

The role of attitude, motivation, and language learning strategies in learning English as a Foreign Language among Vietnamese college students in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of attitudes (positive and negative attitude), motivation (instrumental and integrative motivation), and language learning strategies (direct and indirect strategies) in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among Vietnamese college students. The study involved 193 male and female freshman and sophomore college students majoring in English, Psychology, and Sociology in a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study employed a mixed-method research design, namely, quantitative and qualitative. The former consists of a survey design, which involved administering two different survey questionnaires: Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner (1995) to measure the attitudes and motivations toward EFL, and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) to measure language learning strategies. A semi-structured interview with 45 participants was also conducted to verify the veracity of the responses to the questionnaires. The results of the study revealed that Vietnamese EFL college students tend to have significant positive attitudes toward English, and they appear to be instrumentally and integratively motivated to learn the said language. Interestingly, the findings showed that there is a significant difference between males' and females' attitudes toward EFL; however, there is no significant difference found in motivation and language learning strategies between male and female students. Furthermore, the results revealed that at the $p < .01$ alpha level, there is a significant and positive correlation between language learning strategies and attitudes, and language learning strategies and motivation. By and large, the findings suggest that attitudes, motivation, and language learning strategies play an important role for Vietnamese EFL college students. This implies that the more positive attitude and the more positive motivation students have the better language learning strategies they use in their own language learning.

Keywords: Motivation, language attitudes, language learning strategies, English as a Foreign Language

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the past few decades, English has developed in Vietnam with Ho Chi Minh City having 300 language-center facilities (Thin, 2006). Several language centers, both public and private, have been established with different courses, programs, and types of training to serve

the varied needs of language learners such as employment, job promotion, and overseas studies (Park, 2011; Thin, 1994; Thin, 2006; Van, 2009).

Accordingly, EFL students choose to learn English for the following reasons: (1) the belief that English is a tool for more profitable and better employment opportunities; (2) the need for a good knowledge of English to study further at colleges or universities; and (3) to pass national examinations (Canh, 1999; Van, 2009).

Vietnamese students find it difficult to achieve communicative competence. All they need is a sufficiently good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the target language to pass the national grammar-based and norm-referenced examinations. Currently, the two most important English examinations in Vietnam are the schools' final examinations and the university entrance tests. Both are administered at the end of secondary school and do not include listening and speaking. While the former is norm-referenced, the latter is designed to discriminate between candidates who will be admitted to higher education (Canh, 1999).

Bui (2006) states that most English classes focus only on teaching grammar through reading and writing exercises. Vietnamese teachers of English emphasize writing, reading, and grammar rather than listening and speaking. Thus, students have very few opportunities to use English both inside and outside their classes.

Within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) over the last few decades, a gradual but significant shift has taken place resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching and greater stress on learners and learning. This change has been reflected in various ways in which language education and applied linguistics put premium on the curriculum (Nunan, 1988, 1995) and the institution of learner-centeredness in the language classroom (Tudor, 1996). Hence, it is important to focus on the *attitude*, *motivation*, and the use of *language learning strategies* (LLS) in second language (L2) learning.

Accordingly, *attitudes* play a critical role in learning English. Attitude, as defined by Day and Bamford (1998), is a complex, hypothetical construction, whose general definition usually includes some notion of evaluation. This may be attitudes toward self, toward a language (first or second language), toward English speaking people (e.g., friends, peers, foreigners), and toward the teacher and the classroom environment (Richard-Amato, 1996). Attitudes toward the teacher and the classroom environment play an important role in school success in general and in English acquisition in particular.

Some studies in the Vietnamese context investigated the language learners' attitudes toward English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Thin's (1994) study on the attitudes and motivation of Vietnamese students toward the Language Education Policy in Vietnam revealed that 68.6% of students strongly agree that English should become the most important foreign language taught in Vietnam and that 91.8% of the respondents agree that English can provide them more employment opportunities in the future.

Similarly, Hang (2009) examined the changes in Vietnamese learners' attitudes toward foreign language learning based on an investigation of the history of foreign languages in Vietnam. The results indicated that Vietnamese learners' attitudes have shifted from resentment against foreign languages toward appreciation of and motivation in learning them because of political, economic, and sociocultural changes.

Another factor, which can contribute to EFL learners' success, is *motivation* (Ellis, 1994; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Gardner and Lambert (1972) postulated the two types of motivation in learning a second language: *instrumental* motivation, the need to acquire a language for a specific purpose such as reading technical materials or getting a job; and *integrative* motivation,

the desire to become a member of the culture of the second-language group.

Various studies conducted on the areas of attitudes and motivation aimed, in most cases, at identifying the students' attitudes toward learning a second language and the kind of motivation they have for learning it. The majority of these studies focused on the students' perceptions of English as a second language (ESL). For instance, Svanes (1987) elicited the views of 167 L2 university students enrolled in language classes. The results revealed that Middle Eastern, Asian, and African students show more instrumental motivation to study Norwegian than their European and North American counterparts.

Benson (1991), on the other hand, assessed the motivation in learning English of freshman students in a Japanese university. It was found that integrative and personal reasons for learning English were preferred over instrumental ones.

In 2000, Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura explored the types of language learning motivation possessed by Japanese EFL learners from diverse learning milieus. The findings indicated that the largest motivational factor in English language learning among Japanese EFL students is complex, with both instrumental and integrative motivations present.

Similarly, Liu (2007) looked into the motivation and attitudes of Chinese students toward English language learning. The results indicated that the students have positive attitudes toward learning English and are highly motivated to study it. Moreover, the students are more instrumentally than integratively motivated to learn English; and their attitudes and motivation positively correlate with their English language proficiency.

In the same vein, Vaezi (2009) examined the undergraduate non-English majors' integrative and instrumental motivation toward learning English as a foreign language. The findings showed that Iranian students have very high motivation and positive attitudes toward learning English and that they are more instrumentally motivated.

Aside from general language acquisition processes, learners also adopt individual *strategies* to help them in the language acquisition process (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 1994, O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 2006). *Language learning strategies* (LSS), as defined by Oxford (1990), are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations" (p. 8).

This is a practical approach to promote positive language attitude or motivation of students who claimed to have little interest in English. To achieve the full benefits of learning English, students in non-English speaking countries like Vietnam are guided and instructed with an appropriate curriculum.

Oxford (2003) posited that a strategy would be useful if it relates well to the language-learning task, fits the particular students' learning preferences, and employs it effectively with other language learning strategies.

In 1987, Chamot contributed an insightful study concerning successful language learning strategies. Using different data-gathering instruments (i.e., classroom observation and interview with high school students), Chamot aimed to identify the strategies employed by good learners and the strategies that could be aligned with particular language learning. It was found that students were not only information-receivers in acquiring a new language, but they seemed really active, reflective, and dynamic in utilizing different strategies in varied learning situations inside and outside the classroom.

Later, in 1990, O'Malley and Chamot conducted a study on second language learning strategies, which is based on a cognitive theory that recognizes cognitive skills. They are further categorized into three depending on the type of processing involved: metacognitive

strategies, cognitive strategies, and social strategies.

Oxford (1990), on the other hand, classified a learning strategy system in which she distinguished and divided learning strategies into two categories, namely, direct and indirect strategies. These strategies were found to help students with the best possible learning outcomes.

Over the past few decades, considerable attention has been given to language learning strategies used by EFL and ESL learners (Michael, 1997; Park, 2010; Querol, 2010; Shu-chin Yen & Tun-Whei, 2009). Overall, research on the use of learning strategies (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Harris, 2003; Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000 as cited in Radwan, 2010) state that language learners, whether consciously or unconsciously, utilize a variety of learning strategies. Successful language learners, however, employ more effective and diverse language learning strategies than less successful learners.

Language learning strategies are necessary means to help EFL learners achieve success in language study. However, in a diverse and multicultural world, these factors somehow have great effects on EFL learners depending on the environment where they are situated. EFL learners in different cultures and societies may have different attitudes, motivation, and LLS that contribute to their success in learning and acquiring the target language or L2.

In the Vietnamese context, attitudes toward language learning, language learning motivation, and LLS hardly became a major research concern until quite recently. This may be the case because learner variables in general have not been a focus in foreign language teaching. In Vietnam, the most popular teaching methods have been teacher-centered rather than learner-centered, and classes are usually quite large with 40 to 50 students per class in most high schools and 50 to 200 students per class in many universities. Thus, research on the motivation of individual learners has received little attention (e.g., Canh, 1999, Hang, 2009, Tinh, 1994).

The purpose of the present study is to ascertain the dominant attitudes, motivations, and language learning strategies among Vietnamese college students and the relationship among these variables in learning English as a foreign language.

1.2 Research Questions

Previous research investigated the attitudes, motivation, and LLS among EFL learners in the field of SLA. However, in the Vietnamese context, it is necessary to further explore these factors that can facilitate foreign language learning. Therefore, in an attempt to further investigate learners' attitudes, motivations, and LLS in an EFL context, the present study aims to address the following questions:

1. What is the language attitude of Vietnamese college students toward EFL?
2. What is the predominant motivation in learning English as a foreign language among these college students?
3. What is the predominant language learning strategy employed by these college students?
4. Is there a significant correlation between language learning strategies employed among the students and the following variables:
 - a. Attitudes (Positive and Negative)?
 - b. Motivation (Integrative and Instrumental)?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Ellis (1999, 2008) suggests these factors that influence learners in the route of acquiring and learning a second language: age, gender, motivation, and attitudes. Accordingly, these factors have major effects on learners in using language learning strategies differently.

Language learning is a complex process involving many factors. Normally, individual variables such as age, gender, motivation, attitudes, cultural background, education experience, as well as learning strategies may possibly contribute to influence success or failure in language learning.

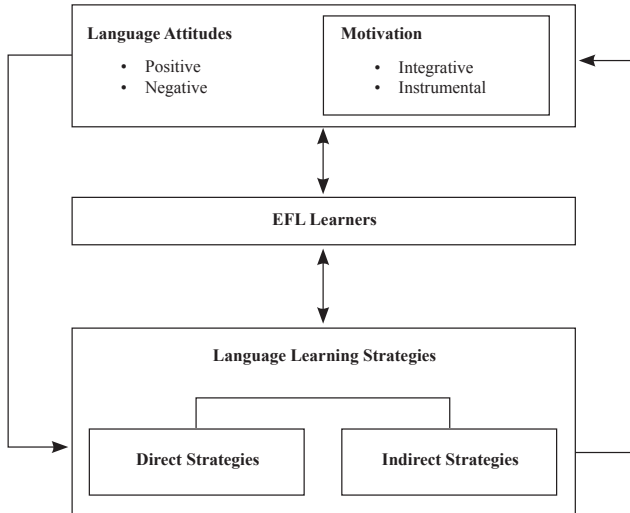
As shown in Figure 1, attitudes and motivation are embedded together and play a crucial role in the choice of language learning strategies. Motivation, together with attitude toward the learning situation, triggers the use of language learning strategies. These factors are deep within the students' minds. Gardner (1985) distinguishes attitudes as components of motivation in language learning. He believes that the motivation to learn a foreign language is determined by basic predispositions and personality characteristics such as the learner's attitudes toward foreign people in general and the target group and language in particular, motives for learning, and generalized attitudes (Gardner, 1985). Wenden (1991), on the other hand, perceives attitudes as including three components: (1) attitudes tend to have a cognitive component; this could involve beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations related to the attitude; (2) attitudes have an evaluative component; this means that the objects or situations related to the attitude may generate like or dislike; and (3) attitudes have a behavioral component; that is, certain attitudes tend to prompt learners to adopt particular learning behaviors. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) discuss the current issues, pedagogical implications, and new directions in beliefs about language learning including social, cultural, contextual, cognitive, affective, and personal factors among which attitudes have an important place. Similarly, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) regard attitude as an important factor in language learning in their study on the internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished the two major kinds of motivation related to L2 learning: integrative and instrumental. The former reflects the learners' willingness or desire to be like a representative member of the other community. This reflects the learners' high level of effort to learn the language of a valued L2 community in order to communicate with the group. The latter, on the other hand, reflects an interest in L2, a desire to learn the target language and an attitude toward the learning situation and the target language community (Gardner, 1985). Aside from attitudes and motivation toward language learning and learning strategy choice, language learning strategies (LLS) are specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more easily transferable to new situations (Oxford, 1990).

The taxonomy of the first type of learning strategies, i.e., direct learning strategies, focuses on memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies that entail a mental process of receiving, retaining, storing, and retrieving the words of the target language (Oxford, 1990). These strategies put emphasis on the memorization of words or word recall and benefit learners in learning vocabulary. Moreover, these strategies help learners make sense of their learning (Magno, 2010).

Figure 1

The role and the relationship of learning attitudes, motivation, and learning strategies among language learners



Indirect learning strategies involve metacognitive, affective, and social strategies that contribute “indirectly but powerfully to learning” (Oxford, 1990, p. 12). These strategies include organizing, guiding, and encouraging the learners without directly taking part in the given language learning tasks.

2. Method

2.1 Research Setting

This study was conducted in the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Three departments (i.e., English Linguistics and Literature, Sociology, and Psychology) of the university were chosen with the aim of investigating the dominant attitudes, motivation, and LLS among English language learners as well as the relationship among these factors.

2.2 Participants

The participants in the present study consisted of 193 EFL freshman and sophomore college students selected from the total population of USSH’s students in HCMC.

The criteria for selecting the participants were the following: (1) 17-25 age range; (2) male and female students of USSH in HCMC; and (3) expressed willingness to participate in the study.

The distribution of the number of participants in terms of gender, discipline, age, and length of learning English is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Number of students by discipline, gender, and length of English learning

Type of Discipline	Gender		Year Level		Length of English Learning
	Male	Female	Freshman	Sophomore	
English (N=74)	34	40	32	42	4-10 years
Sociology (N=65)	28	37	22	43	
Psychology (N=54)	22	32	23	31	
Total (N=193)	193				

Participants for the Interview

Forty-five (45) students majoring in three disciplines (15 English majors, 15 Sociology majors, and 15 Psychology majors) volunteered and were randomly chosen for the interview. Table 4 shows the demographic profile of the interview participants. Such a small number of interview participants may be attributed to the actual number of students taking the said degree programs who may be proficient in the English language.

Table 2
Demographic profile of interview participants

Major	Age	Year Level	Gender		Total number of participants
			Male	Female	
English	19-25	Sophomore	7	8	15
Psychology	18-24	Freshman	5	10	15
Sociology	18-25	Freshman	9	6	15
Total			21	24	45

2.3 Instruments

Two of the three questionnaires, i.e., attitudes and motivation survey (AMTB Questionnaire) and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), were modified in this study in order to elicit the Vietnamese EFL students' attitudes, motivation, and language learning strategies. The demographic questionnaire was designed to determine the background information of the respondents.

2.3.1 Instruments

2.3.1.1 Demographic Questionnaire

To obtain the descriptive data about the population, background information (i.e., age, gender, year level, major, and length of English learning) about the participants were included (see

Appendix A). These information were used to identify the key factors that may influence the participants' attitudes, motivation, and foreign language learning strategies. Likewise, such information helped in the adequate interpretation of the study results.

2.3.1.2 Attitudes and Motivation Survey (AMTB Questionnaire)

The motivation survey used in this study was adapted from the questionnaires developed by Gardner (1985) and Clement et al. (1994). However, some modifications were done to this survey to suit the context of the present study (see Appendix A).

First, the repetition of items was avoided. Second, only items about students' attitudes toward learning English and their motivation were retained. Other items such as classroom anxiety, learning orientation, traveling orientation, and parental encouragement were omitted to be consistent with the aim of the present study, that is, to identify the attitudes and motivation of students toward EFL.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree": Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5 (see Appendix A).

2.3.1.3 Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

The LLS survey used in this study was adopted from the questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990) called the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This assessment instrument, which has been translated into several languages, is widely used to investigate language learners' use of learning strategies (see Appendix B).

All 50 items in SILL were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "never almost true of me" to "always or almost always true of me." However, in this study, these scales were shortened to "never true of me" to "always true of me." The taxonomy of the version 7.0 of SILL was divided into two categories (i.e., direct strategy and indirect strategy), which involve the following six subscale strategies:

Direct strategy

- Memory strategies (9 items: items 1 to 9)
- Cognitive strategies (14 items: items 10 to 23)
- Compensation strategies (6 items: items 24 to 29)

Indirect strategy

- Metacognitive strategies (9 items: items 30 to 38)
- Affective strategies (6 items: items 39 to 44)
- Social strategies (6 items: items 45 to 50)

The questionnaires were translated to Vietnamese since there are several English structures, idiomatic expressions, and sentences that may cause confusion for nonnative learners of English because of their ambiguous meanings. The revised items were 1, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 21, 22, 42, and 49 (see Appendix B). Two qualified English teachers from USSH translated both the questionnaires and the interview questions.

2.3.1.4 Semi-structured Interview

Guide questions for the semi-structured interview were developed and used by the researcher to gather in-depth information to support the qualitative data of the study. The interview questionnaires explored the concept of attitudes, motivation, and LLS among college students (see Appendix C).

The interviews were conducted only once, two weeks after the administration of the two surveys. The interviews were then audio-recorded and transcribed for a more insightful and substantiated interpretation of findings.

2.4 Procedure

2.4.1 Administration of the Survey Questionnaires

Because not all participants in this study were English majors, all instruments were translated to Vietnamese and then were translated back to English by a faculty member of the university where the survey questionnaires were administered. A pilot study among 20 students was conducted to get feedback for the modification of the instruments. Generally, the said pilot study showed that there were no major changes to be done with the questionnaires.

The participants accomplished the two survey questionnaires for approximately 40 minutes. The nature and purpose of the study were explained to the participants prior to the distribution of the questionnaires. The participants were also encouraged to clarify or ask questions about words or statements they found difficult to understand.

2.4.2 Conduct of the Interview

Before the actual data gathering, a pilot interview was conducted to four college students to determine whether they understood the questions clearly. Forty-five (45) students majoring in English, Psychology, and Sociology, who volunteered to have an interview with the researchers, were randomly selected. The interviewees were encouraged to use both English and Vietnamese to clearly express their responses during the interview, which lasted for 10 to 20 minutes each. Primarily, all interview questions were open-ended to elicit much more detailed views and to control the direction and the amount of content in response to questioning (see Appendix C). The reflective approach was utilized during the interview in which feedback were given to clarify some points raised (Roulston, 2010). All interview participants agreed to have the interviews audio-recorded. Also, personal notes during the interview helped in the transcription of responses.

2.5 Method of Analysis

Descriptive statistics and statistical analyses were employed to measure the participants' attitudes, motivation, language learning strategies, as well as the correlation among these variables. Microsoft Excel 2010 was used to encode all raw data and obtain the mean scores. Then, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for Microsoft Windows 20.0 was applied for other treatment tests.

To answer the first three research questions as regards the college English language learners' predominant attitudes, motivation, and LLS, descriptive statistics was applied by calculating the mean scores and standard deviation of the participants' responses to represent the differences between males and females.

Finally, to answer the last question, *Pearson's correlation* coefficient was applied to assess the strength of the relationship of the participants' attitudes, motivation, and LLS. Specifically, a significant relationship may exist among these variables when the *p value* is lesser than .01 ($p < .001$).

2.5.1 Data Analysis of the Interview

All interview data were encoded verbatim and were then content-analyzed and coded based on core ideas and themes. A frequency count of the responses under each thematic category was undertaken.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Language Attitude of Vietnamese College Students toward EFL

The data in Table 3 show that the Vietnamese college students appear to have a relatively high *positive attitude* toward EFL ($M=3.8$ and $SD=.78$). This indicates that in general, these students appreciate the English language and are aware of its importance to their education and future professions.

Table 3

The predominant mean scores and standard deviation distribution of language attitude toward EFL of Vietnamese college students (N=193)

Attitude Scale	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Positive	3.8	.78
Negative	2.0	.79

Learners who possess positive attitudes toward EFL prefer to learn English as an interesting subject not only because of the knowledge it provides but also the joy it brings while learning it. Moreover, Gardner (1985) posited that language learners with positive attitudes toward an L2 are those interested to learn the target language because of its culture and people.

The majority of interview participants admitted that they would like to learn English and agreed that English is important since it is an international language widely used in global communication. The following extract supports these findings:

Extract 1

R: Do you like to learn English?

S: Yes, I really like to learn English.

R: Can you tell me the basic reasons that make you like to learn English as a foreign language?

S: *Yeah, the reason I want to learn English is that English is an international language, and it helps me to communicate and make friends with more people. English is very popular now, and if you do not know English, you may miss and lost many opportunities in life.*

Both quantitative and qualitative results of the present study correspond to the findings of Hang's (2009) study, which found a change in the Vietnamese learners' attitudes toward foreign languages from resentment to appreciation. Moreover, Think's (1995) study, which is on the attitudes and motivation of Vietnamese students toward language education policy in Vietnam, found that approximately, 70% of students showed their agreement that English should become the most important foreign language taught in Vietnam. This would mean that there seems to be a growing popularity of the English language among the learners as they realize its importance to their current education and the opportunities they can gain from learning such a language.

3.2 The Predominant Motivation in Learning EFL among Vietnamese College Students

Table 4

The predominant mean scores and standard deviation distribution of motivation in learning EFL among Vietnamese college students (N=193)

Motivation	M	SD
Integrative	3.6	.62
Instrumental	3.8	.57

As indicated in Table 4, there is a slight significant difference between the integrative motivation and the instrumental motivation in learning EFL among the respondents. They appear to be both *instrumentally motivated* (M=3.8 and SD=.57) and *integratively motivated* (M=3.6 and SD=.62).

The respondents seem to be instrumentally motivated to learn English for practical reasons such as getting a better or high-paying job and being enriched by the target language through its culture and people. Moreover, they are integratively motivated as they experience so much enjoyment in learning the English language.

The results of the interview data (qualitative) support the findings of the survey (quantitative data). Most interviewees pointed out that English is important and should be learned for both instrumental and integrative purposes. The following responses from the interviewees prove these points:

Extract 2

R: *But what are your basic reasons for learning English as a foreign language?*

S: *Yeah, my basic reasons for learning English as a foreign language are ... uhm... first, it helps me get more opportunities*

for my future job. Second, it is the best way for me to update the information happening around the world if I know English.

R: *So do you think Vietnamese should learn English? Why and why not?*

S: *Yes, of course. I think Vietnamese should learn English because Vietnam is now still one of the developing countries. We still cannot be compared with Western countries. Yeah, moreover, learning English is the best way for us to get more information about modern technologies, and we can communicate with foreigners so that we can help our country develop better and better.*

Extract 3

S: *I want to learn English because [sic] like to read English stories and information on the Internet. When you have time, you may feel interesting [sic] if you can read and understand in English. You know. Yes, for my major, there is plenty of information in English, so I think I should learn English harder and harder in order to understand well the information needed for my major – psychology.*

Based on the abovementioned extracts, the respondents perceive English as a key to success in learning and in the workplace. They also aver the advantages of learning the said target language, e.g., becoming more aware of global activities and cultures.

The respondents' motivation to learn the English language may also be attributed to the influence of social factors such as support from parents and family, teachers and schoolmates, and the community and society (Bouchev & Harter, 2005; Lutz, 2006; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007). Furthermore, the significance of context and its mediating role in learning the target language used in the society; the broad understanding of cultural, historical, social, institutional, and linguistic phenomena in the classroom; and the dynamic relations of learners and the world may influence their preference as to the use of the English language (Da & Jang, 2008).

The following extracts show the typical responses of the interviewees who gained their motivation to learn English from the encouragement of their families and teachers:

Extract 4

S: *You know, I was so impressive [sic] the way of one of my teachers in high school taught me English. Yeah, he was so helpful and good at teaching. I think, you would be much more encouraged if you studied English with him. Actually, he made me love English. I really appreciated him.*

Extract 5

S: *Oh, I am so lucky because my parents always encourage me to learn English. Yes, I am very lucky. You know, my father is a teacher of English in high school. That's why he usually helps me*

to study English. Besides, my parents support me to study English in British Council. You know, it's a very famous place to learn English. I am very happy and try to study English harder day by day.

In addition, the contribution and intervention of teachers to students' learning have a significant influence to students' motivation and attitudes toward English learning (Noels, 2001). Most English majors, who were participants of the study, stated that they were motivated to learn English through their teachers' methodology. Moreover, they were encouraged to appreciate the importance and relevance of the said target language to their current education.

3.3 The Predominant Language Learning Strategy Employed by Vietnamese College Students

Table 5

The predominant mean scores and standard deviation distribution of LLS employed by Vietnamese college students (N=193)

LLS Scale	M	SD
Direct Strategies	3.08	.61
Indirect Strategies	3.2	.62

The data in Table 5 show that the predominant language learning strategies (LLS) Vietnamese college students generally tend to employ are Indirect Strategies (M=3.2, SD=.62) (i.e., metacognitive, affective, and social).

The Vietnamese students significantly utilize indirect LLS because they may not have enough opportunities to practice the language they learn. Thus, to achieve the target language and to overcome this deficiency, they use indirect strategies such as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies in the process of learning the target language.

These extracts present the common opinions of the students as regards the strategies they employ to learn and improve their English language skills:

Extract 9

R: *So what do you often do when you have problem in understanding English when you are learning this subject or this foreign language?*

S: *uhm.... My problem is that I do not have much time to learn English. I have to spend time to learn other subjects and sometimes I feel lazy studying English. Yeah...that's why my English is very bad now.*

R: *How about your homework? How often and how much do you do your English homework or assignments?*

S: *Oh... I just do homework before my English class, for instance, if tomorrow I have English subject at school, I try to do*

- it tonight. Honestly, I rarely do homework. When I have free time, I just learn some vocabulary. My grammar is bad, but I am lazy to learn it myself.*
- R: *You like English, but you do not like to do homework; so what do you do to improve your English?*
- S: *Oh.... I just try to learn and do the assignments so that I can pass the exam. You know, I just try to learn in order to pass the exam, but in reality, I do not understand much about English.*
- R: *Do you often listen to radio or watch TV in English language?*
- S: *Yes, I do....I often listen to English music. Sometimes I download movies with English subtitle, and I really enjoy watching those movies.*

The responses would show that students prefer to use indirect strategies, such as listening to music in English and watching movies with English subtitles, to unconsciously learn the target language. In this case, they employ both the *affective* and the *social* strategies (Oxford, 1990). Further, specific language tasks, such as assignments and examinations, do not directly interest students to learn English. Admittedly, such academic tasks hardly entice them to like learning English; but instead, other leisurely activities may somehow help them learn the target language.

3.4 Correlation between Language Learning Strategies Employed by the Students and Their Attitudes and Motivation

3.4.1 Correlation between LLS (Direct or Indirect) and Attitudes (Positive and Negative)

Table 6 shows the correlation matrix between the LSS and the attitudes of Vietnamese college students based on the two survey questionnaires. The data were statistically treated using Pearson Product-moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*) to examine whether there was a significant correlation between the LLS of the students and their attitudes toward the target language.

Table 6
Correlation matrix between attitudes and LLS

Correlation		Positive Attitude	Negative Attitude
Direct Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.402**	-.297**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	193	193
Indirect Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.325**	-.296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	193	193

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data show that there is a significant and positive correlation between the LLS of the students and their attitudes toward English. The positive attitude and direct strategies are correlated to each other ($r=.402, p<.001$). Indirect strategies, although the Pearson *r* value

($r=.325$, $p<.001$) is slightly lower than direct strategies, are also found to be significantly correlated to positive attitude. This means that the Vietnamese students with a high positive attitude toward EFL tend to employ either direct or indirect strategies. On the contrary, the data indicate that higher scores in negative attitude seem to be associated with lower scores in both direct ($r= -.297$, $p<.001$) and indirect strategies ($r= -.296$, $p<.001$). This would mean that students with negative attitude toward English hardly employ many direct or indirect strategies in their language-learning process.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Nisbet and Schucksmith (1986), LLS are employed by language learners as a means to gain and to use information that they have acquired, stored, and recalled to promote autonomous learning. Although Vietnamese students scarcely have adequate exposure to the target language in all circumstances such as at school, at home, and in the society, their positive attitudes to language learning could help them overcome difficulties in the learning process and creatively build up several ways of learning that suit and benefit them best.

The findings of the present study concur with those of Wenden's (1987), which revealed that language learners could employ varied strategies that suit them best in learning the L2. Similarly, in the context of Vietnam, EFL learners with positive attitudes toward the L2 tend to take different strategies for learning the target language. For instance, the Vietnamese students in this study reported that they usually take advantage of listening to English songs, watching English movies, chatting in English, playing games with peers, reviewing grammar and vocabulary in group, participating in English clubs, and the like. These ways of learning English are considered their best and common choices in the process of learning the L2.

Similarly, in the context of Vietnam, EFL learners with positive attitudes toward the L2 tend to take different strategies for learning the target language. For instance, the Vietnamese students in this study reported that they usually take advantage of listening to English songs, watching English movies, chatting in English, playing games with peers, reviewing grammar and vocabulary in group, participating in English clubs, and the like. These ways of learning English are considered their best and common choices in the process of learning the L2.

In addition, positive attitudes toward language learning mutually affect each other; in this case, the more positive attitudes EFL learners have, the higher is the frequency of LLS they employ in learning. Likewise, the more effective LLS language learners use, the more positive attitudes they develop toward their L2. Several studies have proved that attitudes toward language learning are closely associated to LLS choices (Akbulut, 2008; Bull & Ma, 2001 as cited in Lee, 2010; Lee, 2010; Liang, 2009; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Sadighi & Zarafshan, 2006; Sedaghat, 2001; Ushida, 2005; Verma, 2005). Accordingly, the findings in these research claim that learners with positive attitudes try to become members of the target language community and that they do their best to adapt more techniques or strategies that can facilitate the language-learning process.

With regard to the significant correlation score between positive attitudes and LLS, it can be noted that the Pearson r value of indirect strategies ($r=.325$, $p<.001$) is slightly lower than direct strategies ($r=.402$, $p<.001$). Correspondingly, similar studies (cf. Liang, 2009; Oxford, 1990) conducted in the Asian context, such as in China, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, found that EFL learners tend to utilize indirect strategies in learning the English language.

However, based on the statistical correlation treatment, the Pearson r scores of Vietnamese students who have significantly high negative attitudes toward EFL may also have high negative correlation to both direct ($r = -.297, p < .001$) and indirect strategies ($r = -.296, p < .001$). This shows that students with negative attitudes toward EFL might not know what strategies they should use, nor they could describe or name their strategies (Nyikos, 1987 as cited in Liang, 2009). Similarly, Nyikos (1987) found that EFL learners had difficulties in applying LLS and tended to use fewer strategies as compared with advanced learners.

Apart from attitudes as contributing factors in the LLS choice of language learners, Oxford (2002) claims that the different uses of LLS may also predict success in language learning. She argues that successful learners do not only know how to select appropriate strategies to use, but they also excel in combining various and flexible ways to achieve proficiency in the target language.

3.4.2 Correlation between LLS (Direct or Indirect) and Motivation (Integrative or Instrumental)

The data in Table 7 reveal a significant correlation between LLS and motivation. Highly motivated EFL students employ both direct and indirect strategies in learning English. Integrative motivation is significantly correlated with the use of direct strategies ($r = .440, p < .001$) and indirect strategies ($r = .325, p < .001$). This means that those who demonstrate integrative motivation utilize flexible strategies in language learning such as memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies.

Table 7
Correlation matrix between motivation and LLS

Correlation		Integrative Motivation	Instrumental Motivation
Direct Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.440**	.325**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	193	193
Indirect Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.424**	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	193	193

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Oxford (1990), all direct strategies require language learners to employ some techniques such as retaining new information in their memory for later use and placing new words in context (i.e., memory strategies); note-taking and summarizing texts (i.e., cognitive strategies); and guessing the meaning while listening or reading (i.e., compensation strategies). These strategies are appropriate for those learners with integrative motivation in the sense that they exert more effort to learn the L2 to widen their knowledge, to have a better understanding of the cultural and intellectual values associated with the language (Dörnyei, 2003), and to show their interest in the target language.

Moreover, it was also found that students with high instrumental motivation employ high direct strategies ($r = .424, p < .001$) and indirect strategies ($r = .348, p < .001$). This implies

that those who have higher instrumental motivation in language learning also utilize various strategies in learning such as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

These findings were likewise revealed in several studies (Akbulut, 2008; Lee, 2010; Liang, 2009; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Sedaghat, 2001; Sadighi & Zarafshan, 2006; Verma, 2005), which identified motivation as an essential factor that greatly impacts language learning strategies. These studies also proved that motivation directly influences the frequency of LLS used.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Attitudes, motivation, and LLS play a significant role in the language-learning process of Vietnamese college students. Each factor benefits EFL learners; and although these factors may differ in functions, they cannot be separated from each other in the context of language learning.

The Vietnamese college students' high positive attitude and instrumental motivation toward learning English could be attributed to the fact that English as a foreign language plays an essential function in the Vietnamese society. It is possible that these Vietnamese college students study English mainly to prepare themselves to get better job or career opportunities, to pursue further studies abroad, and to do business with foreigners.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that Vietnamese college students may not be able to distinguish clearly and exactly the strategies they employ in learning the target language. However, it is worth mentioning that these students employ other ways to enhance the LLS they use.

The study also revealed that there were no differences in language learning in terms of the relationship between gender and each type of attitudes, motivation, and LLS.

The significant correlation found between LLS and attitude, and motivation could be ascribed to the fact that these psychological and social factors, which mutually support each other, are essential in achieving success in language learning. However, other factors such as age, gender, social environment, school setting, and the like may affect language learning. Thus, the abovementioned factors are significant for Vietnamese college students learning English as their target language.

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Appendix A

English-learning motivation scale

Dear Friend,

I am currently conducting a research on Attitude and Motivation toward English Language learning. This survey is made to provide data for the research; thus, I need your checks on the questionnaire items mentioned below. I am sincerely grateful, and I appreciate your help for this endeavor.

Directions: Please answer the following items by circling the number of the alternative which appears most applicable to you. We would urge you to be as accurate as possible since the success of this investigation depends upon it.

Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Year in college: _____
Department: _____ Time to start to learn English: _____

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree
4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

No.	Survey items	Scales				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Studying English is an enjoyable experience.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I really Enjoy learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I plan to learn as much English as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I hate English.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Learning English is a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I think learning English is dull.	1	2	3	4	5
8	When I leave school, I will give up the study of English entirely because I am not interested in it.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Studying English can be important for me because I would like to meet foreigners with whom I can speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Studying English can be important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Studying English can be important for me because I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of English groups.	1	2	3	4	5
12	It is important for me to know English in order to know the life of the English-speaking nations.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Survey items	Scales				
		1	2	3	4	5
13	The British people are open-minded and modern people.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Studying English is important to me so that I can understand English pop music.	1	2	3	4	5
15	The Americans are sociable and hospitable.	1	2	3	4	5
16	The more I learn about the British, the more I like them.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Studying English is important to me because it will enable me to get to know various cultures and peoples.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Studying English is important to me so that I can keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I would like to know more about American people.	1	2	3	4	5
20	The British are kind and friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
21	The Americans are kind and cheerful.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I would like to know more British people.	1	2	3	4	5
23	Studying English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	1	2	3	4	5
24	Studying English can be important for me because I may need it later for my job or further studies.	1	2	3	4	5
25	Studying English can be important for me because other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of a foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
26	Studying English can be important for me because I will be able to search for information and materials in English on the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5
27	Studying English can be important for me because I will learn more about what's happening in the world.	1	2	3	4	5
28	Studying English can be important for me because language learning often gives me a feeling of success.	1	2	3	4	5
29	Studying English can be important for me because language learning often makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5
30	Studying English is important to me because it provides an interesting intellectual activity.	1	2	3	4	5
31	Studying English is important to me because it offers a new challenge in my life, which has otherwise become a bit monotonous.	1	2	3	4	5
32	Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.	1	2	3	4	5
33	Studying English is important to me so that I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV, or radio.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Survey items	Scales				
34	Studying English is important to me because without it, one cannot be successful in any field.	1	2	3	4	5
35	It is important for me to know English in order to better understand the English-speaking nations' behavior and problem.	1	2	3	4	5
36	Studying English is important to me because it will enable me to get to know new people from different parts of the world.	1	2	3	4	5
37	Studying English is important to me so that I can read English books.	1	2	3	4	5
38	Studying English is important to me because it will enable me to learn more about the English world.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you so much for your cooperation!

Appendix B

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) from Oxford (1989)

Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Year in college: _____
 Department: _____ Time to start to learn English: _____

Please read each statement. Circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

1= Never or almost never true of me

2= Usually not true of me

3= Somewhat true of me

4= Usually true of me

5= Always or almost always true of me

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
5	I use rhymes to remember new English words.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I use flashcards to remember new English words.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I physically act out new English words.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I review English lessons often.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	1	2	3	4	5
Total						
10	I say or write new English words several times in order to remember and know how to use them well.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I try to talk like native English speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I practice pronouncing sounds of English when I have free time.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I use the English words I know in different ways.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I usually start conversation in English with my classmates or my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I read for pleasure in English.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I practice writing notes, messages, letters or reports in English to improve my English writing skill.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I try to find patterns in English.	1	2	3	4	5
21	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing into parts that I understand.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I try not to translate word-for-word when I read English texts or articles.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	1	2	3	4	5
Total						
24	To understand unfamiliar words, I make guesses.	1	2	3	4	5
25	When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	1	2	3	4	5
27	I read English without looking up every new word.	1	2	3	4	5

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
28	I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	1	2	3	4	5
29	If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	1	2	3	4	5
Total						
30	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	1	2	3	4	5
31	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me to do better.	1	2	3	4	5
32	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	1	2	3	4	5
33	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	1	2	3	4	5
34	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	1	2	3	4	5
35	I look for people I can talk to in English.	1	2	3	4	5
36	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	1	2	3	4	5
37	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	1	2	3	4	5
38	I think about my progress in learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
Total						
39	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	1	2	3	4	5
40	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	1	2	3	4	5
41	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.					
42	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	1	2	3	4	5
43	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	1	2	3	4	5
44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
Total						
45	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	1	2	3	4	5
46	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	1	2	3	4	5
47	I practice English with other students.	1	2	3	4	5
48	I ask for help from English speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
49	I ask questions in English whenever I can, even outside English classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
50	I try to learn about culture of English speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
Total						

Appendix C

Guide questions for the semi-structured interview

1. Do you like to learn English? What are your basic reasons for learning English as a foreign language?
2. What makes you decide to choose English, but not other foreign language such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean or French?
3. Do you think Vietnamese should learn English? Why or why not?
4. How often do you practice English elsewhere outside the classroom and school setting?
5. Do you wish to have frequent direct contact with native speakers or English spoken people?
6. Would you continue to learn English after graduating from college? Why or why not?
7. What do you often do when you have problems in understanding English when you are learning this subject or language?
8. How often and how much do you do your English homework or assignments?
9. What do you do to improve your English?
10. How often you do listen to radio or watch TV in English language? Why that often? or Why that less often?

Follow-up questions (if necessary):

1. What makes you think English is important for your future opportunities?
2. Do you want to make friends with a native speaker of English in order to practice English? Why or why not?
3. Where would you choose to learn best English? Why?
4. What activities do you think you or others can take part to improve your English skills?