

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS' USE OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES ACCORDING TO THEIR GENDER AND CLASSES AT LUCHUAN HIGH SCHOOL, GUANGXI, CHINA

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**Abstract:** This research mainly focused on the Chinese Grade 12 students' use of second language learning strategies during the academic year 2016-2017, at Luchuan High school, Guangxi, China. A total of 120 students from grade 12 in this study. The data were collected based on the questionnaire of learning strategies for English learning. The study found that Grade 12 students used both direct strategies and indirect strategies for their English learning at a medium level; the use of overall learning strategies was also at a medium level. There was no significantly difference of students' use of second language learning strategies according to their gender, the direct strategies and indirect strategies. There is a significant difference of students' use of second language learning strategies according to their classes.

**Keywords:** Second Language Learning Strategies, Direct Strategies, Indirect Strategies, Learning English as Second Language, Grade 12 Students.

## Introduction

In the last few decades, the researchers notice that second language learning strategies is a key factor influence second language learning. The early research focused on successful language learner, Rubin (1975) realized the successful language learners are similar in use of learning strategies, and they concern the second language learning strategies are teachable. O'Malley (1990) and Chamot (2004) considered strategies are helping the students acquire and get new information. Oxford (1990) classified strategies of foreign language learning into two main categories: direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies. In China much research has been devoted to second language learning strategies since 1980s.

With the economic development of China and the international cultural impact, a growing number of Chinese students are willing to learn English. In order to let the high school Chinese students and teachers realize the effects of the second language learning strategies as well as to improve English learning and teaching practice in

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Luchuan high school, this research believes it is necessary to conduct a study to identify the second learning strategies used by learners and to compare various learning strategies according to their demographics in this school. In China, practically all schools try to put students into classes according to their abilities because they believe that this grouping is advisable, therefore it is necessary to compare the students' use of language learning strategies according to their classes.

### **Research Objectives:**

There were five research objectives:

1. To identify the Grade 12 students' demographics, contain their gender and classes at Luchuan High school.
2. To survey the Grade 12 students' use of second language learning strategies at Luchuan High school.
  - 2.1 To survey the direct strategies Grade 12 students used at Luchuan High school?
  - 2.2 To survey the indirect strategies Grade 12 students used at Luchuan High school?
3. To compare the Grade 12 students' use of second language learning strategies according to their gender at Luchuan High school.
4. To compare the Grade 12 students' use of second language learning strategies according to their classes at Luchuan High school.
5. To compare the Grade 12 students' use of the direct strategies and indirect strategies at Luchuan High school.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was designed and developed, based on the second language learning strategies theory, especially on Oxford's second or foreign language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) classified learning strategies into direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies. Direct learning strategies involve language learning directly, Indirect learning strategies are related to self-regulated learning and solving emotional problems (Oxford, 2003). Oxford's taxonomy is one of the most widely used taxonomies in foreign language learning and teaching research fields (Vlčková, Berger & Völkle, 2013).

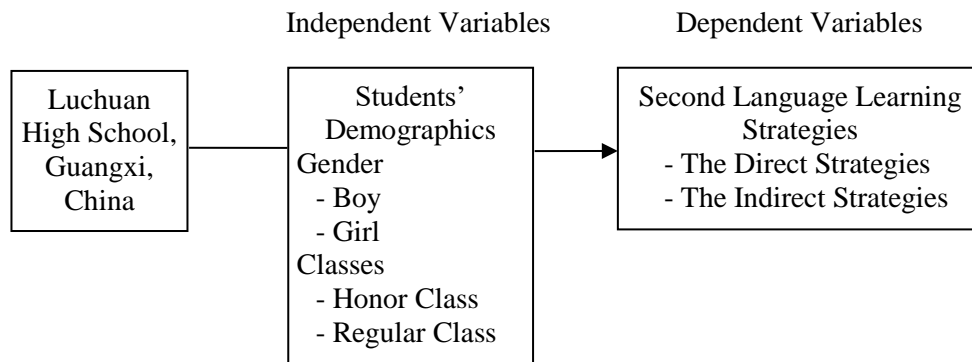
### **Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 below is the conceptual framework, which explains the study's variables and the design of the study purposes.

(See Figure 1 on the next page)

### **Research Instrument**

A questionnaire composed of two sections was used in this study. The questionnaire included two parts: Part I is demographic information, asked students gender (boy or girl) and Class (honor or regular class).and Part II is Strategy Inventory for Language Learning survey (SILL), used to assess the use of language learning strategies.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of This Study**

### *Population and Sample*

The population of this study was the Grade12 students at Luchuan high school, Guangxi in the academic year 2016, a total of 431 students. The sample of this study was 120 students as the researcher selected the honor class (60 students) and one regular class (60 students), who were taught by the same English teacher. The honor class was for the students with excellent learning achievement based on their Grade 11 final exam scores, those students were ranked as the top 60 students in Grade 12, the regular class was the rest students (not top 60 students). There were only one honor classes and 6 regular classes, each class had about 60 students, in order to study their second language strategies well, this study selected the honor class and regular class taught by the same English teacher.

### **Findings**

#### *Research Objective One*

Table 1 below presents the numbers of boys and girls in the selected classes at Luchuan High school. There were 60 honor class students, 60 regular class students, 68 boys, 52 girls. Numbers of boys were 13% higher than girls.

**Table1: Percentage and Number of Respondents of Gender**

	Honor class	Regular class	Total	Percent
Boy	33	35	68	56.7
Girl	27	25	52	43.3
Total	60	60	120	100.0

#### *Research Objective Two*

Table 2 below shows the mean, standard deviation and interpretation of the use of second language learning strategies at Luchuan High school, the overall learning strategies that Grade 12 students' use of second language at Luchuan High school was medium usage.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation and Interpretation of the Use of Second Language Learning Strategies at Luchuan High School (N=120)**

Gender	T-test Comparison			
	t	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Boy	-.778	2.53	.438	-.07
Girl		2.60		

*Research Objective Three*

Table 3 below shows the resulting data of the Independent Samples t-test between boys and girls for their use of second language learning strategies at Luchuan High school. The result data shows that t was -.778, and Sig (2-tailed) was .438, which was bigger than .05. Therefore, it indicated that boys were not significantly different from girls in use of second language learning strategies.

**Table 3: Result of T-test Comparing Use of Second Language Learning Strategies by Gender**

Strategies	M	S.D.	Interpretation
Direct learning strategies	2.51	.650	Medium Usage
Indirect learning strategies	2.50	.660	Medium Usage
Over all	2.51	.649	Medium Usage

*Research Objective Four*

Table 4 below shows the resulting data of the Independent Samples t-test between honor class students and regular class students for their use of second language learning strategies at Luchuan High school. The result shows that t was 2.006, Sig (2-tailed) was .047, which less than .05, so there is a significant difference of students' use of second language learning strategies according to their classes.

**Table 4: Result of T-test Comparing Use of Second Language Learning Strategies by Classes**

Classes	T-test Comparison			
	t	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Honor class	2.01	2.63	.047*	.19
Regular class		2.40		

\*<.05

*Research Objective Five*

Table 5 below shows the resulting data of the Independent Samples t test between use of direct strategies and use of indirect strategies. The result data shows that t was .072, and Sig (2-tailed) was .943, which was bigger than .05. There is no significant difference of Grade 12 students' use of the direct strategies and indirect strategies.

**Table 5: Result of T-test Comparing Use of Direct Strategies and Indirect Strategies**

Strategies	T-test Comparison			
	t	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Direct Strategies	.07	2.59	.943	.01
Indirect Strategies		2.58		

### Discussion

Learning strategies is a specific learning action that can improve learning efficiency, make learning easier and more enjoyable. Oxford (1990) classified strategies of foreign language learning into two main categories: direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies. Each category was sub-divided into three subfields. Direct learning strategies include three aspects: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies; Indirect learning strategies consist of three aspects: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Based on this theory, Oxford (1990) produced a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire-Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). SILL aims to investigate the use of foreign language learning strategies by learners.

For the overall learning strategies, the finding showed medium usage also showed medium usage in direct learning strategies and indirect learning. This probably because: first, in this school English learning is still conducted in a traditional, English teachers teaching English sentence by sentence, students noted them down, then they have no use for learning strategies. Secondly, English teachers do not train students to use learning strategies, the researcher interviewed English teachers in Luchuan high school, most of them do not training students specially, some teachers said they will notice some strategies in teaching process, such as when they teach some big word, they remind students can use other words replace it. Therefore, the item 29 I can think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing showed high usage.

Similarly, Xiao & Lynch (2017) conducted a study on the indirect language learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language used by year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School, in Thailand. In her study, the overall indirect learning strategies and the affective language learning strategies used by year 7 to year 10 students were regarded as medium; although the metacognitive and the social language learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language were high.

The results of this study showed there was no significant difference of Grade 12 students' use of the direct strategies and indirect strategies and there was no significant difference of students' use of the second language learning strategies at Luchuan High school. Many studies in Chinese students use learning strategies when they learning English suggested Chinese students were prefer compensation strategies and metacognitive strategies, such as the study by Zhao (2008) showed that Chinese non-English majors' students in HeTao University used Memory strategies and Social strategies least when they learn English, used compensation and metacognitive strategies most. Base on the result in this study, students in Luchuan

high school used Memory strategies and Social strategies showed in low usage, students used compensation strategies and metacognitive strategies higher than other strategies.

In many language learning strategy studies involving gender, the results had usually showed that female used language learning strategies more than male students, (Oxford et al., 1993) but not on whole cultures. Some studies, noted by Khamkhien's (2010) study, the researcher did not find a significant difference according to gender when limited to one nationality. The result of the current study showed that there was no significant difference in used of learning strategies according to their gender. This result was probably because all those students from the same place and they followed the same curriculum.

The finding showed there is a significant difference of students' use of second language learning strategies according to their classes, it is reasonable to assume that honor class students learn more quickly. In this high school, students were divided into honor class and regular class based on students' result of the entry exam and the final exam of grade 10 and English achievement. English as a compulsory subject, occupy 22 % of the total score, this probably is positive relationship between the use of strategies and students' English achievement, there are many previous studies investigating the relationship between language learning strategies use and achievement, future researchers should investigate the English achievement for next process. The study of Xiao & Lynch (2017) supported this study's result, as they also found there was a positive significant relationship found between the use of overall indirect learning strategies and students' academic achievement in Chinese reading and writing of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School, in Thailand. Yang (2013) also found there was a significant relationship between the use of learning strategies and achievement in Wat Makutkasat Secondary School of Thailand. Therefore, the significant relationship between the use of learning strategies and achievement existed and should get attention by the school administrator and teachers in the future.

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