How do good language learners learn English in Taiwan?

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This paper aims to investigate the language learning strategies (LLSs) employed by advanced EFL learners in Taiwan. It intends to find out their overall use of LLSs, and examines how they apply LLSs in a variety of tasks and with different English subskills. Twenty-eight graduate students from English department in a northern University in Taiwan participated in this study. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a background questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview were adopted for data collection. The results indicated that these advanced EFL learners have employed a variety of LLSs in learning English. Particularly, their high use of metacognitve strategies has made them efficiently plan, monitor, and orchestrate different strategies for different language tasks. This study also revealed that participants have developed specific strategies for different English subskills and they would apply these strategies in an integrated manner. Other underlying commonalities for the participants were their sensitivity and attentiveness for different English expressions and usages, and their active creation of output channels for the actualization and internalization of language use. Other findings regarding gender, different levels of program and studying abroad experience in relation to the use of LLSs among participants will also be discussed in this paper.

Key words: language learning strategies (LLSs)

Introduction

Since the mid seventies, increasing attention has been paid to language learning strategy use in ESL and EFL learning. Numerous research has tried to identify the language learning strategies (LLSs) adopted by "good language learners" and results of these studies showed that more proficient language learners use more and more types of LLSs compared with less proficient learners (Altan, 2003; Bruen, 2001; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Green & Oxford, 1995; O'Malley& Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1975, 1981; Stern, 1983; Wharton, 2000). In addition, research findings have revealed that variables such as motivation, gender, type of task, level of proficiency, different culture and context, etc., may associate with differences in LLS use among EFL learners.

In the context of Taiwan, different studies related to LLSs have been conducted across

different educational levels, ranging from elementary to university students (e.g., Lai, 2005; Lan, 2005; Yang, 1993). Attempts have also been made in exploring the role of gender, proficiency level, motivation and different majors in relation to the use of LLSs among EFL learners in Taiwan (e.g., Chang, 2004; Chang, Liu & Lee, 2007; Sy; 1994, 1995; Yang, 1994). From these studies, some generalization can be drawn such as females tend to use more LLSs than males, and more proficient learners use more types of leaning strategies. Nevertheless, relatively scarce is the study targeting at advanced level EFL learners' language learning strategy use in English learning. The current study, thus aims at examining LLSs commonly employed by advanced EFL learners in Taiwan. Through the identification of the advanced learners' LLSs and how they have applied these strategies in the process of English learning, some useful suggestions and tips may be drawn in helping other EFL learners in Taiwan improve their strategy use and consequently advance their English language proficiency.

Research Question:

1) For the advanced EFL learners in this study, what is their overall learning strategy use in learning English? What are the most commonly used strategies? What are the least used strategies?
2) Do learner characteristics such as experience of studying abroad, different levels of enrolled program, or gender result in differences in the use of LLSs among these advanced EFL learners?
3) How do these advanced EFL learners apply LLSs in their target language (English) learning? How are these LLSs correlated with one another?

Literature Review:

The definition of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Rubin (1975, p.43), one of the earliest researchers in the filed, provided a broad definition of learning strategies as "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge". In 1978, Bialystok defined language learning strategies as "optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in second language (p.71)". Later, Wenden and Rubin (1987, p.19) even more specifically defined learning strategies as

“ any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.” According to Chamot (1987, p.71), learning strategies were defined as “techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information. In 1990, O’Malley and Chamot looked at language learning from a cognitive perspective and viewed language learning strategies as “the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information (p.1)”. Apparently, the term-language learning strategy has been toned and refined as more studies being conducted in the field.

In 1990, Oxford defined language learning strategies as “specific action taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (p.8).” According to Oxford’s system (1990, p.17), learning strategies can be divided to direct strategies and indirect strategies. For direct strategies, further distinctions can be made into 1) memory strategies, 2) cognitive strategies, and 3) compensation strategies. As for indirect strategies, three categories are included: 1) metacognitive strategies, 2) affective strategies, and 3) social strategies. In fact, it has been found in Hsiao and Oxford’s comparative study (2002) that Oxford’s system of six basic types of language leaning strategies was superior in accounting for different strategies used by language learners.

Methods in identifying language learning strategies:

Self-report has still been the most adopted means in obtaining data of learners’ language strategies. As Chomot (2004, p.3) pointed out that although accuracy in self report can be questioned, “it is still the only way to identify learners’ mental processing”. Chomot listed different methods in identifying learners’ language learning strategies and they were 1) retrospective interviews, 2) stimulated recall interviews, 3) questionnaires, 4) written diaries and journals, and 5) think-aloud protocols. Inevitably, each of these methods has its

shortcomings, yet according to Chomot (2004, p.3), "each provides important insights into unobservable mental learning strategies" adopted by language learners.

The most widely used research instrument in assessing learners' use of various strategies when studying a language is called the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990). A large number of studies have adopted SILL to collect data on EFL learners' language learning strategies (see Cohen, Weaver& Li, 1998; Nyikos& Oxford, 1993; Oxford, 1990;1996; Oxford& Burry-Stock, 1995: Wharton,2000). The SILL is a standardized measure of LLS with versions of different languages; thus, it has been used to collect and analyze information from language learners worldwide (Chomot, 2004). The current study has also adopted SILL as the instrument for collecting participants' data on their use of LLSs.

Studies on language learning strategies:

Studies have been interested in different factors associated with differences in the use of LLSs. Studies which focused on the connection between strategy use and language proficiency (e.g., Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Wenden, 1987) have found that more proficient language learners employed more types and more frequent use of strategies than less proficient learners. Chomot (2005, p.116) pointed out that good language learners were equipped with the "metacognitive knowledge about task requirements" and could therefore "select appropriate strategies" accordingly. A study comparing more and less proficient learners in Taiwan (Lai, 2005) found that more proficient EFL Taiwanese learners used more metacognitive, more cognitive and less memory skills than less proficient learners. In Vandergrift's study (2003a) ,which compared the listening comprehension strategies of more-and less-skilled Canadian students of French, he found that more skilled listeners used more metacognitive strategies, especially comprehension monitoring, than did their less skilled classmates.

In terms of gender differences, the results of many studies revealed females used more

language learning strategies than males (e.g., Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1993). In Ehrman and Oxford's study (1989), females tended to use more social learning strategies and in Oxford and Nyikos' study (1989), females used more formal rule-based practice strategies and conversational input elicitation strategies. A study done by Sy (1994) found that female EFL students in Taiwan tended to use more cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies.

As for differences in cultural background in relation to strategy use, studies also showed learners of different ethnicity demonstrated preferred use of LLSs (Bedel and Oxford, 1996; Politzer, 1983; Reid,1987; Takeuchi, 2003; Wharton, 2002). For example, some research findings (Huang& Van Naerrwen, 1987; Polizer,1983; Polizer & McGroarty, 1985) pointed out that Asian students preferred rote memorization strategies and tended to focus on the linguistic code. Polizer (1983) found that Hispanics used more social, interactive kind of strategies in language learning. In Wharton's study (2000), he found that bilingual Singaporean students preferred to use social strategies in studying a foreign language. In 2003, Takeuchi (2003) used biographies to identify characteristics of good language learners in Japan and found good Japanese EFL learners would create opportunities to practice English, apply specific strategies for different tasks, use different kinds of memory and cognitive strategies to help with their internalization and practical use of the language. Nevertheless, culture is too broad a term with too many factors involved; thus, caution should be made when any generalization is to be drawn in terms of ethnically preferred language strategies.

Methodology:

Participants:

Twenty-eight graduate school students currently enrolled in M.A. and Ph.D. programs of English department from Tamkang University participated in this study. The number of participants from each program is the same, with 14 M.A. and 14 Ph.D. students. The average age of the participants is 32 years old, ranging from 22 to 55 years of age. Due to the nature of

the program- English major, graduate school program, there are more female than male students enrolled. Thus, the gender of the participants is somewhat imbalanced, with 8 males and 20 females participated in this study.

Participants' language proficiency and other background information:

The average years of English study among participants are 18 years, ranging from 10 to 33 years. As for the language proficiency, majority of the participants have either passed GEPT higher intermediate level, have reached TOEFL score 600 or above, TOEIC score 900 or above, or IELTS 6.5 or above. Since these participants have passed graduate school entrance exams as well as have attained advanced levels in standardized proficiency tests, they can therefore be categorized as advanced EFL learners in Taiwan. From the background questionnaires, the descriptive statistics has indicated that majority of participants (more than 70%) have never studied or lived in English speaking countries. Those who did study or had lived in English speaking countries were only there for a relatively short time (mostly a year).

In terms of self-rated language proficiency compared with other Chinese classmates, 50% of the participants rated themselves as fair and the other 50% rated themselves as being good or excellent. As for the self-rated proficiency compared with native speakers of English, 57% of the subjects rated themselves as fair, nearly 29% rated as good or excellent and only 14 % of the subjects rated as poor compared with native speakers. Basically, the information disclosed here is that majority of the subjects in this study are quite confident with their English language ability.

As for the motivation of language learning, nearly all participants indicated that they wanted to learn English because of their interests in the language, in the culture, and/or they needed it for future (or current) career. It can thus be inferred most participants in this study are intrinsically and/or instrumentally motivated in English learning.

Instruments:

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL version 7.0 for ESL/EFL learners,

50 items), a self-report questionnaire, was used to assess the frequency use of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). It is estimated that 40-50 major studies, including more than a dozen dissertations and theses have been done using SILL (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995). The high reliability coefficients for the SILL reported by studies (from .85to .98) have also made it the most extensively used instrument in investigating EFL learners' use of language learning strategies. In the SILL, language learning strategies are grouped into six categories for assessment: (a) memory strategies (9 item), (b) cognitive strategies (14 items), (c) compensation strategies (6 items), (d) metacognitiv strategies (9 items), (e) affective strategies (6 items), and (f) social strategies (6 items). The response options in the SILL use a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'never or almost true of me' to 'always true of me'. Oxford (1990) developed scale ranges and identified different levels of usage as: (1) 'high usage': 3.5-5.0, (2) 'medium usage': 2.5-3.4, and (3) 'low usage': 1.0-2.4.

A background questionnaire, modified from Oxford's Background questionnaire (Oxford, 1990, p.282), was also used in this study. It was distributed to collect the demographic information about the participants, and the collected information included participants' years of English study, self-rated English proficiency, motivation, language learning experience, language proficiency, self-perception, most (and least) difficult English subskills perceived, etc,.

Finally, a semi-structured interview was conducted to gather more in-depth information from the participants. A few participating students from both M.A. and Ph.D. programs were interviewed on how they have applied different strategies in the process and different context of English learning. They were specifically asked on what strategies they have used for different English subskills and what strategies they plan to use in tackling the most difficult subskill perceived. In addition, participants had elaborated on their use of strategies for different tasks. Finally, they were required to reflect upon their strategy use in relation to different stages of learning.

Data collection and analysis

The SILL and background questionnaires were administrated to 28 graduate students in their off-class hours in Tamkang University. Participants were informed that their personal information revealed would be strictly for research purpose and therefore, confidentiality would be absolutely guarded.

As for the data analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS, version 14.0) for Microsoft Windows was used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages) were performed in order to gather the demographic data of the participants and to calculate their overall strategy use. In addition, independent t-tests were performed to figure out whether there are significant differences in strategy use between different gender, participants' enrolled programs, or (non) experience of studying abroad. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine how these six subcategories of learning strategies (memory, compensation, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) are correlated to one another.

Results:

Overall strategy use

From the descriptive statistics employed for data analysis, Table 1 illustrates the overall use of strategies by participants. The mean of overall strategy use was 3.51, indicating that participants exercised high use (M= 3.5-5) of LLSs in learning English. According to the results of Table 1, the most frequently used strategies, also ranked in the high-use categories (M=3.5-5), were metacognitive strategies (M=3.80), followed by cognitive strategies (M=3.75), and compensation strategies (M=3.72). Other strategies which were ranked in the medium-use categories (M= 2.5-3.4) were social strategies (M= 3.42), followed by memory strategies (M=3.27) and affective strategies (M=3.10).

Table 2 (see Appendix) ranks reported strategy use by individual item mean scores of the entire sample from the SILL. Results were shown in a descending order from most to least

used strategy. From Table 2, it pointed out that the top 3 most used strategies by participants were a compensation strategy," If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing (M=4.39), and followed by two metacognitive strategies "I pay attention when someone is speaking English" (M=4.32) and "I try to find out how to be a better learner of English" (M=4.29). As for the least used three items for participants, they were two memory strategies, "I use flashcards to remember new English words" (M=2.32), "I physically act out new English words" (M=2.11), and one affective strategy, "I write down my feelings in a language learning diary" (M=1.89).

Table 1 Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Language Learning Strategy Use

Strategies	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Rank
Memory	3.27	.725	1.56	5.00	5
Cognitive	3.75	.505	2.79	4.71	2
Compensation	3.72	.503	2.83	5.00	3
Metacognitive	3.80	.696	2.11	4.89	1
Affective	3.10	.700	1.67	4.17	6
Social	3.42	.835	1.50	5.00	4
Overall Strategy use	3.51	.478	2.15	4.39	

N= 28

The influence of gender, different levels of enrolled program, and experience of studying abroad in relation to the use of LLSs

In order to examine the gender differences in relation to the use of LLSs, independent t-test was performed and the result of analysis (see Table 3 in Appendix) showed no significant difference between male and female participants in their overall LLS use. According to Table 3, overall mean differences indicated that male participants (M=3.69) used more LLSs than female participants (M=3.43) in this study. As for the six subcategories of LLSs, the results showed that there was no significant difference in the use of LLSs between males and females for any subcategory, although males reported more strategy use than females in all subcategories.

As for the participants' currently enrolled program (M.A. or Ph.D. English program) in

relation to LLS use, Table 4 (see Appendix) revealed that there was no significant difference between M.A. and Ph.D. level participants in their overall use of strategies. As for the subcategories, no significant difference was found between participants of different levels of enrolled program.

In terms of the possible effect of having the experience of studying abroad in relation to LLS use, Table 5 (see Appendix) showed that there was no significant difference in overall LLS use between participants who have or have never studied abroad. According to Table 5, overall mean differences indicated that participants who have never studied abroad (M= 3.53) used slightly more LLSs than participants who did have the experience studying abroad (M= 3.42).

The application of LLSs in English learning by advanced learners

From the semi-structured interview, it was found that these advanced EFL learners could clearly identify their strategy use for different English tasks. For example, some participants pointed out their strategies in preparing for tests differed from strategies employed in completing a written report. It was also found that they had clear goals in enhancing their language ability and they would evaluate their English proficiency by taking standardized test such as TOEFL, GEPT, or TOEIC.

In terms of different strategies identified for different English subskills, all interviewees could properly identify their preferred use of strategies in enhancing different English subskills. For listening, participants would listen intensively and repeatedly for segments of speech (deep listening) in preparing for listening tests and they tended to listen for patterns, expressions and special usages when they watched movie, listened to music or radio (broad listening). As for reading, interviewees pointed out that they read regularly, used guessing technique when encountered unknown words, would analyze sentence structures or patterns when encountered sentences hard to comprehend, and would summarize their reading texts to check for their comprehension when preparing for exams.

As for speaking, participants would pay close attention to how native speakers use different expressions and usages in different context, would mimic their pronunciation , would engage in self-talk, and self-practice by reading aloud, would plan and monitor their own speech for presentation or communicative purpose. For writing, most interviewees perceived it as the most difficult subskill to master in English. They pointed out that intensive reading, modeling different English usages and patterns, practicing writing regularly, and responding closely to corrective feedback were effective strategies in enhancing writing skills.

Finally, most of the interviewees pointed out that they worried a lot about accuracy and concerned greatly about the correct grammar usage in the beginning and intermediate stage. However, as their level of proficiency advances, they now concern more on how fluent and how native like they are when expressing their ideas in speaking or in writing. In addition, some of them pointed out that although they didn't often consciously think of their strategy use, they would actually act out many listed strategies in the SILL. They would also actively evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of their strategy use for the encountered tasks.

The Correlation analysis of strategy categories

According to Table 6, it showed that for these advanced EFL learners, their metacognitive strategies were positively and significantly correlated with strategies of all the other subcategories. It indicated that the more these participants use metacognitive strategies, the more they would also use the other five types of learning strategies. It could also be found that their metacognitive strategies had a relatively strong, positive and significant correlation with cognitive strategies (r=.596) and with social strategies (r=.619).

Table 6: The Correlations between the Categories of Strategies

	MEM	COG	Com	Met	Aff	Soc
MEM	1.000	.526**	.625**	.382**	.273	.146
COG	.526**	1.000	.657**	.596**	.296	.352
Com	.652**	.657**	1.000	.388*	.409*	.241
Met	.382**	.596**	.388*	1.000	.489**	.619**
Aff	.273	.296	.409*	.489**	1.000	.511**

Soc	.146	.352	.241	.619**	511**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

MEM (Memory strategies), COG (Cognitive strategies), Com (Compensation strategies),

Met (Metacognitive strategies), Aff (Affective strategies), Soc(Social strategies)

Discussion:

Overall strategy use

The result has indicated that for these advanced EFL learners, they have shown the high use of overall LLSs (M=3.51) and medium to high use for all the subcategories of LLSs in language learning. This outcome is consistent with previous studies in that more proficient language learners use more LLSs in language learning (e.g., Altan, 2003; Bruen, 2001; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Green & Oxford, 1995; O'Malley& Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1975, 1981). For these advanced EFL learners, their high use of metacognitive strategies implies that they are able to "plan" for effective learning, " select" proper strategies for the task, "monitor" their learning process, " orchestrate various strategies" for the target task and finally they would "evaluate" the process and their strategy use of their language learning (Anderson, 2001, pp.2-4). In fact, the currently enrolled program of these advanced EFL learners requires their full use of these strategies in writing academic reports as well as taking comprehensive exams. According to Pintrich and Garcia, 1994, metacognitive knowledge relates closely with enhancement in academic performance, and by employing this strategy, these participants can not only do better in school but further advance their English proficiency.

It should also be noted that these advanced learners also reported high use of cognitive and compensation strategies. It suggests that they not only know *how* do choose proper strategies for the task (metacognitive strategy) but they know *what* they should do to improve their English subskills (cognitive strategies). In addition, the high use of compensation knowledge implies that they have bigger polls of lexis which can help them guess intelligently in reading and listening and convey their intended meaning in speaking and writing.

As for the least used three items in the SILL," the use of flashcards", "physically acting out new words", and "keeping diary" were reported as strategies in low use by the participants. From the interview, it was found that majority of the participants adopted these strategies only when they first started learning English. As their proficiency level advances, these strategies are no longer applied when they study English.

The influence of gender, different levels of enrolled program, and experience of studying abroad in relation to the use of LLSs

From the results of independent t-tests, they showed that gender, currently enrolled program of different levels, and having/ not having experience of studying abroad do not result in significant differences in the use of LLSs for these advanced EFL learners. In terms of gender difference, the result of the current study isn't consistent with many previous findings which indicated females used more LLSs than males (e.g., Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1993). It could possibly be explained that for these advanced EFL learners, their strategy use was no longer constrained by this fundamental gender differences. However, caution should be made before drawing definite generalization because of the limited size and unbalanced number of participants (female= 20, male= 8) in this study.

In terms of different levels of enrolled program, the result does not show significant difference between M.A. and Ph.D. level students. It could possibly be interpreted that once learners' language proficiency reached the more advanced level, their pattern of strategy use would tend to be more or less stabilized.

As for the result of strategy use between participants who have and have never been studying abroad, the result has indicated that there is no significant difference in the strategy use for participants with or without experience of studying abroad. Since there is no significant difference in the use of LLSs, and they've all become advanced EFL learners with good English proficiency, its implication can indeed be very inspiring. It sheds light on the possibility that one can still become a proficient English learner in Taiwan by adopting

effective language learning strategies. However, due to the limited and uneven number of participants in two groups (number of non-experience abroad participants= 20, number of having experience abroad=8), any generalization here can only be drawn tentatively and more research is needed for further clarification.

The application of LLSs in English learning by advanced learners

From the interview, it's clear that these advanced EFL learners were able to identify their strategy use and could also match different tasks with proper LLSs. They had clear goals of improving their language proficiency and they had good knowledge of different strategies used for different subskills. In addition, they not only internally plan, organize, monitor and evaluate their language learning process, but also actively seek out for external evaluation and validation for their English language proficiency by taking different standardized tests.

In terms of strategy use identified for different English subskills, it was found that participants could use strategies appropriate for different tasks by taking on an integrated approach of adopting different English subskills. They read and listened for patterns and special usages, paid close attention to and analyzed difficult structures, summarized key points and later applied what's learned in the written and oral language. To create opportunities for output practice in EFL context, they would also purposely memorize expressions, usages and patterns from reading or listening and engaged in self-talk or talking aloud when they needed to practice for different oral tasks such as giving formal presentations. Their strong concern for accurate, native-like pronunciation made them closely attend to audio input, vocalize the sounds of words or expressions many times, and monitor their errors when they noticed the gap between their own speech and the target language.

In addition, it seems that for these advanced learners, their use of language learning strategies went through different stages. The focus of accuracy in the beginning and intermediate stage has gradually shifted towards concern for greater fluency. As participants reported they do not conscious think of these strategies in dealing with different language

tasks, it implies that for these advanced learners, their language processing has become somewhat automitized. It is especially worth noting that their reported high use of metacognitive strategies (knowing how) would help them greatly with their procedural knowledge and thus enhancing the language internalization process, and promoting greater language proficiency.

The Correlation analysis of strategy categories

The correlation analysis revealed that for these advanced learners, their metacognitive strategies were positively and significantly correlated with strategies of all other subcategories. That is to say, once participants' metacognitive strategies are in active use, they are more prone to activate their cognitive, social, compensative, memory, and affective strategies that are most beneficial for their language learning tasks at hand. Its pedagogical implication is thus significant in that given the limited time and resources in most of the English classes, language instructors should explicitly teach and model the kind of strategies that are most cost-efficient. When properly instruct students to improve their metacognitive strategies to plan, organize, monitor, and evaluate, it is more likely for EFL students to effectively examine their own learning process and strategy use. Consequently, they will be able to identify their problems and select appropriate strategies to match with different language tasks in and out of the language classroom.

Conclusion and Implications:

It is clear that the advanced English learners in this study have employed a variety of learning strategies in learning English. Particularly, their high use of metacognitive strategies has enabled them become efficient EFL learners in planning, organizing, monitoring, evaluating and orchestrating different strategies for different language tasks. In addition, their relative high use of cognitive and compensation strategies indicates that these advanced EFL learners are not only clear about what strategies to use but have good command of knowledge to make intelligent guesses in facilitating their comprehension of the language.

In terms of differences with regard to gender, different levels of enrolled program, and having or not having experience studying abroad in relation to strategy use, this study has not found any of these factors significantly evoke different strategy use among these advanced learners. Implications could be that, for these advanced learners, their language learning strategies were no longer constrained by the fundamental gender differences, and their strategy use tended to be more or less stabilized once a certain level of proficiency was reached. Also, it has given a very positive connotation in that one can still become a proficient and advanced EFL learner in Taiwan when they are equipped with effective language learning strategies.

Finally, it has become clear that these advanced learners have developed skill-specific strategies and they would apply these strategies to different English tasks in an integrated manner. For these advanced learners, the commonality comes from their sensitivity and attentiveness for different English patterns, expressions, and usages in reading and listening. In addition, they would actively create output channels to put these internalized knowledge in use by engaging in different modes of spoken and written practices. Through constant self-monitoring and evaluating their perceptive and productive product, their internalization process is reinforced and consequently their language proficiency is further enhanced.

Drawing on the identified characteristics of advanced EFL learners in this study, becoming highly advanced EFL learners in Taiwan is an attainable goal. To accelerate the process, language instructors can help students by explicitly teaching and modeling the metacognitive strategies matched with the learning tasks in the language classroom. When students are equipped with abilities in planning and orchestrating different learning strategies and in monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness, their journey to a less frustrating and more efficient ride in language learning will come and more optimal outcome of their English language proficiency can and should therefore be resulted.

Due to the limited scale of this study- small sample size and homogeneity of participants,

any definite generalization may be premature at this stage. Future research involving more and a wider range of advanced Taiwanese EFL learners should be conducted to further testify the LLSs identified in the current study. Once these strategies can be validated, more effective strategy training program can then be developed to benefit more EFL learners in Taiwan.

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Appendix:

Table 2: Preference of Language learning strategies by advanced EFL leaners

Strategy category	Strategy No.	Strategy statement	Rank	Mean
High Usage (M=3.50 or above)				
Com	29	If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	1	4.39
Met	32	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	2	4.32
Met	33	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	3	4.29
COG	15	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	4	4.14
Aff	40	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	5	4.14
COG	11	I try to talk like native English speakers	6	4.07
COG	12	I practice the sounds of English.	7	4.04
MEM	1	1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	8	4.00
Com	24	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	9	4.00
Met	31	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	10	4.00
COG	16	I read for pleasure in English.	11	3.93
Met	30	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	12	3.89
COG	17	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	13	3.86
Met	36	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	14	3.86
Met	37	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	15	3.86
Soc	50	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	16	3.86
COG	20	I try to find patterns in English.	17	3.82
Com	25	When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	18	3.82
MEM	3	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	19	3.79
COG	18	I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	20	3.79
MEM	2	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	21	3.75
COG	10	I say or write new English words several times.	22	3.75
Soc	45	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	23	3.75

Met	34	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	24	3.68
Soc	49	I ask questions in English.	25	3.68
COG	19	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	26	3.64
COG	21	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	27	3.64
COG	23	I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	28	3.61
Com	27	I read English without looking up every new word.	29	3.61
COG	22	I try not to translate word-for-word.	30	3.57
Com	28	I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	31	3.54
Met	38	I think about my progress in learning English.	32	3.50
MEM	4	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	33	3.46
MEM	8	I review English lessons often.	34	3.46
MEM	9	I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	35	3.46
Aff	39	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	36	3.46
Medium Usage (M=2.5-3.4)				
COG	14	I start conversations in English.	37	3.36
Aff	42	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	38	3.36
COG	13	I use the English words I know in different ways.	39	3.25
Soc	46	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	40	3.14
Soc	48	I ask for help from English speakers.	41	3.11
MEM	5	I use rhymes to remember new English words.	42	3.07
Aff	41	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	43	3.04
Com	26	I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	44	2.96
Soc	47	I practice English with other students.	45	2.96
Met	35	I look for people I can talk to in English.	46	2.89
Aff	44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	47	2.75
Low Usage (M=1.0-2.4)				
MEM	6	I use flashcards to remember new English words.	48	2.32
MEM	7	I physically act out new English words.	49	2.11
Aff	43	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	50	1.89

MEM (Memory strategies), COG (Cognitive strategies), Com (Compensation strategies),

Met (Metacognitive Strategies), Aff (Affective strategies), Soc(Social strategies)

Table 3: Summary of Variation in Language Learning Strategy Use by Gender

Strategies	**N**		**M**		**SD**			
	male	female	male	female	male	female	t	p
Memory	8	20	3.65	3.12	.505	.753	1.84	.077
Cognitive	8	20	3.77	3.74	.438	.540	.13	.895
Compensation	8	20	3.79	3.68	.330	.563	.46	.644
Metacognitive	8	20	4.04	3.72	.518	.748	1.12	.273
Affective	8	20	3.35	3.01	.545	.742	1.19	.245
Social	8	20	3.56	3.36	.519	.937	.57	.569
Overall Strategy Use	8	20	3.69	3.43	.299	.521	1.29	.205

*P<.05

Table 4: Summary of Variation in Language Learning Strategy Use by enrolled program

Strategies	**N**		**M**		**SD**			
	M.A.	Ph.D.	M.A.	Ph.D.	M.A.	Ph.D.	t	p
Memory	14	14	3.38	3.15	.452	.928	-.80	.42
Cognitive	14	14	3.72	3.76	.361	.631	.18	.85
Compensation	14	14	3.71	3.72	.459	.560	.06	.95
Metacognitive	14	14	3.63	3.98	.480	.843	1.34	.19
Affective	14	14	3.19	3.02	.576	.818	-.62	.53
Social	14	14	3.39	3.44	.823	.876	.148	.88
Overall Strategy Use	14	14	3.50	3.51	.385	.571	.050	.96

*P<.05

Table 5: Summary of Variation in Language Learning Strategy Use by (non) experience of studying abroad

Strategies	N		M		SD			
	Never study abroad	Study abroad	Never study abroad	Study abroad	Never study abroad	Study abroad	t	p
Memory	20	8	3.39	2,95	.714	.700	1.46	.154
Cognitive	20	8	3.79	3.63	.500	.533	.74	.463
Compensation	20	8	3.69	3.79	.525	.469	-.46	.644
Metacognitive	20	8	3.85	3.70	.609	.919	.47	.636
Affective	20	8	3.05	3.25	.703	.718	-.67	.505
Social	20	8	3.43	3.37	.738	1.09	.16	.871
Overall Strategy Use	20	8	3.53	3.45	.479	.500	.40	.688

*P<.05