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A Critical Review of Research on Language Learning Strategies Used by Arab Learners of English

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Abstract

More than four decades have passed since the language learning strategy (LLS) concept was first brought to wide attention by Joan Rubin (1975). Although LLS research is prolific, it has faced challenges regarding its conceptual and methodological nature. These apparent weaknesses have encouraged some proponents of LLS research (e.g. Oxford, 2011; Rose et al, 2018) to conduct a systematic review of previous LLS research, with the aim of identifying the nature of the vigorous attempts to abandon the construct of LLS in research studies. Surprisingly, perhaps, these reviews did not include any LLS research studies concerning Arab learners. Therefore, this paper examines previous research into the LLSs used by Arab learners of English taken from different databases. The analysis has indicated that the majority (22 out of 27) of studies discovered were exclusively quantitative, using Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (*SILL*). These quantitative studies correlated the Arab participants' LLS use with other individual learner variables, especially those related to gender and language proficiency. The other five were qualitative studies, and no study had adopted a mixed-method approach. This paper concludes by suggesting some areas that deserve further investigation in future research.

Keywords: Language learning strategies (LLSs), Arab learners of English; Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (*SILL*); learner autonomy; sociocultural perspectives

The modern history of the Arab world goes back to the post-World War I settlement. At present, the Arab world comprises 22 countries. The Arabs are people of Semitic origin, living largely in Iraq, Syria the Arabian Peninsula, the Maghreb region of North Africa and Egypt. They are united by the use of Arabic as their native tongue. A great unifying force of Arabs is Islam, the religion of 95% of all Arabs (Al-Khatib, 2006, p. 2). Van-den-Hoven (2014, p. 67-68) argues that during most of the twentieth century, English was perceived in the Arab world as “the language of a colonizing and bellicose West”. There was also a fear that learning more English could result in weakening of Arabic, which is the language of the Quran. This in turn led to a delay in the introduction of English into the school curriculum and confined English to the classroom. By the end of the twentieth century, most citizens in Arab countries recognised that “a high standard of proficiency in English is a critical requirement for effective education and for access to, and utilization of, new knowledge and new technology” (El-Ezabi, 2014, p. X). As a result, English is currently taught in Arab schools from an

early stage, usually from the fourth grade. In some Arab countries (especially in the Gulf States), English is starting to be used as a medium of instruction in the teaching of the content courses of many university subjects (Hajar, 2019).

The task of upgrading English language proficiency has recently been seen by many Arabs as a necessary precursor to their academic success and professional development. With the intention of finding solutions to this situation, a number of researchers (e.g. Chamot, 2019; Cohen, 2011; Griffiths, 2018; Oxford, 2017; Takeuchi, 2019) have suggested that language learners need to exercise their agentive power by adopting effective language learning strategies (LLSs). These researchers claim that variation in LLSs use accounts for differences in language learners' learning achievements. From the cognitive perspective, which dominates the bulk of LLS research, LLSs are often defined as the learner's consciously selected activities for "active, self-regulated improvement of language learning" (Oxford et al., 2014, p. 30). Theorised in this way, the effective use of LLSs should not only lead to higher proficiency in the target language, but also more learner autonomy. As Griffiths (2018, p. 156) points out, successful language learners are "autonomous and capable of regulating their own learning and they use strategies in order to do this".

Learner autonomy is generally assumed to be advantageous (see Little, Dam, & Legenhausen, 2017), meaning that as autonomous learners, "we have a deep understanding of the process and practice of learning and the willingness to take charge of our own learning" (Mynard, 2019a, p.15). Recognition of the importance of the role of autonomy in language learning is evidenced by the proliferation of self-access centres. In these centres, language learners can gain access to various learning resources (e.g., computers, books, CDs, DVDs, internet) and have opportunities for using the target language and pursuing their interests. Hence, a self-access centre can contribute to creating proactive agents who are capable of thinking, wanting and using effective LLSs to accomplish their future visions (Hajar, 2019). In what follows, the paper will first present an account of existing LLS research by explaining its theoretical and methodological bases before going on to describe how sociocultural perspectives have advanced as a useful lens through which to consider LLS use. After that, previous studies into the LLSs used by Arab learners of English will be reviewed, given that these studies have not been included in preceding systematic reviews of LLS research (e.g. Oxford, 2011; Rose et al, 2018). This paper will close with reflections on the current state of LLS research and give suggestions for future research directions and pedagogical applications.

Language Learning Strategies: Criticism and Insights

Language learning strategy (LLS) research began in earnest with Joan Rubin's (1975) landmark work on the good language learner (GLL). Rubin (1975) attempted to elucidate how GLLs

manage their language learning and the strategies they employ to improve their target language competence. At that time, the assumption was that GLLs used more and better LLSs than their less successful counterparts; hence the latter could benefit from coaching in LLSs. Other early LLS researchers worked along similar lines (e.g., Cohen, 1977; Naiman et al, 1978; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Stern, 1975; Wenden, 1985). In reviewing the previous LLS studies, Chamot (2001, p. 29) notes that these studies identify the GLL as someone who

- is mentally active;
- monitors language comprehension and production;
- practises communicating in the target language
- makes use of prior general linguistic knowledge;
- uses various memorisation techniques;
- asks questions for clarification.

Nevertheless, the notion of a one dimensional profile for a GLL has been criticised largely because “only listing a repertoire of possible LLSs deployed by some GLLs appears to disregard language learners’ individual variation and their agency, i.e. the human capacity to act on informed choices” (Hajar, 2019, p. 38).

LLS research peaked around the early 1990s, when two of the most influential volumes on LLSs were published (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). In these volumes, the researchers developed strategy taxonomies which borrowed heavily from cognitive theory, and focused mainly on the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they claimed learners employed to process new information about the target language. The goal of using LLSs from a cognitive point of view means it “is confined to linguistic or sociolinguistic competence”, given that less attention has been paid to the significance of the social, historical and political-economic situations in which a language learner is placed (Hajar, 2019, p. 37). Consequently, this cognitive perspective has promoted “a marginalized, decontextualized, individualized, and psychologized form of learner autonomy” (Gu, 2018, p. 146).

The development of strategy taxonomies by some researchers has contributed to the increasing use of survey methods in the LLS research community. Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (*SILL*) is considered “the most widely used instrument in language learner strategy research” (White et al. 2007, p. 95). It has been completed by more than 10,000 learners around the world, and translated into over 20 languages (Oxford, 2017). Related to this, LLS researchers have devoted concerted research efforts to examining quantitatively the correlation between learners’ LLS use and other variables such as motivation, learning style, gender, language aptitude and learner beliefs (see Benson and Gao, 2008). However, the excessive use of survey

methods in LLS research studies has been criticised by several researchers for many reasons (e.g. Gao, 2004; Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015; Hajar, 2019). Hajar (2019, p. 22-25) has discussed in detail these reasons:

- Strategy questionnaires tend to minimise the impact of contextual variations on language learners' strategy use by attempting to use the same strategy questionnaire irrespective of their different sociocultural settings.
- Strategy questionnaires also create the impression that language learners' strategy use is a static variable by focusing on the frequency and expressed preferences of learners' strategy use, rather than on the dynamic and fluid nature of their strategy use and development over time and space.
- It is difficult to ascertain whether strategy questionnaires measure what they purport to measure and do so consistently. For instance, a learner may not be a good memory strategy user in general but may score highly on specific items in the memory scale (e.g. using rhymes or a combination of images and sounds to remember a new word).

With the “social turn” in education (Block, 2003), the landscape of language learning research has challenged the ascendancy and dominance of cognitive norms and assumptions by arguing that language learning cannot be perceived as just the by-product of individualistic mental process. This in turn has prompted some researchers to explore learners' LLS uses from sociocultural language learning perspectives, a variety of approaches to learning that underline the prominence of social, political and cultural processes in mediating learners' cognitive and metacognitive processes (Hajar, 2019, p. 44). Gu (2018, p. 148) points out that the “social turn” in education offers a new dimension to the study of LLSs by promoting sociocultural approaches as complementary, by which “the strategic and autonomous learner not only actively self-regulates his/her own learning process, but is also keenly aware of the situatedness and the social nature of the learning task”. “Context” or “real-world situations” are also treated as “fundamental, not ancillary, to learning” in sociocultural research (Zuengler & Miller, 2006, p. 37) and they include a variety of different societal learning discourses, social agents and cultural or material artefacts (Palfreyman, 2014). Richards (2015) indicates that “good language learners” are more likely to make use of the out-of-class language learning artefacts available to them, and that this use can be linked to their learning outcomes, confidence and enjoyment. Richards (2015) further refers to a number of effective LLSs in English as a foreign language contexts that language learners can take advantage of by using technology-mediated language resources beyond the classroom. Examples of these LLSs are participating in online chat rooms in English, interviewing foreign visitors, playing online language-based digital games, using online resources (e.g. Ted Talks) and watching English programmes or movies. Wang's (2012) study,

for example, explained how a group of Chinese students of English had overcome their poor listening and speaking skills by adopting the strategy of immersing themselves regularly and rigorously in English television dramas at home in China. Based on the findings of her study, Wang (2012) suggested that the significance of watching movies rich in the authentic and functional use of the target language was not limited to targeting only certain specific linguistic facets that these students might still have needed to improve, such as pronunciation and intonation. The value of watching movies extended to their being a mediating and enabling artefact for “an in-depth understanding of western social values, which will empower them [language learners] to become world citizens” (Wang, 2012, p. 339).

Sociocultural perspectives represent “a robust framework for investigating and explaining the development and use of strategies and mediation is a critical variable in the development of strategic learning” (Donato & MacCormick, 1994, p. 462); however, LLS studies undertaken from this standpoint “are still relatively few” (Hajar, 2019, p. 47). Nevertheless, the small body of sociocultural LLS research has enriched our insights into the mediated nature of LLSs in classroom culture, including artefacts, interactions and the relationships between people (e.g. Coyle, 2007; Donato & McCormick, 1994), the examination of GLL social practices in both natural and formal settings (Hajar, 2018; Norton & Toohey, 2001) and the dynamics of learners’ strategy use in response to shifting learning contexts over time (e.g. Gao, 2010; Hajar, 2017a, 2019).

Language Learning Strategy Research into Arab Learners of English

As this paper aims to review previous LLS research on Arab learners of English, it is essential that the research included in the review demonstrates awareness of the construct of LLS. Rose et al.’s (2018, p. 154) inclusion criteria for a systematic reviewing of LLS research has been adopted for this paper. Reports of research must:

1. contain empirical research;
2. be published in a peer-reviewed, academic journal or a book;
3. be connected to language learning; and
4. be aware of learner strategies, mentioning this construct in the paper’s review of the literature or discussion

In addition to the above criteria, the selected LLS research should focus on students from an Arab background. To gather papers, the following databases were examined: ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA); Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts (LLBA), Scopus and the MLA International Bibliography. Notably,

unpublished master's dissertations, PhD theses or non-academic sources were not considered in this paper. Within these search parameters, I sought published work that contained "language learning (learner) strategy (strategies)" in addition to "Arab learners (students)" in the title or abstracts. However, this is a rough estimate because there may be relevant LLS studies on Arab learners of English that do not include these words in the title or abstract. I then scanned each of the published papers to evaluate its relevance according to Rose *et al.*'s (2018) inclusion criteria. A shortlist of 27 published papers was produced, as shown in Table 1 (see appendix 1).

Table 1 indicates that of the short-listed research publications, the majority (22 out of 27) were exclusively quantitative, with no triangulation of data with qualitative methodology results. 17 publications used Oxford's (1990) SILL as the only or the main method for collecting data. The quantitative studies listed in Table 1 correlated the Arab participants' LLS use with other individual learner variables, especially gender and language proficiency variables. El-Dib's (2004) study, for example, aimed to understand the relationship between the LLS use of her 504 Kuwaiti college students studying English for specific purposes and both language proficiency and gender variables, using Oxford's (1990) SILL. El-Dib (2004) found that her male participants used more social and metacognitive strategies than the females, although many previous studies in non-Arab contexts (e.g. Lan & Oxford, 2003) showed the opposite. Her study also demonstrated that female participants favoured using cognitive, memorisation and affective strategies. Commenting on her findings, El-Dib (2004) mentions that Kuwait, like most Arab countries, is a conservative country and thus females do not usually have adequate opportunities to socialise with speakers of English outside the classroom setting. In contrast, Kuwaiti males have more freedom in terms of travelling, socialising and going to the movies, and this enables them to use many social and metacognitive strategies. El-Dib (2004) also found that the less proficient learners deployed many affective strategies to reduce the passive effects of anxiety and to develop their self-confidence and self-efficacy. El-Dib (2004, p. 93) concluded by affirming the importance of adopting qualitative methods in further LLS studies, given that "using questionnaires reflects an approach to investigating strategy use that is separate from context".

A further example is Abu-Radwan's (2011) quantitative study of 128 Omani learners majoring in English at Sultan Qaboos University in the Arab Gulf state of Oman. Like El-Dib (2004), Abu-Radwan (2011) explored the relationship between the LLSs used by his participants and gender and English proficiency variables. The findings in Abu-Radwan's (2011) study relating to the gender variable were congruent with El-Dib's (2004), showing that the male participants used more social strategies than the females as a result of the conservative nature of Omani tribal society, which prevents females from establishing relationships outside their immediate circles. The study also reported that the more proficient learners employed more cognitive, metacognitive and affective

strategies than their less proficient counterparts, who were less aware of their language needs. However, Abu-Radwan (2011) claimed that complete reliance on Oxford's SILL was one of the weaknesses of his study, because language learners "may not remember the strategies they have used in the past, may claim to use strategies that in fact they do not use, or may not understand the strategy descriptions in the questionnaire items" (p. 146). Unlike the findings of El-Dib' (2004) and Abu-Radwan's (2011) studies, other studies listed in Table 1 (e.g., Alhaysony, 2017; Ismail & Al-Khatib, 2013; Shmais; 2003) showed no significant differences between male and female participants in terms of their overall LLS use. Conversely, Alhaisoni (2012) and Al-Shaboul et al (2010) who collected their data using Oxford's (1990) SILL found that their female university students from Saudi Arabia and Jordan respectively reported using more LLSs, especially social strategies, than their male peers. Table 1 also reveals that almost all the quantitative studies (e.g. Abu-Radwan, 2011; Alhaisoni, 2012; Javid et al., 2013; Khalil, 2005; Shamis, 2003) reported a linear relationship between the participants' use of LLSs and their language proficiency, indicating that the more proficient participants deployed more LLSs, especially cognitive strategies, than their less proficient counterparts. Shamis (2003), for example, attributed this finding to the fact that more proficient learners are likely to be more aware of their need to "process and revise internal models in order to receive and produce the language" (P. 23). However, Mutar and Nimehchisalem's (2017) study focusing on the contribution of proficiency level to Iraqi high school students' writing strategy use, indicated that there was no significant difference between high and low proficiency students' LLS use. Recognising the limitations of collecting data from questionnaire surveys in LLS research, some researchers (e.g., Abu-Radwan, 2011; El-Dib, 2004) have pointed out the importance of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection rather than using only survey tools.

As shown in Table 1, five studies used an exclusively qualitative approach. One example of a qualitative design is Vann and Abraham's (1990) study of two less successful Saudi Arabian female learners, using a think-aloud procedure along with semi-structured interviews to show the reasons why these two learners did not pass an intensive English programme. One of the principal findings of Vann and Abraham's (1990) study was that the two learners were active strategy users employing many LLSs such as paying attention to overall meaning and monitoring their errors. However, the difference between these two less successful and GLLs' strategy use lay in the degree of appropriateness and flexibility in their use of LLSs, and their skill in matching their choice of strategy to the demands of the task. For example, one of the two less successful learners used the low-level strategies (e.g. paying attention to grammatical knowledge) that are effective for a verb tense exercise, when carrying out tasks that require higher-level strategies (e.g. deducing the overall meaning). In sum, the results of Vann and Abraham (1990) called into question the claim that ineffective learners

are inactive learners. That is, they are, rather, inappropriate learners in their use of strategies. A further example is Hajar's (2017a) study. Drawing on a sociocultural language learning research perspective, Hajar (2017a) used semi-structured interviews to qualitatively examine the strategic learning efforts of two postgraduate Syrian students before and after their coming to the UK to pursue their postgraduate studies in an English-medium university. Hajar (2017a) revealed how language learners' LLS use and development in similar contexts might be influenced by educational policy and distribution of resources. More specifically, the adjustments to the host environment of the participant raised by a well-off, well-educated family and educated at outstanding private establishments were less taxing than for the other participant, who came from a disadvantaged background in Syria. The former's positive prior language learning experiences helped him to build a positive linguistic self-concept in the UK, using diverse "voluntary" LLSs, including sharing an apartment with two British students, purchasing local magazines, strengthening his relationship with his British colleagues in a hospital and attempting to use any new slang words in his daily life. Hajar (2017a) concluded his paper by affirming that how far the surrounding social practices facilitate or limit an individuals' access to the linguistic resources of their communities often affects the quality and level of language learning success and L2 identity formation and development. Notably, none of the LLS studies in this review used a mixed-methods approach to explore more richly Arab learners' strategic language learning efforts.

Conclusion

In this review of research into the LLSs used by Arab learners of English, the studies included in Table 1 revealed a strong preference for quantitative approaches to LLS research, using mainly Oxford's (1990) SILL, despite the numerous calls for qualitative methods (Gao, 2010; Hajar, 2019; Rose et al, 2018). As discussed in this paper, LLS research has faced a barrage of criticism, principally due to the questionable results obtained from the use of task-free strategy questionnaires. This kind of questionnaire tends to only depict language learners' expressed strategy preferences, and often paints a decontextualized, static picture of learners' strategy use. Thus, the combined use of semi-structured interviews and an open-ended questionnaire that fits local research contexts is essential to explore the correlations between language learners' reported and actual strategy use and their metacognitive beliefs about LLSs in a specific context, along with capturing the mediating role of contextual realities in either enabling or disabling the learners' LLS use and identity construction and development. In addition, LLS researchers should conduct more teacher/learner-friendly research, by making their research findings accessible and coherent to both teachers and students. As Gu (2018, p. 161) observes, "it is sad to see most LLS research findings not applied or not well applied to language learning". In order to encourage language teachers to inform themselves more about LLS

research findings, Gu (2018, p. 161) underlines the importance of “building LLS into teacher training programs”, through which pre-service and in-service teachers can be trained on how they can use “classroom-friendly tools such as questionnaires, observation sheets, and task-specific diagnostic instruments”. This, in turn, can motivate language learners to use specific LLSs to self-diagnose their learning problems (ibid). Related to this, language learners should be given enough space and opportunity to build their own personally relevant connections between what they do inside and outside the classroom. This could be achieved by, for example, incorporating digital and mobile technologies effectively into the classroom (see Palfreyman, 2012). Students might be invited, for example, to take photographs with their own mobile camera phones which could then be presented in the language class. Thus, a personal act (taking photos) becomes the starting point for dialogues among the students, and could also prompt various forms of writing.

Notes on the Contributor

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Appendix

Table 1: Simplified table of LLS studies on Arab learners of English

No	Study	Focus	Context	Participants		Nature of study	Data collection
				No	nationality		
1	Kaylani (1996)	The influence of gender on LLS use	High school EFL students (12 th grade) in Jordan	255	Jordanian	Quantitative	The Arabic translation of Oxford's (1990) SILL
2	Abu Shmais (2003)	The effect of language proficiency and gender on frequency of LLS use	University EFL student in Palestine	120	Palestinian	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
3	El-Dib (2004)	the link between culture, gender, language level, and learner's choice of LLSs	University EFL student in Kuwait	750	Kuwaiti	Quantitative	The Arabic translation of Oxford's (1990) SILL
4	Khalil (2005)	The effect of language proficiency and gender on frequency of strategy use	High school and university EFL students in Palestine	378	Palestinian	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
5	Riazi (2007)	The patterns of LLS use among university students	Arabic-speaking students majoring in English at a university in Qatar	120	Arabian Gulf	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
6	Malcolm (2009)	The reported use of academic reading strategies while using English as a Medium of Instruction	Arabic-speaking medical students in their first year of study at a medical university in Bahrain	160	Arabian Gulf	Quantitative	An Arabic version of the survey of reading strategies (SORS).

7	McMullen (2009)	The effect of gender and academic major on the use of LLSs	University EFL student in Saudi Arabia	165	Saudi	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
8	Al-Buainain (2010)	The relationship between LLSs and language achievement	Arab English-major undergraduates in Qatar	120	Arabian Gulf	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
9	Al-Shaboul, Asassfeh and Alshboul (2010)	The effect of language proficiency and gender on reported LLS use	English-major students at a Jordanian university	111	Jordanian	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
10	Abu-Radwan (2011)	The effect of language proficiency and gender on reported LLS use	Students majoring in English at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman	147	Omani	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
11	Ismail (2011)	The effects of students' language learning beliefs and their LLS use on their English GPA	English-major students at a Saudi University	294	Saudi	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL and Sakui and Gaies' (1999) Belief Questionnaire
12	Alnufaie and Grenfell (2012)	The process-oriented and product-oriented writing strategies used by university students in Saudi Arabia	Second-year undergraduate Saudi students majoring in English at one of the Saudi industrial colleges	121	Saudi	Quantitative	A writing strategies questionnaire developed by authors
13	Alhaisoni (2012)	The effect of language proficiency and gender on reported LLS	EFL students enrolled in an intensive English language	701	Saudi	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL

		use	programme at the preparatory year at a Saudi university				
14	Ababneh (2013)	The effect of gender and academic major on the LLS choice when meeting new vocabulary	University EFL students in Jordan	128	Jordanian	Quantitative	Alseweed's (2005) questionnaire
15	Ismail and Al- Khatib (2013)	The effect of language proficiency and gender on reported LLS use	University EFL students in the Foundation Program in the United Arab Emirates	190	Emirati	Quantitative	The Arabic translation of Oxford's (1990) SILL
16	Javid, Al-thubaiti and Uthman (2013)	The effect of language proficiency on reported LLS use	English-major undergraduates in Saudi Arabia	240	Saudi	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
17	Alkubaidi (2014)	The relation between students' preferred learning styles and their writing strategy uses	English-major undergraduates in Saudi Arabia	74	Saudi	Quantitative	Reid's (1987) Perceptual Learning Style Preference and Petri and Czár's (2003) writing strategy questionnaire
18	Busaidi and Al-Jamal (2015)	The relation between students' perceptions of writing strategies and their own writing performance	High school EFL students (10 th grade) in Oman	186	Omani	Quantitative	The Arabic translation of Oxford's (1990) SILL

19	Alhaysony (2017)	The effect of gender and duration of English language study on reported strategy use	Saudi English-major undergraduates in Saudi Arabia	134	Saudi	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
20	Alzubi and Singh (2017)	The use of LLS mediated by smartphones to improve learner autonomy	Undergraduate students in a Preparatory Year programme attended a reading skills course enrolled at Saudi university	32	Saudi	Quantitative	An English version of Oxford's (1990) SILL
21	Aouri and Zerhou (2017)	The effect of motivation to learn English on reported strategy use	Moroccan university EFL Science students	228	Moroccan	Quantitative	Oxford's (1990) English version of SILL, Pintrich et al.'s Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (1991) and Gardner's (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)
22	Mutar and Nimehchisalem (2017)	The effect of gender and proficiency level on writing strategy use	High school students from the Karkh's district of Baghdad	132	Iraqi	Quantitative	Petrić and Czár's (2003) writing strategy questionnaire
23	Vann and Abraham (1990)	The LLSs used by two less successful female learners in a study	An intensive English programme at a US university	2	Saudi	Qualitative	think-aloud protocols and interviews

		abroad context					
24	Palfreyman (2011)	The influence of immediate family members and friends on students' LLS use and development	Female university students' strategic learning efforts beyond the classroom in the United Arab Emirates	5	Emirati	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews
25	Hajar (2017a)	Changes in LLSs use and L2 identity	University students in Syria and UK	2	Syrian	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews, written narratives
26	Hajar (2017b)	The influences of immediate family members on EFL students' LLSs use and development	University students in their EFL homelands	7	Emirati, Kuwaiti, Saudi	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews
27	Hajar (2018)	The L2 identity development and strategic language efforts	University EFL student in Iraq	1	Iraqi	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews, written narratives, email exchanges