Self-regulation in language learning strategy research

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Overview

- Language learning strategy research problematized

- The rise of self-regulation

- The rise of self-regulation in language education research problematized

- Alternative perspectives to self-regulation in language learning strategy research

Language learning strategy research problematized

Language learning strategy research problematized

- An explosion of studies on ***Language Learning Strategy (LLS)*** (Cohen & Macaro, 2007)
  - As strategy use is closely associated with language learning achievements.

- **Studies explored:**

  language learners' metacognitive

  cognitive strategy use

  significantly improved understanding *of learners' contributions* to their own language learning
  (Chamot, 2001)

Language learning strategy research problematized

- Psychological features emphasized
  Conceptualized LLS *as... 'psychological features of the individual that can change through practice and strategy instruction'*

- Quantitative methodological approaches adopted

- Learner-completed, summative rating scales commonly used.
  E.g. Oxford's (1990) Strategy *Inventory for Language Learning ('SILL'),* the most popular method of data collection.

Language learning strategy research problematized

CONTRIBUTIONS:

1. Strategy taxonomies developed

2. *Systematic investigation of the various factors that influence strategy use'*

3. Individual differences

Language learning strategy research problematized

- Criticism of studies on correlations between learners' strategy use and other individual factors (e.g. motivation):

  These studies tend to present these attributes as _relatively fixed and stable_ across contexts.

  Studies often present strategy use as "largely pertained to individual will and knowledge".

  T_o what extent_ the choice is mediated by the particular social contexts is concerned.

  (Parks & Raymond, 2004)

Language learning strategy research problematized

Criticisms of questionnaire:
• The frequency of individual learners' strategy use measured by these questionnaires cannot be cumulative. (Dörnyei, 2005)
• Blurred boundaries between different categories of strategies in popular questionnaires (Hurd, 2007)
• Need for development of tailor made questionnaires

Language learning strategy research problematized

- **LLS as behavioral and cognitive construct**

  "Specific plans or steps, either observable, such as taking notes or seeking a conversation partner, or unobservable, such as mentally analyzing a word that L2 learners intentionally employ to improve reception, storage, retention and retrieval of information." (Oxford, 2003 p. 81)

- Critically scrutinized by researchers in **second language acquisition (SLA)**

- Quite **marginalized** since the heyday of LLS research in the 1990s.

- One of key criticisms: **Under-theorization of the construct**

Language learning strategy research problematized

Problematic to characterize the construct as **<u>behavioural</u>**, **<u>affective</u>** and **<u>cognitive</u>** simultaneously.

No longer regard LLS as **an individual difference factor** in second language acquisition

Consider it **a tool** or **construct** for pedagogical practices

Replace LLS with *Self-regulation*
* One of the key contributions that language learners can make to affect language learning achievements

Dörnyei (2005), Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt (2006)

Language learning strategy research problematized

- Possible response

- Increasing awareness of the necessity explore strategy use among particular cultural groups of learners *in specific socio-cultural contexts* and/or *task settings*

    Social Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SSILL)

Language learning strategy problematized

Social Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SSILL)

✓ To expand social strategies, one of the six categories in SILL, to three major contexts: *in class*, *outside classrooms* **on campus** & *outside campus*.

✓ "students' social strategy use is highly context bound

✓ should be used together with follow-up interviews to explore *why* social strategies are used or not used in a specific socio-cultural context. (Harish, 2014, p. 72)

Language learning strategy research problematized

- ***Another possible response***

- ***Sociocultural perspectives offers***

- *"a robust framework for investigating and explaining the development and use of strategies"* (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 462)

- have the potential for revealing 'a new dimension to the study of learning strategies' in research. (Palfreyman, 2003, p. 245)

Language learning strategy problematized

- Sociocultural perspectives allow researchers to **conceptualize language learning...**

  ~~as~~ *cognitive and meta-cognitive activities* unfolding in individual brains

  as *social acts* that are meaningfully related to learners' identity formation.

  → (Norton & Toohey, 2001; Oxford, 2003)

- **They encourage researchers to view learners *as social agents*** in active pursuit of language-related competence and non-linguistic objectives.

  (Palfreyman, 2003; Zuengler & Miller, 2006)

Language learning strategy research problematized

- It regards Learners' strategy use as ***a cognitive choice*** made by individuals & **an emergent phenomenon** 'directly connected to the practices of cultural groups'(Donato & McCormick, 1994, p. 453)

- It helps capture the ***dynamic nature*** of learners' strategy use emerging from interactions between ***the agency*** and ***the contextual conditions***.(Gao, 2010; Gao & Zhang, 2011)

Language learning strategy research problematized

- The importance of *contextual mediation* on language learners' strategy use highlighted

The availability and accessibility of material and cultural artifacts, such as learning materials	➔	**Helps language learners adopt strategies different from what they use when these materials and artifacts are not available or accessible.**
Discourses about language learning, reflecting the dominant values, attitudes and beliefs attached to the learning of a foreign language in particular contexts	➔	Influence individual language learners' (values, attitudes and beliefs) and strategy use.
Various social agents' actions	➔	Mediate contextual discourses to language learners and provide material support and assistance crucial for acquiring linguistic competence

The rise of self-regulation

The rise of self-regulation

- Self-regulatory learning capacity as an individual difference factor in explaining variations in individual language leaners' achievements (Tseng et al. 2006)

- Self-regulation as a dynamic concept to capture language learners' "strategic efforts to manage their own achievement through specific beliefs and processes" (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997, p. 105, also see Dörnyei, 2005)

- Researchers either "embraced self-regulation theory as central to the research framework" or "utilized traditional language learner strategy constructs, while acknowledging contributions from self-regulation" by "developing new instruments, exploring new structures, or examining relationships between strategic learning and other theories" (Rose et al, 2018, p. 155)

The rise of self-regulation

- Research has explored

- learners' self-regulation experiences (Bown & White 2010)

- the interaction among self-regulation and other variables such as
  - English learning motivation (Kormos & Csizér 2014),
  - conceptions of English learning (Zheng, Liang, Yang & Cai, 2016),
  - autonomous learning behavior (Kormos & Csizér, 2014)

The rise of self-regulation

- Research has also explored

- the distinguished features of self-regulation among learners with
  - different social-economic backgrounds (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013),
  - bilingual experiences (Melzi, Schick & Escobar, 2017)
  - English proficiency levels (Falout, Elwood & Hood. 2009).

- Efforts to enhance self-regulation through pedagogy or curriculum design (Lam 2015; Mak & Wong 2018).

The rise of self-regulation

- It has met some resistance:

- the promotion of 'self-regulation' needs to consider other competing constructs such as metacognition in the field.

- Language learning strategy research can 'meaningfully complement the advance of self-regulation in research on learners' strategic learning' since "such research shows what constitutes a learner's self-regulatory mechanism and how it operates within the self-regulated learning framework" (Gao, 2007, p. 619).

- Rose (2012) further criticizes the definition fuzziness of 'self-regulation' : the relationships among the categories included in the concept are complex and unclear

The rise of self-regulation research problematized

The rise of self-regulation research problematized

- The definition of self-regulation: often defined implicitly.

- Self-regulation is defined in association with terms such as: regulate, metacogntive capacity, manipulate, self-regulatory behavior, self-monitoring, directing

- Requires readers to infer

- Often describe what self-regulated language learners do to define what self-regulation is

- A mixture of learning behaviors and cognitive efforts

- Behaviors are used to infer what cognitive processes and propensity are alike

The rise of self-regulation research problematized

- It is still necessary to clarify the connection between self-regulation and other constructs, including metacognition, self-regulated learning

- Is metacognition just about cognition?

- Does self-regulation relate to emotion, social behavior, motivation and environment as well?

- Does self-regulated learning cover both metacognition and self-regulation?

The rise of self-regulation research problematized

- Tseng et al (2006) argued that strategic and non-strategic language learners cannot be distinguished by their behaviors

- Most items in the Self-regulating capacity in Vocabulary learning scale: I feel satisfied… I can… I know… I am confident…
  - These items apparently assess language learners' self-efficacy for self-regulation to infer their capacity for self-regulation or perceived capacity of using self-regulatory strategies

- Other (behavioral) items: I look for a good learning environment, I cope with … I try to…
  - Self-regulated learning behavior vs. self-regulated learning capacity?
  - How does such operationalization differ from that of language learning strategy research?

The rise of self-regulation research problematized

- Tseng et al (2006) critiqued LLS measurement instruments for their inclination to "ask respondents to generalize their actions across situations rather than referencing singular and specific learning events" (p. 82)

- Questioned whether the frequencies of strategy use can be used to measure psychometric property reliably, yet

- some scales still ask about general language learning

- the rating scales of self-regulation do not always indicate whether frequency or extent was asked about

- "there is no widely used, agreed-on, standardized, and normed measure of self-regulation" (Woltering & Shi, 2016, p.1087),

The rise of self-regulation research problematized

- Tseng et al (2006) does provoke the thinking about the connotation, the nature, and the measurement issue of language learning strategy

- But the rise of self-regulation:

- Should not leave "the reader …to infer the meaning of the term" (Dinsmore et al., 2008, p. 398)

- Have not solved the problems associated with language learning strategy research

- Self-regulated language learning research also needs to consider alternative theoretical perspectives

Alternative perspectives

- Do language learning strategies have to be self-regulated? (Thomas & Rose, 2019)

Strategy use	Non-strategic language learner	Other-regulated strategy user	Mostly other-regulated strategy user	Mostly self-regulated strategy user	Self-regulated strategy user	Intrinsically-regulated strategy user
Regulatory style	Non-regulation	External regulation	Introjected regulation	Identified regulation	Integrated regulation	Intrinsic regulation
Source of strategic behaviour	Non-existent	External	Somewhat external	Somewhat internal	Internal	Internal

Alternative perspectives

- Even self-regulated language learning can be seen as "a learner's socially mediated plan or action to meet a goal" in the language learning process (Oxford & Schramm, 2007, p. 48)

- Language learner's engagement (associated with agency) and contextual mediation

- Sociocultural theory/activity theory as a lens to make sense of language learners' self-regulated (strategic) language learning:
  - mediating sources
  - community
  - rules
  - division of labor
  - Interactions

Alternative perspectives

- Lei (2016): skilled student writers assumed a variety of roles and engaged with different social agents for help (other-mediated?)

- Liu's (2015): Chinese students adopted different strategies in different contexts as mediated by peers and teachers in the language learning process (other-mediated).

- I have recently explored how high- and under-achievers appropriate resources for self-regulated learning of language and academic subject content in a bilingual education context in Hong Kong (Hu & Gao, 2017).

Alternative perspectives

- Figure 1 (adapted from Engeström, 1999, Hu & Gao, 2017, p. 3

Alternative perspectives

- The perspective allows us to pay attention to the participants' strategic use of artefacts such as textbooks, learning notes, dictionary, linguistic resources (e.g. L1 and L2) in the learning process

- These artefacts, which can be further classified into (physical) tools (e.g. textbooks and dictionary) and (symbolical) signs (e.g. L1 and L2)

- Artefacts- (or resources-) mediated strategies

- High achievers and underachievers have different perceptions about relevant resources

- Use these resources differently (in particular, in terms of frequency)

Alternative perspectives

- Different levels of engagement:

- Underachievers: just wrote down what was relevant to the question" after he "looked for the words" he could recognize in the textbook (Hu & Gao, 2017, p. 6).

- When high achievers use online tools or dictionary:

- … before this lesson was taught, I browsed it. … [There were] these words, such as vertebrates, invertebrates, etc…normally I just browse it. Sometimes I don't know the words. It doesn't matter. Sometimes I search for them on the internet if I really want to know [their meaning]. (Daniel, stimulated recall) (Hu & Gao, 2017, p. 6).

- Under achievers can be easily confused when the word has so many different meanings listed in it and many of these meanings are "not related to IS (Integrated Sciences')" (Hu & Gao, 2017, p. 7).
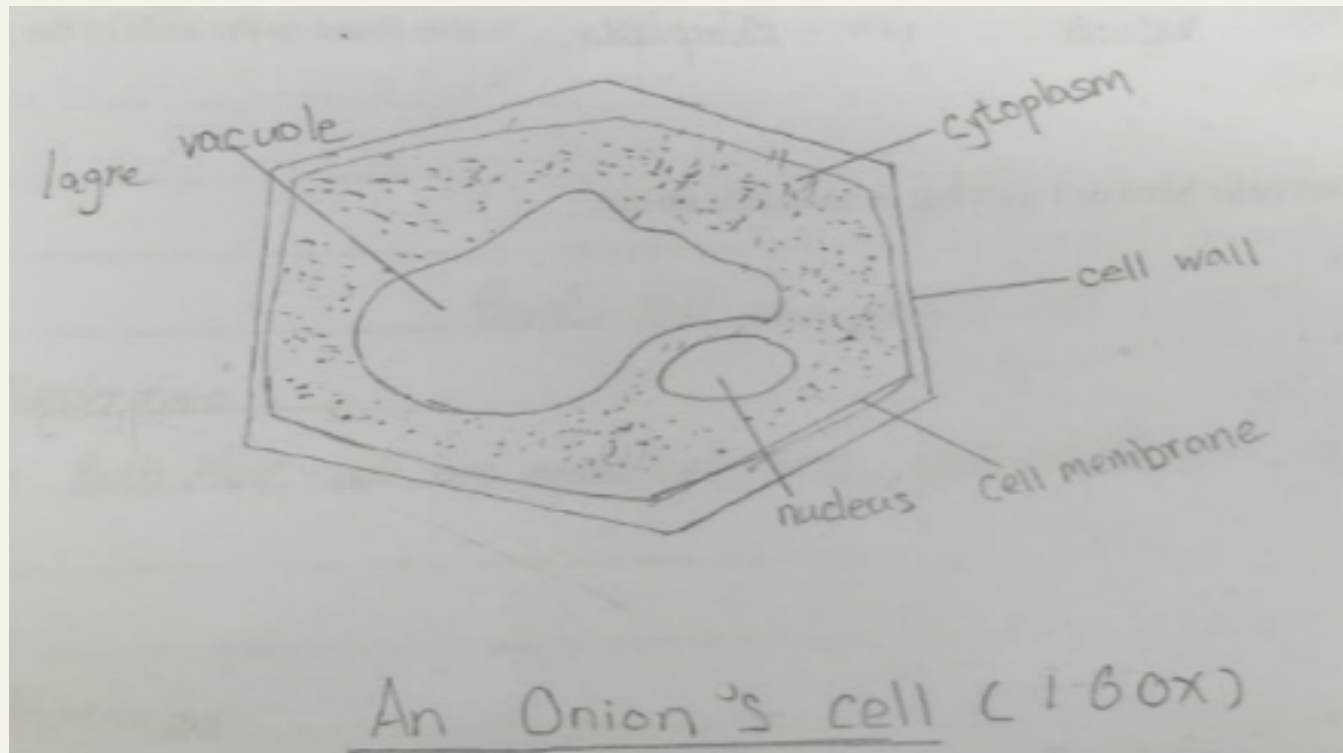
Alternative perspectives

- The participants appropriated various rules such as evaluation criteria to strategically regulate their learning process

- Examination-oriented learning

- High achievers can be strategically selective in selecting language points and subject content for memorization

- Much information the teacher gives orally will be covered in the examinations… sometimes he doesn't write it down, but sometimes he provides orally. If you jot it down and memorize, you will get scores. If you don't, but only memorize what is in the textbook, you won't know [what to write in the examinations]. (Katty, interview) (Hu & Gao, 2017, p. 8)

Alternative perspectives

- Different understandings of rules

- High achievers understand the relevant rules very clearly

- Underachievers have difficulties in working out the rules

- Both learners know what they should do (e.g. memorization)

- Underachieves often attempted to cover everything and end up with covering nothing in the end

Alternative perspectives

- Who drew this figure? High achievers or underachievers

Alternative perspectives

- The mediation of various social agents

- Strategy use is not purely self-regulated as it could be other-regulated (Thomas & Rose, 2019)

- Underachievers usually have a particular group of social agents (usually their peers or siblings)

- [The meaning of the word found in the dictionary] did not look like a scientific term, so I asked my elder sister, but she didn't know. And then I asked my classmates. They didn't know either. (Cindy, stimulated recall) (Hu &Gao, 2017, p. 12).

Alternative perspectives

- High achievers access more social agents (e.g. peers, teachers, siblings, and parents)

- My mom understands [the questions] better. She knows more [than my classmates] … Sometimes they [my classmates] may not know [the correct one], but just give me a wrong answer. (Katty, interview)" (Hu & Gao, 2017, p.11)

- Helpful individuals are social resources

- The comparison reveals the profound mediation of contextual conditions (i.e. access to resources) on the participants' strategic learning

Alternative perspectives

- Individual participants' self construction and role-taking

- In the context of the study, the participants can regard themselves as subject content learners, language learners, or both (with varying degrees)

- high achievers who were committed to excellence in learning subject content only used self-regulated learning strategies that might affect their learning of subject content and related assessment performance

Alternative perspectives

- Previous research on self-regulation: focus too much on cognitive and metacognitive processes such as planning, organizing, monitoring and evaluating

- The participants' self-regulated strategic learning is both cognitive and social, developmental

- One participant did not take notes until she learnt from her experience that her examination result was negatively undermined by her failure to take good notes
  - her use of notes (artefact-mediated strategy)
  - her awareness of the role of note-taking in achieving examination success (rule-mediated strategy).

- Self-regulated strategic learning rests on the students' self, or various social agents such as parents, peers and teachers?

Conclusion

- The self-regulated turn in strategic language learning research may go through similar processes that language learning strategy research had gone through

- The rise of self-regulation may help us to deepen our research engagement with the cognitive and metacognitive processes in language learning but it does not solve the identified problems in language learning strategy research

- Self-regulated strategic language learning vs. self-regulation in strategic language learning?

- We need alternative perspectives to engage with and understand language learners' strategic learning process

- How and why in strategic language learning

Conclusion

- Some final comments on 'self vs. others' in strategic language learning research

- Language learners' strategy use is often a constrained choice or a choice made possible by contextual conditions, but nevertheless a choice made by individual learners (Gao, 2010)

- Both 'self' and 'others' are important in helping us understand language learners' strategic learning

A special collection of articles in *System*

Lawrence Jun Zhang, Nathan Thomas, Tony Limin Qin: Language learning strategy research in System: Looking back and looking forward
https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/system/special-issue/10LL51R8LLN

A special collection of articles in *System*

- Syafi'ul Anam, Elke Stracke (2016):Language learning strategies of Indonesian primary school students: In relation to self-efficacy beliefs
- Andrew D. Cohen, Isobel Kai-Hui Wang (2018): Fluctuation in the functions of language learner strategies
- Sara Cotterall, Garold Murray (2009): Enhancing metacognitive knowledge: Structure, affordances and self
- Carol Dabarera, Willy A. Renandya, Lawrence Jun Zhang (2014):The impact of metacognitive scaffolding and monitring on reading comprehension
- Radhika De Silva, Suzanne Graham (2015): The effects of strategy instruction on writing strategy use for students of different proficiency levels
- Jihua Dong(2016): A dynamic systems theory approach to development of listening strategy use and listening performance
- Hsueh-chao Marcella Hu, Hossein Nassaji (2014): Lexical inferencing strategeis: The case of successful versus less successful inferencers
- Xiaoli Jiang, Richard Smith (2009): Chinese learners' strategy use in historical perspective: A cross-generational interview-based study
- John-Michael L. Nix (2016): Measuring latent listening strategies: Development and validation of the EFL listening strategy inventory
- Heath Rose, Jessica G. Briggs, Jill A. Boggs, Lia Sergio, Natalia Ivanova-Slavianskaia(2018): A systematic review of language learner strategy research in the face of self-regulation
- Elsa Tragant, Marilyn S. Thompson, Mia Victori (2013). Understanding foreign language learning strategies: A validation study
- Kai-Hui (Isobel) Wang (2015). The use of dialogic strategy clusters for vocabulary learning by Chinese students in the UK

Many many thanks for your attention

"Thank you. You've been a great audience."

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