# Literature Review on Language Learning Strategy Research in China

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*Abstract*—**This paper was intended to sketch the landscape of the LLS researches conducted by Chinese researchers between 2003 and 2018, most of which took Chinese college student as research subjects. These researches covered eight topics, including the investigation of overall/individual features of LLS, comparison of LLS use between different learner groups, LLS instruction and the like.**

*Index Terms*—**learning strategy, language learning strategy, foreign language learning strategy**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1975, Rubin first put forward the concept of language learning strategy. Currently, language learning strategy research is the most active field of the course learning strategy research (Gu & Yan, 2017). The Chinese literature involved in this paper is derived from 10 Foreign Language Chinese Core Journals collected by China National Knowledge Infrastructure. We searched the literature on learning strategies from 2003 to 2018 and classified them. It also attempts to describe the research contents, research objects and research methods of language learning strategies in China in the past 15 years. We draw on the classification method of Gu & Yan.(2017), and classify the literature into 8 categories to discuss.

## II. RESEARCH CONTENT OF LLS

### A. Literature Review

CHART1
THE CLASSIFICATION OF LITERATURE OF REVIEW

| Literature Review in China | Literature Review Abroad | Vocabulary Learning Strategy | Reading Strategy | The Empirical Research | Strategy Training |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

There are mainly 6 reviews on language learning strategies (Chart1). Gu & Yan (2017) and Zheng (2011) reviewed the studies on language learning strategies in China, analyzed the deficiencies of the research and put forward the prospect for the future. Gu (2015) conducted a diachronic study on foreign language learning strategies to explore the evolution of foreign language learning strategy research paradigm and research methods. Fan, Xia & Wang(2014) explored the overall development trend of the research on vocabulary learning strategies in China. Li & Qin(2005) reviewed the current situation of research on second language reading strategies in China and abroad in the past 30 years since 2015, and analyzed and summarized the achievements and characteristics of the research on second language reading strategies. Then, descriptive review methodology was used to analyze the literature on second language reading strategies from 2006 to 2015 (Li & Pu, 2017). Shen (2012) reviewed the research on second language learning strategy training from 1990 to 2012, and proposed to include strategy training in the teaching plan of L2 courses and carry out teacher training activities which based on learning strategies. Wen & Wang (2004b) reviewed empirical research on English learning strategies in China in the past 20 years, and pointed out the deficiencies in this field and the questions that are worth studying in the future.

### B. The Investigation of Overall/Individual Features of LLS

In this kind of research, only Qin & Wang (2007) used qualitative research method (study log) to observe the characteristics of using English learning strategies of non-English major college students. Other studies adopt the quantitative research method by using questionnaire. According to the source of the questionnaire, there are two main types.

1. Oxford (1990) language learning strategy scale was used to investigate

Si, Zhao & He (2005) investigated the usage of language learning strategies among vocational students. Li Songhao (2006) investigated the depth and breadth of vocabulary learning strategies used by junior high school students and analyzed the causes. Gong(2008), after slightly modifying the Oxford language learning strategy scale, investigated the

usage of English learning strategies among undergraduates of English majors and non-English majors, and found that students of different majors have both similarities and differences in the use preferences of language learning strategies.

2. Self-designed or adapted questionnaires

Duan(2006) conducted a survey on extracurricular reading strategies of English major students and found that most students did not plan their extracurricular reading, neither paid attention to the effectiveness of language input, nor the language output of reading and cooperative learning. Gu & Li (2018) designed *the Questionnaire on English Writing Strategies of Junior Middle School Students* and *the Scale of Junior Middle School Students' Self-efficacy in English Writing* to explore the usage of English writing strategies, the level of writing self-efficacy and the correlation between the two. Liu Huijun(2004) and Lu(2006) investigated the relationship between English reading, English writing and metacognitive strategies by using questionnaires.

*C.  The Comparative Study on the Use Preference of Learning Strategies among Different Learning Groups*

This kind of comparative study is mainly completed by two research methods.

1. Questionnaire survey is the main method

Liu & Yuan (2005) made a comparative analysis of the differences between high-score and low-score language strategies among undergraduates majoring in English by using Oxford language learning strategy scale. Tao(2009) took the learning strategy system of O'malley & Chamot as the model, and used Wen qiufang' s partial strategy framework to compile a questionnaire. They conducted a comparative study on metacognitive strategies among medical, art and comprehensive students. Miao (2008) mainly used questionnaire to explore the general tendency of English majors and non-English majors in using vocabulary strategies, and to compare their differences and similarities in the use of vocabulary strategies. Cheng, Ma & Dong (2003) designed a questionnaire on English learning strategies based on the theoretical framework of O'malley & Chamot, and studied the group characteristics and inter-group differences of those who passed CET4/CET6 and those who failed in using learning strategies.

2. The hybrid study by using questionnaires and classroom observations and/or interviews

Shang & Wang (2010) took 424 non-English major college students as the research objects, studied the types of English learning strategies, the differences between high-score and low-score students in using learning strategies, and the relationship between English learning strategies and English scores. Wu(2005) studied the relationship between the internal and external personality tendencies of excellent college English learners and the application of learning strategies.

*D.  Researches on Language Learning Strategy Training*

At present, the research on learning strategy training in China can be divided into two categories.

1. Theoretical studies based on literature research

Wang & Wu (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 27 such studies in China and abroad and found that reading strategy training had the greatest impact on students' reading comprehension. Wang & Wen (2003) reviewed the development and current situation of English learning strategy research in China, further understood the principles, models and methods of foreign language learning strategy training, and pointed out the future development direction. Zhu Xianghua(2010) conducted listening strategy training for students in combination with listening classroom teaching, aiming to further verify the teachability of listening learning strategies and explore the reasonable mode and specific operation suitable for college English listening strategy training in China. Fan & Liu's (2008) study aims to explore the effects of vocabulary memory strategy training and explore effective vocabulary memory training models. Yang Jianding(2003) proposed a process teaching model based on strategy training. This teaching mode requires teachers to change their roles, so that teachers could correctly understand the psychological process of listening comprehension, analyze students' needs, integrate strategy training into classroom teaching, and cultivate students' ability of independent learning. Ma & Wang (2010) investigated the English learning strategy training of non-English majors, aiming to verify the effectiveness of strategy training. Yang & Liu (2005) represented the rationale of collaboration learning strategy and the author's practical classroom experiment. They found that applying collaborative learning strategy through the task-based language teaching in college is one of the effective ways to solve the problem of poor teaching efficiency.

2. Empirical researches based on experimental teaching.

a. Holistic strategy training. Li Yu (2008), Xia (2006) and Su(2003) found that language learning strategies were feasible and could effectively improve students' scores after planned language learning strategy training in experimental teaching. However, Guo (2007) found that there is positive correlation only between the training and the usage of social strategies, but it is not too strong. It shows that the training of learning strategies fails to play a positive role in the use of effective learning strategies. Huang & Hu (2009) used mind map to train students' language learning strategies. After two years of teaching experiments, they found that this method was helpful to improve students' scores and the ability of using learning strategies and framing discourse. Based on the listening comprehension model and the learning strategies training model, Li & You (2007) studied the effects of listening strategy training on improving the listening ability of non-English majors. The result shows that the listening ability of the students who received listening strategy training was significantly higher than that of the students who did not receive.

b. Metacognitive strategy training. Liu Ying (2009) and Pan(2006) conducted metacognitive strategy training for non-English majors with poor English reading proficiency. Yang Jianding (2003a) and He (2005) conducted metacognitive strategy training in listening teaching. Liu & Gao (2011) explored the influence of metacognitive strategy training on students' writing. All the results show that metacognitive strategy was not only feasible but also effective. Long & Zhao(2009) introduced multi-modal learning mode and metacognitive strategy into college English listening teaching. The empirical research results show that there is a strong interaction between multi-modal learning mode and metacognitive strategy, and the combination of the two can better promote listening comprehension. Hu & Zhang (2006) conducted a sample survey on the use of metacognitive strategies by non-English majors. It is found that most students still do not possess the ability of autonomous learners whatever in terms of foreign language learning methods or psychological. It is believed that the ability of using metacognitive strategy to most foreign language learners should be conducted through classroom training.

c. Other strategy training. Wang Xiaojing (2016) conducted a one-semester cognitive strategy training teaching experiment on college non-English major students and found that the college English listening teaching model based on cognitive strategy theory can play a positive role in improving students' listening scores.

### E. Researches on the Relationship between Learning Achievement and the Use of Language Learning Strategies

In China, the research on the relationship between learning achievement and the use of language learning strategies is mainly conducted through questionnaire survey. From the sources of questionnaire, there are three main types: Oxford scale, the combination of O'mally & Chamot learning strategy theory and Wen Qiufang and other research results, and Aek Phakiti (2003) questionnaire on cognitive and metacognitive strategies. It is found that metacognitive strategy is the main factor affecting English reading or writing scores. Zhang & Tan (2013), Li & Zhang (2013) explored the meta-analysis of the positive correlation between learning achievement and language learning strategies. These researches suggest that strategy teaching, especially metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy and memory strategy, should be strengthened in English teaching.

### F. The Study on the Relationship between Language Learning Strategies and Autonomous Language Learning.

Yang Aiying (2008) believes that the key of autonomous learning is learners' motivation and confidence as well as knowledge and skills. That is the learners' comprehensive quality. These are also the core issues of metacognitive theory. The author further explored the relationship between metacognitive strategies and second language learning, and proved the necessity and feasibility of metacognitive strategies in second language learning. Yue & Shi (2009), Xiao, Wang & Cao (2011), and Shao & Zhao (2011) found that metacognitive strategies are highly correlated with autonomous learning, and improving the level of metacognitive strategies is an effective way to improve students' autonomous learning ability. Zhang Dianyu (2005) and Ni(2010) have confirmed that English learning strategies have a significant impact on autonomous learning through empirical studies. Through questionnaires and interviews, Hua & Leng (2017) explored the current situation of autonomous learning of English majors, the use of motivation control strategy and the relationship between them, and found that there was a significant correlation between autonomous learning behaviors and motivation control strategies.

Lin (2006), Liu & Zha (2010) discussed the correlation between English learning motivation and learning strategies in the network environment. Ling, Yang Meirong&Yang Gaixue (2012), conducted an empirical study on 60 non-English major college students by using listening strategy in an online environment. It is found that the learning strategies that directly affecting listening learning are ranked according to the frequency of use, and the order from high to low is compensation strategy, cognitive strategy, memory strategy.

### G. The Theoretical Study of Language Learning Strategies

The theory of language learning strategies can be divided into three categories: Questions about the effectiveness of language strategies, the study of language learning strategy theory, researches on metacognitive strategies. Wen&Wang(2004a) reviewed the effective research findings of second language learning strategies, and questioned the three conclusions: the superior and inferior students have differences in using strategies, learning strategies are predictive of academic record, and strategy training is effective. Wang&Chen(2009) pointed out the main problems in the current study of learning strategies. Xu Shuang (2008) verified the structure of language learning strategies with confirmatory factor analysis, and found that the theoretical structure of Oxford's language learning strategies could be used to measure the English learning strategies of Chinese college students. Yang Aiying (2011) and Xue Xinhua (2011) affirmed the great role of metacognitive strategies in English reading.

### H. Researches on the Factors Influencing the Selection and Use of Language Learning Strategies

Wen & Wang (2004b) reviewed on various factors that affecting the operation of foreign language learning strategy system. It focuses on the positive and negative effects of environment and learner factors on learning strategies. Yao & Pan(2004), Xiong & Zhang(2014), Chen & Rukeye (2004), Wang & Yin (2003)found that environment, gender, learners' learning level, interest and confidence, and academic record are all factors that affect the selection and use of learning strategies.

III.  REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN CHINA

*A.  The General Situation of Language Learning Strategies in China*

In this paper, a total of 72 literature searched in 10 foreign language core journals are reviewed. From 2003 to 2018, language strategies have always attracted the attention of researchers. From the perspective of research content, the research on language strategy training has been focused on. Empirical research based on experimental teaching has always been the focus of research.

CHART 2
THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE LITERATURE

| The type of the literature | Quantity |
|---|---|
| literature  review | 8 |
| The investigation of overall/individual features of LLS | 6 |
| The comparative study on the use preference of learning strategies among different learning groups | 6 |
| Researches on language learning strategy training | 22 |
| The study on the relationship between language learning strategies and autonomous language learning. | 10 |
| The theoretical study of language learning strategies | 6 |
| Researches on the factors influencing the selection and use of language learning strategies | 5 |
| Researches on the relationship between learning achievement and the use of language learning strategies | 9 |

According to the research objects (Chart 3), among the 49 empirical studies, there are 24 studies on non-English majors, 8 on English majors, and 5 on English majors and non-English majors with bachelor's degrees. In addition, there is one study on adult English learners, one study on non-English majors with master's and doctor's degrees, and one study on college non-English majors and university teachers.

CHART3
RESEARCH SUBJECTS

| Research subjects | | Quantity |
|---|---|---|
| Doctor in non-English major | | 1 |
| Master | non-English majors | 1 |
| | English majors | 1 |
| Undergraduate | non-English majors | 24 |
| | English majors | 8 |
| | non-English majors & English majors | 3 |
| Vocational students | | 2 |
| High school students | | 1 |
| Middle school students | | 3 |

*B.  Conclusion*

Throughout the 15 years from 2003 to 2018, great achievements have been made in the study of language strategies in China in terms of the number, field and type of studies. The research area is broader, the Angle is diverse. Empirical research is given priority to. And the data collection, processing method is more scientific. But there are still some shortcomings. 1) The experimental data are mostly collected from questionnaire, and the results and conclusions of empirical research lack comparability and universality due to the differences in questionnaire design and sample size. 2) The research objects are almost concentrated in university undergraduates, and there are relatively few studies on primary and secondary school students, and even less on the strategy training of primary and secondary schools. Moreover, the teachers in primary and secondary schools lack theoretical guidance, so researchers need to turn their attention to the research on the use of strategies in primary and secondary schools.

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