

Research Article

STRATEGIES USED IN VOCABULARY LEARNING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by the first year as well as the second year English students at the department of Thai and foreign languages, Kasetsart University Chalermphrakiat Sakonnakhon Province Campus, and to compare the differences of strategies being used among them. The data were collected from 60 English students who were studying in the first and the second year in the second semester of 2016. Three instruments using in the study were questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and think-aloud method. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by statistical procedures of percentage frequency, mean, and standard deviation, while the analysis of information from the semi-interview and think-aloud method had been done by studying participants' opinions. According to determination strategies, it found that 96.6% of the first year students usually searched internet to check their words for accuracy, while 96.6% of the second year students usually used English- Thai dictionary for finding the meaning of the words. For social strategies, it found that 89.9% of the first year and the second year students usually asked their friends to help them for the meaning of new words. In order to remember the meaning of word in term of memory strategies, it found that 96.6% of the first year English students usually used a highlight pen to emphasize words meaning, but 89.8% of the second year students used an underline or a cycle words to help them remember meaning of new words. In the

cognitive strategies, it found that 93.3% of the first year students and 89.9% of the second year students usually took a list of words in class when they wanted to understand the meaning of new words. It also found that 96.5% of the first year students usually used mobile phone to learn new vocabulary by switching language from Thai to English or English to Thai. However, 89.9% of the second year students found the meaning of English words from what they saw.

Keywords: VLS, Language Learning Strategies, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

Introduction

Vocabulary is very important for language learners. When the learners learn a foreign language, it is important for them to remember many vocabularies as they are the meaning container. Learners can speak, write and, read a language because they know vocabulary. Without vocabulary, the communication cannot take place. Even learning vocabulary is the easiest thing in studying a language, but it is very hard to do. The studies of Nation (1990), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) found that vocabulary learning of the second language learners can help them remember many vocabularies for effective communication. Nation (2001) argues that difficulty of vocabulary can make a lot of the problem in learning English. Furthermore, Mingsakoon (2003) states that many Thai students get confused when they see difficult words in texts because they have a little chance to use those words at home. In addition,

learners lack the technique for learning vocabulary from teacher. In the study of problem of vocabulary learning, Intarapaserit (2005) found that vocabulary learning still the main problem of learners who learn a foreign language. The problem that exists in the study language vocabulary learning is the learner forgetting vocabulary. When trying to remember vocabulary, some learners like to remember by seeing group words of vocabulary. According to Cunningsworth and Ferst, (1992) learners do not remember words alphabetical as in shown in dictionaries because remembering by grouping words is easier to image them than remembering words by each word as in dictionaries. In the studying of vocabulary learning strategies to show how the use of various VLS can benefit the learners, Schmitt (1997) studied the VLS in Japan. In his study, there were 600 participants who were taking EFL classes. He had four

groups of participants; 150 junior high school students, 150 high school, 150 university students, and 150 adult learners. His study showed that Japanese learners (95%) often use bilingual dictionaries in learning L2 vocabularies. Interestingly, he also found that there were six most-used strategies that Japanese learners use to help them for learning vocabularies effectively. These strategies are bilingual dictionary, written repetition, verbal repetition, say new words aloud, study a word's spelling, and take note in class.

In order to find out what vocabulary learning strategies a learner used, Satta-Udom (2007) studied Language Learning Strategies (LLS) of the first year students at Mahidol University in 2006 academic year. In this study, he had 570 participants, 477 science students and 123 non-science students. SILL questionnaire (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) was used as a tool for collecting data. All six categories, memory, cognitive, compensation, metaconitive, affective, and social were used for classification of learner strategies. He found that the most frequently used strategy was compensation and the less

frequently used was social strategies. The most frequently strategy used by science students was compensation strategies, and the less frequently strategy used was social strategies. However, the most frequently strategy used by non-science students was metacognitive strategies, and the less frequently used was memory strategies. He also found that the non-science students often used social strategies more than the science students.

Research Questions

This study aimed at the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by students of English who were studying in the first year and second year at the Department of Thai and foreign languages, Kasetsart University Chalermpkrakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus. The research questions were as follows;

1. What vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) do the first year English students often use for finding the meaning of a new word?
2. What vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) do the second year English students often use for finding the meaning of a new word?

Purposes of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by the first year as well as the second year English students, and to compare the differences of strategies being used among them.

Scopes of the study

1. The aim of this study was to study vocabulary learning strategy of the first and the second year English students at the Department of Thai and foreign languages, Kasetsart University, Chalermphrakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus.

2. The participants of this study were 60 English students. There were 30 students in the first year and another 30 students from the second year, at the Department of Thai and foreign languages, Kasetsart University, Chalermphrakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus.

Conceptual Framework

This study focused on the main five categories of VLS (Schmitt, 1997), Determination Strategies (DET), Social strategies (SOC), Memory Strategies (MEM),

Cognitive Strategies (COG), and Metacognitive Strategies (MET).

Participants

The participants of this study were 60 English students who were studying in the first year and the second year, in the second semester, academic year 2016, at Thai and foreign languages Department ,Kasetsart University, Chalermphrakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus.

Data collection

In this study, questionnaire, semi-structure interview, and think aloud method were used as the instruments. The questionnaire was designed to collect background information and to identify the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by the participants. There were two parts in questionnaire. Part one, students were asked about general information, personal background such as name, surname, class, year of study, and attitudes towards learning English. Part two, they were asked to rate the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) according to their usage.

Table 1 Scale and interpretation of six levels of opinions in the questionnaire

Levels of opinions	Meaning	Interpretation
6	Always	Positive (Most-used)
5	Usually	
4	Often	
3	Occasionally	Negative (Less-used)
2	Seldom	
1	Never	

The concept about statistical value of the participants' answer in the questionnaire was considered by using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 by Oxford (1990) as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Interpretation of data in questionnaire

Interpretation	Mean	Attitude
Usually used	4.5-6.0	Positive attitude (more often used)
Often used	3.5-4.4	
Occasionally used	2.5-3.4	Negative attitude (less often used)
Seldom used	1.0-2.4	

Data Analysis

The data from questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and think-aloud method were carefully checked and analyzed. The data from the questionnaire was analyzed by using Microsoft Office Excel 2010 for finding out 60 participants' percentage (Frequency, Mean, and SD). The results of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by the first year and second year English students were compared and summarized. However, data from the semi-interview was analyzed by studying participants' opinions and listed according to their strategies used. In think-aloud

method, the data were analyzed, and presented in term of percentages of the frequencies.

Results

The result of the study is showed according to research Question. The question no.1, What vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) do the first year English students often use for finding the meaning of a new word?

To answers the first question, the results of VLS used by the first year English students showed in table 3.

Table 3 Most-and less used VLS of the first year students

Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Frequency	Mean	SD	Result
Search your words on the Internet to check for accuracy	96.6	4.86	0.712	Usually
Find the meaning from English-English dictionary	16.6	4.16	0.699	Seldom
Ask a good student in your class	89.9	4.66	0.992	Usually
Ask your teacher to translate the meaning from Thai to English or English to Thai	23.2	4.43	1.165	Seldom
Use a highlight pen to emphasize on words	96.6	4.73	0.828	Usually
Underline or cycle words	16.6	4.63	9.999	Seldom
Take notes in class when you get the meaning of new words	93.3	4.40	0.669	Usually
Write a diary in English	33.3	3.93	1.112	Seldom
Change language on mobile phone from Thai to English	96.5	4.70	0.995	Usually
Read English newspaper	23.3	4.20	1.206	Seldom

In Determination Strategies, 96.6% of the first year students usually searched the internet to check their words for accuracy. However, 16.6% of them seldom used English-English dictionary to find the meaning of words. In the social strategies, 89.9% of them usually asked a friend in their class, but 23.2% of them seldom asked their teachers to translate the meaning from Thai

to English or from English to Thai. In the memory strategies, 96.6% of the first year English students usually used a highlight pen to emphasize on words, but only 16.6% of them seldom used an underline or a cycle words. In the cognitive strategies, 93.3% of the first year students usually took note in class when they wanted to get the meaning of new words. Nevertheless 33.3%

of them seldom wrote a diary in English. In the metacognitive strategies 96.5% of the first year English students usually changed language on mobile phone from Thai to English. However, 23.3% of them seldom read English newspaper. These results could be showed in the figure 1.

memory strategies, the color of highlight pen could help the first year students remember the words than underline or cycle words. When the students used a highlight pen to emphasize on words, they could remember words from color better than underline or cycle them. In the cognitive strategies, when

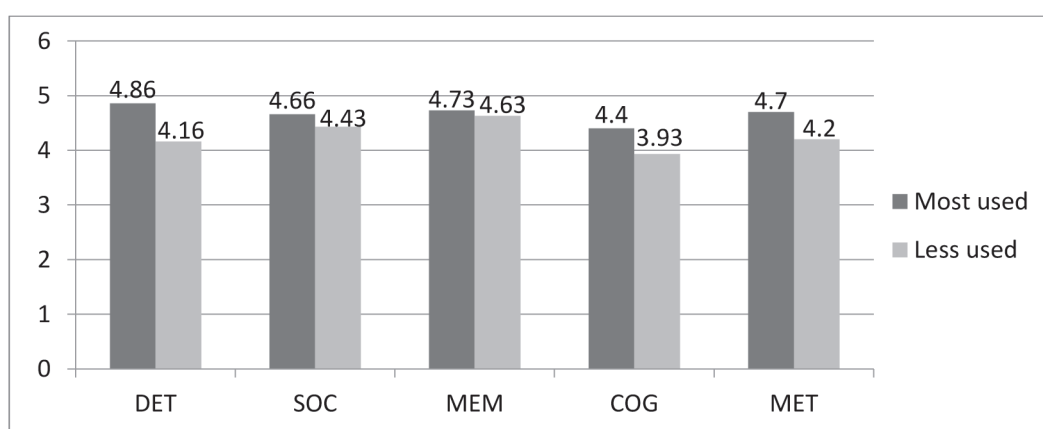


Figure 1 The results of the most-less used VLS of the first year English students

Analysis of the most-and the less used VLS of the first year English students

In the determination strategies, many students stated that using the internet for searching words was easier and faster for them in finding the meaning and function of the words. In the social strategies, many students would rather ask their friends than their teachers because they felt convenience that they could ask their friends at any time. But for teachers, they could only ask them only in class. In the

students wanted to know the meaning of new words, they took notes of new words. In the metacognitive strategies, students preferred using mobile phone to reading the text in newspaper as it was boring for them.

Results from the semi-structure interview of the first year English students

In this part, five of the first year English students were asked for the interview. The first student stated she always

used paper dictionary and mobile phone dictionary when she did not understand how to use the words. She also searched the Internet to find word meaning because it was easier for her. She had been using the strategies for 5 years then. Interestingly, the student no.2 said that she usually guessed the meaning of words from the related word meaning. For example: the word ‘malnutrition’ which means *not having enough food to eat*. At first she knew the meaning of the word ‘nutrition’ but the word preceding ‘nutrition’ is ‘mal’ which is French. Fortunately, she had studied French when she was in high school, so she knew the meaning of ‘mal’ which means *bad*. Furthermore, she also stated that she was good at remembering words and interested

in learning vocabularies everywhere and every time from everything in her daily life, whether it was computer games, movies, music, textbooks, etc. When she wanted to find word, she always picked up her mobile phone dictionary and searched for the meaning. Similarly, students no.3, no.4 and no.5 stated that they liked to search the meaning of words from the Internet, and they used mobile phone dictionary because it was easy way to find a word meaning.

To answer the research question no.2, what vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) do the second year students often use for finding the meaning of a new word?, the results of VLS used by the second year English student showed in table 4.

Table 4: The most-and less used VLS of the second year students

Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Frequency	Mean	SD	Result
Determination Strategies (DET)				
Find the meaning from English-Thai dictionary	96.6	5.10	0.845	Usually
Analyze affixes and roots to guess the meanings of words (ex. “restart – re means do it again)	16.6	4.40	1.003	Seldom
Social Strategies (SOC)				
Ask a good student in your class	89.9	4.66	1.167	Usually
Ask your teacher to check your words in the sentence for accuracy	36.6	3.83	1.137	Seldom
Ask online English teachers by leaving a message	36.6	3.83	1.232	Seldom
Memory Strategies (MEM)				
Underline or cycle words	89.8	4.80	0.961	Usually
Write large words	19.9	4.06	0.868	Seldom
Cognitive Strategies (COG)				
Take notes in class when you get the meaning of new words	89.9	4.76	1.006	Usually
Write a diary in English	53.2	3.63	1.474	Seldom
Metacognitive Strategies (MET)				
Find English words from what you see	89.9	4.86	0.95	Usually
Read English newspaper	46.6	3.63	1.104	Seldom

From the Determination Strategies, it found that 96.6% of the second year English students usually used English-Thai dictionary for finding the meaning of words. 16.6% of the students, however, seldom analyzed affixes and roots to guess the words meanings. 89.9% of the students in the Social Strategies usually asked friends in their class. Asking teachers to check words meaning in the sentence for accuracy, and asking online English teachers by leaving a message were seldom used. In the Memory Strategies, 89.8 % of the students liked to remember new words

by underlining or cycling words. However, only 19.9% of them seldom wrote large words for helping them remember. In the Cognitive Strategies, 89.9% of the students usually took notes in class when they got the meaning of new words. 53.2% of them, in contrast, seldom wrote a diary in English to help them improve vocabulary skill. In the Metacognitive Strategies, 89.9% of the students usually found the meaning of English words from what they saw. On the other hands, only 46.6% of them liked to read English newspaper. These results can be seen in the figure 2.

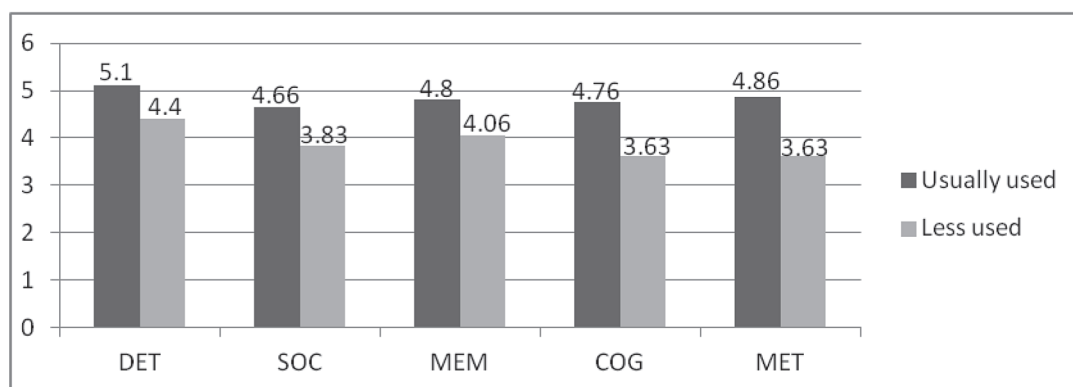


Figure 2 The results of the most-less used VLS of the second year students

Analysis of the most-and the less used VLS of the second year English students

In the Determination Strategies, almost all the students liked to find words from English- Thai dictionary because they wanted to make sure about the meaning of words in Thai, and they did not want to make a mistake from guessing word by analyzing affixes and roots. This is because the second year English students were studying Thai English and English Thai translation in the second semester, 2016. For the Social Strategies, they asked their friends more than their teachers because of their convenience. For the Memory Strategies, emphasizing on words by underlining or cycling word could help them to remember the words better than writing them in a bigger size. In the Cognitive Strategies, taking notes for new words could help them to learn new words better than writing a diary. In the Metacognitive Strategies, students tried to learn new words from the environments instead of reading newspapers as it was boring for them.

The results according to the semi-structure interview of the second year English students, it found that the students no.6, no.7, and no.8 used many different strategies to find the word meaning

such as guessing meaning of words from context, used English – English dictionary, used English – Thai dictionary, used smart phone dictionary, searched on Google etc. They said that these strategies were easy, convenience and very much helpful. From the interview of student no. 9, it found that many strategies were used when she wanted to find the meaning of new words. Firstly, she used Collins Learner Dictionary when she wanted to know the meaning of new word in English. Next, she used Long do Online Dictionary if she did not understand definition of the word in the Collins Dictionary. She consulted this dictionary because she wanted to make sure that she understood the meaning in Thai exactly. Then she used Oxford Learner Dictionary as she wanted to see more examples of the word usages. From the interview, student no. 10 said that she guessed a word meaning from its prefix and suffix. In addition, she also guessed the meaning of words by considering the tenses and other words surrounded them. She always consulted English Thai dictionary if she was confused about its meaning. When she had a problem of the word structure, she would ask the teacher for more information about word meaning.

Think-aloud Results

The first year and the second year English students were asked to read aloud the same text. When the students read the text, they had more strategies to use for finding the new words meaning. This

happened because there were total 173 new words in the text that they were reading and many of them were considered difficult. The results from the reading were analyzed, and were showed in percentages as in table 5.

Table 5 :The comparison of the strategies used in think-aloud method

Strategies	The first year students		The second year students	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
1. Use mobile phone dictionary	4	26.66	4	26.66
2. Remember words from movie	2	13.33	0	0
3. Analyze part of speech of words	1	6.66	1	6.66
4. Use English-English dictionary	2	13.33	1	6.66
5. Remember from the classroom	4	26.66	2	13.33
6. Use the Google translate	2	13.33	2	13.33
7. Guess words	2	13.33	2	13.33
8. Ask friends	2	13.33	1	6.66
9. Ask someone	1	6.66	2	13.33
10. Listen to English music	1	6.66	0	0
11. Pass words	1	6.66	0	0
12. Guess the function	0	0	3	20
13. Consider both prefix and suffix	1	6.66	1	6.66
14. Remember from conversation	1	6.66	2	13.33
15. Use English-Thai dictionary	1	6.66	3	20

Interestingly, almost all of the students preferred to find out the meaning of new words by using mobile phone dictionary. Most of them solved problem of word meaning in this way because it was the only way that they could get the meaning of the new words easier and faster. From the table 5, it showed that the first year English student could learn new words from a movie, while the second year students did not do it. The first year English students preferred English-English dictionary, whereas many of the second year students used Thai-English dictionary instead. In term of conversation, it showed that the second year students learned more new words in this way than the first year students.

Conclusion

Boonnoon, S. (2019) studied the use of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) by undergraduate Thai EFL students doing an academic reading course at Kasetsart University Chalermprakit Sakonnakhon campus. In her study, a group of 267 Thai undergraduate students purposively selected from across four academic majors, Business major (BM), Engineering major (EM), Agriculture major (AM), and Health science major (HM). The results revealed that the students were moderate users of VLS, with

dictionary and note-taking strategies being reported as the most frequently used VLS and selective attention the least frequently used VLS.

By contrast, the results of this study found that the first year English students usually searched the Internet to check their words for accuracy while they seldom used English-English dictionary to find the words meaning. In addition, they usually asked friends in their class, but they seldom asked their teachers for word meaning, or asked them to translate the meaning of word from Thai to English or from English to Thai. Furthermore, the first year students usually used a highlight pen to emphasize on words, but they seldom used an underline or a cycle words.

Many of them usually took note in class when they got the meaning of new words, but they seldom wrote a diary in English. In addition, they usually changed language on mobile phone from Thai to English to find a meaning of new word. It could be concluded from the finding that using the internet was a good way to find and check words for the first year students because they did not only want to know the meaning of words but they also wanted to know how to use words correctly. However, using English-English dictionary to find words

meaning was not the way they liked to use.

However, the second year English students usually used English- Thai dictionary to find the meaning of words. They seldom analyzed affixes and roots to guess the meanings of words as they have already studied word structure course. They usually asked friends in the class for word meaning, however, they seldom asked teachers to check words meaning in the sentence for accuracy, or ask online English teachers. These students remembered new word by underlining or cycling. The second year English students usually took notes in class when they have got the meaning of new words. They liked to learn new words from things around them. In compare to the first year students, it found that the second year students paid more attention to the details and the usage of the words than the first year. In term of vocabulary competence, the second year English student seemed to acquire details of vocabulary more than the first year English students. However this result differs from the finding of Dokchandra, D.(2018) who investigated the competence of vocabulary in term of collocation of 153 students, the 2nd-, 3rd-, and 4th-year students of English. The participants enrolled in the second semester of academic year 2017 at Kasetsart

University, Chalermprakit Sakonnakhon campus. The results of his study showed that the whole participants had a ‘moderate level’ of collocation competence. They were not significantly different in terms of their collocation competence when it comes to their different years of studies.

In this study, the results from the semi-structure interview indicated that most of the first year students searched the meaning of new words from the Internet and they usually used dictionary on mobile phone very much because it was easier way to find the word meaning. By contrast, the second year English student liked to uses many different ways to find word meaning such as guessing meaning from context, using English – English dictionary, using English – Thai dictionary, using their smart phone, and searching meaning of words from Google.

In addition, the results from the think-aloud method found that the most of the first year students like to use the mobile phone dictionary to find the meaning of words in the text. Interestingly, many of them could remember many vocabularies from their classroom and used them in reading the text. However, most of the second year English students used mobile phone dictionary to find the meaning of

words and more word details in their finding, like guessing the function of words, and using English-Thai dictionary for consulting.

Suggestions and Recommendations

All information in this study hawed the behaviors of vocabulary learning strategies of students who were studying in the first year and the second year at the Department of Thai and foreign languages, Kasetsart University, Chalermphrakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus. The further study could be carried out for student studying in the third year and the final year to see the differences between the first year and

second year student. In the future, the study on vocabulary learning strategies can be carried out on the individuals' differences of language learners from elementary to high school level. It can be conducted both in qualitative and quantitative approaches. In addition, it is important to study the effect of the first language in learning English vocabulary in monolingual context. The future study should consider the effective of teaching methods and classroom atmosphere on vocabulary learning strategies. This could be very helpful to get better understanding of the relevant strategies.

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