

# LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES OF MEDICAL STUDENTS IN EFL CONTEXTS: A BASIS FOR THE LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACH

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# Introduction

- What are language learning strategies
- Learner-centred approach
- English should not be barrier to learn

## Purpose of the study

- to explore the language learning strategies which are employed by first year Thai medical students at Mahidol University in the academic year 2004.

# Statement of the problem

- the English proficiency of Thai students is inferior to other nationalities, such as Singaporeans, Filipinos, Malaysians, and Indonesians (Praphal, 2001)
- the students are not taught how to learn English by themselves

# Literature review

- Language learning strategies

are techniques or specific processes that learners intentionally select in order to acquire knowledge and to facilitate their own language learning.

- 6 Types of language learning strategies

(a) direct strategies: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies

(b) indirect strategies: metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Oxford, 1990)

- Previous research

# Significance of the Study

- To help students to find efficient ways to acquire new knowledge
- To help English teachers to design teaching materials that are relevant to efficient language learning strategies of students
- to help subject teachers to teach and monitor learner progress efficiently.

# Research Design and Methodology

## Population

- Population: 540 Thai first year medical students studying in the Faculties of Medicine, Mahidol University
- Subjects: 40% of these students were randomly selected so there were 216 subjects.
- participants: 163 (75.5%)

# Research Design and Methodology

## Instruments

- Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire, developed by Rebecca Oxford (1986-1990)
  - SILL is a five-point Likert rating scale questionnaire
  - (1) never or almost never true of me, (2) generally not true of me, (3) somewhat true of me, (4) generally true of me, and (5) always or almost always true of me.
- English Entrance Scores

# Research Design and Methodology

## Data Analysis Procedure

1. Descriptive statistics analyses of all demographic and instrument items

2. Internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) reliability analyses of subscales and/ or total scores of the instrument (.92)

Distribution of final questionnaire and data collection

# Variables

The construct of language learning strategies:

(a) direct strategies: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies

(b) indirect strategies: metacognitive, affective, and social strategies

## Reliability of Translation of the Instrument

(a) preparing a preliminary survey instrument according to Brislin's guidelines (1986);

(b) selecting four bilingual translators according to Brislin's guidelines (1986);

(c) following back translation with four rounds; and

(d) comparing the last translated version with the original version.

# Results

## Demographic of the Respondents

| Demographic of the Respondents | Amount | %     |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Sex</b>                     |        |       |
| Male                           | 63     | 38.7  |
| Female                         | 100    | 61.3  |
| Total                          | 163    | 100.0 |
| <b>Age</b>                     |        |       |
| 17 years                       | 15     | 9.2   |
| 18 years                       | 103    | 63.2  |
| 19 years                       | 42     | 25.8  |
| 21 years                       | 3      | 1.8   |
| Total                          | 163    | 100   |

# Table of Frequency of Using Language Learning Strategies

| Scale | Frequency of Using Language Learning Strategies | Mean Range |
|-------|---|------------|
| 5     | Higher  | 4.50–5.00  |
| 4     | High  | 3.50–4.49  |
| 3     | Medium  | 2.50–3.49  |
| 2     | Low   | 1.50–2.49  |
| 1     | Lower   | 1.00–1.49  |

# Results

**Table 1: *Frequency of Categories of Strategies Used by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)***

| Language Learning Strategies | No. of Items | M    | SD  | Cronbach's Alpha | Average Frequency of Use of Strategies |
|------------------------------|--------------|------|-----|------------------|--|
| Compensation Strategies      | 6            | 3.52 | .66 | .83              | High                                   |
| Metacognitive Strategies     | 9            | 3.26 | .67 | .78              | Medium                                 |
| Cognitive Strategies         | 14           | 3.03 | .52 | .76              | Medium                                 |
| Affective Strategies         | 6            | 2.84 | .62 | .81              | Medium                                 |
| Social Strategies            | 6            | 2.79 | .60 | .78              | Medium                                 |
| Memory Strategies            | 9            | 2.73 | .50 | .80              | Medium                                 |

**Table 2: *Frequency of Use of Memory Strategy Subdivisions by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)***

| <b>Memory Strategies</b>  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | <b>Average Frequency of Use of Strategies</b> |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------------------|---|
| 1. thinking of relationships between what is already known and new things | 3.31     | .73       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 2. using mental images  | 3.25     | .97       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 3. remembering by location  | 2.93     | 1.10      | .91                     | Medium  |
| 4. using new English words in a sentence to remember them                 | 2.92     | .83       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 5. connecting sounds of a new English word and images                     | 2.85     | .94       | .92                     | Medium  |
| 6. using rhymes   | 2.65     | 1.03      | .91                     | Medium  |
| 7. reviewing often  | 2.63     | .90       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 8. physically acting out new English words                                | 2.17     | 1.11      | .92                     | Low   |
| 9. using flashcards to remember new English words                         | 1.87     | 1.01      | .92                     | Low   |

**Table 3: *Frequency of Use of Cognitive Strategy Subdivisions by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)***

| <b>Cognitive Strategies</b>                           | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | <b>Average Frequency of Use of Strategies</b> |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------------------|---|
| 1. trying to talk like native speakers                | 3.62     | .96       | .91                     | High  |
| 2. watching English TV or movies                      | 3.47     | 1.01      | .91                     | Medium  |
| 3. skimming   | 3.28     | .94       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 4. dividing words for meaning                         | 3.25     | .97       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 5. looking for similar words                          | 3.24     | 1.00      | .91                     | Medium  |
| 6. avoiding verbatim translation                      | 3.24     | .98       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 7. practicing the sounds of English                   | 3.21     | .94       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 8. using English words in different ways              | 3.20     | .95       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 9. finding patterns in English                        | 3.07     | .92       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 10. saying or writing new English words several times | 2.94     | .95       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 11. reading for pleasure in English                   | 2.94     | 1.05      | .91                     | Medium  |
| 12. writing notes or messages in English              | 2.63     | 1.02      | .91                     | Medium  |
| 13. starting conversations in English                 | 2.21     | .92       | .91                     | Low   |
| 14. making summaries                                  | 2.21     | .92       | .91                     | Low   |

**Table 4: *Frequency of Use of Compensation Strategy Subdivisions by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)***

| <b>Compensation Strategies</b>          | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | <b>Average Frequency of Use of Strategies</b> |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------------------|---|
| 1. guessing unfamiliar words            | 3.86     | .85       | .91                     | High  |
| 2. using gestures during a conversation | 3.80     | .84       | .91                     | High  |
| 3. making up new words                  | 3.76     | .80       | .91                     | High  |
| 4. adjusting the message to communicate | 3.53     | .87       | .91                     | High  |
| 5. reading without looking up word      | 3.37     | .98       | .91                     | Medium  |
| 6. guessing what the speaker will say   | 2.94     | .99       | .91                     | Medium  |

**Table 5: *Frequency of Use of Metacognitive Strategy Subdivisions by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)***

| <b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>                 | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Cronbach's Alpha | Average Frequency of Use of Strategies |
|---|----------|-----------|------------------|--|
| 1. thinking about progress in learning English  | 3.97     | .95       | .91              | High                                   |
| 2. finding out how to learn better              | 3.75     | .92       | .91              | High                                   |
| 3. paying attention when someone speaks English | 3.49     | .98       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 4. noticing mistakes                            | 3.43     | .84       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 5. having clear goals                           | 3.42     | 1.00      | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 6. finding many ways to use English             | 2.94     | .85       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 7. looking for opportunities to read            | 2.94     | .97       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 8. looking for conversation partners            | 2.81     | 1.04      | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 9. making a schedule to study English           | 2.71     | .93       | .91              | Medium                                 |

**Table 6: *Frequency of Use of Affective Strategy Subdivisions by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)***

| <b>Affective Strategies</b>  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Cronbach's Alpha | Average Frequency of Use of Strategies |
|--|----------|-----------|------------------|--|
| 1. encouraging oneself to speak English even when afraid of making a mistake | 3.55     | .96       | .91              | High                                   |
| 2. relaxing when one feels bad   | 3.37     | .88       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 3. talking about feelings to someone else                                    | 2.94     | 1.11      | .92              | Medium                                 |
| 4. noticing tension  | 2.80     | 1.16      | .92              | Medium                                 |
| 5. giving self a reward  | 2.71     | 1.06      | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 6. writing down feelings in a diary  | 1.72     | .97       | .91              | Low                                    |

**Table 7: Frequency of Use of Social Strategy Subdivisions by First Year Medical Students (N = 163)**

| <b>Social Strategies</b>                    | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Cronbach's Alpha | Average Frequency of Use of Strategies |
|---|----------|-----------|------------------|--|
| 1. asking for slower delivery or repetition | 3.59     | .94       | .92              | High                                   |
| 2. asking for correction                    | 3.18     | .92       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 3. learning about culture                   | 2.75     | 1.01      | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 4. practicing with others                   | 2.58     | .94       | .91              | Medium                                 |
| 5. asking for help                          | 2.45     | .98       | .91              | Low                                    |
| 6. asking questions                         | 2.18     | 1.01      | .91              | Low                                    |

# Discussion

- *Compensation strategies*
- *Metacognitive strategies*
- *Cognitive strategies*
- *Affective strategies*
- *Social strategies*
- *Memory strategies*

# Implication of the Study

- The students should recognize that these strategies are useful for them when learning a language.
- Teachers should be aware of how to use language learning strategies as part of their instruction.
- Subject teachers can determine what strategies they should use to enhance their students' learning, if they know what language learning strategies their students use.



Thank you very much  
for your attendance  
and participation