English Language Learning Strategies and Public University Freshmen in Thailand: A Qualitative Perspective

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Abstract

Language learning strategies have been defined specifically for this investigation as conscious behaviours or thought processes used in performing learning actions whether observable (behaviours or techniques) or unobservable (thoughts or mental process), that Thai public university students themselves generate and make use of to enhance their L2 learning in the classroom and in a free learning situation.

The focal point of the study emphasises an exploration of Thai public university students’ language learning strategy use. It is more practical for the researcher to make use of the information directly gained from Thai public university students, rather than to borrow other researchers’ language learning strategy classifications which are obtained from language learners in other contexts where language learning strategies have been widely investigated. Language learning strategies have been variously categorised due to individual researchers’ own justifications and systems, that are derived from their direct or indirect experiences as language learners, language teachers, or both. Thus different researchers name their language learning strategy categories differently. No single language learning strategy classification can be definitely used as the best uniform in all language learning contexts. The language learning strategy classification proposed here is certainly different from the existing classifications. The present categorization is based on the purposes of language learning strategy use obtained through the interview data reported by 44 freshmen learning English at different institutions in Thailand.

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The result shows four main categories of language learning strategies. These are 10 individual strategies used for preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 11 strategies for understanding while studying in class; 12 strategies for improving one’s language skills; and 11 strategies for expanding one’s general knowledge of English. In the second phase of data collection of the study, these 44 individual language learning strategies have been used to generate the strategy questionnaire which is then employed to elicit information of Thai language learners’ strategy use on a larger scale.

Key words: language learning strategies, public university freshmen

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Study

It is evident that classifying or categorising language learning strategies remains subjective and unresolved. This results from the fact that using different criteria and systems in classifying language learning strategies causes inconsistencies and mismatches across existing taxonomies and other categories (Cohen, 1998). Ellis (1994) underscores that language learning strategy has been classified variously according to researchers’ own experiences. In other words, the classification systems of language learning strategies have been derived as the result of the particular participants that the researchers worked with, the setting, and the researchers’ particular interests. Therefore, individual researchers have their own classification systems of language learning strategies, which are derived from their direct experiences; i.e. their personal experiences (e.g. Stern 1983, and 1992), the understanding discovered from their own language learning strategy investigations (e.g. Stern 1975, 1983, 1992, Rubin 1975, 1981, O’Malley and Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990, Coleman 1991, and Intaraprasert 2000), or their indirect experiences; i.e. their knowledge and understanding expanded from reviewing other researchers’ works and theories (Rubin 1975, 1981, Stern 1983, 1992, Carver 1984, and Ellis and Sinclair 1989).

The language learning strategy classification proposed here is certainly different from the existing classifications. The present categorisation is based on the purposes of language learning strategy use obtained through the interview data reported by 44 freshmen learning English at different institutions in Thailand. The interviews were conducted to elicit information about language learning strategies learners at a tertiary level employ in learning English.

2. Review of Related Literature and Research on Language Learning Strategies
A review of available literature, and research work reveals how little is known about EFL learners’ use of language learning strategies, especially in the Thai context. This is because a great amount of research has been limited to be carried out with native speakers of English learning a foreign language, or non-native speakers of English learning English as a second language (ESL), as stated in Intaraprasert (2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004b), and Wharton (2000). In the context of EFL education in Thailand, a few research works have been carried out to investigate language learning strategy use of Thai EFL students, and a small amount of research has been conducted with students studying at the tertiary level (Intaraprasert, 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004b), specifically that of public university students. Additionally, most of the educational researchers whose interests lie in language learning strategies have been heavily focusing on language learning strategies of successful and unsuccessful language learners in striving for academic success (e.g. Dhanarattigannon 1990, Lappayawichit 1998, Ounwattana 2000, Kaotsombut 2003). The present investigation, in particular, mainly aims to identify and compare types of language learning strategies used by Thai public university students in general.

3. Definitions and Classifications of Language Learning Strategies

The terms, definitions, classifications, and characteristics of language learning strategies have been one of the fundamental problems that continued to be stressed in the early studies. This problem demonstrates that there is no definite agreement for defining and terming and classifying language learning strategies. This is because different definitions of language learning strategies have been proposed largely according to a variety of contexts. The process of exploring the concept of language learning strategies from recent definitions is approached before arriving at the working definition of the study. As Ellis (1994) suggests, one of the best approaches to defining language learning strategies is to try to list their main characteristics. To do so, reviewing the recent definitions of language learning strategies is one way to facilitate the process of defining the term of language learning strategies in this study. As a result, the original ‘working definition’ of the study contains the following four concepts:

(1) conscious behaviors or thought processes used in performing learning actions, (2) whether observable (behaviors or techniques) or unobservable (thoughts or mental process), that (3) Thai public university students themselves generate and make use of to enhance their L2 learning (4) in the classroom and in a free learning situation.
4. Research Objective

The investigation is designed to be conducted under the ‘research-then-theory’ (termed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996:52), or so called ‘theory-after-research’ (termed by Punch, 1998:16); rather than the ‘theory-then-research’ (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996:52) or ‘theory-first-research’ scheme (Punch, 1998:16). According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), and Punch (1998), ‘research-then-theory’ or ‘theory-after research’ does not start with a theory used to frame the scope of the study, but it ends up with a theory explained from the data the researcher collects. The present investigation does not aim to test a theory about learners’ use of language learning strategies. Rather, the investigation is designed to examine language learning strategy use of Thai public university students. The specific aims of the present investigation are to examine the overall use of language learning strategies that Thai public university students employ.

5. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

To serve the research objective mentioned earlier, the researcher employs qualitative data collection methodology and analysis. The student focus-group interviews were conducted with Thai public university students in Thailand during December 2005 – January 2006. The purpose of the semi-structured focus-group interviews was to obtain students’ use of language learning strategies in the classroom and in a free learning situation, as well as to find out how they improve their English language skills in general.

In focus group interviews, “group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion” (Krueger, 1994, p.2). Due to the distinctive characteristics of focus-group interviews, they “enable researchers to have access to the opinions, viewpoints, attitudes, and experiences of individuals” (Madriz, 2000, p.840). A series of focus-group interviews in the present study were arranged by providing participants with an opportunity to discuss and exchange information among their peers concerning the language learning strategies they use to learn EFL. Recommendations on optimal group size vary from seven to ten participants needed for a session (Krueger, 1994). However, the bigger the group is, the less comfortable interviewees feel to be part of a group. Furthermore, with a small group, the interviewer can more easily manage the group dynamics, process the information and attend to each member (Carey, 1994). Thus the researcher planned to conduct the small focus group interviews, and each group interview was around one hour to one hour and a half. With consent from the participants, each interview was audio-taped (as suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000; Robson, 2002; Creswell, 2003) since relying on
the interviewer’s notes is insufficient and in case that recording equipment fails. The data from focus group interviews, once transcribed and analyzed together with a check for reliability and validity, would help create a better understanding in Thai language learners’ use of language learning strategies.

The process of data collection and analysis consisted of three central phases: interview preparation, interview implementation, and analysis of interview data.

**Phase 1: Preparation**

- The development of guideline interview questions

  After reviewing the research’s working definitions, the guideline questions were formulated to be used to guide the session and these questions were also used to guide the initial development of themes or categories in data analysis. The content of the interview questions partly emerged from the researcher’s review of literature and related research in the field of language learning strategies, and partly through the researcher’s personal experiences about language learning strategies.

  The interview questions were piloted in Thai with four public university students to test the clarity and comprehensibility of all questions prior to use in the actual interviews. With comments from those participating in pilot interviews and with a discussion with the researcher’s main supervisor, the interview questions were re-worded and re-arranged before their actual use. Piloting helped the researcher not only with the wording of questions but also with procedural matters such as the ordering of question sequences, the reduction of non-response rates, and the time arrangement.

- The selection and recruitment of group interview members

  Four public universities were randomly selected to take part in the data collection including 3 regional universities (Naresuan University, Suranaree University of Technology, and Silpakorn University), and one university in metro-Bangkok (Mahidol University). The voluntary participants from each university were recruited to join in the focus group interviews.

**Phase 2: Implementation**

- Conducting the interviews

  Once permission from the participating universities had been granted formally, the researcher followed her interview timetable by meeting the voluntary students at the rooms prepared by each participating university. Considering ethics in interviewing, the researcher followed the three main areas of ethical issues proposed by Cohen et al. (2000) namely informed consent, confidentiality, and
the consequence of the interviews. Before starting the interviews, the participants all received the consent forms together with a verbal summary of the present research to ensure that the possible consequences of the research were made clear to them. In addition, the cares were taken with them and any other related people they referred to would be of confidentiality and anonymity. After completing the consent forms for willingly participating in the focus-group interviews, they were given 10 minutes of preparation to read throughout the focus group interview questions (Appendix I). After getting verbal consent from the participants, each interview was audio-taped.

During the interviews, the researcher addressed the participants by their nicknames. This was one way to help establish a congenial atmosphere for the session (Measor, 1985). This also helped the researcher remember the group members individually to balance between the active and passive roles of every group member, and not allow one person to dominate. The researcher followed the guidelines of conducting interviews proposed by Cohen et al. (2000) to ensure that the interviews were conducted in an appropriate, non-stressful, and non-threatening way. During the interviews, the researcher was required to be a good listener rather than a good speaker avoiding the cause of any interruptions, the sharing or giving advice or opinions, as well as any personal facial and bodily expressions (Carey, 1994; Creswell, 2003). To check for the validity of the data, one way the research could be operated is that the interviewer should have the informants serve as a check throughout an ongoing dialogue regarding the researcher’s interpretations of their reality and meanings to ensure the truth value of the data (Creswell, 2003). Thus, generally after finishing the discussion of the guideline questions and before going to the next questions, the researcher fed back a summary of the discussion to the group in order to have the group members clarify and correct the information.

**Phase 3: Analysis**

- Transcribing and translating the interview data

The audio-recorded interviews which constituted the data base were fully transcribed in the Thai language by the researcher and consequently transformed into individual text electronic files. Some simple layout elements were used for transcription to facilitate data processing later. Transcriptions are transformations of one mode – a conversation or oral discourse - into another mode: narrative discourse. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, such transformations often erase contextual and non-verbal data and make transcription inevitably selective. In this case, interview transcripts were deliberately selective, privileging the record of verbal expressions (where language learning strategies were reported) and keeping the transcripts as simple as possible. No systematic
effort was made to reflect accurately in the transcripts the occurrence of interjections, emphasis, pauses, voice tone, gestures, etc.

To increase the reliability and validity of the interview transcripts, the researcher used three strategies: 1) comparing researcher’s handwritten notes with tape transcripts; 2) repeatedly listening and transcribing the recordings of each interview; and 3) equating the literal meanings of transcripts through careful back-translations; the researcher emailed to ask for assistance from friends who are now pursuing their PhDs in the United Kingdom to check the researcher’s translated data by doing English-Thai translations, and then compared with the original language texts.

- Developing coding schemes and initial coding

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are two main types of coding. The first one, a grounded approach, is used by an inductive researcher who may not want to pre-code any datum until the researcher has collected it, seen how it functions or nests in its context, and determined how many varieties of it there are. The second is to create a provisional “start list” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 58) of codes prior to fieldwork/interview. That list comes from the conceptual framework, the list of research questions, and the key variables that bring a researcher to the area of investigation. For the present study, it is the second type of coding which is utilised. Thus guideline questions of the interviews could actually serve as the initial categories and could provide a common structure of analysis across interview sessions.

After the interview recordings had been transcribed and translated into English, the preliminary language learning strategy inventory was initially generated through the following steps.

**Step One:**

1. The researcher carefully read through the interview data regarding language learning strategies reported by 44 interview participants of 8 groups from 4 open universities to get a whole picture of how they used language learning strategies in learning English.
2. Each language learning behavior or strategy which was consistent with the working definitions of the present study was accordingly adopted, and the codes were then given to such behavior and strategy.
3. From the interview recordings, it was found that the interviewees produced altogether 473 statements about language learning behaviors or strategies.
4. Tentatively, 473 reported language learning strategies emerged. However, it would be impossible to include all of the 473 reported language learning strategies under the two main
categories in the language learning strategy inventory. The 473 reported language learning strategies, therefore, were reorganised and condensed, and then 97 strategies remained.

5. Next, 20 of 97 communication strategies were excluded from the language learning strategy category as a number of scholars in this field argue that communication strategies are related to language use rather than language learning (e.g. Cohen, 1998; Ellis, 1994; Tarone, 1981). The two processes (language use and language learning) are so different in terms of their function and their *psycholinguistic representation* that “they are best kept separate” (Dornyei, 2003: 168).

Communication strategies are contained in the language use strategy, which is defined as the ability to successfully ‘get one’s message across’ (Tarone and Yule, 1989:19). Such strategies are used to enable language users to organise their utterances as effectively as possible to get their messages across to particular listeners. These strategies are also considered to be part of the ability to repair, or compensate for, breakdown in communication (Tarone, 1989).

Additionally, it can be noticed, from the priori language learning classifications proposed by a number of researchers e.g. Stern (1975, 1983, 1992), Ellis and Sinclair (1989), Oxford (1990), that communication strategies are described in those classifications as techniques used to keep conversation going e.g. using circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrasing, or asking for repetition and explanation. Particularly, Oxford (1990)’s taxonomy includes communication strategies in the name of compensation strategies. These strategies are related to language learning strategies which compensate for lack of competence. Oxford (1990:50) classifies them under overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. These are:

1. Switching to L1 (or so-called ‘codeswitching’)
2. Getting help from others to get the messages across
3. Using mime, gesture, or non-verbal noise such as a sigh
4. Avoiding communication partially or totally
5. Adjusting or approximating the message
6. Coining words by making an L1 word sound like an L2 word
7. Using circumlocution or a synonym

According to the characteristics of communications strategies described above, any learning behavior or performance lacking the focus on overcoming limitations of communication
difficulties (e.g. clarifying the question in order to get help, and using gestures or explaining with other words to compensate the unknown words) is regarded as a language learning strategy.

**Step Two:**

1. The researcher further went through the reported statements again to identify similarities and differences of phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, sequences among the 77 language learning strategies gained from Step One.

2. After having negotiation and discussion with the main supervisor, it was found to be clearer to classify the learners’ reported performances and perceptions of acquiring L2 learning in the classroom context and in a free situation under the four new main language learning strategy categories: 1) preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 2) understanding while studying in class; 3) improving one’s language skills; and 4) expanding one’s general knowledge of English. Each main category includes two subcategories. The first main category of language learning strategies involves those used by the language learners to prepare themselves before or after classroom lessons. Next, the second category consists of learning strategies employed to understand while studying in class. They could be divided into two main subcategories depending on with whom the language learners have interactions: intra-personal or inter-personal. Finally, the subcategories of the last two main categories are similarly comprised of learning strategies applied with the support of media or non-media utilization. The media here covers newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and internet.

3. To apply a structure and reference system of those categorisations, the researcher gave codes to the four main categories as follows:
   
   “P” for Preparing Oneself for Classroom Lessons;
   “U” for Understanding while Studying in Class;
   “I” for Improving One’s Language Skills; and
   “E” for Expanding One’s General Knowledge of English.

4. An individual strategy for those four categories was then listed under their two main categories, that is,

   1. Preparing Oneself for Classroom Lessons (P)
      1.1 Before Class (PBC)
      1.2 After Class (PAC)
2. Understanding while Studying in Class (U)
   2.1 Intra-Personal Interaction (UINTRA)
   2.2 Inter-Personal Interaction (UINTER)
3. Improving One’s Language Skills (I)
   3.1 Media Utilization (IMU)
   3.2 Non-Media Utilization (INMU)
4. Expanding One’s General Knowledge of English (E)
   4.1 Media Utilization (EMU)
   4.2 Non-Media Utilization (ENMU)

Although the researcher finally could classify the language learning strategies into four main categories, it does not mean that the language learning strategies under the four categories are clear-cut. Instead, some of them can constantly and possibly appear in any different categories depending on individual researchers’ justification. For example, the language learning strategy regarding ‘reviewing own notes/summary’ can be grouped into either PBC or PAC. That means language learners may use this strategy before class to be ready for what they are going to learn in class, or they may use it after class to help understand what is learned already in class. In the present investigation, such strategy was classified into PAC since the predicate “review” expresses the sense of considering making changes of anything rather than preparing things in advance.

5. After establishing the coding and categories, a clear definition of each category was given to use to analyze the complete data. Firstly, “Preparing Oneself for Classroom Lesson Strategies” were defined as strategies used by language learners to prepare themselves physically and academically before or after class lessons. Secondly, “Understanding while Studying in Class Strategies” involved strategies employed to help learners understand what is learned in class. They could be divided into two kinds of learners’ interactions: intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonal interactions dealt with the language learning strategies learners use to interact with themselves, while interpersonal interactions means social interactions that language learners use to interact with the teacher or other students in their classrooms. Next, “Improving One’s Language Skill Strategies” covered strategies language learners used to improve their language skills in general with or without a use of media utilization. Lastly, “Expanding One’s General Knowledge of English Strategies” dealt
with strategies language learners employed to help expand their general knowledge of English outside the class, together with a consideration of a reliance on media utilization to do so.

Establishing trustworthiness in coding schemes

Once the initial analysis of the data sets was completed, a second coder involved in a blinding-coding exercise was conducted with a subset of transcripts, that means the second coder did not know which codes were used by the first coder (the researcher). Both coding outcomes were compared and used to improve the definitions of coding categories and subsequently to refine the coding in the full data base. The reviewed definite versions of coding schemes and actual coding were subject to a final blind coding exercise to determine inter-coder reliability using the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994: 64).

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\text{Inter-coder reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}
\]

In the present study, approximately 25 per cent out of the reported language learning strategies was used as a sample of the data base. The transcripts were coded by the researcher, while the other five coders were not involved in the development of the coding schemes. These five coders included three Ph.D. students, and two M.Ed. students studying at the University of Leeds, U.K. All coders were provided with print-outs of a list of 28 language learning strategies and then randomly selected 30 reported statements. These language learning strategies and reported statements were randomly ordered. The five coders were then asked to match the reported statements to the language learning strategies (see the sample task for this reliability in Appendix II).

Once the responses were collected, agreement and disagreements were computed on coding decisions made by all five coders. The results obtained were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coder</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
<th>Inter-Coder Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These agreements were informed in the review of the coding scheme and actual coding throughout the interview sets. As a consequence of the review, ambiguous definitions of codes were sharpened and some coding categories were split. These helped the final coding to be more systematic. As inter-coder reliability at the level of 0.80 or above was established in all cases, there was confidence to take inter-coder reliability indicators to mean that the five coders working independently used roughly the same codes for the same segments of data and disagreements among coders did not occur if they had processed the full data base. This result also revealed that their coding was consistent with that proposed by the researcher. However, the reliability revealed that there were a few reported statements which addressed a lack of clarity and insufficient explanation that could cause difficulties for matching. For example, one of the coders, a Ph.D. student, gave a comment that a clear categorization of the main categories should be done to facilitate and reduce lots of time to analyze and match the statements.

In sum, although the above process of interview data analysis was time-consuming, the researcher could go through this with the assistance of experts who do have experiences in this type of data analysis. As Robson (2002) states, in qualitative data analysis, experienced people like the researchers’ supervisors and professional lecturers in the same field can help the researcher analyze the qualitative data.

6. Results of the Study

The interview data were analyzed and then classified according to learners’ both academic and nonacademic learning performances to achieve particular L2 learning purposes. Following are the results of the student oral interviews regarding the language learning strategies employed by the participating students. These results are presented according to the specific aims of the investigation;
that is, examining the overall use of language learning strategies that Thai public university students employ in the classroom and in a free learning situation.

With a careful selection and classification of those reported learning strategies, it is found that there are 44 individual language learning strategies employed by Thai public university freshmen. These strategies can be divided into four main groups according to the learners’ purposes of language learning strategy use: 1) for preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 2) for understanding while studying in class; 3) for improving one’s language skills; and 4) for expanding one’s general knowledge of English. See more information as follows:

I. Language Learning Strategies Used for Preparing Oneself for Classroom Lessons

1. Before Class
   - Studying the course details before hand
   - Preparing oneself physically
   - Attempting to attend the class
   - Doing revision of the previous lessons

2. After Class
   - Reviewing own notes/summary
   - Attempting to revise today lessons
   - Doing homework or assignments
   - Personally approaching the teacher by asking the teacher for clarification of what is learned in class
   - Practicing what is learned in class with the teacher
   - Discussing L2 learning problems with the teacher

II. Language Learning Strategies Used for Understanding while Studying in Class

1. Intra-Personal Interaction
   - Trying to get a seat in the front row
   - Avoiding talking with other students while studying
   - Taking notes while studying
   - Thinking to oneself along with the teacher’s instruction
   - Trying to understand English by translating into Thai
   - Consulting a dictionary
2. Inter-Personal Interaction
   - Asking the teacher for clarification
   - Double checking what is learned with friends
   - Joining a language study group
   - Choosing to sit near students proficient in L2
   - Participating the classroom activities

III. Language Learning Strategies Used for Improving One’s Language Skills

1. Media Utilization to Improve One’s Language Skills
   - Reading on-line materials (e.g. news, articles, stories, film scripts in English) to improve one’s reading skill
   - Reading printed materials such as books, magazines, newspapers in English to sharpen reading
   - Reading any English-printed resources such as labels on drugs or consumer goods, computer instructions/functions in English to enrich vocabulary and expressions apart from what one learned in class
   - Contacting Thai or foreign friends through emails, instant messages (MSN) or SMS texts with computers or mobile phones to improve one’s writing skill
   - Watching English-speaking films to practice listening comprehension without looking at the Thai subtitles
   - Watching television programs in English to help one become familiar with the accents, tones of voice, and intonations
   - Listening to English songs or cassette tapes of English conversations to practice listening skill
   - Listening to radio programs in English to improve listening skill
   - Imitating a native speaker from media such as films, songs, cassette tapes, TV shows to practice one’s speaking skill

2. Non-Media Utilization to Improve One’s Language Skills
   - Practicing writing with English texts such as poems, greeting cards, or diaries etc.
- Conversing in English with teachers, peers, siblings, or foreigners
- Talking to oneself in English

IV. Language Learning Strategies Used for Expanding One’s General Knowledge of English

1. Media Utilization
   - Practicing English with a commercially packaged English program
     (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS, Follow Me)
   - Playing games for vocabulary enrichment such as English crossword puzzles
   - Seeking out information in English through surfing the Internet

2. Non-Media Utilization
   - Having extra tutorials
     (e.g. attending classes at a private school, having a personal tutor teach English at home, taking short English courses abroad)
   - Taking any job to practice English
     (e.g. being a local/young guide in a hometown, working part-time at a restaurant, where there are many foreign customers)
   - Having own language learning notebooks
   - Translating English news, song lyrics, poems, etc. into Thai
   - Using a dictionary for vocabulary enrichment
   - Joining leisure or social activities to practice and improve English
     (e.g. joining English Camps, entering singing contests, going to a church on Sunday, etc.)
   - Practicing general English with family members
   - Giving tutorials to others like junior students, peers, or siblings

These 44 individual language learning strategies which consist of 10 strategies used for preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 11 strategies for understanding while studying in class; 12 strategies for improving one’s language skills; and 11 strategies for expanding one’s general knowledge of English will be used to generate the strategy questionnaire which is then employed to
elicit information of Thai language learners’ strategy use on a larger scale in the second phase of data collection of the study.

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Appendix I: Interview Questions

**Part I – Background & Previous Knowledge**

1) Name
2) Birthplace
3) Education:
   3.1 Areas of study
   3.2 Types of academic program
4) Do you consider yourself to be:
   a. a high language learner
   b. a moderate language learner
   c. a low language learner
5) When did you start and how long did you learn English?
6) Where and under what circumstances did you learn English?
7) When you learned English, what did you study? Grammar? Speaking?
8) Do you remember what kind of text-books you used, if any?
9) Did the teacher speak in the foreign language most of the time?
10) Do you remember what kind of homework you had to do?
11) Did you have any contact outside the classroom/your home with English native speakers?
12) Did you listen to the radio or watch films or TV in English?
13) Do you think that your success at learning English is due to the teacher? Or, did it have something to do with the environment? Or, would you say that you developed some special study habits? Or, do you have some particular personal learning techniques that helped you in learning?

**Part II – Language Learning Strategies**
1. How often do you study English at university?
2. According to 1., do you think it is enough for you?
3. What have you been doing in your class in the past few weeks?
4. Do you do anything to help yourself understand the English lessons better (before/during/after the class)?
5. What do you do to improve your English in general (inside and outside the classroom)?
6. How do you think you get along with your teacher and the other students in class?
7. How does the atmosphere in the English class compare with that of other classes?
8. Which classroom activities do you most like or dislike? Why?
9. Which classroom activities do you consider to be the most or the least effective and useful? Why?
10. In your opinion, should the teacher speak English only while teaching?
11. Could you please tell me which aspects of learning English are easy or difficult for you? Why?
12. What do you do when you get stuck while responding in English?
13. When you make an error, would you prefer to be interrupted right away or would you rather finish your response?
14. Do you mind being corrected? Why?
15. What would you like to get out of the English course in the long run?
16. Do you have any other comments about your language learning experiences that you would like to tell me?

Appendix II: A Sample Task for the Reliability

The Language Learning Strategy Coding/Categorization

Instructions:

- Please read the list of language learning strategies in (A) and the list of reported statements in (B) carefully.
Choose the reported statements of (B) to match the language learning strategies of (A) by writing the number; 1-30 statements of (B), in the space given in front of each language learning strategy of (A).

Please note that each reported statement of (B) can be used only ONCE, while some language learning strategies of (A) can be used MORE THAN ONCE.

When completing the matching, please give some comments if you have had any difficulties or confusion matching between (A) and (B).

Example:

(A) List of language learning strategies

- Seeking out more supplementary resources to study before class
- Finding ways to help understand what is learnt in class
- Checking word meanings from dictionaries
- Making own lesson summary to prepare for the examinations
- Adapting oneself to meet and serve the teacher’s criterion
- Relating new vocabulary learnt to things in the environment for better understanding

(B) List of reported statements

1. ‘I’ve planned how much time I’ll devote to English study in relation to my overall purpose and long term needs for studying English…’
2. ‘I sometimes seek out additional information through articles/magazines by surfing the Internet before doing assignments/homework…’
3. ‘If I find any unknown/new/unclear words, I check with a dictionary…’
4. ‘After class, I sometimes borrow friends’ text books/lectures to recheck and add more input that I missed in class…’
5. ‘In class, I always use colorful highlighters to mark what the teacher emphasizes…’
6. ‘I spend my extra time/private time practicing conversations with my foreign friends outside the classroom …’

7. ‘Almost every year my parents send me to take summer courses abroad e.g. U.K, Australia, New Zealand…’