit 2004). This LLS type relates to metacognitive knowledge and the ability to organise, self-manage, self-evaluate and seek practice opportunities, with high levels of this type of LLS often demonstrated by more successful learners (Chatupote and Teo 2008: 344). It may be logical to assume that students in this study reported frequent use of this type of LLS due to their relatively high level of language proficiency.

It seems these students are aware of the importance of self-management and planning in their learning success. Similar to the IEP students in Hong-Nam and Leavell's study (2006: 409), students in a pre-admissions program generally tend to be quite instrumentally motivated as their reasons for studying relate to their future academic lives and careers. Coupled with the knowledge that they have the option of entering a diploma program upon passing, these students are probably also strongly goal orientated, in other words, motivated to take responsibility for, and control of, their learning (Gardner 2001, in Woodrow 2006: 298).

### **5.2.4 Cognitive LLSs**

Cognitive LLSs are directly applied to a target language through manipulation and transformation of the language, and are typically found to be of the most frequently applied LLSs (Oxford 1990: 43). In this study, LLSs related to cognition were reported to be used at a medium level (3.34). A closer

investigation of the individual LLS items was also conducted in part to analyse some of the overlapping cognitive LLSs which relate to memory (see section 4.1.2).

In terms of individual LLSs of cognition, students reported high use of active language practising. This includes LLSs related to rote memorisation such as practising the sounds of English and saying or writing new words several times to remember them. These results are in line with the stereotype that students from CHCs are rote learners (Gan 2009: 42). In this regard, this rote learning characterisation of learners from these cultures may hold true, although there are other possible reasons for the high usage of these types of memory-related cognitive LLSs. For example, Vietnamese students may practise the sounds of English frequently due to the substantial difference between their L1 and the L2 in terms of pronunciation and phonology. It may also be an attempt at sounding like native speakers, which is another cognitive LLS on the SILL-V reported to be utilised highly frequently. Rote learning may also be utilised in an attempt to deal with a large number of new words. This English course expects students to learn and use academic lexis in their writing and many of these learners have not been exposed to this type of English vocabulary before. Thus, in trying to learn the large number of new words, students apply their rote memorisation LLS.

Students in this study also reportedly make great use of other active practice LLSs such as watching television or movies in English without looking at the subtitles. In Vietnam, Western shows and movies with Vietnamese subtitles are shown on cable television and are very popular. Similarly, films at the cinema and DVDs are usually in English with Vietnamese subtitles and are very popular with teenagers and young adults. The influence of Western entertainment is also readily seen in the EFL students' use of Americanised expressions and colloquial language. The students who take opportunities to actively practise their language use, commonly employ these methods.

A final cognitive LLS used highly frequently is skimming, which relates to the students' reading skills. The high frequency of this LLS's use is possibly due to the IEP curriculum and is a LLS which is often taught implicitly and in the context of classroom activity at the intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced levels. As students were surveyed in week eight of their ten-week course, it is very likely that they would have been exposed to, and made aware of, this LLS and incorporated it into their learning.

### 5.2.5 Memory LLSs

Students in this study reported relatively low use of memory LLSs (3.16 on the SILL-V) which prompted a closer analysis of the individual items in this category (see section 4.1.2). While the LLSs related to rote memorisation in the cognitive LLS category were utilised frequently, similar items in the memory LLS category were only reported as being used at a medium level. Instead, the only LLS employed at a high level in this category is related to making connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge. This contradicts the stereotypical assumption that Asian learners strongly rely on rote memorisation techniques in learning a language, as well as results found by Politzer and McGroarty (1985). In their study, Asian students were found to have strong preferences for memory LLSs, while “learn by heart” memorisation is strongly encouraged at school in Vietnam (Wei 2012).

This result is perplexing, given the high usage of the LLS related to rote learning in the cognitive LLS category mentioned above. The differing use of these LLSs may lie with the course level. As mentioned in section 5.2.4, students may employ the LLS relating to memorisation in the cognitive category at a high level due to the challenging academic lexis they are expected to memorise. It is possible that the LLSs related to rote learning in the memory LLS category are not required as often due to the nature of the coursework and the LLSs. For example, “remembering new words or phrases by remembering where I first saw them” may be a LLS utilised more by beginner learners, rather than upper-intermediate students focusing mostly on academic lexis – which is nearly always learnt in the classroom environment.

Further support could be found by examining other studies with similar findings. The current study’s results resemble Hong-Nam and Leavell’s (2006: 409) findings, and the authors suggest two possible reasons for the low memory LLS use. The first possibility is the influence of the IEP on student’s LLS use. Teachers in this program may highlight other LLSs students can use to learn the language, such as mnemonic games and quizzes, thus lowering their reliance on the memory LLSs referred to in the SILL. Another plausible explanation can be found in the differing definitions of memory LLSs used in different studies. For example, in Politzer and McGroarty’s (1985) study, the entire memory LLS

category is defined as rote memorisation of vocabulary, whereas this specific skill only relates to a small part of the memory LLS category on the SILL.

A strong argument can also be made in favour of students consciously changing their attitudes to language learning. This would be in line with the findings of Littlewood (in Gan 2006: 44) discussed in section 5.2.1, which confirmed that, regardless of culture, students tend to question the authority figure in classroom settings, which include tertiary EFL settings. As rote learning, rigid instruction and the belief that students should be a passive audience rather than active participants is still favoured and encouraged in the Vietnamese education system, it is conceivable that students are trying to break away from this didactic approach and embrace a less traditional attitude to language learning upon completing their secondary education, reflected in their choice of LLSs. Studying English for academic purposes (EAP) at an Australian international university in Vietnam which follows the communicative approach to teaching presents them with the opportunity to test other study techniques and LLSs. Gan (2009: 43) states that “students’ learning attitudes and LLSs can be subject to changes under different social and educational circumstances”, and this may very likely be the case in the current situation.

The LLSs related to memory reported as being used least are using rhymes as well as physically acting out new words. This may be seen as a reflection of one of the typical features of learners from CHCs, namely that they are passive and favour traditional learning methods and therefore would not favour what could be considered as less conventional strategies (Gan 2006). Vocabulary at the upper-intermediate level of this IEP tends to be mostly academic and often abstract in nature; hence, it may be that students find employing the LLSs of acting out new words or rhyming words difficult.

#### **5.2.6 Affective LLSs**

Of all six categories, affective LLSs, or those relating to emotions and attitudes, were reported to be used least frequently by the students in this investigation, with a mean of 3.12 on the SILL-V. This is a general trend in East-Asian and South-East Asian LLS studies conducted using the SILL (examples include Hong-Nam and Leavell 2006). There may be various reasons for the relatively low use of affective LLSs.

One viable reason may be related to students' cultural background. It seems probable that cultural values and norms influence affective LLS use. Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006: 409) observe that "Asian cultural mores encourage listening to others and discourage public discussion of feelings". Thus, students are culturally dissuaded to talk to others about their feelings regarding English, which is an affective LLS.

Another possibility involves the structure of the IEP and the context. As the ten-week courses are structured around OGAs and EOCs which students need to pass in order to progress to the next level, or to gain admission to university, students are very aware of examinations and the importance they have in influencing the speed of their progress in their academic careers. This importance is reinforced by the cyclical nature of the courses and the fact that much time is spent preparing for assessments. All of these factors can cause students to feel under a lot of pressure and thus affect their ability to take their "emotional temperature", which can manifest in their use of affective LLSs.

It also seems credible that low reported affective LLS usage on the SILL may not actually reflect true LLS usage. Baker and Boonkit's (2004: 319) findings reflect the current study's in terms of affective LLSs, and the authors point out that their students' low scores may be ascribed to the shortage of items – a mere six items in total – relating to emotional LLSs on the SILL. The researchers also found data collected through more qualitative measures contradicted their quantitative findings. Furthermore, the researchers posit that affective LLSs actually act as support for the other LLSs, and therefore students are less aware of them and have difficulty identifying and reporting them (Baker and Boonkit 2004: 319). Other affective variables, such as attitude and personality type, may also affect the choice of affective LLSs, making it difficult to ascertain the precise factor or combination of factors influencing the students' reported use of these LLSs.

### 5.3 LLS use and language proficiency

The lack of significant correlations between the six LLS categories, on the one hand, and language proficiency as measured by the students' end of course assessments on the other, is at first glance surprising; yet, upon more in-depth examination, numerous possible reasons for this finding emerge.

#### 5.3.1 Problems with self-report questionnaires

The first area of investigation involves the data collection instrument and the way in which students report their LLS use. There is a strong possibility that students use LLSs not assessed by the SILL, a point also noted by Park (1997: 217) in his study of Korean EFL learners' LLS use and language proficiency. This is not the only study to encounter students reporting LLSs which are not inventoried on the SILL. For example, LoCastro (1994) observed in her study of Japanese students that there were insufficient LLSs on the questionnaire relating to listening practice. Numerous researchers have noted that there are hundreds of learning strategies which students can employ, and a self-report inventory such as the SILL, with only 50 items, can by no means capture all LLSs available to learners. It seems highly likely that other LLSs influence language proficiency just as much, if not more, than the LLSs captured by the SILL-V. To measure how predictive the SILL-V's six-category LLS classification is of language proficiency, a stepwise multiple regression analysis would need to be performed, similar to that in Park's (1997) study. More qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observations, could also be used in an attempt to identify LLSs not assessed by the SILL, or any self-report questionnaire for that matter.

A second issue regarding students' self-report of LLSs is that there may be variation in how these LLSs are applied. This could result in little or no significant differences in the reported LLS usage of successful and less successful students, as measured by the end of course assessments, and thus the lack of a significant correlation between language proficiency and LLS use. In other words, more proficient and less proficient students may report using LLSs at a similar frequency, but the *way* in which these LLSs are implemented or applied may be different. One study supporting this proposal is that of Vann and Abraham (1990), which analysed the LLS use of successful and less successful learners, and found that although both groups were active LLS users, the less proficient students

applied their LLSs inappropriately or ineffectively, resulting in less than successful learning outcomes. Thus, it is quite possible that LLSs assessed quantitatively (i.e. in terms of how frequently they are used), and not qualitatively (i.e. in terms of how they are employed), may not accurately account for language proficiency. A further investigation of the students in the current study's LLS use by means of verbal protocols, as described in section 3.1, may yield such qualitative results and identify whether there is any difference between the learners' reported and actual LLS use.

The automatising of LLSs may be another mitigating factor when it comes to the relationship between this variable and language proficiency. The automatising of LLSs is generally used more in reference to advanced learners, whose language proficiency develops to such a level that their need to consciously employ LLSs in learning and in completing specific tasks is significantly reduced (Hong-Nam and Leavell 2006: 410). Thus, more successful students may report that they use these strategies less frequently than lower proficiency users simply because they would not be as consciously aware of them. Similarly, learners at all levels of proficiency may be unaware of certain strategies related to metacognition, which may be employed more often than is reported. For example, not all students may be aware of how frequently they "try to find out how to be a better learner" – a metacognitive LLS – and thus report its use inaccurately. Other researchers, such as Park (2010), have also explored the phenomenon of automatising and students failing to accurately report unconscious LLSs as possible reasons for a lack of significance between LLS use and language proficiency.

A final issue with learners' self-reporting of LLS use, which may further explain why LLSs in this study were not significantly correlated with language proficiency, relates to the retrospective nature of questionnaires. As mentioned in section 3.1, one limitation of these types of self-report questionnaires is that students may have forgotten which LLSs they used or how often they applied them in a specific situation. This could cause inaccuracies in the assessment of reported LLS use and thus skew this variables' correlation with language proficiency. This limitation lends support to the use of more task-specific, introspective methods of LLS data collection, such as stimulated recall protocols to nullify the possibility that students forget which LLSs they employ, as described in section 3.1.

### 5.3.2 Issues with the language proficiency assessments

Another issue may relate to the method of assessing language proficiency. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the scores received in assessments of the upper-intermediate course at tertiary level (RMIT English Worldwide 2011) were taken as an indication of the participants' English proficiency. The listening and reading assessments have undergone a rigorous testing procedure, testing for, amongst other things, reliability, as discussed in section 3.2.2.3. The writing and speaking examinations, on the other hand, have not been tested for reliability and therefore it is possible that these two EOCs are not appropriate assessments, although other measures are in place to ensure their rigour. To illustrate, examiners have to follow strict assessment procedures, and mark according to a standardised set of writing and speaking criteria, and assessments are double or triple marked to test for inter-rater reliability. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the EOCs are an unreliable measure of language proficiency.

Potentially, it may be that the SILL does not correlate with academic language proficiency or CALP. As the participants of this investigation are studying in an EAP setting and are tested on their CALP, and not their BICS, there is a possibility that what is tested by the EOCs does not relate to the students' assessed LLS use. This seems implausible however, as the SILL is designed to provide a general picture of students' LLS use, as opposed to a "specific portrayal" of LLSs used in a specific task and thus could be appropriately applied in the EAP context (Oxford 2010: 159). More support for this notion comes from a number of other studies which have found LLSs referred to in the SILL to be a reliable predictor of CALP (see, for example, Park 1997). It seems therefore that, unless the EOC assessments are unreliable or invalid, testing the significance of their relationship with LLSs is appropriate.

### 5.3.3 The influence of other variables

It would be inaccurate to assume that LLSs are the only predictors of and influencing factors on language proficiency. Perhaps the most plausible reason for this study not finding a significant relationship between LLS use and language proficiency lies precisely with the influence of other variables on language proficiency. Ehrmann et al. (2003: 321) identify numerous psychological studies which have found that successful learners (i.e. students exhibiting high levels of language proficiency)

are highly motivated, and possess positive attitudes as well as self-efficacy. What this implies is that language proficiency is influenced by these affective variables – a hypothesis supported by other studies (for an example in the Asian EFL context, see Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons 2004). Other affective factors which have been shown to shape language proficiency in the East-Asian EFL context are autonomy (discussed in Nisbett et al. 2005), enjoyment of studying English (Wong and Nunan 2011), and interest in the English course (Gan et al. 2004). Many or all of these affective determinants could influence language proficiency to varying degrees, depending on the context.

While factors relating to emotions are important determiners of language proficiency, other individual influences have been shown to bear upon students' language proficiency. These include time spent on English outside of the classroom and academic specialisation (Wong and Nunan 2011), age (Oxford and Ehrmann 1995), intelligence (Dreyer and Oxford 1996) and learning style (Jie and Xiaoqing 2006).

These variables mentioned are by no means the only factors which interplay with language proficiency and there are perhaps other yet to be identified influences. Of course, not having taken all these interrelations into account in the current study might well have lead to the lack of significant results – however, as mentioned earlier, it is simply not possible for any one study to take all factors into account when examining any complex phenomenon. Any study has to focus on some variables at the expense of others. This does not detract from the value of the current study, though, since its findings contribute to our knowledge of the role of LLSs in L2 learning, by, amongst other things, highlighting some serious considerations for future research on LLSs.

#### **5.4 LLS use and gender**

A number of LLS studies worldwide have investigated the role of gender differences in the choice and frequency of LLSs use, as discussed in Chapter 2. Generally, studies have found females to use LLSs more frequently than males (see Oxford and Nyikos 1989 as an example), although some studies have reported the opposite, namely that males report using LLSs more frequently than females, either overall or in certain categories (see, for example, Liyanage and Bartlett 2011). Similar to the current study, other investigations into the relationship between these two variables have shown there to be

no significant differences in reported LLS use between the genders when examining overall LLS use (Wharton 2000), or the use of specific LLS types (Kaylani 1996; and Nisbett et al. 2005). This has lead researchers to question the assumption that females are more active and frequent LLS users and to call for further studies into gender differences in LLS research in different contexts (Liyanage and Bartlett 2011).

There may be a number of reasons for the lack of significant gender differences in the current study. The most straightforward conclusion would be that in Vietnamese culture, LLS use simply does not differ by gender or that other variables are significantly more influential in LLS use in this culture. Oxford (1996: 247) concedes that, although male versus female LLS use differs significantly in many cultures, this is not true for all. In a study of Thai and Vietnamese tertiary EFL learners' LLS use, Khamkhen (2010) found no significant differences according to gender in any of the six LLS categories on the SILL. It can therefore reasonably be assumed that culture plays a large role in whether gender significantly influences LLS use or not and that in Vietnamese the case is the latter rather than the former.

One should be careful, however, not to overgeneralise results from specific studies as if they were absolute for an entire culture, a limitation of other LLS studies pointed out by Liyanage and Bartlett (2011: 2). By looking at the employment of individual LLSs as opposed to overall LLS use or the use of LLS types, a more detailed picture regarding the role of gender may emerge. Furthermore, LLSs by gender may differ in specific contexts and with specific tasks. By studying male and female learners' individual LLSs as they are used in completing a certain task, one could glean vital information about the role of gender in LLS use. Researchers should attempt to replicate these studies across and within cultures to inform and further this area of LLS research, instead of generalising LLS use from overall self-report questionnaire scores (Oxford 1996: 247). Unfortunately, such investigations fall outside the scope of this study, but could possibly be undertaken as a follow-up study.

The discussion above does not detract from the possibility that the lack of significant differences in LLS use according to gender may be attributed to other factors. Wharton (2000: 236-236) postulates that other influences such as socialisation (in terms of previous language experience) probably have a larger role to play in LLS use than gender. In a study of over 600 tertiary L2 learners in Singapore, he

found no significant effects when analysing the role of gender in LLS preference and frequency of use. The author suggests that these findings may be attributed to the fact that the participants of the study were all experienced L2 learners, similar to the learners in a previous study by Oxford and Erhman (1995) who reported similar results. It is possible that previous learning experience is a mitigating factor when it comes to gender differences in LLS use. In the current study, nearly all participants had indeed had exposure to English language instruction for a minimum of six years in a formal school setting. A possibility, therefore, is that the effects of gender on LLS use are lessened by the relatively extensive length of exposure to English in formal learning settings.

Similarly, it is possible that the effect of age, which has been shown to influence LLS use, has diminished the role of gender in this study. This may be due to the students' relative homogeneity in terms of age with a large majority of the 102 participants being between 18 and 19 years of age. It is entirely possible that other (as of yet untested) determiners also shape the relationship between gender and LLS to differing degrees.

### **5.5 LLS use and exposure to English**

The research question regarding length of exposure to English was partly motivated by Oxford and Nyikos' (1989) investigation of 1200 L2 learners' LLS usage which found years of study to be significantly related to LLS use, in particular functional practice LLSs and conversation LLSs. In terms of Oxford's (1990) six-category classification, these would fall under cognitive, memory, compensation and social LLSs. Specifically, students who had studied a foreign language for at least four years used LLSs far more frequently than those who had had less exposure in terms of years of study.

The current study, however, did not ask this question specifically, but instead investigated whether students had any additional English language learning experience *outside of high school* and, if so, for how long. This decision was made due to the fact that English is a compulsory subject in secondary and high school<sup>1</sup> in Vietnam and thus length of exposure would be around the same time for almost

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<sup>1</sup> In Vietnam, learners attend primary school (forms 3-5), from ages five to 11, followed by lower secondary school (forms 6-9) between 11-15 years of age, and then upper secondary, or high school (forms 10-12) for three years between 15 and

all participants, thus negating this factor's differentiating influence. Although about two-thirds of the students did have this type of learning experience, no significant correlation was found between type of exposure and LLS use, despite the fact that nearly half of these learners had had more than two years exposure outside of school. These findings could be attributed to various factors, although the considerations are limited by the phrasing of the specific question at the end of the SILL-V, which did not ask students directly how long they had been exposed to English, but instead asked what type of exposure they had had.

The first plausible reason for the lack of significance is that the type of exposure to English does not significantly influence the LLS use of Thai and Vietnamese learners in an academic EFL setting. This finding is supported by Khamkhen's (2010) results, which demonstrated a lack of significance between additional experience in studying English through a language centre or studying abroad and the LLS use of tertiary Vietnamese learners. The author (2010: 81) posits that those students without extra exposure recognise that their classmates have additional experience and make more of an effort to learn and thus use more LLSs, counterbalancing the effect of this supplementary English language exposure. This hypothesis, however, is untested, and warrants further research.

In the current study, the lack of significant difference between the two groups of students' LLS use may be a result of the kind of additional English instruction they received. Around 50% of the respondents reported that this exposure was in informal settings, such as with English-speaking family members or friends, in English-speaking countries, or with private tutors. It is likely, then, that implicit or explicit exposure to LLSs would not be as prevalent as it would have been in more formal language learning settings. Although approximately 75% of these participants had also had experience in the more formal context of English language centres in Vietnam, the majority of the institutions follow the communicative approach and teach general communicative English as opposed to English for specific purposes (ESP) or EAP. Furthermore, the quality and type of instruction varies substantially from one centre to the next and more research would be needed to adequately address the role that additional exposure through language centres plays in the use of LLSs. What the participants' responses to the question regarding additional exposure do, however, indicate is the

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18 years of age. English is compulsory from lower secondary level upwards, where it is taught two or three times a week for 35 weeks a year, and it is an elective subject in primary school (Hoang 2009: 11).

popularity of, and the importance that Vietnamese speakers place on, English language centres in Vietnam, with just over half of the participants having studied at one or more of these institutions.

This chapter has presented a number of possible reasons for the results presented in Chapter 4. The next chapter discusses the limitations and strengths of this study, and presents implications of the findings, as well as a conclusion.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The previous chapter discussed a variety of possible reasons for the findings regarding the reported LLS use of the Vietnamese-speaking learners who participated in the study reported in this thesis. Although certain shortcomings and implications of the results were touched on, this chapter will provide a more detailed discussion of the limitations (section 6.2) and strengths (section 6.3) of this study and potential areas for future research in this field (section 6.4), followed by concluding remarks (section 6.5). Before turning to the strengths and limitations of the study, though, a brief summary of the study's findings is presented in section 6.1.

### **6.1 Summary of findings**

Following the presentation (chapter 4) and discussion (chapter 5) of the results of this study on the LLS use of Vietnamese-speaking learners of English in a tertiary EFL setting, it should be clear that these results do not offer evidence in support of any of the hypotheses proposed in response to the four research questions that informed the study (see chapter 1). Specifically, the learners did not report using memory LLSs significantly more frequently than affective LLSs; there was no significant correlation between overall LLS use and language proficiency; there was no significant difference between males and females in terms of how frequently they use LLSs; and learners who had been exposed to more English instruction outside of school did not use LLSs significantly more frequently.

These findings were surprising given that the hypotheses are all based on the findings of a wealth of previous studies in the field, and the research design of the study is also very similar to that of the most prominent studies in the field. Chapters 4 and 5 offered in-depth discussions of possible reasons for this lack of evidence in support of the hypotheses, referring to, amongst other things, characteristics of the data collection instruments, the influence of other variables, and the specific context in which the study was conducted.

## 6.2 Limitations

The fact that many of the findings of this study remain inconclusive and that the hypotheses underlying the research questions are not supported could in part be due to a number of limiting factors in this study. The first restriction regards the nature of the research method used to collect LLS data in this study. As mentioned in Chapter 3 and briefly discussed in the previous chapter, there are a number of disadvantages to using self-report questionnaires as LLS data collection instruments (see table 3.1 for a summary of these), not least of all the fact that the SILL does not assess context-specific and task-specific LLSs.

Two limitations of the study brought about by time constraints are the relatively small sample size and the use of a single data collection instrument to investigate LLS use. A larger sample size may have yielded more comprehensive results regarding LLS use and this variable's correlation with language proficiency, especially in terms of the grouping of low, medium and high frequency LLS users – recall from Chapter 4 that the low LLS use groups had fewer than eight learners in five of the six LLS categories. Moreover, two or more research instruments, including at least one qualitative data collection instrument, may have been useful to verify the participants' responses to the items on the SILL-V and to identify LLSs not assessed by the SILL-V.

Further limitations involve the use of the participating learners' EOC results as a measure of their language proficiency. For practical reasons, the students' final examination results were used, but a more accurate reflection of their language proficiency might have been attained by including their MCAs and overall scores, or by employing a standardised language proficiency assessment method, such as the TOEFL or the so-called "IELTS" (International English Language Testing System) tests. One of the advantages of using a standardised assessment method is that it renders the results more comparable to previous and future investigations, in this setting as well as cross-culturally, due to the fact that these assessments are commonly used around the world.

### 6.3 Strengths

Despite the limitations referred to in the previous section, the study reported here has a number of strengths as well and does contribute to the field of LLS research. Firstly, due to the sample size of 102 participants, the findings of this study represent a relatively robust cross-section of learners' LLS use in this setting. Given the detailed presentation of learners' LLS use provided in this thesis, the study can be said to have contributed significantly to the extremely limited body of research regarding the LLS use of Vietnamese-speaking learners in an academic EFL context.

The findings regarding the participants' overall and by-category usage may prove to be quite meaningful. The relatively high frequency of social LLS use and low utilisation of memory LLSs is significant in itself as it challenges the enduring stereotype that Asian learners, and especially those from CHCs, are passive, quiet and submissive students favouring rote learning (Shi 2006: 122). Furthermore, these findings indicate that these students are perhaps trying to break away from the enduring traditional teaching methods they would have experienced in Vietnamese schools and are perhaps embracing a more communicative approach to teaching and learning. Whether the students' learning styles and strategies are slowly evolving towards what is traditionally seen as a more Western concept of education and learning, remains to be seen.

These findings are also significant when viewed in the light of Vietnam's rapid economic development and liberalisation. It may be that the changing views on education and learning are in part a reflection of the developing nature of Vietnam and the growing influence of Western culture on this industrialising country. Nisbett et al. (2005: 105) highlight the effect of previous education experience and the prevailing educational philosophy in a culture on LLS use; however, the contradicting nature of the social and memory LLS outcomes of this study raises the question of whether LLS use is more context-specific, with institutional pedagogy and learning settings being more influential than the role of cultural traditions and the enduring education system in a country (Gan 2009: 53).

Although the homogeneous nature of this group of learners limits the generalisability of the findings, it is also a strong point of this research. The participants' uniformity in terms of age and cultural background has, in a sense, neutralised the differentiating influence of these variables, allowing the

researcher to focus on the variables under investigation without having to be concerned about the undesired effects which may be caused by including participants from different cultural backgrounds and age groups.

The fact that LLS use was not found to differ significantly by gender is significant in its own right. These results question the importance of the role of gender in LLS use, at least in the Vietnamese tertiary EFL context. Although other investigations have reported a similar lack of correlation in this type of setting, the current study does add to the growing body of research regarding LLSs and gender, and calls for more comprehensive investigations into the relationship between these two variables. Recall, for example, the suggestion that the effect of gender might be better investigated by considering individual LLSs within LLS categories.

While the results of the study failed to support the hypothesis that students with more exposure to English outside of the formal school setting use more LLSs, they are still noteworthy in terms of additional exposure to English. More specifically, the study confirmed the popularity of studying at English language learning centres in Vietnam, with over three quarters of the participants who replied that they had received instruction outside of school having studied at such institutions. Again, this demand for additional language instruction could be seen as a reflection of the country's growing economic prosperity and the increasing importance Vietnamese place on being able to speak English. L2 learning research would benefit from future studies which examine Vietnamese-speaking learners' beliefs regarding language learning and the importance of English.

This study also provides researchers and teachers with a deeper insight into Vietnamese-speaking learners' LLS use, if not in general, at least in this specific context. These Vietnamese-speaking EFL learners have indicated that they are relatively high strategy users and are generally aware of the range of LLSs at their disposal. Hopefully, this study will also increase teachers' awareness of the phenomenon of LLS use, the range of different LLSs that are at learners' disposal and the potential value of increasing learners' awareness of these different LLSs, maybe also teaching them which LLSs seem to be most appropriate for specific tasks. This should also increase learner autonomy and facilitate language learning.

## 6.4 Future research

A number of possibilities for future research have been mentioned in passing throughout the thesis – these are briefly summarised here. From the findings of this study, perhaps the most obvious future research possibility involves the need for a triangulated approach in studying learners' LLS use. By employing more qualitative research methods such as verbal protocols, observations, interviews or focus groups, a richer and more detailed depiction of learners' LLS use can be provided. Macaro (2006: 327) asserts that LLSs only facilitate and improve learning behaviour and performance when used in combination, in what he terms "strategy clusters", or sequences. These strategy clusters are much more accurately assessed and identified through qualitative methods. Although time-consuming, these assessment methods can reveal LLSs used in specific, task-related activities, as well as unconscious LLSs, which questionnaires and other retrospective data collection methods cannot. These findings could then be compared with the quantitative outcomes to consolidate and increase the study's validity, while the limitations which accompany the use of only one instrument could then be avoided.

Future research also needs to be conducted on the influence of other variables on language proficiency and on LLS use. Firstly, further investigations into the potential role of gender in LLS choice needs to be conducted in this context. A replication of the current study would strengthen the validity of the findings regarding a lack of significant differences in LLS choice according to gender. A more qualitative approach would also depict a more comprehensive picture regarding the relationship between these variables in the current context. By looking at male and female LLS use at an individual level, as opposed to overall LLS use, and while the learners are actively completing learning tasks, researchers could more accurately determine whether or not gender and LLS use are significantly correlated in the Vietnamese tertiary EFL context.

As mentioned previously, affective factors – in particular motivation – have been shown to have a strong correlation with learners' LLS choice and frequency of usage (see, for example, Oxford and Nyikos 1989). Woodrow (2005: 96) notes that CHC learners of English show different motivation patterns to Western learners. Further research into the relationship between cultural background, motivation and LLSs needs to be conducted. Investigations assessing students' types and levels of

motivation in the particular Vietnamese EFL setting could then be analysed in terms of their LLS use to test the significance of this relationship. This type of research would add much to the field of LLSs and language learning studies in general. Similarly, analysing the nature and the significance of the relationship between LLSs and other affective variables, such as attitude, learning style, personality type and self-efficacy, would contribute vital knowledge to this branch of L2 research.

The fact that this study is comprised of a relatively uniform group of students in terms of age and cultural background has negated the discriminating effects that these variables may have on LLS use. However, to test the type of interplay between socio-cultural variables and LLS use, one may consider a more comparative study using students from different cultural backgrounds or of different ages. There is still room for much research into the role of cultural background in the field of LLSs. As mentioned previously, some of this study's findings contradict the stereotypical notions generally associated with CHC learners. More research into students' language learning beliefs, educational background and previous language learning experience is needed to ascertain the extent to which these factors and LLSs are connected in the Vietnamese EFL context. Furthermore, studies of this kind need to be replicated in other settings and contexts in Vietnam and South-East Asia to build on the existing body of LLS and L2 literature.

With regards to language development over time, follow-up studies could compare the LLS use of EFL students at different course levels. By comparing the LLS use of beginner, intermediate and advanced level students, researchers could establish whether or not the relationship between LLS use and language proficiency is more significant at certain proficiency levels than at others, i.e. whether learners' LLS use (in terms of preference for LLS types, as well as frequency of LLS use) actually changes over time, as the learners' proficiency increases, and whether the relationship is linear or curvilinear. This could, in turn, assist teachers in deciding which LLSs to encourage at different levels of L2 development.

In terms of language proficiency assessments, future studies could include students' self-rated proficiency or teacher-rated proficiency and more standardised tests such as the TOEFL or the IELTS tests, as the results of these assessments are more readily comparable across studies. Due to the large number of previous and current studies using these test instruments, this would make the

findings more generalisable, not just interculturally but also across different contexts, for example, EFL versus ESL, or EAP versus general English settings. If a correlation could be found between LLS use and language proficiency, this would open a new area of LLS research in the Vietnamese EFL setting. Investigations into the effectiveness of strategy training could then be conducted and this would have a number of pedagogical implications.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This study was conducted partly in response to the deficiency of LLS studies in the specific context of Vietnamese-speaking learners of EAP in a tertiary EFL setting. A thorough examination of previous literature concerning this field of research was followed by a discussion of the research methodology and design of this investigation, a report of the results and a detailed discussion of these results. Finally, the limitations and strengths of the study were discussed and possibilities for future research in this area of SLA were proposed. It is this researcher's belief that the study has contributed to the limited body of literature regarding LLS research in Vietnam specifically and in South-East Asia, more generally.

There are a number of significant observations which can be made from this study. Firstly, the participants seem to be quite aware of the role that LLSs play in the process of learning English. Their preference for social LLSs can be supported in the classroom through encouraging students to ask questions, collaborate in pairs or groups and actively practise speaking English outside of the classroom environment. The participants also show a preference for using LLSs related to compensating for missing knowledge. While some of these strategies, such as guessing the meaning of new words from context, are already taught in the IEP (though teachers might not explicitly refer to the concept of 'LLSs'), more could be done to facilitate a focus on *fluency* and using strategies such as circumlocution, as opposed to only focusing on grammatical *accuracy*. Students report making relatively frequent use of cognitive and metacognitive LLSs as well. These LLSs can be supported and developed in the classroom by organising lessons around themes, and grouping new lexis around topics. Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006: 412) propose that teachers should link daily classroom activities to students' previous knowledge and experience of how they learn best. This would facilitate and stimulate greater use of cognitive and metacognitive LLSs.

The relatively low use of affective LLSs suggests that the participants do not find it easy to deal with anxiety and prefer not to share their feelings regarding L2 learning with others. They could be encouraged by their teachers to write down their thoughts and feelings regarding their studies in a journal or on a (anonymous) blog. Teachers should also facilitate the creation of a safe and constructive learning environment, in which students can encourage each other. It might well be that it would help learners to know that their fellow classmates experience similar levels of anxiety over similar tasks. Finally, students reported relatively less frequent use of certain memory strategies. Teachers should raise awareness of alternatives to rote learning, by providing more social mnemonic devices. For example, teachers could instruct students how to quiz each other on new vocabulary learned in class. Thus, the onus would be on the learners to choose the LLSs which best suit their own learning style.

While making more frequent use of LLSs has not been shown to affect language proficiency in the current study, raising awareness of different ways to learn facilitates self-regulation, which is related to one of the underlying goals of LLS research – finding ways to make learners take more responsibility for their own learning and to be more autonomous. Recall from chapter 2 that LLSs are characterised as strategies that make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable and more effective (Oxford 2011: 14). Therefore, making learners aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and offering them alternative or additional ways to learn may motivate them to take a more active approach in improving and regulating their learning (Jie and Xiaoqing 2006: 86).

The current study offers evidence in favour of the notion that learners and their learning behaviour should be considered in a more holistic sense. Holliday (2003, in Gan 2006: 53) proposes that we should look at our students “more generously as people and not as confined either to culturist stereotypes or to teacherly constructs of the ‘learner’ located within ‘our’ teacher-created activities”. We should instead take into consideration individual learner differences, including how and which LLSs they choose to employ, as well as the social and cultural variables that influence their learning behaviour. Griffiths (2003: 17) notes that there has been a general trend towards what she terms “eclecticism” in language teaching, whereby pedagogical methods, including LLS instruction, are chosen to match the students’ needs and the context, rather than “conform to some rigid theory”. A

better understanding of the factors which influence learning behaviour, as well as combining LLS instruction with techniques proposed by various LLS and, more generally, L2 learning theories can aid teachers and researchers in improving curricula and pedagogy, and facilitating learner autonomy.

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**Appendix A: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning V (SILL-V)**

(Adapted from Oxford’s (1989) SILL Version 7.0 – Version for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English)

**Student Questionnaire**

You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement and rate it.

Scale:

- 1 = Never or almost never true of me**
- 2 = Usually not true of me**
- 3 = Somewhat true of me**
- 4 = Usually true of me**
- 5 = Always or almost always true of me**

**Part A**

**1 = Never or almost never true of me**

**5 = Always or almost always true of me**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1a. I connect new things I learn in English with what I already know</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1c. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1e. I connect the sounds of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1g. I remember a new English word by imagining situation in which the word might be used</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1i. I use rhymes (đồng âm) to remember new English words</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1k. I use notes or pictures to remember new English words</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1m. I physically act out new English words</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>1o. I review English lessons often</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

1q. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering where I first saw them

**Part B**

1 = Never or almost never true of me

5 = Always or almost always true of me

	1	2	3	4	5
2a. I say or write new English words several times to learn or remember them	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2c. I try to talk like native English speakers.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2e. I practise the sounds of English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2g. I use the English words I know in different ways	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2i. I start conversations in English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2k. I watch English language TV shows in English or go to movies spoken in English (without looking at subtitles)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2m. I read for pleasure or fun in English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2o. I write notes, messages, letters or reports in English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2q. first skim an English text (read over it quickly) then go back and read it carefully	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2s. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2u. I try to find patterns (mẫu câu) in English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2w. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2y. I try not to translate word-by-	<input type="checkbox"/>				

word

2aa. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English

Part C

1 = Never or almost never true of me

5 = Always or almost always true of me

	1	2	3	4	5
3a. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3c. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures (my hands and body)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3e. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3g. I read English without looking up every new word	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3i. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3k. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Part D

1 = Never or almost never true of me

5 = Always or almost always true of me

	1	2	3	4	5
4a. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4c. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4e. I pay attention when someone is speaking English	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4g. I try to find out how to be a	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**better learner of English**

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>4i. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4k. I look for people I can talk to in English outside of class</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4m. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4o. I have clear goals for improving my English skills</b>              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>4q. I think about my progress in English</b>                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Part E**

**1 = Never or almost never true of me**

**5 = Always or almost always true of me**

- |  | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>                 | <b>3</b>                 | <b>4</b>                 | <b>5</b>                 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>5a. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English</b>                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5c. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5e. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English</b>                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5g. I notice if I am stressed or nervous when I am studying or using English</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5i. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary (study journal)</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>5k. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English</b>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Part F**

**1 = Never or almost never true of me**

**5 = Always or almost always true of me**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6a. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>6c. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>6e. I practise English with other students</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>6g. I ask for help from English speakers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>6i. I ask questions in English</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>6k. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

7. **Name (Optional)**

8. **Age (Optional)**

9. **Gender**

10. **Student ID (Lxxxxxxx)**

11. **When did you first start learning English? Please fill your age in the box.**

12. **Have you studied English outside of secondary/high school?**  
 Yes  
 No

13. **How long have you studied English outside of secondary/high school?**

14. **Tick the places (boxes) you have studied English before**

- International school
- English language centre
- Private Tutor
- In an English-speaking country
- With English speaking family member or friend
- Others

(Please specify)

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire**

## Appendix B: Modifications to the SILL

Modifications made to the SILL Version 7.0 to create SILL-V:

1. Part A (1): Changed sentence to *I connect new things I learn in English with what I already know*
2. Part A (4): Changed *making a mental picture* to *imagining*
3. Part A (5): Added Vietnamese translation *đồng âm* in brackets for *rhymes*
4. Part A (6): Changed *flashcards* to *pictures and notes*
5. Part A (9): Changed their *location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign* to *where I first saw them*
6. Part B (10): Added *to learn or remember them*
7. Part B (15): Added *without looking at subtitles* in brackets
8. Part B (16): Added *or fun*
9. Part B (18): Changed *passage* to *text*
10. Part B (20): Added Vietnamese translation *mẫu câu* in brackets for *patterns*
11. Part C (25): Added *my hands and body* in brackets to explain *gestures*
12. Part D (35): Added *outside of class*
13. Part E (43): Added *study journal* to explain *learning diary*

**Appendix C: Assessments**

Overview of Upper-Intermediate Course Assessments (RMIT Vietnam 2011)				
<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Text Type</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Task Type</i>	<i>Course Weighting</i>
<b>LISTENING</b>				
<b>OGA</b>	Radio program/ radio talkback/	Section 1: Listening to identify opinions	10 multiple choice	10%
	Lecture	Section 2 : Listening for main idea and details and Identifying opposing arguments	10 short answer	
<b>EOC</b>	Tutorial discussion/	Section 1: Listening for main idea and detail, opinion, arguments	Multiple choice	15%
	Lecture	Section 2: Listening to identify numbers and statistics	Table completion	
	Business presentation	Section 3: Listening for main idea and detail	Short answer / Gap fill	
<b>SPEAKING</b>				
<b>OGA</b>	Individual presentation	Section 1: Presenting an argument and evidence persuasively	3 min prep time 2 min talk	10%
	Discussion	Section 2: Exchanging opinions/responding	3 min prep time 3-4 min discussion	
<b>EOC</b>	Tutorial type discussion	Section 1: Support arguments, ask and answer questions	8-10 min per group of 4 students	15%
	Q & A discussion	Section 2: Support arguments, ask and answer questions	2 min per student	
<b>READING</b>				
<b>OGA</b>	Online post / blog	Section 1A: Reading to identify opinion Section 1B: Reading to identify supporting argument and facts	10 multiple choice 10 short answer	10%
	Report	Section 2A: Reading for main ideas Section 2B: Reading to interpret information from a report		
<b>EOC</b>	Journal article	Section 1A: Identifying the topic of a paragraph Section 1B: Identifying cause and effect Section 1C: Detail & to identify cause and effect	6 match heading to paragraph 5 multiple choice 5 sentence completion	15%
	Magazine article	Section 2A: Interpreting numbers Section 2B: Reading for detail, reading to understand cause and effect	8 gap fill 6 multiple choice	
<b>WRITING</b>				
<b>OGA</b>	Opinion essay	Write an argumentative / discursive essay in response to a short reading	300-350 words	10%
<b>EOC</b>	Graph description	Describe a trend or bar graph	150-200 words	5%
	Cause/effect/solution essay	Write a cause and effect OR an effect and solution OR a cause and solution essay	300-350 words	10%

**Appendix D: Strategy analysis results****Table D1. Significance test (MANOVA) between 4 assessment scores and *memory* LLS use**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.987	1808.876 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.987
	Wilks' Lambda	.013	1808.876 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.987
	Hotelling's Trace	76.163	1808.876 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.987
	Roy's Largest Root	76.163	1808.876 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.987
PartA_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.044	.537	8.000	192.000	.827	.022
	Wilks' Lambda	.956	.536 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	190.000	.829	.022
	Hotelling's Trace	.045	.534	8.000	188.000	.830	.022
	Roy's Largest Root	.041	.990 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	96.000	.417	.040

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + PartA\_Gp3Ls

**Table D2. Significance test (MANOVA) between 4 assessment scores and *cognitive* LLS use**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.980	1184.363 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.980
	Wilks' Lambda	.020	1184.363 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.980
	Hotelling's Trace	49.868	1184.363 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.980
	Roy's Largest Root	49.868	1184.363 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.980
PartB_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.093	1.170	8.000	192.000	.319	.046
	Wilks' Lambda	.907	1.183 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	190.000	.311	.047
	Hotelling's Trace	.102	1.195	8.000	188.000	.304	.048
	Roy's Largest Root	.098	2.343 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	96.000	.060	.089

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + PartB\_Gp3Ls

**Table D3. Significance test (MANOVA) between 4 assessment scores and *compensation* LLS use**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.973	865.254 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.973
	Wilks' Lambda	.027	865.254 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.973
	Hotelling's Trace	36.432	865.254 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.973
	Roy's Largest Root	36.432	865.254 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.973
PartB_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.038	.461	8.000	192.000	.882	.019
	Wilks' Lambda	.963	.457 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	190.000	.885	.019
	Hotelling's Trace	.039	.453	8.000	188.000	.888	.019
	Roy's Largest Root	.027	.646 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	96.000	.631	.026

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + PartC\_Gp3Ls

**Table D4. Significance test (MANOVA) between 4 assessment scores and *metacognitive* LLS use**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.985	1570.669 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.985
	Wilks' Lambda	.015	1570.669 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.985
	Hotelling's Trace	66.133	1570.669 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.985
	Roy's Largest Root	66.133	1570.669 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.985
PartB_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.065	.807	8.000	192.000	.597	.033
	Wilks' Lambda	.935	.806 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	190.000	.598	.033
	Hotelling's Trace	.068	.804	8.000	188.000	.600	.033
	Roy's Largest Root	.058	1.396 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	96.000	.241	.055

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + PartD\_Gp3Ls

**Table D5. Significance test (MANOVA) between 4 assessment scores and *affective* LLS use**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.992	3094.261 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.992
	Wilks' Lambda	.008	3094.261 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.992
	Hotelling's Trace	130.285	3094.261 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.992
	Roy's Largest Root	130.285	3094.261 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.992
PartB_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.073	.907	8.000	192.000	.511	.036
	Wilks' Lambda	.928	.899 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	190.000	.518	.036
	Hotelling's Trace	.076	.890	8.000	188.000	.526	.037
	Roy's Largest Root	.047	1.138 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	96.000	.344	.045

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + PartE\_Gp3Ls

**Table D6. Significance test (MANOVA) between 4 assessment scores and *social* LLS use**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.983	1361.455 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.983
	Wilks' Lambda	.017	1361.455 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.983
	Hotelling's Trace	57.324	1361.455 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.983
	Roy's Largest Root	57.324	1361.455 <sup>a</sup>	4.000	95.000	.000	.983
PartB_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.088	1.104	8.000	192.000	.362	.044
	Wilks' Lambda	.914	1.093 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	190.000	.370	.044
	Hotelling's Trace	.092	1.083	8.000	188.000	.377	.044
	Roy's Largest Root	.055	1.326 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	96.000	.266	.052

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + PartF\_Gp3Ls

**Table D7. Significance test (MANOVA) between overall LLS averages and gender**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.988	1306.528 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.000	.988
	Wilks' Lambda	.012	1306.528 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.000	.988
	Hotelling's Trace	82.518	1306.528 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.000	.988
	Roy's Largest Root	82.518	1306.528 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.000	.988
PartB_Gp3Ls	Pillai's Trace	.048	.792 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.578	.048
	Wilks' Lambda	.952	.792 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.578	.048
	Hotelling's Trace	.050	.792 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.578	.048
	Roy's Largest Root	.050	.792 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	95.000	.578	.048

a. Exact statistic

b. Design: Intercept + Q9gender

## Appendix E: Assessment specifications and criteria

### INTERMEDIATE - UPPER INTERMEDIATE WRITING CRITERIA FOR GRAPH DESCRIPTIONS

	Content and Ideas	Organisation and Cohesion	Grammar	Lexis
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completes all requirements of the task fully and thoroughly</li> <li>selects and accurately summarises sufficient &amp; appropriate key data</li> <li>elaborates on comparisons and makes relevant comment on less obvious features of graph.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sequences response logically throughout</li> <li>has a clear overview</li> <li>uses a range of cohesive devices accurately and effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of simple and complex structures throughout</li> <li><u>most sentences are error-free</u></li> <li>any errors do not affect meaning</li> <li>almost all punctuation is accurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of relevant lexis throughout</li> <li><u>uses almost all lexis with precision</u></li> <li>collocations are appropriate and accurate</li> <li>very few, if any, errors in word form or spelling</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completes all requirements of the task successfully</li> <li><u>selects appropriate key data</u> but may add some irrelevant detail</li> <li>very few, if any, inaccuracies in summary and comparison of data</li> <li><u>response is of required length</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>generally sequences response logically</li> <li><u>has an overview</u></li> <li>uses cohesive devices successfully, with minor lapses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>uses a range of simple and complex structures appropriate to the task type</u></li> <li>many sentences are error-free</li> <li>errors occasionally distract but do not interfere with meaning</li> <li>most punctuation is accurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a range of relevant lexis</li> <li><u>choice of lexis is appropriate to the task, to the graph type and is generally accurate</u></li> <li>collocations are generally appropriate and accurate</li> <li>word forms and spelling are generally accurate</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses requirements of the task, but gaps, such as missing some key data, are evident</li> <li><u>data is mostly accurate</u></li> <li>attempts to discuss features and make comparisons may include insufficient, excessive or irrelevant data</li> <li><b>within 10% of word limit</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to sequence the response logically, but some sections difficult to follow</li> <li><u>attempts to include an overview</u></li> <li>uses cohesive devices, with some inappropriacy or overuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses simple structures and a limited range of complex structures</li> <li>some sentences are error-free</li> <li><b>errors sometimes interfere with meaning</b></li> <li>punctuation errors sometimes interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a limited range of relevant lexis</li> <li>errors in lexical choice sometimes interfere with meaning</li> <li>attempts to use collocation with some accuracy</li> <li>errors in word form and spelling may interfere with meaning at times</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses only some requirements of the task</li> <li>attempts to describe features but may misinterpret graph</li> <li>data is given but contains major inaccuracies or gaps</li> <li><b>within 20% of word limit</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to sequence the response logically, but overall is difficult to follow</li> <li><b>no attempt at an overview</b></li> <li>uses cohesive devices, but with inaccuracies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a very limited range of mostly simple structures</li> <li>few sentences are error-free</li> <li><b>errors frequently interfere with meaning</b></li> <li>punctuation errors frequently interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a very limited range of relevant lexis</li> <li><b>lexical choice may be inappropriate for graph type, and errors may impede understanding</b></li> <li>few attempts at collocation and errors often occur</li> <li>frequent errors in word form and spelling impede understanding</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>most requirements of the task are not met</li> <li>data is missing, consistently inaccurate or randomly chosen</li> <li>contributes little of relevance to task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>response is not organised logically</li> <li>no overview</li> <li>few cohesive devices are used accurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structures are often not discernible</li> <li>almost all sentences contain errors</li> <li>errors severely impede meaning</li> <li>punctuation errors severely impede meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extremely limited and basic range of lexis</li> <li>errors in lexical choice, collocation, word form and spelling severely impede understanding</li> <li><b>relies on task or rubric for most lexis</b></li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>task is not attempted or there is insufficient material to grade</li> </ul>			

**Bold** (ceiling statement)  
Underlined (hurdle statement)

- if a text fits this criterion, this is the maximum grade it can receive in this area  
- the text must fit this criterion to be awarded this grade or higher.

**INTERMEDIATE – UPPER INTERMEDIATE WRITING CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS**

	<b>Content and Ideas</b>	<b>Organisation and Cohesion</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Lexis</b>
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completes all requirements of the task fully and thoroughly with appropriate elaboration</li> <li>produces relevant, logical and well-formulated ideas</li> <li><u>supports ideas with effective description and/or argument</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sequences the response logically throughout</li> <li>paragraphing used appropriately throughout</li> <li>uses a range of cohesive devices accurately and effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of simple and complex structures throughout</li> <li><u>most sentences are error-free</u></li> <li>any errors do not affect meaning</li> <li>almost all punctuation is accurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of relevant lexis throughout</li> <li>uses almost all lexis with precision</li> <li>collocations are appropriate and accurate</li> <li><u>very few, if any, errors in word form or spelling</u></li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completes all requirements of the task successfully</li> <li>produces generally relevant, logical and well-formulated ideas</li> <li>supports ideas successfully, with occasional lapses in description or argumentation</li> <li><u>response is of required length</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>generally sequences the response logically</li> <li><u>paragraphing is generally adequate and appropriate</u></li> <li>uses cohesive devices successfully, with minor lapses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>uses a range of simple and complex structures appropriate to the task</u></li> <li>many sentences are error-free</li> <li>errors occasionally distract but do not interfere with meaning</li> <li>most punctuation is accurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a range of relevant lexis</li> <li><u>generally uses lexis with precision</u></li> <li>collocations are generally appropriate and accurate</li> <li>few word form or spelling errors</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses requirements of the task, but <b>gaps are evident</b></li> <li>produces ideas and/or arguments, but they are not fully developed or logical</li> <li>supports ideas, but some irrelevancies or overgeneralisations evident</li> <li><b>within 10% of word limit</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to sequence the response logically, but some sections difficult to follow</li> <li>uses paragraphing, but not always effectively</li> <li><u>uses a range of cohesive devices</u>, with occasional inappropriacy or overuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses simple structures and a limited range of complex structures</li> <li>some sentences are error-free</li> <li><b>errors sometimes interfere with meaning</b></li> <li>punctuation errors sometimes interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a limited range of relevant vocabulary</li> <li>errors in lexical choice sometimes interfere with meaning</li> <li>attempts to use collocation with some accuracy</li> <li>spelling and/or word form errors sometimes interfere with meaning</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses the general topic of the task attempts to produce ideas and/or arguments, but these are difficult to identify</li> <li>attempts to support ideas, but this is difficult to follow</li> <li><b>within 20% of word limit</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to sequence the response logically, but <b>response is difficult to follow overall</b></li> <li>attempts to use paragraphing, but applied illogically</li> <li>uses cohesive devices inaccurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a very limited range of mostly simple structures</li> <li><b>few sentences are error-free</b></li> <li>errors frequently interfere with meaning</li> <li>punctuation errors frequently interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a very limited range of relevant vocabulary</li> <li>errors in lexical choice frequently interfere with meaning</li> <li>few attempts at collocation and errors often occur</li> <li><b>spelling and/or word form errors are frequent and interfere with meaning</b></li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>response is not directly related to the topic of the question</li> <li>ideas and/or arguments mostly cannot be identified</li> <li>ideas do not appear to be supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>response is not organised logically</li> <li>paragraphing is mostly not used</li> <li>few cohesive devices are used accurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structures are often not discernible</li> <li>almost all sentences contain errors</li> <li>errors severely impede meaning</li> <li>punctuation errors severely impede meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extremely limited and basic range of lexis</li> <li>errors in lexical choice, collocation, word form and spelling severely impede understanding</li> <li><b>relies on task or rubric for most lexis</b></li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	task is not attempted or there is insufficient material to grade			

**Bold** (ceiling statement) - if a text fits this criterion, this is the maximum grade it can receive in this area.  
**Underlined** (hurdle statement) - the text must fit this criterion to be awarded this grade or higher.

**ELEMENTARY - UPPER INTERMEDIATE SPEAKING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR MCA & EOC TASKS**

	<b>Task completion &amp; expression of ideas</b>	<b>Discourse management &amp; interaction</b>	<b>Language use</b>	<b>Pronunciation and fluency</b>
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful and thorough achievement of all aspects of task requirements</li> <li>Ideas are very effectively expressed, clearly stated and appropriately supported with relevant reasons and examples.</li> <li>Contributions always of appropriate length</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays high level ability to interact with other participant and initiates and maintains exchanges (eg. sensitive to turn taking)</li> <li>Can adapt to new topics or changes in direction of topic very effectively</li> <li>Able to successfully repair communication breakdowns</li> <li>Very effectively applies a range of communicative strategies; eg. confirms, clarifies and checks information, paraphrases, reforms or questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide range of vocabulary and complex grammatical structures attempted and used accurately in most situations</li> <li>Occasional minor errors evident but these do not interfere with meaning</li> <li>Language used is always appropriate to the task, overall intention is clear</li> <li>Very effective use of appropriate discourse markers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual sound production, word and sentence stress, intonation and rhythm used effectively to convey meaning</li> <li>Features of L1 accent apparent but do not impede message</li> <li>Speech is fluent and cohesive</li> <li>Hesitations may occur but do not cause strain</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful achievement of task requirements</li> <li>Minor elements may be missing but does not impact on message</li> <li>Ideas effectively expressed and clearly stated and generally supported with reasons and examples</li> <li>Contributions of appropriate length</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays ability to interact with other participant effectively and initiates and maintains exchanges successfully (eg. sensitive to turn taking)</li> <li>Can adapt to new topics or changes in direction of topic effectively</li> <li>Able to repair communication breakdowns in most situations</li> <li>Effectively applies communicative strategies; eg. confirms, clarifies and checks information, paraphrases, reforms or questions, though not always successfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of vocabulary and complex grammatical structures attempted with minor inaccuracies evident</li> <li>Errors only occasionally interfere with meaning</li> <li>Language used appropriate to the task so that overall message is clear</li> <li>Uses appropriate discourse markers effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual sound production, word and sentence stress, intonation and rhythm appropriate and minor inappropriacies rarely interfere with meaning</li> <li>Features of L1 accent apparent and only occasionally impede understanding</li> <li>Minor loss of fluency occurs at times but remains cohesive</li> <li>Hesitations may occur but cause minimal strain</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most aspects of tasks achieved satisfactorily, some minor elements of task may be missing but do not impact on task achievement</li> <li>Most ideas clearly stated but some may have been further developed</li> <li>Overall meaning is adequately communicated with minor gaps evident</li> <li>Contributions are of sufficient length but some may be short</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction with other participant managed adequately with minor inconsistencies evident (eg. may not always be sensitive to turn taking)</li> <li>Displays ability to adapt to new topics or changes in direction of topic satisfactorily but at times relies on other participant</li> <li>Attempts made to repair discourse evident but not always successfully</li> <li>Attempts made to confirm, clarify and check information adequate but not always successful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays an adequate range of vocabulary and grammatical structures appropriate to task, although some inaccuracies evident</li> <li>Errors noticeable but only occasionally impede meaning</li> <li>Language used adequate and appropriate to the task but at times limited with inaccuracies sometimes affecting message</li> <li>Able to apply an adequate range of discourse markers successfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual sound production, word and sentence stress, intonation and rhythm satisfactory but inappropriacies may at times interfere with meaning</li> <li>Features of L1 accent apparent but only sometimes impede message</li> <li>Loss of fluency occurs but overall cohesion is adequately maintained</li> <li>Hesitations evident but do not reduce overall fluency</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most aspects of tasks attempted but incomplete and not successfully achieved</li> <li>Key elements of task missing</li> <li>Ideas not clearly stated and only partially developed</li> <li>Contributions of inadequate length or incomplete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactions with other participant not well handled, (eg. not sensitive to turn taking)</li> <li>Generally not able to adapt to changes in topic</li> <li>Limited attempt to apply strategies to confirm, clarify and check information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary and grammatical structures mostly limited and at times insufficient for task with frequent inaccuracies evident</li> <li>Errors intrusive</li> <li>Insufficient range of language used with frequent inaccuracies</li> <li>Relies on limited range of discourse markers often used incorrectly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent inappropriacies and inaccuracies in individual sound production, word and sentence stress, intonation and rhythm clearly interfere with meaning</li> <li>Features of L1 accent are intrusive</li> <li>Loss of fluency frequently occurs and clearly affects cohesion</li> <li>Hesitations significantly reduce overall fluency</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task attempted but not successfully</li> <li>Most aspects of tasks missing or not attempted</li> <li>Ideas not stated clearly, use of examples not evident</li> <li>Little sense of overall communicative ability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactions with other participant limited and not successful.</li> <li>Not able to adapt to changes in topic</li> <li>Attempts to apply strategies to confirm, clarify and check information not successful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary and grammatical structures clearly limited and consistent errors intrusive</li> <li>Very limited and often inaccurate range of language used which significantly impacts on communication</li> <li>Discourse markers rarely used or used inaccurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pronunciation deficiencies impede meaning</li> <li>L1 interference limits most attempts at communication</li> <li>Lack of fluency in responses significantly limits ability to communicate</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to engage with task</li> <li>Message minimal, ideas unable to be followed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactions with other participant not evident</li> <li>Unable to engage with partner and topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary and grammatical structures not appropriate or relevant to task</li> <li>Language cannot be used to convey message</li> <li>Discourse markers not used at all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pronunciation deficiencies severely impede meaning</li> <li>L1 interference severely limits communication</li> <li>Lack of fluency in responses prevents ability to communicate</li> </ul>

**NOTES: Bands**

- Task completion and expression of ideas:** refers to the quality and to a lesser extent, the quantity of ideas the student expresses in direct relation to the task. Students are graded on quality and relevance of ideas, logic and effective task completion.
- Discourse management & interaction:** refers to how the student interacts with both the task and the other participants (other student and rater/assessor) and how they manage the interactions to engage with the task.
- Language Use:** refers to the accurate and appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar structures relevant to the function of communication required by the task.
- Pronunciation & fluency:** refers to how the student produces the language considering issues of intonation, stress, accuracy of sound production and rate of production (fluency). **L1 interference** refers to the affect that the students' first language may have on successful pronunciation (accent).

**NOTES: Scoring**

- A score of 5 for any criterion denotes a very high standard of performance for the level, it does not denote perfection. Similarly, students who have performed very poorly on any given criterion may be awarded zero.

**NOTES: General**

- 'Accurate' and 'appropriate' refer to the use of structures, lexis, cohesive and discursive devices etc. which are described in the **Outcome Elements Guide; Speaking** for each speaking assessment task.
- 'Task requirements' refers to what is stated as the requirements of the task by the rubric in the assessment.
- Italicised** font indicates that this is not a requirement but may be present to positively or negatively affect marks.

**Appendix F: Participants' assessment scores**

Name	End-of-Course Assessment					Total
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing 1	Writing 2	%
	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	
1	19	13	24	16.5	14	73
2	22.5	13	23	14.5	12.5	72
3	26	17	26	16	14.5	85
4	21	12	27	13.5	12	70
5	13.5	10	22	13	14.5	59
6	21	14	20	12	13.5	71
7	18	15	21	15.5	13	67
8	24	17	22	13	13.5	77
9	26	16	25	16.5	16	84
10	26	16	29	17.5	18.5	89
11	24	12	23	13.5	12.5	69
12	11	13	12	13.5	12	56
13	13.5	12	16	13	11	56
14	25	14	27	15.5	13	80
15	10	13	18	12	14	55
16	23	13	22	12	14.5	70
17	20	16	20	10.5	13	69
18	18	13	23	12	10.5	64
19	14.5	11	20	13	13	59
20	27.5	16	22	14.5	16.5	82
21	22.5	16	21	14	14	74
22	21	13	19	14	13	64
23	22.5	14	25	13.5	13	68
24	28	18	27	15.5	18	91
25	20	18	23	14	14.5	70
26	27.5	18	21	13	13	79
27	19.5	18	24	14.5	14.5	77
28	5.5	15	12	13	10	48
29	22.5	14	24	14	15	77
30	20	13	23	14.5	15.5	74
31	13.5	14	14	12.5	15	58
32	25.5	19	25	14.5	15	82
33	27	18	23	14	13	81
34	10.5	14	24	13.5	13	59
35	20	15	24	14	15	72
36	25.5	14	28	13.5	14	76
37	14.5	12	22	13.5	14	63
38	12.5	13	14	10	12.5	53
39	8	13	13	12.5	11	51
41	19	13	24	15	14.5	73
42	19	18	22	13.5	14	69
43	22	14	27	12.5	15	75
44	23	15	21	16.5	15.5	74
45	22	14	11	11	13	58

46	18	11	25	13	13	50
47	20	12	24	15	13.5	70
48	18	16	22	13	13.5	62
49	18	18	25	14.5	14.5	75
50	23	15	28	15.5	15	81
51	23	17	26	13.5	15	76
52	18.5	12	16	13	13.5	58
53	25	14	22	12	13.5	71
54	22.5	13	19	16	14	68
55	22.5	13	22	12.5	14.5	72
56	21.5	13	27	13.5	14.5	75
57	14.5	14	23	13	18	68
58	26	14	26	13	15	81
59	15.5	13	23	12	14.5	62
60	19	14	28	14	13.5	73
61	30	14	27	15.5	16	81
62	27.5	19	25	15	17.5	87
63	23.5	13	24	12	14	75
64	13.5	12	25	12.5	15	63
65	15.5	15	18	14.5	15	67
66	18.5	13	24	14	17	72
67	22	14	25	14.5	13.5	73
68	10.5	12	22	12.5	12.5	55
69	25	14	25	13	15.5	78
70	19.5	12	20	13	18	67
71	10.5	14	14	15.5	13	55
72	28	15	30	12.5	18	86
73	18	13	23	12	14.5	68
74	19	17	25	14.5	14.5	73
75	25.5	13	23	14	15.5	75
76	9.5	11	19	12	12	53
77	23.5	18	24	16	15	81
78	26.5	18	26	14.5	14.5	84
79	21.5	13	21	14.5	11	71
80	19.5	13	27	14.5	14.5	73
81	28	18	25	14.5	16.5	85
82	18	12	20	15	14	65
83	13.5	16	17	14.5	15	64
84	12.5	13	28	17.5	15	68
85	21	14	25	14.5	16.5	74
86	20	14	26	15	17	72
87	11.5	12	14	12	13.5	57
88	7	11	13	12	12	46
89	21.5	16	23	14.5	15	74
90	18	13	22	15.5	15.5	67
91	18.5	14	22	12.5	15.5	71
92	20	17	22	13	13.5	72
93	27	14	24	15	15.5	77
94	22	15	16	13	13.5	67
95	21	16	22	13	13.5	67
96	18	15	18	11	11	60

97	18	14	21	16	13.5	72
98	22	17	21	13	13	65
99	25	15	24	12	14	67
100	21	16	29	14	14	70
101	20.5	16	24	15	14	72
102	29	16	24	13	15	72