

Language Learning Problems and Language Learning Strategies of MFU Students

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Abstract

English is a medium of instruction in many institutes including Mae Fah Luang University (MFU), Thailand. This study aimed to investigate the English language learning problems (LLP) and language learning strategies (LLS) used by the 396 MFU students. The data were collected using questionnaires based on the six common problems (Rubin & Thompson, 1994) and the SILL questionnaire (Oxford, 1990) for language learning strategies usage. The fewest problems were found in listening, reading, international communication, speaking, sociocultural, and writing respectively. All LLS were used at a medium level. However, the most frequently used strategies were metacognitive, social, compensation, cognitive, memory, and affective respectively. It could be inferred that MFU students had less difficulties as the passive learners, and more problems activating or expressing their opinions in an academic way. Besides, this research shows that keep using English language as a medium of instruction can reduce the language learning problems significantly.

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Keywords: Language Learning Problems / Language Learning Strategies / English as a Foreign Language

บทคัดย่อ

ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นสื่อกลางการเรียนการสอนในสถาบันหลายแห่ง รวมทั้งมหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวง ประเทศไทย บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบปัญหาการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ และกลวิธีการเรียนภาษาของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัย แม่ฟ้าหลวง จำนวน 396 คน ผู้วิจัยใช้แบบสอบถามที่สร้างขึ้นจากแนวคิดเรื่องปัญหา 6 ประการของ Rubin และ Thomson (1994) และแบบสอบถามเกี่ยวกับการเรียนรู้ภาษา (SILL) ของ Oxford (1990) เพื่อหากลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษา ผลการวิจัยพบปัญหาด้านการฟังน้อยที่สุด รองลงมาคือ การอ่าน การสื่อสารแบบนานาชาติ การพูด สังคม วัฒนธรรม และปัญหาด้านการเรียนเกิดขึ้นมากที่สุด กลุ่มตัวอย่างใช้กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาทั้งหมดในระดับปานกลาง อย่างไรก็ตามกลวิธีที่กลุ่มตัวอย่างใช้โดยเรียงลำดับจากมากไปน้อย ได้แก่ คปฏิริชาน สังคม การทดสอบ ปริชาน ภาษาจำ และอารมณ์ ผลการวิจัยสามารถตีความได้ว่านักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวงเป็นผู้เรียนแบบรับความรู้ และมีปัญหาในการแสดงความคิดเห็นเชิงวิชาการ นอกจากนั้นผลการวิจัย ยังแสดงให้เห็นด้วยว่า การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นสื่อในการเรียนการสอน สามารถลดปัญหาการเรียนรู้ภาษาได้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ

คำสำคัญ: ปัญหาในการเรียนรู้ภาษา / กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษา / ภาษาอังกฤษในส้านภาษาต่างประเทศ

Introduction

Since the world is now globalized, everyone can communicate with each other easily through the worldwide network of the Internet. English language is a crucial tool to access and gain the benefits from these technologies. Therefore, more schools or universities around the world are designing their curriculum by using English as a media of instruction to prepare and help students be ready to live in this world happily (Hengsadeekul, Hengsadeekul, Koul, & Kaewkuekool, 2010). By doing so, people believe that English language knowledge can help students broaden their cumulative knowledge because English can help them search for information (key words and instructions), convey their messages or thoughts (MSN or blogs), or exchange their opinions with others (discussions or web boards).

Apart from the instruction style which has been shifted recently the teaching approach also has changed. For two decades, educators have shifted their emphasis of approach in teaching from teacher-centered to student-centered, and from classrooms to the outside world. They have realized the advantages of producing life-long learners. Consequently, students in today's world have to be able to use English not only in class at school or university, but also in their daily living. Nevertheless, to achieve the goal set educators then have to find barriers to English language learning and help students to overcome these obstacles and achieve their goals (Thongsongsee; 1998; Songsangkaew; 2003; Pawapatcharaudom, 2007).

Thongsongsee (1998) conducted her research based on investigating linguistic and cultural difficulties of Thai students studying in American universities. Songsangkaew (2003) also studied Thai learners' difficulties while

they were studying in America. Both shared the same results that culture and learning styles were one of the major difficulties for the Thai learners to encounter when they studied oversea. Later, Pawapatchcharaudom (2007) investigated 30 Thai students learning in Thailand but using English as their setting, the international program of Mahidol University. She studied both learners' language learning difficulties and their language learning strategies. The results revealed that most serious problem for the learners was "writing skills" while the hindrances of international culture were the least problem. They reported that they used all six learning strategies in medium level. However, metacognitive (the motives of the learners to be better) were found mostly used.

As Mae Fah Luang University (MFU), Thailand, has promoted the model of using English as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning to develop students' English language proficiency for about 10 years, their learners also have language learning barriers and language learning strategies to encounter with.

In addition, MFU is taught in English, except courses in the School of Law. All lecturers and students use technologies which are well-provided in their teaching and learning. The English language is expected to be used as a primary medium in courses: assignments, discussions, and also for examinations. However, MFU students vary in terms of their language learning problems and learning strategies usage to overcome their barriers.

Therefore, in order to know the barriers that students encounter when they study the English language and to find ways to help solve those problems, this research was conducted. The purposes of this research were to investigate the language learning problems (LLP) and the language learning strategies

(LLS) of MFU students, and to compare the similarities and differences between students of each year. For these reasons, MFU students and teachers may know the areas to develop the curriculum in order to increase students' language competency. Consequently, they can become life-long learners and graduate with good tools to help them live with other people (Office of the National Education Commission, 2001).

Objectives

The purposes of this research were to investigate the language learning problems faced by MFU students and also the language learning strategies used by the MFU students. The similarities and differences between the LLP and LLS of the first year students, second year students, and fourth year students were then investigated. After that comparisons were made (LLP and LLS) from these three years. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What LLPs did MFU students face?
2. What LLSs did MFU students use?
3. What LLPs and LLS did MFU students share in common?

Language Learning Problems (LLPs)

When people want to achieve something, many times they will meet problems. In the same way, when humans learn they will need to learn how to overcome problems.

Cook (1996) claimed that to understand how people learn language means that we have to understand the actual nature of language itself which are about grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. In addition, Krashen's (1982) hypothesis also brings some characteristics of language learning problems. First, students could not study well when they are not ready to learn. Second, students will find difficulties when the environments are not suitable for their level and they have never been trained to adjust. Third, students will learn less when students have to learn under anxiety. Last, students may stop their learning or have a bad attitude towards what they learn when the level is too much or lower than their own level. Nonetheless, in the classroom setting or outside class, there are three main areas that could obstruct students to learn their language and may stop their learning to become "fossilized" as Krashen suggested. The three main problems are: Linguistics, Sociocultural, and other Barriers to international communication (Rubin and Thompson, 1994). Therefore, this current research will focus only on the linguistics problems, and sociocultural perspectives on English language learning, and the barriers in language communications.

Linguistics Problems

In classroom settings, educators learn language in a linguistics view because they think that it is the most common areas for them to develop their learning. Thus, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are always focused in every language teaching and learning. In linguistics, these four skills are classified into two categories: Receiver (passive) and Sender (active). The receiver or passive skills cover listening and reading skills. Sender skills include speaking and writing skills.

Sociocultural Perspectives

Krashen's idea of these four aspects is supported by Ochs and Scheiffelin (1995). They said that the environment could influence the learners in terms of their grammatical development. Students need to learn about socialization in class and outside class too, so they can study or learn successfully. They explain that language socialization perspective could predict that there will be structured strategic relationships between language development and culturally organized situations of use. Students have to live in a society that uses English as a medium to learn. They still need this skill to work with their friends in group work or pair work.

Barriers to International Communication

When people learn language in a new setting or environment, other inner barriers like "culture shock" might also happen. Kim (1997) and Schumann (1978) have claimed that when the second language barriers occurs and learners are comparing the values and pattern of the new culture or new country which is not their own, this symptom will occur for about six months after entering to this new culture. When students got the culture shock, they decrease their motivation to study, their self-esteem, and bring them to "fossilization" eventually. Apart from "culture shock," students may have to face the problem of "ethnocentrism." Etnocentrism means a belief in the centrality of one's own culture. It can be defined as "regarding one's own race or ethnic group as of supreme importance." In other words, students will have difficulty when they cannot feel that they are a part of the group they are in. They cannot adapt to the place where other students seem to have the same culture and

norm. They will react in different negative attitudes and actions to learn in the place they cannot adapt themselves in.

Another barrier is “Stereotype.” Samovar and Porter (1991) has defined this word as the perceptions or beliefs that we hold about groups or individuals based on our previously formed opinions or attitudes. There are two types of stereotypes. First is the positive stereotype and the second one is the negative one. If students have the positive side, it will help them analyze things more reasonably when they encounter difficult situations. However, if students have negative stereotypes, such as dishonesty, they will impede their friends' study and also their intercultural communication by reinforcing other stereotypes affecting learners' belief which is very important for learners and teachers to be aware of.

“Prejudice” is another important barrier for students learning English in the international setting. Prejudice also has both positive and negative. Prejudice involves the prejudgment of individuals based on unsatisfied opinions, attitudes, or beliefs. Prejudice can generally refer to bias, unfairness, or intolerance of attitudes or opinions towards another person because of the religion, race, nationality, or group difference. If students have negative prejudices in their learning or living in their environment, it can easily cause bad motivation, and affect their learning. It can affect respect and also lead the student who is prejudiced to stop his/her learning as well.

To sum up, the problems in learning language are not only concerned with the linguistics area, but also in the sociocultural perspective and other barriers to international communication. To help students overcome their

limitations, educators must pay attention to these barriers and help students get rid of each area appropriately.

Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)

Various meanings have been given to the term learning strategies. Most researchers define “learning strategies” as “techniques” used by students to acquire knowledge or their language learning (Rubin, 1975; Chamot, 1987; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Oxford, 1990). Moreover, it is defined as “operations or steps” used to improve the learners’ progress, store new information, retrieve previous knowledge, or apply information (Rigney, 1978; O’Malley, Chamot, Manzanares, Kupper & Russo, 1985; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Oxford, 1990). Others have defined it as “devises” (Rubin, 1975) and some as “styles” (Stern, 1975; Willing, 1988; Nunan, 1991). Nonetheless, all of these definitions share the common impression that LLSs are things that students use to enhance their second language learning in order to acquire or improve in the target language studied.

However, this research emphasizes only Oxford’s LLS taxonomy (1990). Oxford (1990) has developed two main categories of learning strategies: direct and indirect. “Direct strategies” is classified for behaviors which directly involve the target language and enhance language learning. It consists of three subdivisions: Memory, Cognitive, and Compensation strategies. “Indirect strategies” is classified for the opposite. It also consists of three subdivisions: Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies. Learners will use Memory strategies for remembering new information more effectively and recalling it when needed. Cognitive strategies are used to understand and

produce new language and link information with existing knowledge. Compensation strategies are used for helping learners to overcome a limitation or lack of knowledge of the four skills of the learners.

Learners will use Metacognitive strategies for getting the most out of language learning, such as centering learning, arranging and planning learning, and evaluating learning. Affective strategies emphasize emotional management. Social strategies emphasize the interaction of language learners with others in order to exchange or gain new knowledge.

There are two main reasons why LLSs are vital for learning and teaching language: for students themselves and for teachers.

For Students

LLSs are focused on and studied for the benefit of the students because LLSs are the salient keys for students to become good learners. For two decades, researchers have studied language learning strategies with good language students because they believe that these kinds of students model good language learner characteristics (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978; Stern, 1980; MacIntyre, 1994). However, educators and researchers have accepted that LLSs can be used well only when learners aware of using them (Oxford, 1990; Harris, 2003; Chamot, 2004).

For teachers

LLSs also help teachers teach more effectively. When teachers know the LLSs that their students use, they can then apply the LLSs to their class to raise students' awareness of LLSs and to train them to become better learners or to achieve the goals they set; by doing so, these teachers also become better language teachers (Atkinson, 1985; Bejarano, 1987; Oxford, Crookall,

Lavine, Cohen, Nyikos & Sutter, 1990; Lessard-Clouston, 1997). However, Chamot (2004) discovered that few researchers or teachers have conducted action research of language of instruction in teaching language learning strategies (such as Grenfell & Harris, 1999), especially for L2 learners, because of the language barrier, and this has hindered the ideal implementation of teaching LLSSs to students.

In brief, teaching and learning courses by using English as a medium of instruction at MFU has met many kinds of problems. However, to know these could bring learning strategies for students to overcome their barriers. The research could enable the university to design the right ways for teaching and to help students overcome their barriers successfully.

Methodology

This part will explain the subjects, the research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and statistical procedures.

Subjects

The subjects were 396 MFU students out of 4,335, excluding students in the School of Law because this school does not use English as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning. The subjects were 152 first year students out of 1,973, followed by 127 second year students out of 1,278, and 117 forth year students out of 1,087 respectively. There were 255 females and 141 males. Subjects were selected as an accidental sampling.

Instrument

A questionnaire was the chief device to collect data for this research. It was divided into three parts. The first part asked for the subject's

demographic data. Part two was about their language problems. And last part was about their language learning strategies usage. A brief sketch of how to construct each part of the questionnaire is presented.

Structure of the Questionnaire and Its Characteristics

Part one of the questionnaire is about students' demographic data. This part mainly investigates the student's basic information, English language background, English language competency, and the reasons why they chose to study at MFU.

Part two is based on asking about students' language problems. Overall, this part consisted of 44 items. The questions asked were mostly involved with the three main theories of language learning: linguistics problems (four common skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing), Sociocultural problems in second language learning, and barriers to intercultural communication. The first section of this part was designed based on Rubin and Thompson (1994). The other two sections were verified and used by Pawapatcharaudom (2007).

The last part is mostly focused on students' language learning strategies. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 was used as the main tool for this part because of its high reliability (.86- .95) in Cronbach's alpha (Oxford, 1990). This SILL 7.0 version consists of 50 items. It is designed for measuring the use of LLS by non-native English speaker students who study English as a second or foreign language. Oxford also claimed in 2003 that in the last 30 years, this SILL has been used widely and has been translated into more than 20 languages in dozens of publications around the world. Oxford has divided SILL into six main categories: Memory

strategies, Cognitive strategies, Compensation strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Affective strategies, and Social strategies. Each category was mentioned clearly in an earlier chapter. See the example of the questionnaire in Appendix.

Data Collection Procedures

The numbers of expected subjects were calculated by using Yamane's formula. Later they were carefully adjusted the number with the proportions of each major in each school that has students enrolled in the first year, second year, and fourth year.

After that three parts of questionnaire were distributed and collected. The three parts are biography data, LLPs, and LLSSs. Finally the data obtained was analyzed by SPSS 11.5 version.

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures

Data obtained from the students' demographic part was analyzed by frequency, and percentage. The students' problems and language learning strategies parts were analyzed by showing the Mean score (M) and the standard Deviation score (SD) based on the interpretation of Pawapatcharaudom (2007) and SILL (version 7.0) created by Oxford (1990).

Results

The subjects consisted of 396 students: 152 of the first year students, 127 of the second year students, and 117 of the fourth year students. Their ages were 18 to 25. The statistics calculated from both the LLP part and the SILL part were constituted as the main results in mean scores (M), and

standard deviation (SD). The overall of LLP questionnaire reliability is 0.96 and 0.94 for the reliability of LLS. The results are analyzed and described below.

The Results of Demographic data

The majority of the learners had studied English before studying in MFU (94.9%), only little had not been studied (5.1%). However, the percentage of the students who experienced going abroad was the opposite. Only 11.1 % used to go oversea while 88.9% never. Half of the subjects reported that their language proficiency when comparing with other students in the class was at “good” (56.4%), but it was dropped to the lower level or “fair” (56.4) when comparing with the natives. The subjects enjoyed learning English (88.9%). They also learned other languages—Chinese (29.9%), Japanese (19.7%), French (7.7%), Spanish and Korean (0.9%), and others (1.7%). About one third of the subjects reported that they did not study other language. (See Appendix A)

The reasons why the subjects wanted to learn English at MFU and their favorite experienced in language learning at MFU were also investigated and computed. All three years of the learners agreed that they wanted to study English at MFU because they were interested in the language (Y1: 73.23%, Y2 = 70.08%, and Y4: 65.81%), needed it for future career (Y1: 60.60%, Y2: 63.78%, and Y4: 56.41%), and required to take course for their graduation (Y1: 46.71%, Y2: 48.03, Y4: 50.43%). They reflected that their three most favorite experiences in language learning at MFU were “teachers” (Y1:72.22%, Y2:77.95%, and Y4: 70.94%). Year 1 and Year 2 students reported that their number two favorite was “friends” while Year 4 students thought “technology or multimedia” (48.72%). However, Year 1 and Year 2 students reported that their

third favorite experience in learning language was “technology” (Y1: 50.50% and Y2:48.82%) when Year 4 reported that their third appreciation in learning language was “classroom environment” (47%). The findings reveal that all three levels of the students think that “university environment” was their least favorite experience comparing with others in learning English language at MFU (Y1: 1.76%, Y2:2.36%, and Y4: 2.56% respectively). (See appendix A)

In addition, the subjects’ behavior and characteristic while studying at MFU were analyzed. The overall of Year 1 and Year 2 presented their learning behavior as “medium” (Y1:M= 3.42 and Y2:M= 3.38) while Y4 was at “high” (M=3.55). All three years shared the same “high” level in two behaviors which are “I try my best to be a good student” and “I have responsibility to learn in class and do assignment.” The results revealed that more good behaviors and characteristics in language learning are higher when they studied in higher year. Year 1 has 3 “high” good behaviors, Year 2 has 4 “high” good behaviors and Year 4 has 5. Apart from the two good behaviors shared in “high”, Year 1 reported that they were also looking to study English language course (M=3.53) while Year 2 revealed that they highly did go to class regularly (M=4.36) and did homework often (M= 3.99) and the Year 4 did all of them as “high.” In contrast, Year 4 reported that “I was always slept in class” as “medium” (M=2.53) while Year1 and Year 2 did it as “Low” (Year 1:M=2.39, Year 2:M=2.24). (See Appendix A)

The Results of All LLPs

Based on Pawapatcharaudom (2007), the English language learning problems experienced were classified into 5 levels: always = 5, usually = 4, occasionally = 3, rarely = 2, and never = 1. The overall extent to which MFU

students faced the language problem was at a “medium” level. There were only two items that were at a “high” level: item 4 of listening problem “I can understand classroom lectures in English,” and item 1 of reading problem “I can read academic textbooks in English.”

The Results and Application of LLP of the Overall

Table 1 The means and SD of problems in six categories faced by all students

(N=396)

Problems	M	Min.-Max.	SD	Interpretation
Writing skill	2.96	1.00-5.00	0.73	Medium
Sociocultural perspectives on second language learning	2.99	1.00-4.89	0.62	Medium
Speaking skill	3.12	1.00-5.00	0.56	Medium
Barrier to International Communication	3.13	1.00-5.00	0.59	Medium
Reading skill	3.16	1.17-5.00	0.62	Medium
Listening skill	3.21	1.50-5.00	0.53	Medium

From Table 1, it can be seen that all MFU students encountered the six difficulties in learning the English language at a medium level. The most serious problems faced are the “Writing skill problems,” ($M=2.96$), which show that the students sometimes have problems in their writing skill at a medium level. They were followed by “Sociocultural perspectives on second language learning problem” ($M=2.99$), “Speaking skill” ($M=3.12$), “Barrier to International Communication” ($M=3.13$), “Reading skill” ($M=3.16$), and “Listening skill”

($M=3.21$) respectively. These results will be explained more in the next sections within the context of each problem's category.

The Five Most Problematic English Tasks for MFU Students

The overall five most problematic English tasks for MFU students were at a medium level, which means that they sometimes had these problems. However, the two most serious problems were about students' production in learning the language. They found themselves in the most trouble when they had to write, followed by when they spoke out. The third serious problem in learning English at MFU were about their adjustments. They found it hard to give up their free time to associate with native speakers. This may be because that they did not know the places to go to meet native speakers, or that they were reluctant to do so. The last two serious problems were about students' listening problems ($M=2.66$) and students' reading problems ($M=2.68$). These two latter items show that students had fewer difficulties in the receptive way of learning English. The next section will explain the five least problematic tasks of English. (See Appendix D)

The Five Least Problematic English Tasks

Students hardly had any difficulty in passive learning techniques like listening ($M=3.53$) and reading ($M=3.53$). They mostly adapted well when they had to listen to lectures and read academic textbooks in English. This might be because every course at MFU uses English as a medium of instruction; therefore they could do these two tasks without hesitation. In other words, they had confidence to do these two tasks because they found that they could do them without errors. The next least problem for students who study at MFU was entertaining themselves, like reading magazines in English. They could read

magazines and only had problems sometimes. Then, they found that they had less problems adapting themselves to a new environment or culture ($M=3.43$), followed by understanding the comments from the English speakers ($M=3.40$). The next part will reveal the results of LLS used by the MFU students. (See Appendix E)

The Results of All LLS that Overall MFU Students Used

Table 2 Frequency for categories of strategies used by all MFU students
($N=396$)

Language Learning Strategies	No. of items	M	Ranked Order	Average Frequency of Use of Strategies
Metacognitive strategies	9	3.16	1	Sometimes Used (medium)
Social strategies	6	3.13	2	Sometimes Used (medium)
Compensation strategies	6	3.10	3	Sometimes Used (medium)
Cognitive strategies	14	3.08	4	Sometimes Used (medium)
Memory strategies	9	3.05	5	Sometimes Used (medium)
Affective strategies	6	2.98	6	Sometimes Used (medium)

The results displayed in Table 2 show that overall MFU students used all six LLS categories at a medium level. The most frequently used was Metacognitive strategies ($M=3.16$). The following frequently used LLS were

Social strategies ($M=3.13$), Compensation strategies ($M=3.10$), Cognitive strategies ($M=3.08$), Memory strategies ($M=3.05$), and Affective strategies ($M=2.98$) respectively.

MFU students had language learning problems in six categories (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Sociocultural perspectives on second language learning, and barriers to international communication) at the medium level. Also they used all six language learning strategies (Memory strategies, Cognitive strategies, Compensation strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Affective strategies, and Social strategies) to overcome their barriers. Thus, the overall LLP faced and LLS used were correlated to each other at 0.01 in all pairs. (See Appendix F)

The Comparison of Results between Year 1, Year 2, and Year 4

Students for Language Learning Problems, year one students faced 'Writing problem' the most when they first came or adjusted themselves to study. Moreover, this problem decreased when they became fourth year students. However, "Writing skill problem" was still the second most common problem for students to face. Thus, the overall problem for all years was in this category ($M=2.96$). The second difficulty that the first and the second year students found was sociocultural problem, but the fourth year students thought that it was their most common problem when studying the English language at the university. Apart from "Writing skill problems", another problem was Speaking. Year one students thought that Barriers to international communication came first, while the other two years thought that they could overcome that better than compared to speaking out. It may be interpreted that the higher level of students needed more productive or active skills to present

their projects or to submit their assignments, while the first year students would focus more on the new barriers. The fifth most problems in “Reading” and the sixth most problems, “Listening”, all share the same rank. (See Appendix G)

For Language Learning Strategies, first year and second year students used “Metacognitive” strategies to learn the most frequently. However, when their level of study at MFU changed, the fourth year students had slightly different results. The fourth year students used “Social” strategies more than Metacognitive; this could be interpreted that they did not focus on being better at their learning, but more on relationships with friends and tended to ask for help with native speakers. Nonetheless, these first two most frequently used strategies (Metacognitive and Social strategies) could indicate MFU students’ society and ways they learn language. They love to be better but also overcome their obstacles with friends. The next two strategies that students used were “Compensation” and “Cognitive” strategies. First year students revealed more effort in learning by practicing and reviewing their lessons than the higher level students. On the other hand, the higher level students (Year 2 and Year 4) challenged themselves by compromising and guessing unfamiliar input more than the first year students. However, in other ways these students also needed to practice and be aware of what they were doing in learning the English language. The fifth learning strategies category used by all students was Memory strategies. Students shared the same habits of memorizing new input like new vocabulary and lessons at a medium level (Sometimes used that). The least frequently used was Affective strategies. In addition, Appendix H reveals that the first year students used all language learning strategies less frequently. Their use of learning strategies more frequently was improved when

they studied at the higher level, but still at the same level, a medium level. (See Appendix H)

Conclusion

The overall results obtained from the two main parts: LLP and LLS were the main important data investigated in this study. They were all combined in one survey to collect data from MFU students in different levels: first year, second year, and fourth year. The overall LLP and LLS were at a medium level. They sometimes faced all six LLP categories (Writing, Sociocultural perspectives, Speaking, Barriers to international communication, Reading, and Listening) and six LLS categories (Metacognitive, Social, Compensation, Cognitive, Memory, and Affective). The most difficulties in learning language from the previous research has shared the same result which is “writing skills.” In addition, the correlations of these two issues are significantly related in a positive way at 0.01.

The results show that students used Metacognitive strategies the most because they wanted to be better. The results of the present study are also supported by previous research (Thongsongsee, 1998; Pawapatcharaudom, 2007). MFU learners watched movies and TV shows in English to improve their language learning the most. However, from these results students had fewer problems with listening skills while Pawapatcharaudom’s subjects reported in speaking skills. The receptive skills like listening and reading skills seemed like they weren’t big problems for students at any level (in their perceptions), but they did think that their reading and writing were more problematic.

Nevertheless, use of all language learning strategies or techniques was gradually increased when students studied at the higher levels. In contrast, higher levels of students had more problems in writing ($M=2.84$ for year 1, $M=2.94$ for year 2, and $M=3.02$ for year 4 respectively).

Suggestions of Further Studies

The findings of this study are very useful for both teachers and students, because they will bring awareness to teachers and students about different language learning problems and language learning strategies. Consequently, students can notice their language problem areas, and choose the strategies to help overcome them with their own learning styles to achieve their goals in learning by using English as a medium of instruction or in learning the English language gradually. The following section will recommend three areas which will be useful for the further study.

Firstly, this study was conducted on MFU students with different language learning backgrounds. Thus, further studies need to include other variables, such as their existing grades overall, existing grades of their English proficiency, and their previous history of English proficiency.

Secondly, this study investigated the language learning problems and strategies used with the samples that were mostly Thai students (accidental sampling). Thus, this research could not be generalized for all students studying at Mae Fah Luang University (especially for non-Thais), further studies should be conducted with larger numbers of non-Thai students.

Thirdly, the present study utilized a questionnaire for gathering data. It could show the statistics, but could not gain in-depth information about why

and how students faced the language learning problems, and why they used or did not use the strategies mentioned. Thus, further research should use more techniques in the data collection such as interviewing, observation, and journal writing.

In conclusion, language learning problems and learning strategies will continue to be subjects of interests. The less problems in language learning that any country's citizens have, the better advantages that nation will gain. Thus, when the citizens of any country aware of the problems which they might have when they learn other languages, and they know how to choose the appropriate techniques to reduce those barriers, they also can become real life-long learners who can increase their own self values, and the overall image of the country.

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Appendix

A: Demographic data of participants

(Year 1: N=152; Year 2: N=127; Year 4: N=117)

Demographic data (1)		Year 1 (N=152)		Year 2 (N=127)		Year 4 (N=117)	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	141	35.6	49	38.6	37	31.6
	Female	255	64.4	78	61.4	80	68.4
School (Faculty)	Arts	118	29.8	42	33.1	40	34.2
	Science	11	2.8	3	2.4	2	1.7
	Management	138	34.8	48	37.8	42	35.9
	IT	66	16.7	18	14.2	26	22.2
	Agriculture	12	3.0	1	0.8	6	5.1
	Inds.						
	Cosmetics	10	2.5	1	0.8	1	0.9
	Health Science	34	8.6	14	11.0	0	0
	Nurse	7	1.8	0	0	0	0
Major	TLC	5	1.3	5	3.9	0	0
	EN	13.6	13.6	17	13.4	20	17.1
	BC	14.4	14.4	20	15.7	20	17.1
	BIO	2.3	2.3	2	0.8	2	1.7
	ACC	3.6	6.3	7	1.6	12	10.3
	ECO	3.5	3.5	6	5.5	2	1.7
	BA	8.1	8.1	10	4.7	10	8.5
	TR	8.8	8.8	15	7.9	6	5.1
	HIM	6.1	6.1	10	11.8	12	10.3
	MIT	2.8	2.8	4	7.9	3	2.6
	CS	2.8	2.8	2	3.1	5	4.3
	SE	2.3	2.3	3	1.6	3	2.6
	MTA	3.3	3.3	3	2.4	6	5.1
	CE	3.5	3.5	4	3.1	6	5.1
	ICE	2.0	2.0	2	1.6	3	2.6
	FT	2.0	2.0	1	0.8	3	2.6
	PTP	0.8	0.8	0	0	3	2.6
	CSC	2.5	2.5	1	0.8	1	0.9
	ATM	2.5	2.5	4	3.1	0	0
	PSCT	2.5	2.5	5	3.9	0	0
	PUBH	3.5	3.5	5	3.9	0	0
	TCL	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0
	CHM	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0
	AVI	2.0	2.0	0	0	0	0
	NS	1.8	1.8	0	0	0	0

Demographic data (1)	Year 1 (N=152)		Year 2 (N=127)		Year 4 (N=117)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
In your previous degree, have you studied English?	Yes 371	93.7	116	91.3	111	94.9
	No 25	6.3	11	8.7	6	5.1
Studied abroad experience	Yes 56	14.1	20	15.7	13	11.1
	No 340	85.9	107	84.3	104	88.9
Self-evaluation in their language proficiency compared with other students in your class.	Excellent 10	2.5	1	0.8	4	3.4
	Good 126	31.8	31	24.4	44	56.4
	Fair 241	60.9	83	65.4	66	37.6
	Poor 19	4.8	9	7.1	3	3.4
Self-evaluation in their language proficiency compared with native speakers	Excellent 6	1.5	3	2.4	3	2.6
	Good 84	21.2	15	11.8	28	23.9
	Fair 232	58.6	78	61.4	66	56.4
	Poor 74	18.7	31	24.4	20	17.1
Attitude to study English language (enjoy or not)	Yes 350	88.4	104	81.9	104	88.9
	No 46	11.6	23	18.1	13	11.1
Other language that students have studied	None 178	44.9	55	43.3	46	39.3
	Japanese 58	14.6	18	14.2	23	19.7
	Chinese 113	28.5	34	26.8	35	29.9
	Spanish 3	0.8	0	0	1	0.9
	Korean 11	2.8	6	4.7	1	0.9
	French 24	6.1	10	7.9	9	7.7
	German 5	1.3	3	2.4	0	0
	Others 4	1.0	1	0.8	2	1.7

B: Example of LLP questions

Item	Listening skill problems	Item	Reading skill problems
10.	I never have a listening problem.	6.	I never have a reading problem.
3.	I can understand an attitude, customs, and social circumstances of a native speaker.	4.	I can understand English idioms.
7.	I participate group discussions in English.	5.	I can explain the main idea and summary the passage.
6.	I participate group discussions in English.	3.	I can guess the meaning of new vocabulary.
2.	I can understand a native speaker speaking at normal speed.	2.	I can read magazine in English.
1.	I understand the tone of voice of a native speaker.	1.	I can read academic textbooks in English.

8.	I feel comfortable in listening to a native speaker instructor in the classroom.	Item	Writing skill problems
9.	I can understand the main idea of the native speaker instructor.	9.	I never have a writing problem.
5.	I can understand comments given by native English speakers.	5.	I can use perfectly grammatical rules in writing any papers.
4.	I can understand classroom lectures in English.	7.	I have an adequate English vocabulary for writing essays.
Item	Speaking skill problems	8.	I am able to develop a suitable structure for the content.
10.	I never have a speaking problem	4.	I can write an essay within limited time.
4.	I have an adequate English vocabulary for effective speaking.	6.	I can choose appropriate vocabulary to write my paper.
2.	I can have a formal conversation in English.	3.	I can paraphrase English passages.
5.	I can explain my idea clearly in English.	1.	I can write an academic paper in English.
9.	I feel comfortable in talking with a native speaker instructor in the classroom.	Item	Sociocultural on second language learning
3.	I can perform academic presentation in English in the classroom	1.	I spend my free time to associate with native speakers.
7.	I find it easy to express myself in English.	2.	I like to be an English society.
1.	I can have an informal conversation in English	4.	I pay close attention to thoughts and feelings of other people with whom I interact in English language.
8.	I can ask questions in English in the classroom	3.	I like to make new friends especially English native speakers.
6.	My friend, a native speaker, understands my pronunciation.		
Item	Barrier to international communication		
1.	Mr. Thomas Cook is an American. He never explains the lesson when his friends have questions. I don't think I can justify others Americans like Mr. Thomas Cook.	2.	When I have a presentation for acting out in class, I rehearse it only 2-3 times to confide myself.
3.	I can adapt myself with new environment/ culture.	4.	When I communicate with an English native speaker, I am never ashamed about my pronunciation.

C: Example of LLS: 50 Questions of SILL 7.0 version (Oxford, 1990)

Memory Strategies (1-9)	Cognitive strategies (10-23)	Compensation strategies (24-29)
<p>1. I think of relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English.</p> <p>2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.</p> <p>3. I connect the sound of a new English word or picture of word to help me remember.</p> <p>4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.</p> <p>5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.</p> <p>6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.</p> <p>7. I physically cut out new English words.</p> <p>8. I review English lessons often.</p> <p>9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.</p>	<p>10. I say or write new English words several times.</p> <p>11. I try to talk like native English speakers.</p> <p>12. I practice the sounds of English.</p> <p>13. I use the English words I know in different ways.</p> <p>14. I start conversation in English.</p> <p>15. I watch English language TV show spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.</p> <p>16. I read for pleasure in English.</p> <p>17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.</p> <p>18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.</p> <p>19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.</p> <p>20. I try to find patterns in English.</p> <p>21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.</p> <p>22. I try not to translate word-for-word.</p> <p>23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.</p>	<p>24. To understand unfamiliar words, I make guesses.</p> <p>25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.</p> <p>26. I make up new words if I don't know the right ones in English.</p> <p>27. I read English without looking up every new word.</p> <p>28. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.</p> <p>29. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.</p>

Metacognitive strategies (30-38)	Affective strategies (39-44)	Social strategies (45-50)
<p>30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.</p> <p>31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.</p> <p>32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.</p> <p>33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.</p> <p>34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.</p> <p>35. I look for people I can talk to in English.</p> <p>36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.</p> <p>37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.</p> <p>38. I think about my progress in learning English.</p>	<p>39. I talk to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.</p> <p>40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am studying or using English.</p> <p>41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.</p> <p>42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.</p> <p>43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.</p> <p>44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.</p>	<p>45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.</p> <p>46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.</p> <p>47. I practice English with other students.</p> <p>48. I ask for the help from English speakers.</p> <p>49. I ask questions in English.</p> <p>50. I try to learn about the cultures of English speakers.</p>

D: The Five Most Problematic English Tasks

No.	Problem	M	Problem category	Interpretation
1.	I never have a writing problem.	2.52	Writing	Medium
2.	I never have a speaking problem	2.53	Speaking	Medium
3.	I spend my free time associating with native speakers.	2.62	Socio culture	Medium
4.	I never have a listening problem.	2.66	Listening	Medium
5.	I never have a reading problem.	2.68	Reading	Medium

E: The Five Least Problematic English Tasks

No.	Problem	M	Problem category	Interpretation
1.	I can understand classroom lectures in English.	3.53	Listening	High
2.	I can read academic textbooks in English.	3.53	Reading	High
3.	I can read magazines in English.	3.43	Reading	Medium
4.	I can adapt myself to a new environment/culture.	3.43	Barriers	Medium
5.	I can understand comments given by native English speakers.	3.40	Listening	Medium

F: The Correlations between LLP and LLS

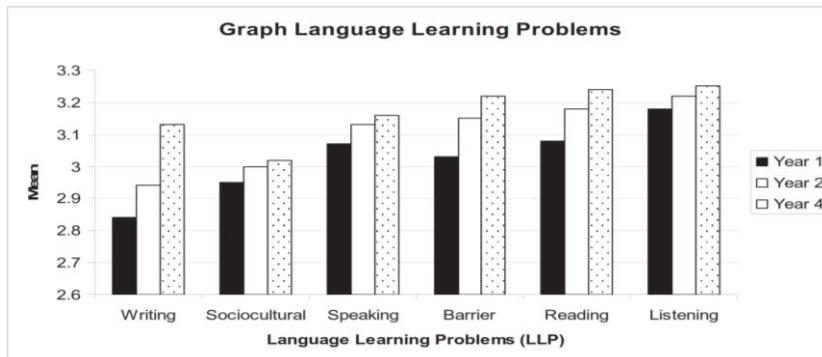
Correlations of Overall 4 Years (N=396)

Pearson Correlation	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Socio-cultural	Barriers to international
Metacognitive	.424(**)	.515(**)	.454(**)	.408(**)	.482(**)	.298(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Social	.412(**)	.437(**)	.410(**)	.324(**)	.467(**)	.327(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Compensation	.310(**)	.385(**)	.387(**)	.345(**)	.324(**)	.326(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Cognitive	.439(**)	.500(**)	.422(**)	.428(**)	.452(**)	.394(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Memory	.343(**)	.372(**)	.340(**)	.331(**)	.398(**)	.298(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Affective	.314(**)	.436(**)	.379(**)	.373(**)	.361(**)	.344(**)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

G: The Comparison of LLP between Year 1, 2, and 4 Students



H: The Comparison of LLS between Year 1, 2, and 4 Students

