

Editorial

We welcome you to our special issue of *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* (SSLT). Our focus is language learning strategies, or LLS. We have been discussing the need for this special issue for years. Over coffee, sodas, or Chardonnay at many conferences and via emails and Skype, we discussed urgent issues in LLS assessment, research, and instruction.

SSLT, like many journals, has published numerous articles involving LLS, and other journals have had special issues on LLS. However, the time is ripe for a special issue that systematically includes LLS for all language skill areas, all major cross-cutting language subsystems such as grammar, and some important yet often ignored topics, such as strategies for learning culture and for technology-enhanced language learning (TELL), which greatly advances decades of research on computer-assisted language learning (CALL). We have gathered articles from a talented team of researchers, most of them well-known and the others rising stars. The articles in this special issue directly involve LLS research in several world regions and allude to such research in many more regions.

At the most fundamental level, LLS are *conscious, teachable, intentional, self-regulated thoughts and actions used for learning the target language*. Self-regulation is the key to strategies, as noted by Oxford (1999, 2011, 2017). The articles in this special issue generally describe or define LLS as having many of these features, though phrased in various ways. A more detailed definition of LLS is given in the paper by Oxford and Gkonou (this issue) and Oxford (2017). Note that learning another language necessarily involves learning another culture, and many strategies assist in these intertwined learnings.

Our special issue title, *Language Learning Strategies: Linking with the Past, Shaping the Future*, has a triple meaning arising from three perspectives: learner, teacher, and researcher. Here is how we see it through the lens of knowledge and audacious hope:

- Each learner's current and future self-regulatory LLS use (we consider *all* serious LLS to be self-regulatory) and language attainment are based on his or her own personal learning history, cognition, and fluctuating emotional and motivational states. Also influential in the learner's past, present, and future use of LLS are attitudes and beliefs of the learner, the family, the community, and the culture; affordances in formal (classroom) or informal learning contexts; and the role of demographic factors, such as the learner's socioeconomic status. Learners might not consider how their LLS use is related to all these elements and how these elements are associated with each other, but teachers and researchers should consider these as interacting, shifting, melding, and altering parts of a complex dynamic system (Oxford, 2017).
- The second meaning of our title concerns what the teacher has done, is doing, and will do in multiple areas, such as gaining a strong understanding of learners, culture, contexts, and strategies; noticing each learner's needs; offering strategy instruction or strategy assistance that fits the learner, addresses the learning tasks, and promotes learner self-regulation; providing relevant linguistic and cultural content; planning and assessing effectively; and encouraging the individual's excitement about learning. This asks a lot of teachers, who deserve much more recognition than they receive in many or most cultures.
- The third meaning of the title of our special issue relates to LLS researchers' role, past, present, and future. Their studies, publications, and presentations from the past and present can pave the way for future LLS research. LLS researchers can both learn from and enlighten teachers, teacher educators, and language learners in diverse cultures and settings. Using their knowledge and staying open to serendipity and epiphany, LLS researchers can create new theories; work with teachers to develop innovative designs for future strategy instruction and strategy assessment; and devise improved techniques for research design and analysis.

The special issue begins with this editorial by the two of us, Rebecca L. Oxford and Mirosław Pawlak, who offer an overview and raise some key factors. A cluster of articles then addresses LLS in the four skill areas in this order: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Fortunately, listening is no longer viewable as the most ignored area of LLS research, as witnessed by Yajun Zeng and Christine C. M. Goh's article on extensive-listening strategies as influences on metacognitive awareness and listening achievement. Kouider Mokhtari, Dimiter M. Dimitrov, and Carla A. Reichard also center on metacognitive awareness, but in reading, not listening. Their article concerns the revision of the *Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory* (MARSII), reports on testing for the

measure's factorial Invariance, and includes specialized information on assessment for second language learners. A vast view of writing strategy research comes from Rosa M. Manchón, who looks at past and future research agendas in terms of conceptualizations, inquiry methods, and research findings. Mirosław Pawlak writes about the importance of context in the use of speaking strategies for two communicative tasks.

The next three articles concern language subsystems: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Pronunciation, as a subsystem, contributes to two language skill areas, listening and speaking, and also affects reading. Therefore, the informative, critical article on researching pronunciation learning strategies, written by Mirosław Pawlak and Magdalena Szyszka, is very much needed. Peter Yongqi Gu describes the validation of an internationally important online questionnaire of vocabulary learning strategies for ESL learners, while Mirosław Pawlak analyzes grammar learning strategies, laments the inadequate research on those strategies, and offers a new, practical, and theoretically sound *Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory*.

Two articles are heavily cultural. Julie M. Sykes and Andrew D. Cohen describe explicit strategies for interlanguage pragmatics, a culture-and-language topic that needs much more attention. Rebecca L. Oxford and Christina Gkonou write about learning strategies in relation to culture, which is inextricably interwoven with language for all learners, including the refugees and immigrants mentioned in the chapter.

Four articles deal with overarching issues in LLS. Mirosław Pawlak and Zuzanna Kiermasz deal with foreign language majors' use of learning strategies for second and third languages, and their article is important especially because third language learning strategies are rarely explored. Relationships among self-directed learning, autonomy, and LLS are highlighted in the article by Melissa Williamson Hawkins. Yalun Zhou and Michael Wei talk about strategies in technology-enhanced language learning, or TELL, which offers opportunities now that were not dreamed of a decade ago. Mixed-methods strategy research is the focus of Carmen M. Amerstorfer, who also discusses the utility of a traditional LLS survey, the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*, or the SILL (Oxford, 1990).

The final article (Pawlak and Oxford) wraps up the special issue by pointing out key elements in and across the other articles. It also speculates about what the future might bring in terms of LLS assessment, research, and instruction.

Because a number of the articles in the special issue mention quantitative or mixed-method studies, and several report using the SILL, we need to say a word about the statistical analysis of LLS questionnaire data. With 5-point Likert-scale items, as used in the SILL and a multitude of other psychological and educational measures, it is appropriate to use parametric procedures rather than

having to use nonparametric procedures, which are necessary for 3- or 4-point Likert-scale data.¹

We sincerely hope that you enjoy this special issue. We anticipate that your discussions about LLS over coffee, sodas, or Chardonnay will be as spirited as ours have been. We encourage you to follow up on any leads and references in the articles. We hope to hear from you if you have new ideas, suggestions, or questions about LLS.

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¹ A brief detour into statistics and the social pressure of academic criticism is needed here. Dörnyei (2005) criticized the SILL for being analyzed with interval-level parametric significance tests. Data from 3- or 4-point Likert-scale items, which to our knowledge have not been used in LLS research, violate the distribution-normality assumption for parametric procedures (Plonsky, 2015), and in such cases nonparametric procedures are needed. However, data from 5-point Likert scales (as found in the SILL) resemble interval-level data due to the wider range of the scales, thus permitting the use of parametric statistics (see Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Jaccard & Wan, 1996; Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2018; Oxford, 2011). Parametric statistics can also be used with Likert-scale data if the sample is sufficiently large (Ferguson & Takane, 2005). Nevertheless, the injunction against using (acceptable) parametric analyses for the 5-point Likert-scale SILL cast a shadow over much quantitative LLS research, and researchers like Gunning and Oxford (2014) shelved their parametrically-attained findings and reported only nonparametric results in a major strategy-instruction study. A more justifiable criticism of the SILL focused on the cumulativeness of responses across strategy items and categories and the varying "grain size" of strategies, problems that could be relatively easily resolved with careful redesign of the inventory.

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