English Language Learning Strategies Used by University Students: A Case Study of English and Business English Major at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat in Bangkok

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Abstract—The purposes of this research are 1) to study English language learning strategies used by the fourth-year students majoring in English and Business English, 2) to study the English language learning strategies which have an affect on English learning achievement, and 3) to compare the English language learning strategies used by the students majoring in English and Business English. The population and sampling comprise of 139 university students of the Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Research instruments are language learning strategies questionnaire which was constructed by the researcher and improved on by three experts and the transcripts that show the results of English learning achievement. The questionnaire includes 1) Language Practice Strategy 2) Memory Strategy 3) Communication Strategy 4) Making an Intelligent Guess or Compensation Strategy 5) Self-discipline in Learning Management Strategy 6) Affective Strategy 7) Self-Monitoring Strategy 8) Self-study Skill Strategy. Statistics used in the study are mean, standard deviation, T-test and One Way ANOVA, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and Regression Analysis.

The results of the findings reveal that the English language learning strategies most frequently used by the students are affective strategy, making an intelligent guess or compensation strategy, self-study skill strategy and self-monitoring strategy respectively. The aspect of making an intelligent guess or compensation strategy had the most significant affect on English learning achievement. It is found that the English language learning strategies mostly used by the Business English major students and moderately used by the English major students. Their language practice strategies uses were significantly different at the 0.05 level and their communication strategies uses were significantly different at the 0.01 level. In addition, it is found that the poor students and the fair ones most frequently used affective strategy while the good ones most frequently used making an intelligent guess or compensation strategy.

Keywords—English language, language learning strategies, English learning achievement, and students majoring in English, Business English.

I. INTRODUCTION

TEACHING English in Thailand is teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL). Thai do not use English in daily life because it is not an official language so the students have less motivation to study English in class and outside class. Although they have learnt English for more than 16 years before they graduate, they have few chances to communicate in English even in English language classes especially listening and speaking skills. In addition, numbers of years of English studying cannot guarantee the quality of Thai students' English communication proficiency. Compared to the other language skills of reading, writing, and listening, speaking seems to be the weakest skill of Thai students. Although they start learning English early, most Thai students cannot be counted as successful language learners, for they cannot speak English as well as they are expected to.

Learning English in tertiary institutions in Thailand, the students must pass the English courses at least 12 years according to the primary and secondary curriculum. Unfortunately, the Rajabhat University students who apply to study in various fields have different levels of Basic English so it is essential for English teachers who teach in this level to be concerned about how to teach them effectively. Furthermore, they should focus on various factors which affect on students' English Learning Achievement. According to Gardner's research [3] which related to English language proficiency in term of foreign language use prediction of adult learners found that the important variance which affects on learners' abilities is language acquisition strategy. In addition, Naiman et al. [5] noted that "good" language learners appeared to use a larger number and range of strategies than "poor" language learners, the implications of understanding strategy use have seemed increasingly important while Carroll [1] quoted that the important factor for language success is language learning strategies. If the learners use appropriate strategies, even the poor will succeed in learning language. As the result, language learning strategies should be considered to be one of the factors which affect the students' language achievement.

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II. Theoretical Background

A. Importance of Language Learning Strategies

The main factor that helps the students succeed in learning language is language learning strategies. As Wenden [13] says "Learning strategies are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning". Also, Williams & Burden [14] indicate that when students are involved in a learning task, they have several resources which they use in different ways to finish or solve the task, so this can be termed process of learning strategy. Recently, Lee [4] who is interested in language learning strategies used by learners from different cultural background study about the development of language learning strategy since the 1970s. He found that many researchers focus on how learners process new information and what kinds of strategies they use to understand, learn or remember the information in the area of second or foreign language learning. For instance, Naiman et al. [5], Rubin [11], [12] and Stern [16] pointed out that certain learners are more successful than others at learning a second or foreign language despite exposure to the same teaching methods and learning environment. In addition, to investigate the language learners' learning strategies, there are many researchers and specialists do some researches related to this kind of factor and the results frequently show that the most successful learners tend to use learning strategies that are appropriate to the material, to the task, and to their own goals, needs, and stage of learning. More proficient learners appear to use a wider range of strategies in a greater number of situations than do less proficient learners, but the relationship between strategy use and proficiency is complex. Research indicates that language learners at all levels use strategies Chamot & Kupper [2] but that some or most learners are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most beneficial to employ. In conclusion, language learning strategies is an important factor which influences the language learners to be successful in second or foreign language learning.

B. Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

Due to language learning strategies are the behaviors used by language learners, Oxford [9] defined learning strategies as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques --such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella & Oxford [15] According to Wenden [13] language learning strategies can be defined from the aspect of language learning behaviours, such as learning and regulating the meaning of a second or foreign language, cognitive theory, such as learners' strategic knowledge of language learning, and the affective view, such as learners' motivation, attitude, etc. It is argued that three points of views can improve language learning. Based on Chamot & O'Malley's definition, they defined learning strategies as idea or behaviors used by language learners to enhance their comprehension, store, and use of new information. Therefore, when language learners encounter language learning tasks such as reading or writing, they can apply the several different strategies to complete the tasks. Language learners will be successful in the tasks due to use of an appropriate language learning strategy [10] Oxford [9] claims that language learning strategies have the following features as shown in Table I.

TABLE I
FEATURES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Language learning strategies:

1. Contribute to the main goal. Communication competence.
2. Allow learners to become more self-directed.
3. Expand the role of teachers.
4. Are problem-oriented.
5. Are specific actions taken by the learner?
6. Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
7. Support learning both directly and indirectly.
8. Are not always observable.
9. Are often conscious.
10. Can be taught.
11. Are flexible.
12. Are influenced by a variety of factors.

In summary, language learning strategies are applied by language learners as a means to acquire and to use information that learners have acquired stored or recall and can also promote autonomous learning [2],[6].

C. Classifications of Language Learning Strategies

Oxford divides language learning strategies into two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies.

Direct strategies are specific ways that involve use of language and sub-divisions are as follows: [9]

Direct strategies

1. Memory Strategies

These Strategies help the students to remember new language items. They are as follows:

1.1 Creating mental linkage such as grouping, relating new knowledge to the old ones and using words in the new context.
1.2 Applying images and sounds
1.3 Reviewing well
1.4 Employing action

2. Cognitive Strategies

2.1 Practice
2.2 Receiving and sending messages
2.3 Analyzing and reasoning
2.4 Creating structure for input and output

3. Compensation Strategies

3.1 Guessing intelligently
3.2 Overcoming limitations speaking and writing

Indirect strategies do not directly involve using the language, but they support language. The sub-divisions are as follows:

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1. Metacognitive Strategies

   1.1 Centering your learning
   1.2 Arranging and planning your learning
   1.3 Evaluating your learning

2. Affective Strategy

   2.1 Lowering your anxiety
   2.2 Encouraging yourself
   2.3 Taking your emotional temperature

3. Social Affective Strategy

   3.1 Asking questions
   3.2 Cooperating with others
   3.3 Empathizing with others

Both direct strategies indirect strategies enable the learners to practice their language skills and the important things are self-encouragement and emotional control.

According to O'Malley and Chamot, [6], [7], [8] language learning strategies are divided into three main categories as follows:

1. Metacognitive Strategies

   1.1 Planning
   1.2 Monitoring or Self-monitoring
   1.3 Evaluation

2. Cognitive Strategies

3. Social Strategies

   3.1 Question for Clarification
   3.2 Cooperation

These three main categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and social Strategies refer to learners' planning their learning, thinking about the learning process, making social interaction, monitoring their own comprehension or production, and evaluating the outcomes of their own learning.

After finishing studying the researchers and the specialists who are expertise in language learning strategies, Oxford, O'Malley and Chamot's classifications of language learning strategies are selected as the prototype to construct the questionnaire according to Thai students' behaviors. It was classified into eight categories as follows: 1) Language Practice Strategy 2) Memory Strategy 3) Communication Strategy 4) Making an Intelligent Guess or Compensation Strategy 5) Self-discipline in Learning Management Strategy 6) Affective Strategy 7) Self-Monitoring Strategy 8) Self-study Skill Strategy.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

To serve the research purposes, the procedures to find out the results are planned as follows:

A. Population and Sampling

The students major in English and Business English were selected by Sample Random Sampling according to Krejcie and Morgan table of sampling size. The total number was 139 students.

B. Research Construction Instrument

The process of instrument construction;
1) Study the prototype of English Language Learning Strategies classifications from Oxford, Wenden, and Rubin, O'Malley and Chamot's classifications of language learning strategies.
2) Students major in English, Business English, and other fields were randomly sampling interviewed to collect the information.
3) Analyze all the information to construct the 5-scale-language learning strategies questionnaire.
4) Assess the content validity of the language learning strategies questionnaire by three experts, and this research instrument was distributed to try out for reliability which equal . 94.

C. Data Collection Procedure

The students major in English and Business English who were selected as a sampling completed the 5-scale-questionnaires to find out the language learning strategies. The reply of the respondents is analyzed by mean and standard deviation, T-test and One Way ANOVA, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and Regression Analysis.

IV. RESULTS

The results of the findings reveal the English language learning strategies most frequently used by the students and the learning strategies which have an affect on English learning achievement including the comparison of language learning strategies used by the students majoring in English and Business English. The results of the study are shown in the following tables:

TABLE II
THE OVERALL LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES
USED BY STUDENTS

No. Language Learning Strategies	Mean	S.D.	Level
1. Language Practice Strategy moderate		2.26	.49
2. Memory Strategy moderate		2.03	.60
3. Communication Strategy	2.24	.60	moderate
4. Making an intelligent guess or Compensation Strategy	2.73	.51	most frequently
5. Self-discipline in Learning Management Strategy	2.34	.55	moderate
6. Affective Strategy	**2.77**	.49	**most frequently**
7. Self-Monitoring Strategy	2.57	.48	most frequently
8. Self-study Skill Strategy	2.64	.57	most frequently
Total	**2.45**	**.41**	most frequently

Based on table II, it is shown that the students of both majors used the overall language learning strategies most frequently. ($\overline{X}$=2.45) When focusing on each type, it is shown that language learning strategies most frequently used by the

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students are affective strategy ($\overline{X}$=2.77), making an intelligent guess or compensation strategy ($\overline{X}$=2.73), self-study skill strategy ($\overline{X}$=2.64) and self-monitoring strategy ($\overline{X}$= 2.57) respectively. They moderate use language learning strategies in Self-discipline in learning management strategy ($\overline{X}$= 2.34), language practice strategy ($\overline{X}$=2.26), communication Strategy ($\overline{X}$=2.24), and memory strategy ($\overline{X}$=2.03) respectively.

The English language learning strategies have an affect on English learning achievement.

TABLE III
AN AFFECT ON ENGLISH LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

No. Language Learning Strategies	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	relationship
English learning achievement			
1. Language Practice Strategy	.222**	.009	low
2. Memory Strategy	.185*	.029	low
3. Communication Strategy	.183*	.031	low
4. Making an intelligent guess or Compensation Strategy	.347**	.000	low
5. Self-discipline in Learning Management Strategy	.033	.701	low
6. Affective Strategy	.198*	.019	low
7. Self-Monitoring Strategy	.291**	.001	low
8. Self-study Skill Strategy	.338**	.000	low
Total	.298**	.000	low

** Significantly different at level .01 *Significantly different at level 0.05

Based on table III, it is shown that there is no relationship between self-discipline in learning management strategy and English learning achievement and there is low relationship between the overall language learning strategies and English learning achievement at the level of .05.

Based on table IV, it is shown that the English language learning strategies mostly used by the Business English major students ($\overline{X}$=2.51) and moderately used by the English major students.($\overline{X}$=2.33).The outstanding language learning strategy mostly used by the students of both majors is affective strategy.

V. DISCUSSION

It is found that the students of both majors used the overall language learning strategies most frequently. ($\overline{X}$=2.45) and when focusing on each category, it is found that students of both majors used affective strategies most frequently. ($\overline{X}$=2.77) and the contents of the questionnaire show that the students like listening to English songs and study the meanings of them, seeing the movies with sound track, watching TV programs which teaching English, and encourage themselves learning English by their own preferences. The most important thing is language learning strategies have an affect on English learning achievement. As a result, the language teachers have to be focus on these learning strategies and support the students to enhance their learning strategies preferences.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that English language learning strategy which is used most frequently by both majors is affective strategy. In addition, the aspect of making an intelligent guess or compensation strategy had the most significant affect on English learning achievement. It is found that the English language learning strategies mostly used by the Business English major students and moderately used by the English major students. As a result, it is essential for English teachers who teach in this level to be concerned about how to guide their students the suitable strategies. Furthermore, they should focus on various factors which affect on students' English Learning Achievement. The study results support the theory by Oxford strategies stating that learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques used by students to enhance their own learning as well as language learning proficiency and self-confidence.

According to the results of the study, language teachers should provide various activities which support students' language learning strategies depending upon their preferences, assign tasks to enhance their language proficiency. Students should have an opportunity to participate in English Camp once a year. For further study, the designed tasks related to learning strategies which enhance English learning achievement should be used for the weak students to find out the results.

TABLE IV
THE COMPARISON OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES
USED BY THE STUDENTS MAJORING IN ENGLISH AND BUSINESS ENGLISH

No. Language Learning Strategies	English Major			Business English Major		
	Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level
1. Language Practice Strategy	2.14	.58	moderate	2.32	.43	moderate
2. Memory Strategy	1.91	.62	moderate	2.10	.59	moderate
3. Communication Strategy	1.99	.55	moderate	2.38	.58	moderate
4. Making an intelligent guess or Compensation Strategy	2.66	.56	most frequently	2.77	.48	most frequently
5. Self-discipline in Learning Management Strategy	2.30	.65	moderate	2.36	.49	moderate
6. Affective Strategy	**2.68**	.49	**most frequently**	**2.83**	.49	**most frequently**
7. Self-Monitoring Strategy	2.46	.57	most frequently	2.62	.42	most frequently

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8. Self-study Skill Strategy	2.56	.61	most frequently	2.68	.54	most frequently
Total	**2.33**	**.44**	moderate	**2.51**	**.38**	most frequently

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