

**A STUDY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING
STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS
LEARNING KOREAN AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE AT WAT MAKUTKASAT
SECONDARY SCHOOL OF THAILAND**

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Abstract: Language learning strategies are considered as an important factor for influencing and determining the success of language learning. In order to implement differentiated instruction to meet the diverse need of the learners it is vital to identify individual differences of students learning strategies. In this study, the use of language learning strategies was investigated among Thai student studying Korean as a Foreign Language at Mattayom Wat Makutkasat Secondary School. One hundred and seventy-nine students participated in this study studying Korean as a Foreign Language program in the academic year 2012. The quantitative data was collected by means of a questionnaire. The result indicated that the participants frequently use social strategies and meta-cognitive strategies. In addition, differences in language learning strategies were reported and student preference for strategy use was reported. Specifically in terms of learning strategies, grades 7 and 12 students had higher use of learning strategies than grades 8, 9, 10, and 11 students. And female students had higher use of learning strategies of memory, cognitive, compensation meta-cognitive, and social strategies than the male students. Significant relationship was found between the use of the learning strategies and student achievement. In sum, this research will help more effective teaching and learning with considering individual differences into account.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, Student Achievement, Sill

Introduction

Language learning strategies have been considered as a key factor for successful language learning for the last few decades. Numerous researchers emphasize the importance of language learning strategies as successful learners utilize language learning strategies more frequently and more appropriately than did less successful learners (e.g., Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Green & Oxford, 1995, Rossi-Le 1989). Language learning strategies allow

learners to be actively involved in the language learning process, which is important for developing language proficiency, and proper utilization of language learning strategies are helpful for the development of communicative competence and improved proficiency (Oxford, 1990).

Recent study has shown that Thai students prefer to learn Korean language and it's the third highest choice among them after Chinese and Japanese. The Thailand Basic Education Commission conducted a study among 700 schools and found that more than 12,000 students are learning Korean as Foreign Language and this study found that the most popular foreign languages in Thailand were Chinese, Japanese, Korean. Currently nine universities and fifty-one secondary schools offer Korean as Foreign Language in Thailand (Thandee, 2008; Hankuk University of foreign studies, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

In this study, the researcher will focus on differences of learners' Language Learning Strategies for learning Korean as Foreign Language in Mattayom Wat Makutkasat Secondary School. Though no empirical research has been done in Thailand indicating Thai students' language achievement in learning Korean as a Foreign Language, much can be learned from carefully studying the strategy of Thai student learning Korean. Armed with such studies, one can look at ways of showing learners how to take control and be more responsible for their own learning. Through such studies, it is hoped that language learning strategies will play a key role in creating more efficient and successful learning experiences.

Background of the problem

To improve the students learning and promote effective teaching in KFL classrooms at MWMSS, the researcher intended to identify the use of language learning strategies and student achievement in learning Korean as a Foreign Language at MWMSS. No past research has been carried out on use of language learning strategies and student achievement on Korean language students at MWMSS before and that's why the researcher was aware that instructors had inadequate information about students' choice of strategy for language learning. In order to implement effective learning and identify individual differences for learning Korean the researcher was keen to identify the use of language learning strategies among

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Thai student as MWMSS. Therefore, this study examined the use of language learning strategies and its relationship with student achievement.

The researcher has formulated the following objectives derived from the problem of the study are outlined below.

1. To identify the language learning strategies used by Thai students studying Korean as a Foreign Language at the Mattayom Wat Makutkasat Secondary School.
2. To identify the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and students achievement among Thai students studying Korean as a Foreign Language at the Mattayom Wat Makutkasat Secondary School.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study based on language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Language learning strategies are known as behaviors, techniques, steps or actions of the language learner in which learners tend to utilize to understand the target language (Oxford, 1993). Based on Oxford's (1990) findings, a good language learner uses six groups of strategies: meta-cognitive, affective, social, memory, cognitive and compensatory strategies. The categories of memory, cognitive and compensatory strategies are direct strategies which are directly involved in the target language. On the other hand, meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies are included in indirect strategies because they are not directly involved in the process of language learning.

Population & Sample

The population in this study was the secondary students who studied KFL in MWMSS. The sample consisted of students ranging from grade 7 to 12 of MWMSS. This study used all the 179 students in the academic year 2012.

Research Instrument

As a quantitative study a survey was the sole means of data collection. The questionnaire that used in this study was adopted from the Oxford (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) survey. This questionnaire SILL has been chosen as it's been developed by Oxford (1990) whose language learning strategies are the core theoretical background for this study. Moreover, the SILL survey has been extensively used by ESL/EFL researchers throughout the world and has shown high validity, reliability and utility (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

This study utilized the version 5.1 of SILL for data collection amongst the KFL students at the MWMSS.

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning Questionnaire

The 50-item SILL questionnaire is composed of two main groups: direct and indirect strategies, which are subdivided into 6 groups. Six subgroups of SILL include A) memory, B) cognitive, C) compensation, D) meta-cognitive, E) affective, and F) social strategies.

The SILL is 5-point likert scale contains 50 items according to the six categories of language learning strategies. There are 9 items on memory strategies, 14 items on cognitive strategies, 6 items on compensation strategies, 9 items on meta-cognitive strategies, 6 items on affective strategies, and 6 items on social strategies.

According to Oxford (1990) SILL strategy choice score interpretation are as follows,

Table 1: Oxford (1990) SILL Score Interpretation

Level	Interpretation	<i>M</i>
High	Always or almost used	4.5 to 5.0
	Generally used	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Generally not used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

Data Collection

The survey was carried out from November 5 to 9, 2012 among Grade 7 - 12 students who are studying KFL at MWMSS. The researcher requested the head of Korean department and other Korean language teachers and administrated the questionnaire in the classes. The questionnaire was distributed and collected by the researcher. The total number of respondents was 167 out of a sample of 179, so the questionnaire's return rate was 93%. Among them 42% were male and 48% female students.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed using statistical package software for descriptive statistics as well as for inferential statistics. The following statistical methods were used to address the objectives of the study.

For Objective 1, descriptive statistics were used to identify the language learning strategies used by Thai students studying Korean as a Foreign Language at the Mattayom Wat Makutkasat Secondary School.

For Objective 2, the Pearson product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine if there

was any significant relationship between the use of language learning strategies and student achievement.

Research Findings

The research findings are presented according to the research objectives which were reported on in two parts:

Research Objective One: *What language learning strategies used by the Thai students studying Korean as a Foreign Language at the Mattayom Wat Makutkasat Secondary School?*

The SILL assesses the strategy choice of language learning from six groups: memory, cognitive, compensatory, meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies of KFL students at MWMSS. The SILL consists of 50 statements with a 5-point likert scale (“always or almost always true of me,” “usually true of me,” “somewhat true of me,” and “never or almost never true of me”) to identify the students’ attitudes toward each statement.

preference was used. The data was analyzed by a statistical software package, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was utilized. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient determines the significance and direction of the relationship between two variables assuming both variables are approximately normally distributed (Morgan et al., 2007). The skewness was less than plus or minus one for the degree of learning strategies and student achievement (course grade), and it was indicated the both of these variables were approximately normally distributed. Therefore, the researcher proceeded with the analysis of the data and the result is displayed in Table 3.

The resulting data shows that $r = .242$ and sig. was $.000$, which was much less than $.05$. Hence the evidence exists to allow for a rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) which is that the correlation of the population equals zero. The findings do accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) which is that the correlation of the sample does not equal to zero.

Table 2: Mean scores for use of Students from the SILL (N=167)

Learning Strategy	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Meta-cognitive	Affective	Social
<i>M</i>	3.26	3.11	3.09	3.38	3.19	3.41

According to Oxford (1990) SILL score interpretation, it was indicated that for the KFL students, the mean for total strategy use is at the upper medium level at 3.24 out of a possible 5. With regard to the subscales, social (M 3.41) were considered to be highly used and meta-cognitive (M 3.38) were considered to be moderately used, with each of the other categories falling in the medium use category, and none had low usage. Given the relatively medium to upper medium scores of preference for language learning strategies, it can be seen that there was relatively little difference, in terms of usage, among the six strategies.

Research Objective Two: *Is there any significant relationship between the use of language learning strategies and students achievement among Thai students studying Korean as a Foreign Language at the MWMSS?*

The course grade of Korean as a Foreign Language in the first semester of the academic year 2012, student’s perception on language learning

Therefore, the researcher accepted the research hypothesis H_1 : There is significant relationship between the use of language learning strategies and students achievement among Thai students studying Korean as a Foreign Language at the MWMSS. Moreover, the strength of association ($r = .242$) is just above the RMPE (Ferguson, 2009) or Recommended Minimum Effect Size which is $.2$ that is why the correlation can be considered with low effect size.

Discussion

The Language learning strategies

Language learning strategies witnessed prolific and vigorous growth in the past few decades in both second and foreign language contexts. The result of this study also support the relationship between (a) language learners’ strategy use and (b) factors such as proficiency or achievement and gender like the previous studies of Chamot & El-Dinary (1999), Dreyer & Oxford (1996), Green & Oxford (1995)

Table 3: Correlation between the use of Language Learning Strategies and Students Achievement (N=167)

	Language Learning strategies use	Student Achievement (GPA)
Use the Language Learning Strategies and Student Achievement (Course grade)	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	167

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

thought these studies have been conducted using different sample and different demography but the same research instrument has been utilized on all of those studies.

Role of Gender and Use of language learning strategies

It was shown in the present study that gender has significant influence on use of language learning strategies. The mean (*M*) of male student usage of language learning strategies (*M* 3.04) is less than female usage (*M* 3.39). This study is similar like the previous study done in the University of Puerto Rico by Green & Oxford (1995) where women tends to use more learning strategies than men. Moreover, Macaro (2006) also mentioned that women tend to use language learning strategies more than men as well. As in this study, male student showed less use of language learning strategies than female usage like other past studies the researcher assumed from her own personal experience that most Thai female students are interest in Korean language because of Korean culture and Korean pop music Thailand. Also according to researcher own teaching experience, female students have more concentration for acquiring new vocabulary and have better ability than male students.

Student Achievement

Student achievement and the use of language learning is the main factor for this study and in this study the researcher has found a significant relationship between the use of language learning strategies and student achievement in MWMSS as the result showed that the sig. was .000, which was less than both .05 and .01 significance level. According to the chapter 2 text, this study find similar result like other previous studies of Politzer (1983), Abraham and Vann (1990), Green & Oxford (1995), Macaro (2006) where the study have been conducted on different demography and different samples. Thought Murray (2010) study was not alike this study where the researcher has found.

Conclusion

From this study, the use of language learning strategies and student achievement among Thai students studying at MWMSS were revealed. The degree of use for language learning strategies was ascertained and there was a correlation with student achievement but it had a low effect size.

Recommendations

Recommendations for students

As the students mostly use social strategies and meta-cognitive strategies so it will be beneficial if they are taught to practice to utilize these strategies for students' better involvement. Although the learner may not even be aware of the strategy used, these strategies do support their learning process.

Recommendations for Teachers

Instructor should focus on the language learning strategies as learning strategies can actually be learned (Williams & Burden, 1997). However over-emphasizing language learning strategies may not benefit some students whose major learning strategies are different than others. Though small, the mean score differences among all the six learning strategies indicate that the students could use all the learning strategies fairly well but social strategies and meta-cognitive strategies will be the first preference for students.

For instance, social strategies are used in social interactions such as by asking questions, an action from which learners can gain great benefit as asking helps learners get closer to the intended meaning and thus aid their understanding. Moreover, the conversation partner's response to the learners' question indicates whether the question itself was understood, thus providing indirect feedback about the learner's production skills. A related social strategy involves asking for correction which is especially useful in the classroom. Cooperative learning consistently shows the following significant effects: higher self-esteem; increased confidence and enjoyment; and greater respect for the teacher as well (Oxford, 1990).

In the traditional lecture classroom, which is often common in Primary-Secondary education, these various learning strategies have not often been reflected. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is important to use the social learning strategies of students especially for language learning. Also it is essential in language learning to incorporating different types of activities which support specific knowledge and skill development, since both the knowledge of the target language and the skills for communication have to be taught and learned.

Another important strategy can be considered for recommendation which is teaching meta-cognitive strategies. As the second preference for language learning strategies at MWMSS the instructor can easily implement this strategy. As discussed in the chapter 2 text, the main focus of these strategies are for finding the focus of learning which is most important for any learner if he/she wants to link up their learning with some exciting idea and organize their learning by planning and evaluating. Instructors can easily motivate students and design a curriculum

in such a way so that self-evaluation as well self-monitoring should be the part of learning and thus it will support the learning process using meta-cognitive strategies.

The researcher hopes that this study will give other instructors opportunities to revise their instructional methods and improve their lessons based on the idea that students have and can use various learning strategies. In terms of the language learning strategies, instructors of Korean language can surely incorporate all the six strategies in their classes.

Considering the gender differences of the use of the language learning strategies, the instructors probably could reconsider the societal values of the Thai people and if there were unintentional and possibly unfavorable expectations directed at the male students. Also, they could review the content and instruction of the previous lesson to see if they were in any way unconsciously female-oriented. Although there are much fewer male students than female students in the Korean department at MWMSS, the male students seem to have a strong interest in Korea for its foreign language and culture. Therefore, the researcher believes that instructors should create lessons which consciously consider male and female students equally.

Recommendations for principal and administrators

The principal and administrators of the school can play a vital role for utilizing language learning strategies in classroom by giving suggestion, advice to the teachers following these recommendation as mentioned above and thus help students for better learning language.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study could be replicated with a larger sample size at other school schools teaching Korean in Thailand or in other countries as well as in different grade level learners. In order to gain more precise information regarding gender differences especially, a larger number of male students should participate in the future research.

The researcher also recommends that further research use a mixed approach involving qualitative methods, such as structured interviews and classroom observations. Such an diverse approach will be useful to explore the results of the quantitative data, check the accuracy of the self-reported response of the questionnaire, and further and more through qualitative examination is needed to accurately describe and find out why the social strategies and meta-cognitive strategies mean score was higher than other strategies and why male students were not as high as female students in terms of strategy use.

Finally, the researcher hopes that this research will help more effective Korean as a Foreign Language teaching and learning which take the individual differences into account and that every learner can achieve their purposes of learning and explore their potentials. It is also the researcher's opinion that continuous research efforts in the topic of learner differences should be made in order to meet diverse needs of learners. Such effort will be valuable and contribute to future and better language education.

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