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ENGLISH LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THAI STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT PRINCE SONGKLA UNIVERSITY, PATTANI CAMPUS

Abstract:

As elsewhere, Thailand, in the globalized world, English has gained an important role in different areas of life over the last decades. It is taught as an official second language in all elementary and many secondary schools and also in universities. Unfortunately, although Thai students spend a lot of time learning English, both in schools hours and after school tutorial classes, college graduates today cannot use English to communicate effectively in the real world.

The purpose of this study aimed to investigate the English learning strategies among Thai university students. The study employed a survey design which involved administering questionnaires of rating scales by using Oxford (1990) Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) to measure language learning strategies. The study also used interview questions as part of data collection to investigate how ecological system influence learning English from twenty five students of Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand. The research design of this study was a qualitative study focusing on in-depth interview session while questionnaires were the supplementary to explain the general language learning preferences. The result of this study revealed that most Thai students adopted cognitive strategy in learning ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. Also, they learned in transferring expressions from Thai language which is a mother tongue to English. The learners constructed a formal model in their minds based on analysis and comparison, created general rules and then revised the rules when any new information is available. Listening to music and watching soundtrack movies and clips were among the major activities employed by the students.

Keywords:

Learning strategy, EFL, language acquisition, cognition

JEL Classification: I29

1. Rationale

English, led by historical factors, is a language being predicting as a global language for at least two centuries, having large numbers of people in a country speak English as a first language, as happens in the USA, Britain, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and a scattering of other territories. It is also present when it is made the official language of a country, is given joint-official or special-regional status, and comes to be used as the primary medium of communication in such domains as government, the law courts, broadcasting, the press and the education system (Crystal, 2012). Today, more than ever, we live in an interconnected worldwide to understand and interface with different cultures in the field of their education, work and travels. In today's global world, the importance of English cannot be denied and ignored since English has provided viability and practicability as a most common language to almost every walk of life. English has been playing a major role in many sectors including medicine, engineering and education. Crystal (2012) also provides an example of an overwhelming advancement of global language—English, in his article, ―English worldwide. Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, Singapore and Vanuatu have English as some kind of special administrative status. Then, in a different way, English achieves a special role when it is made a priority in a country's foreign-language teaching policy; it has no official status, but it is nonetheless the foreign language which children are most likely to encounter when they arrive in school, and the one most available to adults in further education. English is also being treated as a foreign language over 100 countries around the world, and in most of these it is now recognized as the chief foreign language being taught in schools, or the one which a country would most like to introduce. In terms of number, there are now more non-native speakers than native speakers who regularly communicate in English.

However, Thailand has always been a country with one official language, Thai. We are proud that we have never been colonized by any western countries in our history. Another reason for having been a country with one language is the concept of national stability. There have been proposals to make Thailand a country with two languages, Thai and English, but this has never materialized due to the abovementioned reasons. English can, therefore, be at most the first foreign language that the national curriculum has encouraged students to study in schools (Wiriyachitra, 2012). Nowadays in Thailand, as elsewhere in the globalized world, English has gained an important role in different area of life over the last decades. This is the evident by the increasing number of English schools and teaching English in schools as well as the number of English private tutors especially the big cities. According to Worthington (2009), English is taught as an official second language in all elementary and many secondary schools and also in universities. English is one of the core courses in almost every curriculum in Thailand. Moreover, English is recognized as a key indicator of educational and professional successes. If college graduates use English effectively, they will be employed with high positions and good salaries (Mackenzie, 2002; Raksaphet, 1991). Unfortunately, although Thai students spend a lot of time learning English, both in schools hours and after school tutorial classes, college graduates today cannot use English to communicate effectively and functionally in the real world (Mackenzie, 2002). This is because Thai students have little chance to practice speaking English in or outside the

classroom. Students respond to the teacher only when called upon and the learning atmosphere is individualistic.

As in most other Asian countries, traditional Thai culture places a very high value on learning. Because of this, teachers are highly respected and are typically considered as being knowledgeable and authoritative. The hierarchical order of Thai culture plays some role in teaching and learning environment. Learners are supposed to follow their teachers' instruction without any arguments. If it is otherwise, the learners are perceived aggressive, resistant and disobedient (Waelateh, 2009). Out of respect, Thai students may not feel as comfortable asking questions and/or voicing their opinions as Western students do. Eliciting a response can be difficult sometimes, but this should not be taken as non-cooperative on the part of the students. A teacher of English can expect to find Thai learners admirably industrious and well behaved. They listen attentively and take notes very carefully. Moreover, learning English in Thailand, a salient feature of Thai learning style, is a rote memorization of new words and sentence structure only on paper (Liu, 1993). Students tend to spend considerable time memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary at the expense of oral practice and they are prepared to answer written tests which are full of grammar points and vocabulary. As a result, most Thai learners of English have better reading and writing skills than listening and speaking abilities. A more active communication-oriented method may help balance their performance (Nguyen, 2012). In addition, many Thai teachers have limited backgrounds in English and few materials to work with; instructional strategies are needed that are simple enough for all teachers attending the workshops. From the reasons mentioned above, it can be said that up to now English language teaching in Thailand does not get prepared Thais for the globalized world. Consequently, Thailand will be left behind in the competitive world of business, education, science and technology if the teaching and learning of English remains unimproved.

Many Thai students from all over Thailand enrolled at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus (PSU Pattani) which is located in the Southern Thailand, bordering to Malaysia. This is because it was understandable as the environment is very agreeable away from bustling city. However, since January 2004, escalating violence in four provinces of Thailand's predominantly Muslim southern provinces – Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and parts of Songkhla– has resulted in unprecedented levels of brutality in which civilians and officials have been increasingly targeted. The resurgence of violence is directly and indirectly affecting the lives of up to a million children living there. The everyday lives of students in the southern border area communities are inevitably affected by the violence or the threat of it, which has become associated with such everyday activities as going to school, shopping, travelling by bus or by car, or going to a tea shop. (UNICEF, 2008) Until now, over five thousands officials and civilians have been killed. Students from other parts of the country are reluctant to come down to study in university. It leaves ample seats for local students to fill in. Thus, it is obviously realized that the students suffer anxiety and stress associated with the ongoing threat and anticipation violence. Due to the unrest, the situation has changed. There is no diversity of ethnicity, linguistic background, faiths or religious affiliations, lacking of skillful teachers, and lacking of opportunities to learn, which gives very great impacts on students and staff in the area. The competition to get admitted to the campus is

less compared to the last decade before the eruption of violence. The heterogeneous society is hazed all over the campus. Teachers may need to adjust their teaching approach in order to handle with the change. According to the Registrar Office of PSU Pattani (2010, 2011, 2012), it shows English is one of the core courses that every students have to take it. Students cannot graduate if they cannot pass English foundation course. Importantly, the Registrar Office also summarized the grades of students who enrolled in this course. It said that almost half of the registered students failed in English foundation course in each semester. There are many reasons for the success and failure of each student. It is undeniable that learning strategy is one of the reasons. As it is known that if the learners have a solid and set an appropriate strategy in their learning foreign language, it would help the learners (Oxford, 1990).

Learning strategy refers to the actions and behaviors' person uses to learn (Oxford, 1989). In studying a language, all language learners use strategies to help them progress and succeed in developing the second or foreign language skills, but not all are aware of the strategies they use. For example, questions during lectures, reflection after reading, etc. students pay less attention in questioning when they do not understand or when the opportunity is available. As Oxford stated: "…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," (Oxford, 1989: p. 45). Learning strategy consists of six categories, according to Oxford (1990). They are memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The task requirements will help students to determine what strategies they should employ for their learning task. Each learner may have their own strategy. Many researchers emphasized the importance of the use of learning strategy which makes good language learners. Researchers suggested that strategies of successful language learners could provide a basis for aiding language learners. If ESL teachers know more about effective strategies that successful learners use, they may be able to apply these effective strategies to less proficient learners to enhance their language skills (Yang, 2007). There has been awareness that language learning strategies have the potential to be an extremely powerful learning tool, if the learner can employ it properly and effectively.

How to use language learning strategies effectively and successfully is the main concern of most English teachers and learners. The present study contributes to the body of educational knowledge by increasing the understanding of problems and difficulties in learning English, which causes from the unrest, faced by the Deep South students. We were interested to investigate the language learning strategies employed by the students who were studying in PSU Pattani campus. This is partly from our curiosity to know why almost half of the students who enrolled in English foundation course failed. There should be some linkage and connection to the individual learning strategy. Analyzing the learning strategies of the Deep South students at PSU Pattani Campus were carried out an effort to make a small contribution to the understanding and improvement of Thais English learning abilities.

2. The objective of the study

As it was mentioned above that students in PSU Pattani encountered in learning English, we, as researchers, intended to focus our study on learning strategy which is a process of the

learning journey. We set the objective of the study to investigate on English learning strategies employed by PSU Pattani undergraduate students by adopting Oxford (1991) as a theoretical framework. This study will attempt to answer the following two research questions:

Research question I: What are the learning strategies employed by the students in the southern border area of Thailand?

Research question II: How does ecological system influence learning English?

3. Methodology

The research methodology of this study was qualitative, which serves to explain the complexity of social interactions and it takes the researchers into natural settings. The distinction of this inquiry is a close interaction between the researchers and participants because it utilizes multiple methods—indept-interviews, participant observations, document analysis, and survey (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Moreover, this method is more pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people (Mertens, 2005). A feature of this qualitative study is rich detailed information about a small number of people or cases and in-depth description in the area of investigation. In the qualitative paradigm, the researchers attempt to view holistically all aspects of the case because it is believed that "there is not a single objective reality but multiple realities of which the researcher must be aware" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 11). From this explanation, the researchers were convinced to employ a natural enquiry for this study.

In selecting participants for the study, a purposive sampling technique was used as the logic of purposive sampling participants lies in selecting "*information-rich cases*" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). With the purposive sampling, the chosen participants in this study were twenty five undergraduate students of PSU Pattani who were born, raised and lived in the southern border area of Thailand where the unrest occurred. The participant group of student was studying English course in the second semester of 2013 academic year. The study employed a survey design which involved administering questionnaires of rating scales by using Oxford (1990) Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), as a theoretical framework for the study, to measure language learning strategies. The SILL instrument contained 30 short statements, each describing the use of one strategy. These statements were further groups into six categories of language learning according to Oxford's strategy system: cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, memory-related strategies, mate-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The first three subscales are direct strategies that they 'require mental processing of the language' and 'directly involve the target language'. In contrast, the last three subscales are indirect strategies because they 'provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy and other means'. Participants have to respond to each statement on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 5 (Always) to 1 (Never). The study also used interview questions as part of data collection to investigate how ecological system influence learning English. The main purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in the interviewee's mind (Patton, 2002). In other words, the researchers wanted to learn what the interviewee thinks or feels about certain things, or to explore the shared

meanings that participants have (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To ensure that both the researchers and interviewees better understand each other, the interviewing session and questionnaires were made in Thai which is a native language of the participants and the researchers. According to Patton, he said "It is tricky enough to be sure what a person means when using a common language" (p. 392). The interviews were audio-recorded with respondents' permission. Tape-recording was later transcribed verbatim and notes were made for further analysis.

4. Related literatures

There are many theories related to the current study such as Vygotsky who mentioned the understanding of human cognition and learning as social and cultural environment. Brown and Palinscar also revealed the learning strategies. So, the state of the English language problems and solutions are based on a number of variables which include socio-cultural context on second language learning and learning strategies.

The language socialists believe that language and culture are not repeatable, but both are acquired together. This perspective grounds on the theory of Vygotsky: socio-cultural, that lies on the understanding of human cognition and learning as social and cultural. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was introduced to refer to learning which is concerned with social events as learners interact with people and environment. Vygotsky describes it as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). Vygotsky further elaborated by describing how a teacher or a more advanced peer might provide an explanation to enable a learner to attain a higher level of achievement with support. Moreover, Harry and Corinne (2002) stressed Vygotsky's view of language acquisition and sociocultural influence is mirrored in the learning of a second language. Along with a strong development influence, there are identified multiple ecological, social and psychological factors that account for successful learning of a second, nonnative language. In addition, according to Pass (2008), the focal point of Vygotsky is on social environment and he believed that talking and thinking are major tools of learning, and not all learners reach the highest stage of development.

There are many definition of learning strategies. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined as "behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning." Language learning strategies contribute to all parts of the language learning. The main idea of learning strategies is to engage between action and skills for understanding, storing and remembering new information. In order to be specific, Oxford (1990) categorized the learning strategy into six as the following:

1. Memory strategies help the learners store new information in memory and retrieve it.
2. Cognitive strategies enable the learners to understand and produce new language through reasoning, analysis, taking note, etc.
3. Compensation strategies encourage the learners to guess or mean in the context, using gestures when they cannot think a right word in English.

4. Metacognitive strategies provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process such as centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating.
5. Affective strategies help learners gain better control over their emotions, attitudes, and motivations related to language learning.
6. Social strategies help the learners learn to interaction with others such as asking questions and cooperating with others.

In Oxford's language learning taxonomy, language learning strategies are divided into two big categories: direct and indirect strategies. The direct language learning strategies is 'directly involve the target language', which require metal processing of the language. It is consisted of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies; the three groups of direct strategies do this processing differently and for different purposes (Oxford, 1990a, p.37). As for the indirect language learning strategies, they support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language as it is shown in the diagram below (Oxford, 1990a, p.135).
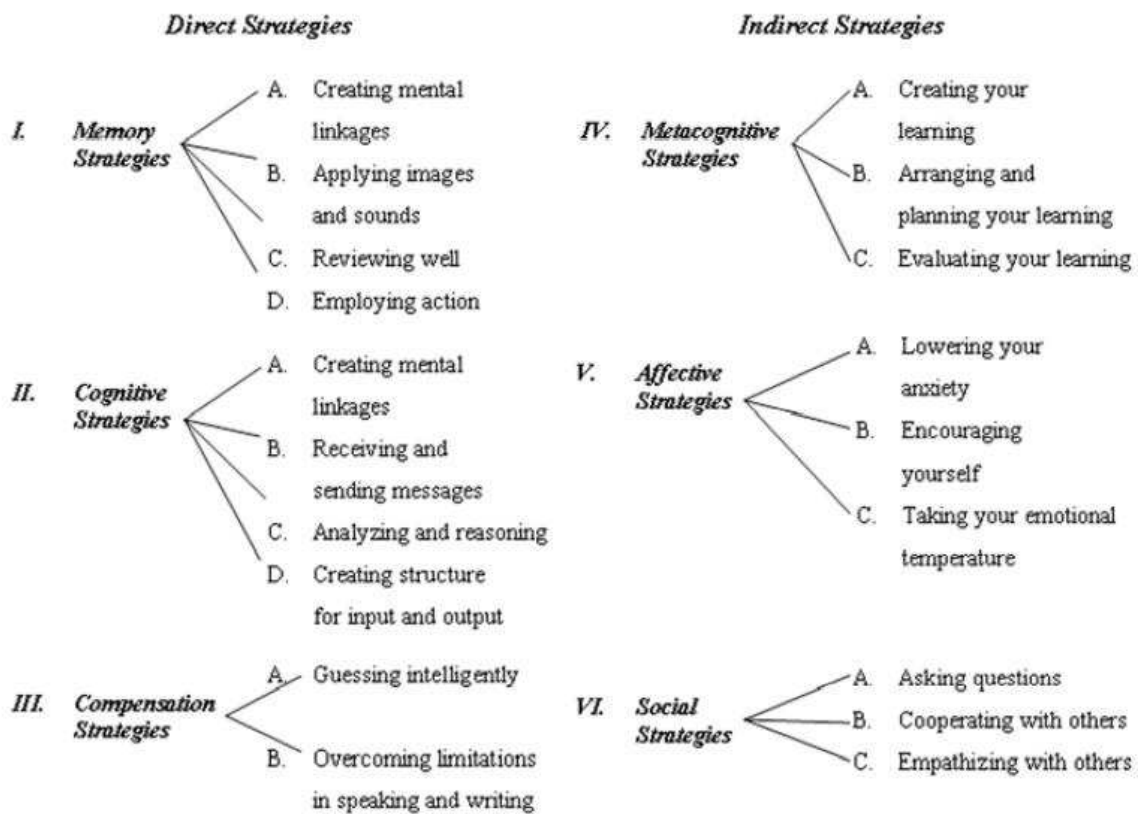
Oxford's LLS Taxonomy (1990a)

5.   Research findings

The following section discusses the result of the study. It includes a description of the demographic profile of the participants. After that it is followed by a discussion on the employed strategies and the ecological system influencing in learning English of the three boarder provinces undergraduate students studying in Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus as stated in the research questions mentioned above.

5.1   Demographic profile of the respondents

PSU is a comprehensive university and accommodates about almost forty thousand of student population in five campuses dotted in the Southern part of Thailand. PSU Pattani is the only campus located in the Muslim populated area where the unrest has erupted since 2004 until present days. According to the Registrar Office (2010, 2011, 2013), over 62% of student population is from the restricted area who speak Pattani Malay as their first language which constitutes only 8% of the total Thai residents. This minority group, with Malay ethnicity and culture, residing in a Buddhist country started learning Thai, a national language, in school compound at the age of six. Mostly, they are bilingual and also they take Arabic for religious purpose. English is the fourth language.

The total number of participants of this study was twenty five. All of them were undergraduate students of PSU Pattani. They were from various fields of study and faculties, namely, Malay Language, Human Resource Management, Chinese, Arabic Business, Psychology, Physical Education, Social Anthropology, Government, Health Education, Information Technology, Primary Education, Islamic Studies, Public Policy and Fine Arts. From our interview and informal discussion, we found that they had a positive attitude toward learning English by giving some important reasons to this global language, especially, to get prepared for travelling. They expressed that English is increasingly important in the world nowadays. Most of them enjoyed English language learning. At the same time, they realized themselves as a poor learner compared to the majority of students in the campus. However, they needed to take this course as it is a core course in their curriculum. Anyway, they rated their overall English proficiency as fair level.

5.2   Language learning strategies use perceives by the participants
The results from the basic statistical analysis were presented in this section to inform the frequency of adopting learning strategies in English course study. The study we adopted Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) as a lens to measure the learning strategy of participants. SILL provides basic framework to understand the mean scores on the students' SILL, which has a scale range of 1-5:

Interpretation data of frequency used learning strategies
High   Always or almost always use 4.5 to 5.0
            Usually use   3.5 to 4.4
Medium   Sometimes use   2.5 to 3.4
Low   Generally not use   1.5 to 2.4
            Never or almost never use   1.0 to 1.4

Participants' language learning use perceives were obtained through the use of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 5 (Always) to 1 (Never). The respondents were asked to provide their opinion on seventeen statements regarding their attitudes towards English language learning strategy. Among the statements, the first five statements (part A) elicited participants' cognitive strategies use in English learning which can be seen in Table 1. The range of cognitive strategies for solving those problems to achieve the target goal is between 3.00-3.48 at the average point of 3.22. From the analysis, it can be concluded that the frequency employed strategies are the imaginary strategy. It could interpret that they set their strategy by remembering new English words by making a clear mental image of each vocabulary or by drawing a picture. They make a visual picture or an association the

vocabulary with certain objects or with their existing knowledge. The second strategy that PSU Pattani employed for learning English was the repetition strategy. It can relate to this example, if they do not understand any lesson learned in the class or talked to their teacher, they will repeat it several times until they understand clearly. Someone may not understand once they learn for the first or second time. They need some times to get repeated until they are certain that the target language is gradually established in their memory. The lowest frequency employed strategy was to seize every opportunity practicing English which was 3.00. The explanation can be drawn into the following table.

TABLE 1: Means of cognitive learning strategies

Statement of Part A	Mean	Interpretation
1. I take every opportunity to practice English.	3.00	Medium
2. When someone corrects my English errors, I try not to repeat the same errors.	3.08	Medium
3. If I don't understand any lesson, I will repeat it many times until I understand clearly.	3.44	Medium
4. When I write an English essay, I never copy the pattern of others.	3.08	Medium
5. I remember new English words by making a clear mental image of it or by drawing a picture.	3.48	Medium
Average	3.22	Medium

Statements of part B obtained the participants' compensatory strategy in learning English which is shown in Table 2. The range of compensatory-related strategies for solving those problems to achieve the target goal is between 3.64-3.16 with the average point of 3.34. The results illustrated that the most frequently employed strategy is making guesses to understand unfamiliar English words which is a common strategy for foreign language learners if they are facing with unfamiliar words. While using gesture comes the second highest frequency. It helps the learners to express non-verbally if they do not know that word in English. The least frequently employed strategy is directing the conversation in a topic for which they know the word as shown in the table below.

TABLE 2: Means of compensatory learning strategies

Statement of Part B	Mean	Interpretation
1. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	3.64	High
2. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	3.36	Medium
3. I make up new words if I don't know the right ones in English.	3.32	Medium
4. I read English without looking up every new word.	3.20	Medium
5. I direct the conversation in a topic for which I know the word.	3.16	Medium

Average	3.34	Medium

Statements of part C elicited respondents' memory strategies use in learning English which can be seen in Table 3 below. As described in the table, the scores of memory strategies for solving those problems to achieve the target goal are between 3.28-3.36. The means is 3.32. From the results it discloses that the frequently employed memory strategy is mental strategy. Learners remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used. The least frequently employed strategy was the use of new English words in a sentence to remember them.

TABLE 3 Means of memory learning strategies

Statement of Part C	Mean	Interpretation
1. I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	3.32	Medium
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3.28	Medium
3. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.36	Medium
4. I remember new English words or phrase by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on the street sign.	3.32	Medium
5. I review English lessons often.	3.32	Medium
Average	3.32	Medium

As reported in Table 4, statements of part D demonstrated the rate of meta-cognitive strategies for solving those problems to achieve the target goal. It is between 3.40-3.80 with the average point of 3.56. From the results it can be summarized that the highly frequently employed is trying to guess the word which not fully understand what is being said (3.80). Guessing the meaning is preferred if they do not understand what it is said. The lowest frequently employed strategy is using gestures or switch back to their own language momentarily if cannot think of the right expression.

TABLE 4 Means of meta-cognitive learning strategies

Statement of Part D	Mean	Interpretation
1. If I don't understand all the words I read or hear, I try to keep listening/reading because I may get a clue as to what was meant.	3.52	High
2. When I don't know how to say something in English, I say something else instead.	3.52	High
3. I try to guess if I don't fully understand what is being said.	3.80	High
4. I rely on context to figure the meaning of unfamiliar words in the text.	3.56	High
5. If I am speaking and cannot think of the right expression, I use gestures or switch back to my	3.40	Medium

own language momentarily.		
Average	3.56	High

As indicated in Table 5 below, the statements part E, is the rate of affective strategies for solving those problems to achieve the target goal is between 3.20-3.68. The means is 3.44. The most frequency used affective strategies of Thai students is paying attention to physical stress that might affect their language learning (3.43). The lowest frequently employable strategy is to make encouraging statement to try hard and do the best in English language learning.

TABLE 5 Means of affective learning strategies

Statement of Part E	Mean	Interpretation
1. I try to relax whenever I feel anxious about using the new language.	3.44	Medium
2. I give myself a reward when I have done something well in English learning.	3.56	High
3. I pay attention to physical stress that might affect my language learning.	3.68	High
4. I make encouraging statement to myself so that I will continue to try hard and do my best in English language learning.	3.20	Medium
5. I talk to someone I trust about my attitudes and feelings concerning the English language learning process.	3.32	Medium
Average	3.44	Medium

As presented in Table 6, the statements part F, is the scores of social strategies for solving those problems to achieve the target goal is between 2.64-3.60. The means is 3.37. The most frequency used social strategies of Thai students is to summarize what they have understood and ask friend for verification (3.60). The lowest employed strategy is to consult with native speaker when having any problem which was 2.64.

TABLE 6 Means of social learning strategies

Statement of Part F	Mean	Interpretation
1. When I don't understand completely, I summarize what I have understood and ask my friend for verification.	3.60	High
2. I ask my teacher or friend for help when I don't understand any lessons.	3.48	Medium
3. I usually ask my friend to edit my English writing.	2.84	Medium
4. When I have any problem, I prefer to consult with native speaker rather than Thai friend.	2.64	Medium
5. I work with my friend to practice, review, or share information.	3.20	Medium
Average	3.15	Medium

5.3   Ecological factors influence in learning English

This research investigated the connection of studying English as a second and third language with attitude, cultures, motivation and models. Results suggest that ecological factors had certain influence on learning style and language learning. Their names here are pseudonym as to hide their real identity which may cause certain consequences. Many participants talked about the influence of ecological system in learning English as the following.

> **Serena** – '*I have registered this course for three times. […]… for this time, the lecturer taught me to learn English by learning English surround us that encourages me to learn English through noticing signs, listening to music, reading comics, comparing sentences, etc. When having exams my friends and I always make a group tutorial. This activity really helps me in learning English; I passed the English exam. […]…I usually make fun in English with my friends such as greetings, but they just laugh and no English responds.*'

> **Blair –** '*This registration is also my third registered for the English class. Earlier, I hate English but with the teaching style and the encouragement of my lecturer, I enjoy learning it and eventually, I passed the exam. […]… I sometimes learn English by compare English to Malay language.*'

> **Charles** – '*I improve my English skills by listen to music and watching movies, but it does not really help me in English class and exams. This is because slang is being used in music and movies. I also improve by chatting with friends in English without realize weather the sentences I've made are correct or not, but I've tried. Since, there are no English native speakers and lack of English lecturers to consult and talk with. Sometimes, I learn English by Malay language because there are some similar words.*'

> **Nathaniel** – '*I always ask my friends to help me learning English to translate or give me keywords of each problem because I am an English illiterate person. Since I now Malay language, I use Malay language to interoperate with English. […]…I think that we have not enough lecturers to consult our problem in learning English.*'

In conclusion, the majority of participants agreed that ecological system have a great influence on them in learning English. From the interview session above, we could draw a conclusion that

- Students with low performance in English may need to enroll English course more than one time because they could not pass for the first enrolment.

- Talking and discussing with friends or surrounding people can be of help to promote and sharpening English outside classroom. They learn the language without any restriction from their teachers. They feel free to use it with friends, even their friends may laugh at them sometimes.

- There are some advantages for those who learn English as a third or fourth language because they can compare the language structure or sound of vocabulary with their mother tongue language.

- Listening to English language music or watching movies with soundtracks is a rewind activity in learning English. The learners may spend their free time to

entertain themselves. At the same time, they naturally learn English from the music and from the script of the movies.

- The students also need teacher to support the process of learning. Moreover, a positive attitude towards English is a one of successful mastery in learning English.

6.   Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to illustrate the strategies used in learning the English language of the Deep South students in Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand, with the two main areas of research questions (1) What are the learning strategies employed by the students in the southern border area of Thailand? (2) How does ecological system influence learning English? The main instrument in this study includes the interview questions and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaires. The questionnaires were based on the questionnaires developed by and Oxford (1990). The questionnaire consisted of the learning strategies as a solution with five scales range from 1-5. In reporting problems and frequency of use in learning strategies, Oxford (1990) provided the basic framework to interpret the data of the English language problems and learning strategies. The study used interview questions as part of data collection to investigate how ecological system influence learning English from twenty five students of PSU Pattani. The research design of this study is qualitative study by focusing on in-depth interview session while questionnaires are the supplementary to explain the general language learning preferences. A total of twenty five participants in the study are fourteen females and eleven males. More than half participants rate their proficiency compared with others students in class in fair level while they enjoy English language learning.

6.1   Learning Strategies used

The average score of all strategies were at medium-used level. It is also found that the metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategies by Thai undergraduate students in the Deep South of Thailand at PSU Pattani in English learning. In fact, according to the observation, most Thai students exactly adopted cognitive strategies in learning ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. Furthermore, the social strategies were the least frequently used. It means that they had limited interaction with others in using spoken language. To our observation, students were reluctant to use English with friends because if someone tried to speak English, it could be interpreted that he or she wants to "show off" or shows arrogance. They had better keep quiet or use local language instead.

This result provided with the collated the study of Nisbet (2002) and Liu (2004). Nisbet stated that among metacognitive, cognitive, and memory strategies, metacognitive were the most frequently used strategies of Chinese students. Additionally, Liu's research (2004) found that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategies in Chinese technological institute English majors.

In conclusion, each strategy serves language learners in a different purpose; therefore successful language learners should apply all strategies to achieve a target goal in learning language.

6.2   Ecological factors influenced

Ecological factors play an important role for Thai undergraduate students in the Deep South of Thailand at PSU Pattani in learning the English language. The results indicated that all participants couldn't learn and rarely improve the English language very well. Since, the learners are forced by the curriculum to take English course in their university life. Also, the unrest in the southern border area of Thailand, there are rarely supported ecological factors to learn: less native-speaker lecturers, lack of English lecturers, curfew, limited source of learning, etc. In order to learn and improve their English skills; thus, the learners constructed a formal model in their minds based on analysis and comparison, created general rules and then revised the rules when any new information was available. Additionally, Listening to music and watching soundtrack movies and clips were among the activities employed by the students. However, the learners need teachers or certain guidance to lead them solving the difficulties and problems in learning English. Role models are among the other options that students need to see and follow. They can enhance and promote motivation through the success of the role models.

The result supported the theory of second-language acquisition; ecological factors influences in learning English. An easily identifiable ecological factors influences second language acquisition is the learning context itself. There are two types of situations in which a second language can be learned; (1) Natural setting: learning English as a native language while living in a country. (2) Educational setting: learning English where a formal instruction takes place. Ecological setting can be implied in using the language with multiple levels of society such as classroom, workplace, media, etc. Furthermore, attitude, culture, motivations, and models play an important role in learning second language. As Harry and Corinne (2002) stated in their *Lives across cultures: cross-cultural human development* that Individuals who wish to learn a second language at an old age may indeed near-native proficiency if they can choose a favorable ecological system and has a positive attitude.

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