



# Foreign Language Learning Strategy Use Profile of University Students in Taiwan and Japan

**Chih-hui Chang**

([chang00@mail.dyu.edu.tw](mailto:chang00@mail.dyu.edu.tw))

Da-Yeh University, Taiwan ROC

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## Abstract

The current study, combining the use of the online questionnaire of Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, Version 7.0, and face-to-face group interviews, investigated the language learning strategy use (LLSU) profile of 599 university students of foreign languages in Taiwan and Japan. The target languages (TLs) included English, Japanese, and the European languages of French, German and Spanish. Four factors were examined in correlation with LLSU consisted of gender, academic discipline/TL, fondness for TL and previous experience in TL-speaking country. The overall LLSU of Taiwanese participants was higher than their Japanese counterparts. Taiwanese participants used social strategies the most, while the Japanese used memory strategies the most. Taiwanese participants used memory strategies the least, while the Japanese used social strategies the least. Male participants from the Taiwan research site performed the best in terms of the frequency of LLSU among all participants. among both Taiwanese and Japanese participants learning European languages as TL had a significantly high LLSU. Interviews with participants revealed that Taiwanese participants preferred talking to TL native speakers, while Japanese participants preferred reading in the TL. The current study suggests that the use of various TL teaching strategies is beneficial in helping TL learners develop different learning strategies, which would eventually become part of their lifelong autonomous learning mechanism. In addition, to better understand the correlation between good language learners and LLSU (Oxford, 1990), language proficiency level and language instructions are suggested as independent variables for future related studies.

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## 1 Introduction

Research on language learning strategy use (LLSU) by adopting the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) created by Oxford (1990) has supported the view that good language learners apply a good variety of learning strategies to assist their foreign language learning. Although many studies have investigated LLSU among university students in Taiwan (Chang & Liu, 2013; Chang, 2011; Chang, Liu, & Lee, 2007; Chen, 2005; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Su, 2015; Wang, 2013; Yang, 1993) and in Japan (Kato, 2005, 2009; Kato, 2005; Oxford, 1990; Robson & Midorikawa, 2001; Takeuchi, 1991, 1993a, 1993b; Watanabe, 1990), limited studies have included research participants in both the countries of Taiwan and Japan, and the learning of different foreign languages (English, Japanese, French, and German). The current study was designed and conducted to investigate LLSU profile of university foreign language learners in Taiwan and Japan, and to explore how different factors, including gender, target language (TL) major, fondness for TL and previous experience in a TL country, may have affected the participants' choices in the use of different learning strategies.

## 2 Language learning strategy use research

Research on language learning strategy use began in the mid-1970s when Rubin (1975) started research on the use of learning strategies among successful language learners and concluded that language learning strategies were techniques or devices that learners may use to obtain knowledge, and good language learners tend to actively take initiative in improving their language proficiency levels. O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo (1985) used the definition of learning strategies as being "operations or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information" (p. 23), which is a definition originally used by Rigney (1978). Tarone (1983), however, regarded language learning strategies as attempts to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in target languages.

In addition, Schmeck (1988) indicated learning strategies as a series of steps utilized by learners to complete their learning tasks. Chamot (2005) regarded learning strategies as procedures to facilitate learning. Griffiths (2008, 2013), in recent years, conducted a systematic and detailed review of previous literature, and defined language learning strategies as the activities which were consciously adopted by learners to regulate their own language learning activities.

Oxford (1990) provided an additional, well-discussed definition of language learning strategies, namely, as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). Oxford (1990) also developed a classification model, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which is highly recommended by Ellis (1994) as the most comprehensive classification of language learning strategies with a strong theoretical foundation. According to Oxford (1990), the goals of language learning strategies should be driven towards the expansion of communicative competence. She categorized language learning strategies into two major groups: direct and indirect strategies. She further divided language learning strategies into six subsections: (1) memory strategies, (2) cognitive strategies and (3) compensation strategies, belonging to direct language learning strategies and (4) metacognitive strategies, (5) affective strategies and (6) social strategies, which are indirect language learning strategies.

Many researchers also suggested that the various language learning strategies are not equally effective. In other words, some strategies facilitate language learners' acquisition of the TLs better and faster than others (Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Lavasani & Faryadres, 2011; Oxford, 1989). Such differences result from the quality of the strategies, as well as from a range of individual learner characteristics, such as gender (Alhaisoni, 2012; Alhaysony, 2017; Anugkakul & Yordchim, 2014; Ayachi, 2015; Green & Oxford, 1995; Gu, 2002; Hsieh, 2014; Huang, 2014; Ku, 2018; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Su, 2015; Tsai, 2017; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013; Xue, 2015; Zhou, 2010), level of grammatical sensitivity (Skehan, 1991), and TL proficiency (Alhaisoni, 2012; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Griffith, 2003; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). TL learners employ the most effective strategies to assist their TL learning. Vann & Abraham (1990) conducted a research in an intensive English program (IEP), and discovered that the participants' learning strategy use is closely related to their learning progress. Additionally, ineffective strategies create a sense of anxiety that would further reduce language learners' ability in their TL learning experience and lead to more difficulties in their language learning process (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

In addition to gender, it is also suggested that language learning strategy use (LLSU) is affected by many factors such as academic major (Chang, 2011; Chang & Liu, 2013; Gu, 2002; Mochizuki, 1999; Oxford & Nyikos 1989, Peacock & Ho, 2003; Su, 2015; Tsai, 2017; Wang, 2013), fondness for TL/learning motivation (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989, 1990; Su, 2015; Tsai, 2017; Wang, 2013; Wharton, 2000) and previous experience in a TL speaking country (Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Bruen, 2001; Chang, 2011; Green & Oxford, 1995; Su, 2015; Wang, 2013). Additionally, years of study, culture, motivation and self-perception of language proficiency level (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Tsai, 2017) also relate to LLSU. The current study included four factors: gender, TL major, fondness for TL and previous experience in a TL country.

## 2.1 Gender

Much research has revealed that female TL learners tended to employ more LLSU than their male counterparts (Alhaisoni, 2012; Alhaysony, 2017; Anugakul & Yordchim, 2014; Ayachi, 2015; Green & Oxford, 1995; Gu, 2002; Huang, 2014; Hsieh, 2014; Ku, 2018; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Su, 2015; Tsai, 2017; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013; Xue, 2015; Zhou, 2010). A study by Politzer (1983) on LLSU of 90 undergraduate foreign language learners of French, German and Spanish in the U.S. found that female participants employed social learning strategy items more often than their male counterparts. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) studied LLSU of more than 1,200 undergraduate university language learners and revealed that the variable of gender had a reflective influence on the participants' LLSU, since female participants utilized strategies more than their male counterparts. A study of 134 students by Alhaysony (2017) also discovered that female participants used more strategy items than their male counterparts.

Xue's (2015) study of 102 Chinese students indicated significant gender differences in LLSU between female participants and male counterparts with females reporting more use of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategy items. Research by Dongyue (2004) on the correlation between language proficiency, gender and strategy use indicated statistically significant gender differences in memory, affective, and overall strategy use in favor of females. Dongyue (2004) additionally suggested that the difference in the strategy use frequency between male participants and female ones could be influenced by other variables, including cultural background, ethnic background and language learning environment, which are the factors to be discussed in the current study in which participants were from two different countries of different cultural backgrounds and language learning environments.

Some research, however, revealed contrasting findings due to different participants and contexts. Results from research conducted by Wharton (2000) on learning strategy use among 678 university students learning French or Japanese as a foreign language in Singapore unexpectedly indicated that LLSs were used significantly more by male participants. Wharton (2000) further speculated that the research participants were well experienced foreign language learners and that, therefore, gender difference in the use of language learning strategies would be not significant. A different study by Zamri's (2004) in Malaysia also reported a similar result, as male learners used strategies more often than females. On the other hand, some researchers, however, suggested no significant differences between males and females in their use of language learning strategies (Chang, 1990; Chou, 2002). Ehrman and Oxford (1990) also failed to discover any evidence between males and females in language learning strategy use. A study conducted by Martinez, Perez, Navarrete, & Paz (2016) on a group of 206 Spanish EFL students' LLSU also failed to discover any statistically significant differences between male or female students. The researcher, therefore, would suggest a bigger scale study on LLSU among learners of different cultural backgrounds to be conducted to uncover the possible cultural influence on the gender difference in LLSU.

## 2.2 Academic discipline/TL

Research also revealed that students majoring in different academic disciplines would use different learning strategies, and research also supported that students of social science tended to make greater use of language learning strategies (Chang et al., 2007; Chen, 2005; Ku, 2018; Mochizuki, 1999; Oxford & Nyikos 1989, Wang, 2013; Wu, 2010). Chang (1990) investigated 50 Taiwanese and Chinese students at the University of Georgia, and found that students majoring in social science and humanities used more learning strategies than science majors. Peacock and Ho (2003) studied the second language strategy use of 1006 university students in a study abroad program in Hong Kong and reported English majors to have the most strategy use, while computer science majors had the least. Chang (2011) investigated different foreign language majors in the same foreign language college to profile similarities and differences in their learning strategy use and found that

English majors used compensation strategies the most, while European and Japanese language majors use social strategies the most. However, results from a recent study on a group of senior TL learners of Japanese and English at the same Taiwan research site indicated the opposite (Ku, 2018). Japanese TL learners demonstrated more frequent use of LLSs than their counterparts of English TL learners.

Chang et al. (2007) showed that students of humanities and social science majors tended to use LLS more frequently than those of business and management, and science and engineering majors. They indicated that the majority of participants of humanity and social science majors were female, and those who majored in science and engineering were mostly male students; therefore, the result of their investigation was in accordance with the result obtained in research on gender differences in LLSU.

### **2.3 *Fondness for TL***

Fondness for TL is relevant to learning motivation, as some researchers note that motivation is the key element to be proficient in English (Mochizuki, 1999; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Oxford and Nyikos stated that the degree of motivation was the single and most powerful influential factor on the choice of language learning strategy use. Mochizuki (1999) conducted a study in Japan showing that better motivated learners had higher frequency use for the six categories of strategies than less motivated ones. In the study of Oxford and Ehrman (1995), the overall use of LLSs was related to strong motivation and desire to use the TL outside the classroom. Some research also supported the positive influence of fondness for TL on LLSU (Hsieh, 2014; Huang, 2014; Su, 2015; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013). The current study used the term of fondness for TL instead of learning motivation due to the fact that learners may learn a foreign language for either integrative motivation of cultural interest or functional motivation of job requirement purposes but may not necessarily like the TL. Therefore, the complexity of learning motivation is much more than the term used in the current study, fondness of TL, in which learners only pose a much simpler notion of like, dislike or of no strong sentiment toward the TL they learn.

### **2.4 *Previous experience in the TL country***

Several research studies supported the positive influence of TL environment on TL development (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Freed, 1995; Huebner, 1995; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995; Marriott, 1995; Regan, 1995). According to Chang (2008), many parents in Taiwan chose to send their children to English speaking countries to improve their children's English abilities, especially in listening and speaking skills. Watanabe (1990) studied language learning strategy use among Japanese college and university EFL students, and found that life abroad had a favorable effect on LLSU. According to Serrano, Llanes and Tragant (2011), these are language learners who had participated in various study-abroad programs with an eye on compensating for the lack of communicative language input. Chang (2011) also indicated that previous experience in target language-speaking countries was one of the four most crucial factors influencing LLSU. The other three were gender, academic major discipline and positive attitude toward the TL.

## **3 Research methods**

A Chinese version and a Japanese version of the Foreign Language Learning Strategy Use (FLLSU) questionnaire with 30 strategy items on a five-point Likert scale adapted from Oxford's (1990) SILL (Version 7.0) was administered through two individual online pages to a total of 599 university TL learners at a university in Taiwan and in Japan. The sample group consisted of 510 Taiwanese participants from a private university located in central Taiwan and 89 Japanese participants from a national university located in the west of Honshu, Japan. The noticeable difference between the number of participants from the two research sites was due to students' willingness to

fill out the online questionnaire. Even with encouragement from a team of four professors, students at the Japan research site were very reluctant to fill out the Japanese version of the online questionnaire. Such reluctance, according to two of the Japanese professors at the research site, is rooted in Japanese culture where people tend not to reveal their thoughts and personal feelings to others.

Among the 510 Taiwanese participants, 143 were male and 367 were female. Among the 510 Taiwanese participants, 162 of them were English majors; 151 were European language majors, and 197 were Japanese language majors. Among the 89 Japanese participants, 28 were male and 61 were female. Among the 89 Japanese participants, 67 were English majors; 20 were European language majors, and 2 were Chinese majors.

**Table 1. Gender and TL of the participants**

Research Site	Female	Male	TL-English	TL-European Languages	TL-Japanese/Chinese
Taiwan	367	143	162	151	197
Japan	61	28	67	20	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>199</b>

The 30 language learning strategy items of SILL were divided into six strategy categories, five belonging to the memory strategy category, ten to the cognitive strategy category, four to the compensation strategy category, five to the metacognitive strategy category, three to the affective strategy category, and three to the social strategy category.

**Table 2. Strategy category and number of strategy item**

Strategy Category	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Strategy Items	5	10	4	5	3	3

According to Oxford (1990), average scores of 3.5 to 5.0 were regarded as high use; average scores of 2.5 to 3.49 were regarded as medium use and average scores of 1.00 to 2.49 were regarded as low use on SILL. The current study also adopted this scale to interpret and analyze statistical data gathered from 599 responses to the FLLSU questionnaire.

**Table 3. Use range on a five-point Likert scale**

Use Range	Explanation	5-point Likert scale
High	Always or almost always used	4.5~5.0
	Usually used	3.5~4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5~3.4
	Generally not used	1.5~2.4
Low	Never or almost never used	1.0~1.4

In addition to the use of the online questionnaire, two individual sessions of face-to-face group interviews of eight participants each from the Taiwanese and Japanese groups were also conducted to further interpret and better understand, and support by findings revealed by the online statistical data. Among the eight English as a TL Japanese participants, three of them also minored in Chinese.

**Table 4. Gender and TL of the interviewed participants**

Research Site	Female	Male	TL-English	TL-European Languages	TL-Japanese/Chinese
Taiwan	6	2	6	1	1
Japan	5	3	8	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

#### 4 Findings and discussions of current research study

For all the participants, the mean of the overall strategy use was 2.75 on the five-point Likert scale, which indicated a medium strategy use by the research participants. For participants from Taiwan, the mean of overall strategy use was 2.97, indicating a medium level of strategy use. For participants from Japan, the mean of overall strategy use was 2.54, indicating a medium level of strategy use.

The social strategy category, with the mean score of 3.02 in the medium-use range, was the most used by Taiwanese participants. One Taiwanese interviewee (TI) clearly indicated that she always enjoyed talking to teachers and classmates to learn English. Another Taiwanese interviewee also mentioned that exams always make her nervous and that she has trouble memorizing English vocabulary. The other strategy categories (SCs) used in descending order were: Compensation (M=2.98), Cognitive (M=2.97), Affective (M=2.96), Metacognitive (M=2.95) and Memory (M=2.94). The use of six strategy categories all fell into the medium-use range for the participants from Taiwan.

... I always like talking to teachers and classmates to learn English ... (TP6 [Taiwanese Participant 6])

... I don't like to memorize English vocabulary or phrases. I like to talk to classmates ... (TP1)

**Table 5. The means overall and each of the six strategy categories, Taiwan site**

Strategy Category	Mean	Standard Deviation(SD)	Use Range
Social	3.02	1.20	Medium
Compensation	2.98	1.04	Medium
Cognitive	2.97	1.04	Medium
Affective	2.96	1.02	Medium
Metacognitive	2.95	1.00	Medium
Memory	2.94	.86	Medium
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>Medium</b>

Japanese participants used the memory strategy category the most with the mean score of 2.83 in the medium-use range. One Japanese interviewee (JI) clearly indicated that she always enjoyed reading to learn English. The use of other strategy categories (SCs) in descending order were: Affective (M=2.76), Cognitive (M=2.56), Metacognitive (M=2.54), Compensation (M=2.23) and Social (M=2.12). Among the six strategy categories, Compensation and Social were in the low-use range for the Japanese participants, while the other four, Affective, Memory, Cognitive and Metacognitive, were in the medium-use range.

... I always like to read to learn English ... (JP1 [Japanese Participant 1])

**Table 6. The means overall and each of the six strategy categories, Japan site**

Strategy Category	Mean	Standard Deviation(SD)	Use Range
Memory	2.83	.71	Medium
Affective	2.76	.87	Medium
Cognitive	2.56	.73	Medium
Metacognitive	2.54	.78	Medium
Compensation	2.23	.67	<b>Low</b>
Social	2.12	.79	<b>Low</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>.75</b>	<b>Medium</b>

Among all 30 strategy items, Item 29 (M=3.05), studying TL with classmates, of the social strategy categories, was the most used strategy item among Taiwanese participants, while Item 20 (M=3.31), setting time for studying TL, of the metacognitive strategy category, was the most used for Japanese participants. Interestingly, Item 20 (M=2.92), setting time for studying TL, of the metacognitive strategy category, was the least used for Taiwanese participants, while Item 28, requesting for repeats when not understanding, of the social strategy category, was the least used strategy item among Japanese participants.

Findings regarding the general use of LLSU between participants from Taiwan and Japan indicated that Taiwanese participants had slightly higher LLSU than their Japanese counterparts. Social strategy items were the most popular ones among Taiwanese participants, while they were the least used among Japanese participants. On the other hand, memory strategy items were the most popular ones among Japanese participants, while they were the least popular among Taiwanese participants. Such results demonstrate that Taiwanese and Japanese participants of current study were totally different TL strategy users and learners.

#### 4.1 Gender

The broad profile of the overall strategy use for male Taiwanese participants was 3.07, while the mean for females was 2.93, indicating that male Taiwanese participants used strategies slightly more often than the female ones. The broad profile of overall strategy use for male Japanese participants was 2.53, while the mean for female Japanese participants was also 2.53. In the current study, male Taiwanese participants used more language learning strategy items compared to their Taiwanese female and Japanese male and female counterparts.

In addition, no gender significance was detected in terms of the overall strategy use among Taiwanese and Japanese participants. However, one gender difference of significance was detected in the memory strategy category among Taiwanese participants, with male participants using memory strategy significantly more than their female counterparts.

**Table 7. Overall strategy use with regard to gender**

Gender	Number of Participants	Mean	SD	Use Range
Taiwan				
Male	143	3.07	1.00	Medium
Female	367	2.93	.94	Medium
Japan				
Male	28	2.53	.76	Medium
Female	61	2.53	.56	Medium

Gender difference has long been regarded as playing an important role in LLSU. Many researchers indicated that female learners use LLSs more often than males do (Chang, 2010; Chang et al., 2007; Chen, 2005; Chiu, 2014; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Huang, 2014; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Ox-

ford, 1993; Oxford & Nyikos 1989; Politzer, 1983; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013; Zeynali, 2012). Additionally, Huang (2014) indicated that female participants ( $M=3.78$ ) in general high school and female participants ( $M=3.51$ ) in vocational high school used LLSs more than their male counterparts (male GHS:  $M=3.44$ ; male VHS:  $M=3.02$ ). According to Green and Oxford (1995), gender differences in LLSU may be associated with biological and socialization factors. Oxford (1993), and Oxford and Ehrman (1995) also point out that women are usually equipped with stronger verbal skills and tend to have greater conformity to academic and linguistic norms.

Results from the current study, however, showed that male Taiwanese participants used strategy items more than female Taiwanese participants, which is in line with the results from a study by Wharton (2000), a study on LLSU by 678 university students of Japanese or French as a TL in Singapore. As for the participants in the Japan site of the current study, male and female Japanese participants had the same frequency use of language strategy items and no gender difference was detected.

#### 4.2 Academic disciplines/TLs

The broad profile of overall strategy use for the different TL learners among the Taiwanese participants was 2.97, while the mean for European language learner participants was 3.60; for Japanese language learners, 3.16; for English learners, 2.15. These results indicate that, among the Taiwanese participants, European language participants used strategies the most, Japanese language participants second most, and English language participants the least.

The broad profile of overall strategy use for the different TL learners among the Japanese participants was 2.53, while the mean of European language learner participants was 2.82; for English learners, 2.47; for Chinese language learners, 1.66, indicating that among the Japanese participants, European language participants used strategies the most, English language participants second most and Chinese language participants the least. It is interesting that European language learners at both the Taiwan and Japan sites used LLSs the most.

In addition, TL learner significance was detected in terms of the overall strategy use among Taiwanese and Japanese participants with European language learner participants using LLSs the most at both research sites. TL learner significance was also detected in all six strategy categories among Taiwanese participants of European languages, who used strategies the most. TL learner significance was detected in two strategy categories, affective and social, among Japanese participants of European languages, who used these strategies most frequently.

Table 8. Overall strategy use with regard to TL major

TL	Major	Number of Participants	Mean	SD	Use Range
Taiwan	European Languages	151	3.60	.81	Medium
	Japanese	197	3.16	.85	Medium
	English	162	2.14	.58	Low
Japan	European Languages	20	2.82	.50	Medium
	English	67	2.47	.62	Low
	Japanese	2	1.66	.94	Low

Research studies have long supported that social and humanity majors used LLSU more than science majors (Chang et al., 2007; Chen, 2005; Mochizuki, 1999; Oxford and Nyikos 1989, Wang, 2013; Wu, 2010). Little research has aimed at different language learners' use of language learning strategies in Taiwan and Japan at the same time. However, a research by Chang (2011) on the LLSU among TL learners of English, Japanese and European languages demonstrated that English learners had the most frequent strategy use while European language learners the least. Another study by Su (2015) also revealed that English language learners used LLSs more than Japanese and European



language learners. However, a recent study by Ku (2018) revealed the opposite result of Japanese TL learners using more strategy items than their counterparts of English TL learners. The current study presented a different finding that European language participants in both Taiwan and Japan research sites had the most frequent overall strategy use among other TL learner participants. European language majors and English majors from the Japan site of the current study had similar frequency use of strategy items. The number of the participants of learning Chinese as a TL was as little as two on the Japan research site that such result is not to be considered as statistically representative.

It is, however, alarming that the LLSU frequency of both English TL learners among Taiwanese and Japanese participants was in the low use range. English is the most used international language and it is, therefore, important to learn how to facilitate the employment in the current globalization era. To better motivate participants of English as a TL in using more LLSU is, therefore, an important task for English as a TL educator at both research sites.

### 4.3 Fondness for TL

The broad profile of overall strategy use for Taiwanese participants in terms of fondness for TL was 2.97; the mean for participants who dislike TL was 3.40; participants find TL OK, 3.03; participants like TL, 2.92. Such result indicated that among the Taiwanese participants, the ones who dislike TL used strategy items the most. However, the number of the participants who disliked TL was only eight so such result is not to be regarded as statistically representative. Taiwanese participants who like TL used strategy items slightly less than their counterparts of liking TL OK.

The broad profile of overall strategy use for Japanese participants in terms of fondness for TL was 2.53; the mean for participants who find TL OK was 2.83; participants who like TL, 2.42; participants who dislike TL, 2.46. Such result indicated that among Japanese participants, the ones who like TL OK used strategy items the most. The ones who dislike TL used LLSs slightly more than the ones like TL, indicating the ones who like TL used LLSs the least among Japanese participants. However, again the number of the participants who disliked TL was only five so such result is not to be regarded as statistically representative.

In addition, no fondness for TL significance was detected in terms of the overall strategy use among Taiwanese participants, neither in any of the six strategy categories. However, fondness for TL significance was detected in terms of the overall strategy use among Japanese participants with the participants who like TL OK using the strategy items more frequently than the ones who like and dislike TL. Fondness for TL significance was detected in three strategy categories, cognitive, affective, and social, indicating the use of these three strategy categories among the Japanese participants to be significantly different.

**Table 9. Overall strategy use with regard to fondness for TL**

Fondness for TL		Number of Participants	Mean	SD	Use Range
Taiwan					
	Dislike	8	3.40	.63	Medium
	OK	159	3.03	.67	Medium
	Like	343	2.92	1.07	Medium
Japan					
	OK	24	2.83	.60	Medium
	Dislike	5	2.46	1.07	<b>Low</b>
	Like	60	2.42	.56	<b>Low</b>

Research has supported positive links between TL learners and strategy use (Chang, 2011; Chang & Liu 2013; Hsieh, 2014; Huang, 2014; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Okada, Oxford, & Abo, 1996; Su, 2015; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013). Disregarding the statistically unrepresentativeness of participants who dislike TL among Taiwanese and Japanese participants, the current study presents a rather

different finding that the LLSU frequency of Japanese participants who like the TL is in the low use range. Such result could be explained by the high frequency use of memory strategy category among the Japanese participants and the information indicated in the face-to-face interviews that studying for examinations was the least favorable part of their TL learning experience, which is in line with the results from Falout and Maruyama (2004), detailing the demotivation of exams in the English as an academic subject in Japanese education.

... I don't like studying English for exams ... (JI3)

In addition, interviews with the Japanese participants also revealed that fondness for TL was not influential in their learning motivation; instead, the pragmatic reason of getting a job was. This finding also corresponds to the finding by Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura (2001) that Japanese learners studied foreign languages for pragmatic reasons.

... I like English culture but it was not the key ... (JI6)

... I don't like English culture but I want to become a global person. Culture will help me understand their people ... (JI1)

#### 4.4 Previous experience in TL-speaking country

The mean of overall strategy use for Taiwanese participants with experience in the TL country was 2.95, while that for those without such experience was 2.97. The mean of overall strategy use for Japanese participants with experience in TL country was 2.50, while that for those without such experience was 2.58. No significant difference was detected in the overall strategy use in six strategy categories among Taiwanese and Japanese participants with regard to prior TL experience.

**Table 10. Overall strategy use with regard to previous experience in TL countries**

Prior Experience in TL Country		Number of Participants	Mean	SD	Use Range
Taiwan	No	309	2.97	.96	Medium
	Yes	201	2.95	.96	Medium
Japan	No	38	2.58	.63	Medium
	Yes	51	2.50	.62	Medium

Much research has supported the positive influence of the study abroad experience in TL learning (Brecht et al., 1995; Freed, 1995; Guntulga, 2016; Huebner, 1995; Lapkin et al., 1995; Marriott, 1995; Regan, 1995) and studies also investigated the links between TL country experience and LLSU (Chang, 1999, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Hsieh, 2014; Huang, 2014; Su, 2015; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013). Findings from the current study presents no significant difference in terms of the influence of prior TL experience on LLSU.

## 5 Conclusion

The current study presented a thorough analysis of the LLSU profile of Taiwanese and Japanese university learners of English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese as TL. The analysis of the findings in regard to the four variables, gender, fondness for TL and previous experience in TL-speaking countries, provides a comprehensive understanding of the similarities and differences in the LLSU of the research participants. Suggestions drawn from the results of the current study are for both pedagogical and research purposes. Firstly, the LLSU of participants in both Taiwan and Japan fell into the medium use range, 2.97 for Taiwanese participants and 2.54 for Japanese participants. Taiwanese participants favored strategies from the social strategy category, whereas Japanese favored those from the memory strategy category. According to Kato (2009), Japanese

English learners had a tendency to use entrance-exam-measured strategies more than other strategies, which would explain the finding that memory strategies were the most used among the Japanese participants in the current study. On the other hand, Taiwanese parents prefer to send their children to bilingual kindergartens in the hope that the early introduction of English instruction will give their children an edge in a very competitive educational environment (Oladejo, 2006). It is also believed that bilingual schools can facilitate children's development of English communicative ability (Lee, 1999). Therefore, the popularity of bilingual schools where communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches were commonly used, has played a significant role in the high frequency use of social strategies among Taiwanese participants. Social and educational contextual factors are, therefore, regarded as contributing factors that account for the LLSU preferences among Taiwanese. However, the Japanese participants' preference for memory strategies is due to the use of authoritative teaching methods in Japanese education (Kimura et al., 2001).

Secondly, academic discipline/TL was the most influential factor among the four variables with differential significance detected in LLSU among the participants in the current study, with a higher frequency of LLSU among European language majors than among participants who studied English or Japanese as a TL. This finding is different from previous studies in which fondness for TL was found to be significant in LLSU (Chang, 2009, 2010b, 2011; Hsieh 2014; Huang, 2014; Su, 2015; Wang, 2013; Yeh, 2013). According to Kato (2009), better teacher-student relationship results in broader use of LLSU. It is, therefore, suggested that further research be conducted to gain insights into the European language classrooms and to determine if communicative teaching approaches are employed more frequently. European languages are less emphasized foreign languages in both Taiwan and Japan. Instructors may, therefore, provide more interactive processes to allow students to take more responsibility and to motivate learners to make greater use of LLSs (Oxford, 1990). It is also further suggested that the use of various TL teaching strategies is beneficial to help TL learners develop different learning strategies which would eventually become part of their lifelong autonomous learning mechanism.

Thirdly, given the approach of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, the Japanese government has devoted great efforts in foreign language enrichment and mobility programs to better develop the foreign language abilities of university students in Japan (Kubota, 2015). According to statistics released by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, there is a steady increase of Japanese students studying in Taiwan in recent years, from 7,491 in 2015, 8,444 in 2016 to 9,642 in 2017, which also makes the current study an important one in achieving some insights into the LLSU preferences of Japanese foreign language majors or learners. To understand that Japanese students prefer memory strategies to social ones would ensure better informed foreign language instructors and learning settings to improve Japanese exchange or degree students' learning experience in Taiwan.

In conclusion, findings from the current study are important in providing a better understanding of: (1) the different LLSU between participants from Taiwan and Japan; (2) the influence of four variables on the LLSU of the participants from Taiwan and Japan; and (3) the insights into LLSU preferences of the participants from Taiwan and Japan. It is suggested that quantitative and qualitative in-depth research of larger sample groups and additional independent variables be conducted to further investigate the relationships between: (1) LLSU and language proficiency levels (Oxford, 1990); and (2) LLSU and TL instruction. In addition, a better understanding of cross-cultural differences in LLSU will particularly benefit the ever-increasing educational mobility in higher education between Taiwan and Japan.

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