

กลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษในกระบวนการเขียน: กรณีศึกษาผู้เรียน ภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย

Language Learning Strategies in the Writing Process: A Case Study of Thai EFL Learner

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยแบบกรณีศึกษาชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาพฤติกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาของผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย โดยศึกษาพฤติกรรมการใช้ในแต่ละขั้นตอนของงานเขียน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลครั้งนี้ คือตัวอย่างงานเขียนและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยพิจารณาจากการจำแนก 3 ประเภท ได้แก่ กลยุทธ์อภิปัญญา (Metacognitive strategies) กลยุทธ์ทางสังคมและอารมณ์ (Social Affective Strategies) และกลยุทธ์ปริชาน (Cognitive Strategies) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้เรียนใช้กลยุทธ์อภิปัญญา (Metacognitive strategies) มากที่สุดในระยะก่อนลงมือเขียน (Pre-task) และใช้กลยุทธ์ทางด้านสังคม-จิตพิสัย (Social Affective Strategies) ในช่วงการวางแผนงานเขียน และระหว่างเขียนงาน (During-task) บ่อยครั้งที่สุดในปริมาณเท่ากัน ทั้งนี้พบว่าผู้เรียนใช้กลยุทธ์ปริชาน (Cognitive Strategies) มากที่สุดในช่วงเวลาระหว่างเขียนงาน (During-task) ในภาษาอังกฤษ

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ กระบวนการเขียนภาษาต่างประเทศ

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate language learning strategies used by Thai learners of English in each stage of writing tasks. The participant in this study was a Thai EFL learner. The instrument employed to collect data is writing tasks and interview questions. The data was analyzed based on three classifications which were metacognitive strategies, social and affective strategies, and cognitive strategies. The results revealed that Metacognitive strategies were mostly employed in the pre-task stage, Social Affective Strategies equally appeared in the pre-task and during-task the most often while Cognitive Strategies were most preferred in the during-task moment.

KEYWORDS: Language, Learning, Strategies, English as a foreign, Language, Writing Processes

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Introduction

Language Learning Strategy is one of the most important factors affecting learners' ability in other languages. The preferences of the Learning Strategy used in a particular learner are varied depending on the specific type and process of the task he/she is dealing with (Halbach, 2000). Writing skill is one of the English skills which have been pointed as the hardest tasks for learners of English as it requires many sub-skills such as knowledge telling and transforming, critical thinking, and grammatical knowledge (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

According to writing Little (2007), in order to be a successful writer, it is essential for learners to employ strategies in their learning. Similarly, to teaching and learning English, it is important for teachers and learners themselves to notice language learning strategies used by learners and how to properly employ them in a certain process of. This research, thus, aims to examine language learning strategies employed by a Thai EFL learner in each stage of the writing process of paragraph writing tasks.

Literature Review

1. Language Learning strategies

Language Learning strategies refers to techniques or procedures that learners employ to assist their learning in both linguistic and content fields (Chamot, 1987). Besides, Rubin (1987) further explained that using strategies to learn language leads to learners' language development. Besides, learning strategies were described as steps or approaches used by learners to acquire, assemble, recall and manage information (Oxford, 1990).

2. Common Features of Language Learning Strategies

In general, Language Learning Strategies are divided into two types; Direct and Indirect Language Learning strategies. Direct Language Learning Strategies include Memory, Cognitive, Compensation sub-strategies while, Indirect Language Learning Strategies include Metacognitive, Affective, Social sub-strategies (Oxford, 1990).

2.1 Direct Language Learning Strategies

Direct Language Learning Strategies refer to ways of dealing with the new language system. This is useful for learners in the retention and use of new information. Subcategories of Direct Language Learning Strategies are as follows,

2.1.1 Memory strategies

Memory strategies are simple principles such as arranging, making associations, and reviewing. These principles are often used when learners learn vocabulary by linking words or phrases with pictures. On the other hand, some learners find it easier to associate words or phrases with sounds, movement or touch (Lan & Oxford, 2003). Memorization strategy is often used in the early stages of learning a language. When learners can develop learning at an advanced level, Memorization is often used less, but does not completely disappear (Oxford, 1990).

2.1.2 Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies are frequently used by adult learners. That is, they tend to analyze or summarize the language before learning the particular language by practicing, conveying and interpreting messages touch (Lan & Oxford, 2003).

2.1.3 Compensation Strategies are used when a language learner has the background knowledge of the particular language. It is often used in learning grammar and vocabulary, such as guessing unknown words from context (Oxford, 1990).

2.2 Indirect Language Learning Strategies

Indirect Language Learning Strategies are used in conjunction with direct Language Learning Strategies. These allow learners to naturally acquire a new language system.

Subcategories of Indirect Language Learning Strategies are as follow,

2.2.1 Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies are the learning strategies that help learners plan their learning more effectively. When learners learn grammar, vocabulary or writing that may be difficult for the learner. Metacognitive plays a very important role in language learning as students will determine the learning 's priority, plan their learning processes and assess their learning outcomes (Kim, 1995).

According to Oxford (1990), these are key factors affecting learners' success in language learning. That is, setting up learning 's priority helps learners set goals to improve their language skills. Alignment and planning help learners prioritize their learning in order to gain the most out of the lessons while, self-assessments help learners deal with problems such as checking and correcting errors.

2.2.2 Affective Strategies

Affective Strategies refer to emotions, attitudes, and learning incentives which include Lowering anxiety, Encouraging, Emotional temperature. Good

language learners tend to successfully control their negative attitudes and emotions about learning and understand that they are not a positive influence on learning ability. Yu (2003) also clarified that too much anxiety can significantly affect learning potential. To explain more, anxiety is often in the form of fear, awkwardness, a feeling of insecurity, and doubt. The case study of Shmais (2003) further exemplified that learner are prone to anxiety if they have to answer questions in front of their peers or answer questions if the answers are not prepared in advanced.

2.2.3 Social Strategies

Social Strategies are used in Interpersonal communication, including Asking questions, cooperating and empathizing with others. Of the three, asking questions is very helpful in learning and helping to understand the accurate meaning of communication. These strategies help language learners to build self-esteem, increase confidence and reach their learning goal faster and more efficiently (Halbach, 2000).

Employing Social Strategies means being in the real situation where language is used. Learners can use social strategies to develop their language interpretations and cultural awareness of the thoughts and feelings of humans which is the main objective of language learning (O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

3. Language Learning Strategies in writing tasks

As there are various ways of defining strategies, there are also various ways of categorizing them. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have identified learning strategies into three main types, which are cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. Cognitive Strategies refer to techniques that manage information to improve learning, Social Affective Strategies involve with interaction and communication with others, including people and materials, while Metacognitive Strategies work with planning, observing, and assessing skills.

According to students' use of learning strategies described by Oxford (1994), learners seem to use different strategies to deal with different language tasks. This is to say, learners frequently employ self-monitoring, and self-evaluation in speaking tasks yet use elaboration, making inferences, selective attention, and self-monitoring in listening; on the other hand, there is more evidence in using self-monitoring, deduction, and substitution strategies in writing task.

Focusing on learning strategies used in writing, there are some findings in a previous study by Chamot and Kupper (1989) explaining that learners mostly employ Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies to plan and elaborate their writing tasks, respectively. Furthermore, it is explained in the study of Chenoweth (1987)

that in order to complete a single writing task, activities are mostly required as follows: post-task, during-task, and post-task activities. However, it is further pointed out that these three steps depend on the particular learner, that is, some may follow these steps strictly, yet some may not. In contrast, Susser (1994) pointed out that writing is an activity where learners are in a loop between drafting and modifying their writing. This is to say, by moving forward and backward, learners are able to revise their content and ideas. Later, Richard and Nunan (1990) identified that high proficiency learners seem to spend more time brainstorming ideas before writing, compared to those lower ones who usually face the confusion when they start writing. Similarly, to the drafting process which consumes more time for high proficiency learners, who normally reconsider their paragraph, than lower proficiency learners who spend a small amount of time looking at vocabulary. As for the last step, revision, high proficiency learners mostly review the meaning of the whole task, yet lower proficiency learners seem to recheck their misspelling and grammatical errors.

Kellog (1994) has mentioned in his previous study that every single step in writing tasks include different learning strategies. According to Grabe (1999) stating that in pre-task activity, learners mostly use Organization planning and Advanced organization, during task stage; Questioning for Clarification Strategy is most preferred, while Elaboration and Self-Evaluation are mostly employed in post-task activity. However, it depends on a particular learner in employing certain strategies that suit them the most. This different preference of selecting learning strategies in an individual writer is a factor affecting differences of how tasks are represented.

Research Objective

To examine Language Learning Strategies employed by a Thai EFL learner in each stage of the writing process of paragraph writing tasks.

Methodology

Participant

The participant employed as case study in this research was purposefully selected under the criteria of “Information-rich case selection” of Patton (1990). The participant was a 24-year-old male Thai native speaker who is originally from Thailand. The participant has never lived outside the motherland. The participant speaks three languages including Thai (mother tongue), Chinese (second language) and English (additional language). Also, the participant has learned English in Thai public School and university an hour a week since grade 7 as a requirement of the Ministry of Education. As for English proficiency, the participant is identified as

intermediate English speaker (B1 level, based on Common European Framework Reference (Little, 2007), as he received 610 scores for TOEIC.

Tool

In order to accomplish the purpose, writing tasks and a list of interview questions are employed in this research. The writing task, including bar chart and specific data, is selected from IELTS writing task1 of British Council under the topic of “The number of travelers using three major airports in New York City between 1995 and 2000. Also, a question list for the interview was adapted from Khaldieh (2000) to scope the interview content. The questions are categorized into three types of language learning strategies of O’Malley (1990) which are Metacognitive strategies, Social Strategies and Cognitive strategies

Ethical Considerations

The participant has been informed of the aims, and method of this research before participating in this study. Besides, the learner himself has received and signed the consent form attached with details of Language awareness for second language teachers course detail and agreement of research participation. Besides, the participant is required to keep the copy of the consent form with himself. All information in this research, including participant’s information, results and recorded interview are confidential.

Data Collection

To collect data, the participant was first given a task to write a paragraph describing a bar chart showing “the number of travelers using three major airports in New York City between 1995 and 2000”. The participant must write at least 150 words describing the summary of main ideas and relevant comparisons of information, within 20 minutes. During the writing stage, the researcher would observe and take note of participant’s activities in pre-writing, during- writing and post writing. After finishing the task, the participant was interviewed by using a question list prepared, in order to investigate strategies, he used to facilitate his previous task. In this process, the interview would be recorded.

Data Analysis

The data were transcribed in line from an observation and interview. Language learning strategies category of by Malley (1990), including metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social affective strategies was employed as a criterion. Evidence of strategies are counted and categorized into stages of performance (pre-task, during-task and post-task), and frequency of use in each type of strategy use.

Results

The research shows outstanding evidence of learning strategies used in each stage of task. To explain more, the participant used the same amount of the Metacognitive Strategy in pre-task (16 times) and during-task(16times) stage. Furthermore, in the pre pre-task stage, Organization Planning strategy was employed most frequently at 9 times, followed by advanced organization (3 times) and self-monitoring (3 times). Nevertheless, Direct Attention and Selective Attention were not used by the participant in the pre-task stage of writing. For during-tasks, Self-Monitoring is used the most (8 times), followed by Selective Attention (4times) and Self-evaluation (2 times). Advanced organization and Organization Planning Strategies' evidence of use did not exist in the during-task stage. Looking at the post-task stage, there was only evidence of Metacognitive Strategies which were under criteria of self-evaluation (2 times).

Similarly, there was an equal number of evidences in pre-task and post-task stages which were three times each. For the pre-task stage, Questioning for Clarification was the only strategy preferred by the participant with the frequency of three times. In the during-task moment, the participant used all strategies at once, including Questioning for Clarification, Self-talk and Self-reinforcement Strategies. On the contrary, this learner did not use any Social Strategy type while he was in the post-task stage.

Cognitive Strategy was most preferred by the learner in the during-task stage as he used it 41 times, which significantly showed a high difference between those other two stages, the post-task and the pre-task which employed only three and one time respectively. To explain more, in the pre-task moment, Translation was the only strategy used by the participant, and he used it only once. On the other hand, in the during- task period, Resourcing was employed most frequently (12 times), followed by Note-taking, and rehearsal strategies which the learner used 5 times per each strategy. During this during-task moment, there was no evidence of Elaboration Strategy. Referring to the post-task stage, the learner only preferred Elaboration Strategy which was used three times in total. In addition, Repetition, Grouping, Summarizing, Imagery, Auditory Representation and Contextualization Strategies did not appear in any stage of this task.

Looking closer in to the Frequency of Learning Strategies use in each learning strategy, all 7 types of cognitive strategies were employed in this writing task. The participant preferred to use Self-monitoring strategy (32.36%) the most, followed by Organization planning (26.48%) and Self-evaluation (14.70%),

respectively. In contrast, it was obviously seen that direct attention (2.94%) and Advanced Organization Strategies (2.94%) similarly received the least preference from this particular learner. The Metacognitive Strategies results obtained are presented in Figure 1 below;

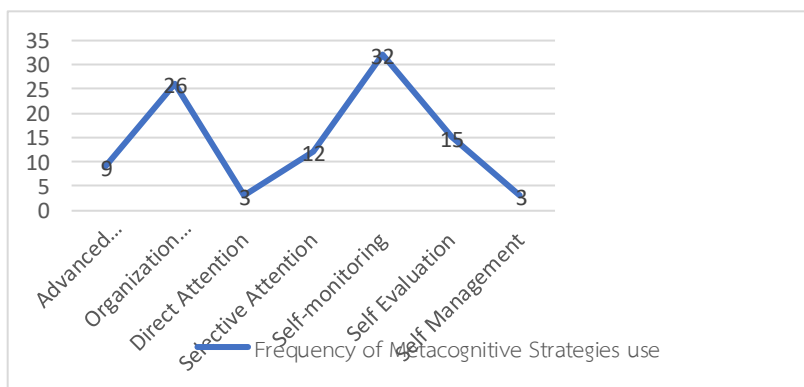


Figure 1: Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies used by the participant in writing task

Also, the result reflected three types of social strategies used by the learner in order to facilitate his writing task. There was a significant result of questioning for a Clarification Strategy which was highly used by the participant at 66.67% which received approximately 4 times of self-talk and Self-inference Strategies which were used at 16.67 and 16.66 respectively as shown in Figure 2 below;

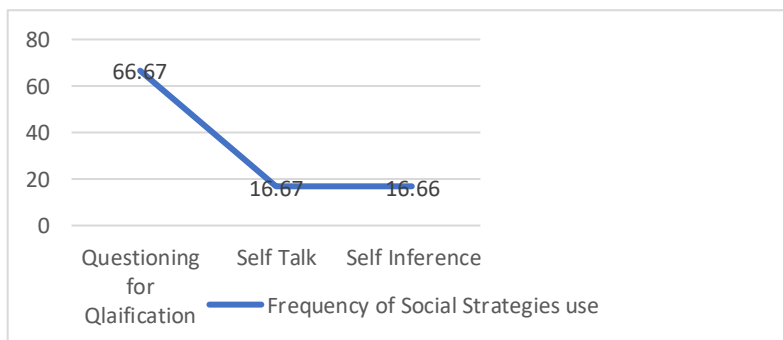


Figure 2: Frequency of Social Strategies used by the participant in writing task

Regarding frequency of learner's use of Cognitive Strategies, Resourcing Strategy outstandingly received the majority preference from the participant with a percentage of 30%. The second highest use was Translation Strategy (15%), followed

by Note-Taking and Rehearsal which were used at the same frequency at 12.5%. However, inferencing strategy was employed the least at 2.50%. Results are presented in Figure 3 below;

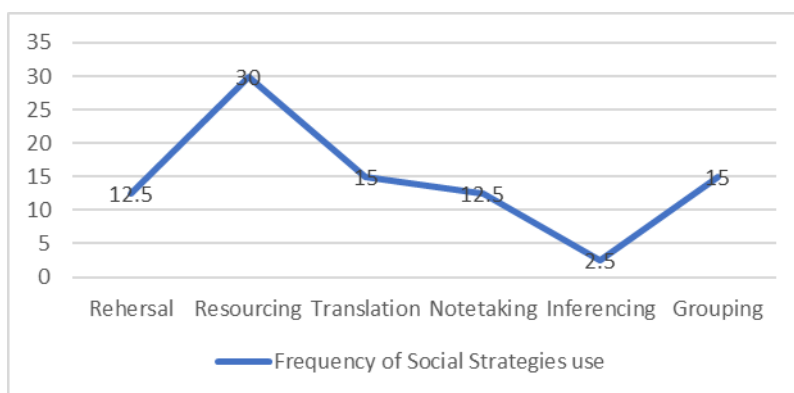


Figure 3: Frequency of Cognitive Strategies used by the participant in writing task

Discussion

According to the results, this particular learner's learning strategies reflected in the same way as the previous research of Chamot (1987) that learners normally employ different strategies to deal with language and content. In addition, this particular learner employed certain language learning strategies for each stage of his writing task. Metacognitive strategy was mostly used in the pre-task and the post-task of writing, however, there was almost no evidence of them in the post-task stage. According to further discussion in the post-interview, the participant employed Organization Planning strategy most often in the pre-task in order to prepare himself in terms of getting ideas, outlining and managing on time and vocabulary. Yet, during a task, Evaluation Strategy was employed most often due to the reason of rechecking and proofing the participant's spelling.

Focusing on Social Affective Strategies uses of learner which were mostly preferred in pre-task and during task activities, more than the post-task ones, the participant used to question for clarification most often in both types due to the instance of dealing with problem solving, such as ask for understanding and comprehension (line no.17,121). These results support the previous study of Galbraith and Rijlaarsdam (1992) stating that questioning for clarification strategy was most preferred by intermediate learners in these stages as they were exploring and deciding the idea and language use. In addition, many intermediate level learners

seem to be confident with their knowledge, thus; they would normally ask or consult for clarification or confirmation from others.

As for Cognitive Strategy type, this participant outstandingly employed this strategy in the during-task stage and the majority of them was resourcing strategy. By looking closer at the instance of using resourcing strategy, the participant needed to deal with unknown vocabulary and structure while he was writing. However, there was only one time using cognitive strategy in the pre-task moment, and three times in the post-task stage. This finding confirms the previous research of Grabe and Kaplan (1999) stating that, there was less evidence of cognitive strategy uses in pre-task and post-task activity in low to intermediate level language learners, as they mostly started to write before knowing what to write, and use learning strategies to deal with challenges faced during the task.

Moreover, by looking at the results in this study, there was a tendency of repetition in strategy uses. To explain more, the frequency of use was not varied as the learner kept using the specific strategies, he was familiar with, and seldom used others. The participant tended to use the same strategy repetitively, such as Organization Planning and Self-Monitoring in Metacognitive type, questioning for clarification in Social Affective type and Resourcing in Cognitive type. This notice agreed with Chenoweth (1987) that there was a narrower rank of pattern in language strategy use in writing performance of intermediate English learners, compared to those advanced who normally employed various learning strategies.

Conclusion

In Metacognitive Strategy Strategies, the participant employed self-monitoring strategy most often in the total task. Besides, Organization planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation were most preferred in the pre-task, the during-task and the post-task respectively. As for Social Affective type, questioning for clarification was used most often in writing tasks. It was used the most in the pre-task and the during-task. However, there was no evidence of Social Affective Strategy used in the post-task stage. Cognitive Strategy type, Resourcing Strategy received the highest preference in writing tasks, while Translation, Resourcing and Elaboration were used most often in pre-, during- and post-task respectively.

Limitations

A controlled environment was one of the barriers in this study. That was to say, as the interview was held in a controlled area where there was only one

learner doing a task, it could be a barrier to choosing some specific learning strategy, such as cooperation strategy in Social affective type as there is no peer or other learners for the participant to cooperate with.

Recommendations for further research

Further research could focus on the relationship between choice of learning strategies and success of language learning by using this particular case exploration as ground information. The factors influencing the choice of learning methods such as motivation, gender, culture, attitudes and beliefs, type of work, time of beginning language learning, learning styles, tolerance ambiguity among different case studies is also worth explored and compared.

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