

## A Study of English Language Learning Strategies of Undergraduate Students of The Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University

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### บทคัดย่อ

ภาษาอังกฤษ เป็นภาษาทางการที่ถูกใช้ในหลายประเทศ ไม่เฉพาะประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ ยังรวมไปถึงประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สอง และประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาอื่นอีกด้วย คริสตัล (2003: 1-10) กล่าวว่า ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาอันดับต้นๆ ของโลก เนื่องจากมันถูกใช้อย่างแพร่หลายไปทั่วโลก ดังนั้น ประเทศในกลุ่มประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สองและกลุ่มประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาอื่น จำเป็นต้องเรียนรู้และพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อใช้ในการติดต่อสื่อสารและอื่นๆ ที่จำเป็น บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ ศึกษากลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี คณะสหวิทยาการ มหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น ประเทศไทย จำนวน 310 คน โดยตัวแปรที่ต้องการศึกษาได้แก่ 1) เพศ 2) สาขาวิชา และ 3) ระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ เปรียบเทียบกับกลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาสำหรับผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาอื่น ซึ่งแบ่งออกเป็น 6 กลยุทธ์ ได้แก่ 1) กลยุทธ์ด้านความจำ 2) กลยุทธ์ด้านปัญญา 3) กลยุทธ์ด้านการขาดเฉย 4) กลยุทธ์ด้านอภิปัญญา 5) กลยุทธ์ด้านอารมณ์ และ 6) กลยุทธ์ด้านสังคม โดยใช้เครื่องมือแบบสอบถามกลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษา SILL version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) Oxford (1990) พร้อมทั้งใช้แบบสัมภาษณ์กับครุ不成ร้าง เพื่อเก็บข้อมูลกลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ อังกฤษตามแบบฉบับของตัวบุคคลอีกด้วย ผลการศึกษาพบว่า 1) เพศไม่มีความแตกต่างกันในการใช้กลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ 2) สาขาวิชามีความแตกต่างกันในการใช้กลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ และ 3) ระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ มีความแตกต่างกันในการใช้กลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ โดยกลยุทธ์หลักที่ผู้เรียนใช้ในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษคือ กลยุทธ์ด้านการขาดเฉย นอกจากนี้ ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์พบว่า นักเรียนในปัจจุบันนำเทคโนโลยีมาใช้ในการเก็บปัญหาและพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษของตนเองอีกด้วย เช่น ฝึกทักษะการฟังจากการดูภาพยนตร์บน Netflix การฝึกทักษะการพูดกับชาวต่างชาติผ่านเกมส์ออนไลน์ เป็นต้น

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**คำสำคัญ:** การใช้กลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษา, ความแตกต่างในการใช้กลยุทธ์เฉพาะบุคคล, เครื่องมือแบบสอบถามกลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ภาษา สำหรับ ESL/EFL

## ABSTRACT

English is an official language in many countries. Its use is prevalent not only in native English-speaking countries but also in non-native English-speaking countries. Crystal (2003:1-10) states English is the world's leading language because of its commonality worldwide. Therefore, people of the countries that use English as a second or as a foreign language have to learn and develop their English language skills for communication or other purposes. This study aims to investigate English language learning strategies employed by 310 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University through the use of SILL for ESL/EFL (Oxford, 1990) and a semi-structured interview. The results show no significant differences in the strategy use in relation to gender, but significant differences were found in relation to the field of study and English proficiency level. In addition, the results of the interviews showed that technology uptake were reported to assist learners in solving and developing their English skills. They reported practising listening skills by watching a movie on Netflix, practising speaking skills by talking with foreigners via games online, etc.

**Keywords:** Language learning strategy use, Individual learner differences, SILL for ESL/EFL

## Introduction

English is currently the official international language in many parts of the world. In countries where English is the first language, including the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, English directs all roles and essential aspects of daily life, such as communication, education, and business. On the other hand, English is a second language in many countries, such as Cameroon, Fiji, Ghana, India, Kenya, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. In these contexts, even though English is not the native language for most people, it remains the official language: in official communications, letters, academia, and research reporting. English remains a foreign language in other parts of the world, such as China, Russia, Japan, Italy, Germany, and even Thailand. Subsequently, the majority population rarely uses English in their daily communication. Notwithstanding, English is still often the adopted alternative in academic, economic, business, advertisements, and road signage. Thereby, English has

become a global language. Crystal (2003:1-10) states English is the world's leading language because of its 'standard' worldwide spread. It is no longer limited to a group of native speakers. Nowadays, community, culture, education, and global economics connect through English, regardless of mother tongue. Therefore, English transcends history, culture and geography.

In Thai education, English is an essential compulsory subject that every student must take, commencing at the primary level. In some schools, the "English Program (EP)" or "Mini-English Program (MEP)" is offered as an alternative for students who want to focus their learning both on subject content and English proficiency. English has become an optional medium of instruction in many subjects. Importantly, students can use English to access explicit knowledge to develop their understanding of broader geographies, those beyond a Thai context, within this changing world. In addition, at the higher level of education, English is of growing importance. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) points to a policy of raising English proficiency across all higher education programs. That is the development of teachers' teaching skills and students' English skills. MHESI sets policies for increasing the English ability of students across all levels and programs. Moreover, undergraduates should attain a minimum standard in academic outputs, including professional knowledge and communication skills.

However, not all Thai students achieve the goals set by the Ministry. Those students who are interested in English tend to excel. They pay attention in class and diligently attend to their learning tasks. After class, they watch movies, listen to songs, and engage in other activities requiring them to use English. On the other hand, some students are not successful learners of English. Plailek (2011:1) found that Thai students are inactive and listless. Moreover, they prefer familiar and traditional teaching methods with direct information transfer rather than encouraging students into independent thinking frames.

Oxford (1990:8) defined learning strategies as 'the specific actions the learner takes to learn easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations'. Later, Oxford (2005:124) refined learning strategies as 'the specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills'. Moreover, Oxford (1990) developed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to understand techniques and strategies ESL/EFL learners use for learning and developing their English knowledge. For example, SILL encourages students to question/reflect upon the relationships between "What I

already know and new things I learn in English”; “I use new English words in a sentence so that I can remember them”. In effect, it invites reflection on how many ways students practice their English.

The Bachelor programs within the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Khon Kaen University, Thailand, has 13 programs; Technology and Engineering (3); Applied Science (2); Business Management (3), Law (1); Social Science (2); and Arts and Education (2) Undergraduate students must use English textbooks, communicate with international students and lecturers in English, make English presentations, and write an English thesis. Consequently, English proficiency is essential for their success. In addition, according to the announcement of Khon Kaen University concerning the English Testing Score of Undergraduates (Khon Kaen University Announcement No. 146/2019), students must have the minimum English testing score before graduating. Acceptable tests include the Khon Kaen University English proficiency Test or KEPT; TOEFL; IELTS; and TOEIC. For the reasons described above, all undergraduate students should obtain an appropriate “test” level of English proficiency pre-graduation - a goal that is not always achieved.

Following the Ministry goals above and graduation of Khon Kaen University, this research aims to investigate the English language learning strategies used by undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Khon Kaen University Thailand. Those sample required to use English in many ways such as research, graduation, job requirement, and so on. Additionally, mitigating factors, including gender, fields of studies, and English proficiency, are reviewed to ascertain their impact on students' learning strategies.

### **Research Objectives**

Two specific research objectives guide the study:

1. To investigate English learning strategies of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University.
2. To compare differences between gender, field of study, and English proficiency level with English learning strategies of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University.

### **Research Methodology**

The study uses the Quan/qual mixed methods paradigm though a survey and focus groups. The latter specifically fleshes out meaning relative to the survey findings:

### 1 Population

The population of the study comprised 1,605 undergraduate students who are enrolled as undergraduate students from July 1 to September 30, 2022 of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University as shown in the table 1.

### 2 Subject

The subjects of the study were selected from population using the Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sample size table with precision  $\pm 5\%$  and confidence 95%. After that, the subjects were selected using simple random sampling based on the number required for each stratum 310 undergraduate students of the faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University as shown in the table 1.

**Table 1** The numbers of populations and subjects

Majors	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Total
Business Management	177	34	138	27	93
Engineering and Technology	101	20	89	17	37
Apply Science	51	10	29	6	26
Social Science	82	15	48	9	16
Law	88	17	62	12	34
Liberal Arts and Education	88	17	74	14	51
Total	587	113	441	85	257
				50	320
				62	1,605
					310

### Research Instruments

Two data collection methods are adopted to support the study:

#### 1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was based on model of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for students of English as a second or foreign language version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) by Oxford (1990).

#### 2. Open-ended questions

An open-ended question was in the questionnaire enables the subjects to give freely additional information relative to those strategies that appear on the questionnaire.

### 3. Semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview was created to relate to the purposes of the study. It was used with 10 – 12 samplings and divided into 2 groups; undergraduate students of the faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University who have high academic result and low academic result by purposive sampling.

The researcher indicated grade of English, obtaining A, B+, B equals High, Obtaining C+, C equals Medium, and obtaining D+, D, F equals Low.

### Data Collection

In accordance with ethical research guidelines the following section describes the processes used in both quantitative and qualitative phases:

#### 1. Quantitative data

The data collection was conducted from July 1 to September 30, 2022.

There were 4 steps as follows:

1.1 The researcher was granted permission to undertake the low-risk study by the Graduate Department of Udon Thani Rajabhat University. A permission letter was obtained.

1.2 The permission letter was presented to, and approved by the Faculty of Interdisciplinary of Khon Kaen University (the subject university) for data collection.

1.3 Questionnaires were sent to participants by online form.

1.4 Information was collected in google drive.

1.5 All data were analyzed, and the results were interpreted.

#### 2. Qualitative Data

The data collection was conducted from July 1 to September 30, 2022.

2.1 The researcher purposively chose 12 subjects from different fields of study and English proficiency level. Selection was made to achieve balance in proficiency level of each major (high - low English proficiency).

2.2 The researcher conducted in-depth focus groups (two groups of six students) recording same through notes and tape recording. Focus group conversations were guided by a semi-structured interview guideline. Participants consented to the research by signing an informed consent which outlined the research purpose, advised their right to withdraw, and independent committee contacts if they concerned over unethical practices.

2.3 All data were analyzed, and the results were interpreted.

## Data Analysis

Analysis was undertaken for the quantitative data and qualitative data respectively:

### 1. Quantitative data

#### 1. Quantitative data

The quantitative data was used descriptive statistics in questionnaire. There were frequency distribution, percentage, mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), and standard deviation (S.D.).

The data interpretations of the level of use the English language learning strategies were interpreted using the criterion of Oxford (1990: 300) as shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2** The interpretation of the strategy used in learning English

Level of Use	Frequency of Strategy Use	Average Mean Score
High	Always or almost always true of me	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually true of me	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Somewhat true of me	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Usually not true of me	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never true of me	1.0 to 1.4

Part 1 background information: frequency distribution and percentage

Part 2 SILL statements: mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation (S.D.), and ranking.

The t-test for independent samples was used to compare the mean scores of the English language learning strategies between genders. All of statistics will be interpreted by SPSS.

### 2. Qualitative Data

Data of the open-ended questions and the semi-structured focus groups was analyzed for meaning. The 12 subjects were probed to elicit responses related to three independent variables: gender, field of study, and English proficiency level. The researcher followed stepwise protocols as follows:

2.1 Transcribing interviews word by word of 12 subjects. Post the record transcription a coding system was developed following Bogdan and Biklen (1998).

2.2 Categorizing data by gender, field of study, and English proficiency level.

2.3 Analyzing information through to purposing (Open-Coding) which looks for statements related to the study (Concepts). Then, data was merged (Axial Coding). Data of Axial for integration and presented as propositions (Selective Coding).

**Research Results**

The results were presented according to the research objectives as follows:

1. Demographic Information of the Respondents

**Table 3** Frequency and percentage of Gender

Gender	Freshma	Sophomor	Junior	Senior	Frequenc	Percentag
male	37	34	22	17	110	35.48
female	69	59	27	45	200	64.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 3 illustrates the frequency and percentage of the respondents. They included 310 undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University - the subjects comprising 200 females (64.52%) and 110 males (35.48%).

**Table 4** Frequency and percentage of Fields of Study

Fields of Study	Freshm	Sophom	Juni	Seni	Frequen	Percenta
Business Management	34	29	21	26	110	35.48
Engineering and	20	15	7	8	50	16.13
Applied Science	10	6	5	5	26	8.39
Social Science	15	9	3	9	36	11.61
Law	12	18	4	6	40	12.90
Liberal Arts and	15	16	9	8	48	15.48
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4 illustrates the frequency and percentage of respondents. 110 students (35.48%) were from the field of Business Management, 50 students (16.13%) were from the field of Engineering and Technology, 48 students (15.48%) were from the field of Liberal Arts and Education, 40 students (12.90%) were from the field of Law, 36 students (11.61%) were from the field of Social Science, and 26 students (8.39%) were from the field of Applied Science.

**Table 5** Frequency and percentage of English Proficiency Levels

English Proficiency	Freshm	Sophom	Junior	Senior	Freque	Percent
High	42	38	25	14	119	38.39
Medium	47	40	19	25	131	42.26
Low	17	15	5	23	60	19.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 5 illustrates the frequency and percentage of respondents. 131 students (42.24%) were of medium English proficiency level, 119 students (38.39%) were at high English proficiency level, and 60 students (19.35%) were low English proficiency level.

## 2. Results of Studies of English Language Learning Strategies Used by Undergraduate Students

**Table 6** Mean scores, standard deviation, level of use, and rank in service of the overall strategy and the six strategies groups by undergraduate students

Language Learning Strategies	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level of	Rank
Memory strategies	3.20	0.79	Medium	5
Cognitive Strategies	3.14	0.85	Medium	6
Compensation Strategies	3.37	0.71	Medium	1
Metacognitive Strategies	3.25	0.83	Medium	3
Affective Strategies	3.25	0.85	Medium	4
Social Strategies	3.25	0.80	Medium	2
Overall Strategies Use	3.24	0.74	Medium	

Table 6 illustrates the undergraduate students' English language learning strategies in general. Our analysis indicates an overall strategy use of a medium level ( $\bar{X}=3.24$ ). The most used of the six strategy groups was the compensation strategy ( $\bar{X}=3.37$ ) and followed by social strategy ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ), metacognitive strategy ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ), and affective strategy ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ) respectively. Memory and cognitive strategy were fifth ( $\bar{X}=3.20$ ) and sixth ( $\bar{X}=3.14$ ), respectively. The study found that overall strategies use was medium, or the students sometimes used it. For the individual strategies use, the mean scores, standard deviation, level of service, and rank in use are displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7** Mean scores, standard deviation, level of use, and rank (1 – 3) of the individual strategy used by undergraduate students

English Language Learning Strategies	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level	Rank
1. If I do not understand something in English, I	3.79	0.99	High	1
2. When I can't think of a word during a	3.73	1.03	High	2
3. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make	3.51	0.92	High	3

Table 7 shows the individual strategies used by undergraduate students, with strategies items ranked (1-3) high in use ( $\bar{X}=3.79$ , 3.73, and 3.51).

### Qualitative Data of the Strategy Use by Undergraduate Students

The following section presents findings from 1) The open-ended survey questions, followed by 2) findings from the semi-structured interviews:

1. The use of strategies in learning English from the open-ended questions

**Table 8** English language learning strategies used and problems by undergraduate students derived from the open-ended questions

Problems in Learning English	Fre.	Strategies for Learning English	Fre.
Can't remember English words	60	Listening to music and watching a	33
Can't understand what another	14	Practicing English on the Internet,	25
Can't speak English in sentences	14	Recitation vocabulary	22
Can't use grammatically	7	Asking and Learning from friends or	17
Can't understand the meaning	7	Review lesson	8

Table 8 shows the analysis of undergraduate students' English language learning strategies and problems obtained through open-ended questions. The respondents indicated, in order, five issues in learning English: "I can't remember English words", "I can't understand what another one is speaking", "I can't speak English in sentences", "I can't use grammatically", and "I can't understand the meaning".

Another question in the open-ended questions part also asked the respondents to indicate English learning strategies. The five-reported strategies stated as follows: "I listen to music and watch a movie in English", "I practice English from the Internet such as Youtube, websites, podcasts, and so on", "I recite vocabulary", "I ask and learn from friends or experts to correct mistakes", and "I review lesson".

- 2 The use of strategies in learning English from the semi-structured interview

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were initially categorized to determine what language-learning strategies were employed in learning English. The interview data were coded into six strategies groups based on Oxford's (1990:14-16) learning strategy classification system. For example, statements from interviewees "...I use flashcards to remember new English words..." (Interviewee 1), "...I listen to music and write lyrics on a paper, and then I interpret that and remember them..." (Interviewee 5), "... I listen to music and sing a song, after that, I interpret a lyric and remember in a mental picture..." (Interviewee 6).

## Results of Studies of English Language Learning Strategies Used by Undergraduate Students Classified by Gender, the field of Study, and English Proficiency Level

This part was presented in order to respond to the purpose of the study as to study and compare the English language learning strategies used of undergraduate students of Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies of Khon Kaen University classified by gender, field of study, and English proficiency level. The analysis of the strategies used was analyzed based upon the classification variables of gender, field of study, and English proficiency level.

**Table 9** English language learning strategies used classified by gender

Language Learning Strategies (Six Main Strategy Groups)	Gender				t	
	Male (n=110)		Female (n=200)			
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.		
Memory strategies	3.12	0.82	3.24	0.78	-1.31	
Cognitive strategies	3.10	0.90	3.17	0.81	-0.65	
Compensation strategies	3.33	0.70	3.38	0.71	-0.56	
Metacognitive strategies	3.31	0.88	3.29	0.81	-1.15	
Affective strategies	3.17	0.90	3.29	0.82	-1.18	
Social strategies	3.21	0.85	3.28	0.77	-0.68	
Overall Strategy Use	3.19	0.79	3.28	0.72	-1.02	

Table 9 compares the overall English language learning strategies used between males and females. The results showed no statistically significant difference in the strategies use based on gender. When investigating the strategies groups, there was no statistically significant difference between the strategies groups' memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Thus, gender didn't affect the English language learning strategies of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at Khon Kaen University.

**Table 10** English language learning strategies used classified by field of study

Language Learning Strategies	Field of Study												
	Engineering and Technology (n=51)		Apply Science (n=26)		Business Management (n=110)		Law (n=40)		Social Science (n=36)		Liberal Arts and Education (n=48)		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	
Memory	3.1	0.8	2.	0.	3.0	0.7	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	9.392
Cognitive	3.1	0.9	2.	0.	2.9	0.7	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	9.011
Compens	3.3	0.7	3.	0.	3.2	0.6	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	6.550
Metacogn	3.0	0.8	2.	0.	3.0	0.7	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	9.914
Affective	3.2	0.9	2.	0.	3.0	0.7	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	8.807
Social	3.2	0.8	3.	0.	3.0	0.7	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	6.995
Overall	3.1	0.8	2.	0.	3.0	0.6	3.	0.	3.	0.	3.	0.	9.892

Table 10 reflects strategies used when the subjects were grouped by field of study. When examining the overall strategy used when classified by field of study, it was found that Liberal Arts and Education students reported overall strategy use at a high level ( $\bar{X} = 3.87$ ) while Social Science, Law, Engineering and Technology, Business Management, and Applied Science students reported overall strategy use at a medium level ( $\bar{X}=3.25, 3.20, 3.19, 3.08, 2.97$ ).

**Table 11** English language learning strategies used classified by English proficiency level

Language Learning Strategies	English proficiency level						F	
	High		Medium		Low			
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.		
Memory strategies	3.78	0.68	2.85	0.61	2.87	0.72	71.23 ***	
Cognitive Strategies	3.71	0.72	2.78	0.71	2.89	0.81	54.41 ***	
Compensation Strategies	3.82	0.66	3.09	0.55	3.12	0.70	47.90 ***	
Metacognitive Strategies	3.79	0.75	2.92	0.72	2.98	0.74	48.86 ***	
Affective Strategies	3.75	0.77	2.96	0.75	2.96	0.78	39.04 ***	
Social Strategies	3.77	0.72	2.95	0.67	2.95	0.72	50.34 ***	
Overall Strategies Use	3.77	0.63	2.93	0.60	2.96	0.69	63.47 ***	

Table 11 illustrates the data analysis of the strategies use classified by English proficiency level. The results reveal that high-proficiency English students reported the use of learning strategies at a high level ( $\bar{X}=3.77$ ), while medium and low English proficiency students reported use at a medium level ( $\bar{X}=2.93,2.96$ ).

## Conclusion

The current study utilized a survey that explored English language learning strategies used by undergraduate students of the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies of Khon Kaen university and investigated factors that influenced their strategy choices in learning English. Moreover, the qualitative data from the open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview supported the investigation. The findings were as follows:

### 1. Results of Studies of English Language Learning Strategies Used by Undergraduate Students

The undergraduate students' overall strategies use reports at a medium level ( $\bar{X}=3.24$ ). The most-used strategies groups ranked high in use were compensation strategies ( $\bar{X}=3.37$ ) followed by social strategies ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ). The subsequent strategy uses, ranked medium in use, included metacognitive ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ), affective ( $\bar{X}=3.25$ ), memory ( $\bar{X}=3.20$ ), and cognitive strategies ( $\bar{X}=3.14$ ), respectively. When investigating fifty individual strategies items, three report as high in use, and forty-seven report as medium in use.

### 2. Results of Studies of English Language Learning Strategies Used by Graduate Students Classified by Gender, Fields of Study, and English Proficiency Levels

2.1 The undergraduate students' overall English language learning strategies, classified by gender, show no statistically significant difference between males and females.

2.2 The undergraduate students' overall English language learning strategies, classified by field of study, show statistically significant differences among fields of study ( $\alpha = .01, .05$ ). Liberal Arts and Education students tend to use more metacognitive, affective, compensation, social, cognitive, and memory strategies than those in Engineering and Technology, Applied Science, Business Management, Law, and Social Science.

2.3 The undergraduate students' overall English language learning strategy, classified by English proficiency level' show statistically significant differences among English proficiency levels ( $\alpha = .01$ ). High proficiency English students report using

compensation, metacognitive, memory, social, affective, and cognitive strategies more than students with a medium proficiency in English. Moreover, the medium English proficiency students report using affective, social, metacognitive, memory, and cognitive strategies more than those with low English language proficiency. On the other hand, the low English proficiency students reported using compensation strategies more than those with medium English language proficiency.

## Discussions

According to the fore mentioned findings, a more profound discussion follows:

1. The undergraduate students' overall English language learning strategy reports at the medium level ( $\bar{X} = 3.24$ ). The results of the current study are consistent with earlier work. Thai students used learning strategies with moderate frequency (Prakongchat, 2007:12-263) (Satta-Udom, 2007:7-81). Sara & Nooreiny (2010:47-61) explored the effective use of language learning strategies of undergraduate students of Universiti Keebang saan Malaysia at a medium level. When investigating the strategies groups. Consequently, the compensation, social, affective, metacognitive, memory, and cognitive strategies were moderately used. The findings were consistent with previous studies by Satta-Udom (2007:7-81), finding that the most frequently used strategies categories by first-year students at Mahidol University were the compensation strategies. Mochizuki's (1999:101-113) study showed that Japanese university students used compensation strategies most often. Thus, it may reasonably be assumed that Asian university students employ compensation strategies to assist in second language learning. As in many Asian countries where they learn English as a second language or as a foreign language (ESL/EFL), they tend to use compensation strategies to compensate for missing knowledge in the target language. Moreover, cognitive and metacognitive strategies were identified through the open-ended questions "I listen to music and watch a movie in English" and "I practice English from the internet such as Youtube, websites, podcasts, and so on. The result was contrary to the perception of Asian memory strategies (Oxford & Lee, 2008). Moreover, the data obtained through a semi-structured interview were per the quantitative questionnaire. For instance, undergraduate students usually employ body language or gestures more frequently in speaking, i.e., to point out directly the items that can indicate the meanings. Interviewee 1 stated, "When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures". Moreover, circumlocution or talking around the subject is also employed because this strategy can help them to describe

what they need to say, i.e., to point out directly to the items which can indicate the meanings.

2. Strategy used concern gender in the present study found that no statistically significant difference between males and females in the frequency of using overall English language learning strategies. Hong-Nam & Leavell (2006:300-415) investigated language learning strategy use. They found that strategy use between males and female were not statistically significant. Griffith (2003:367-384) surveyed strategy use by international students in New Zealand, mostly adult learners, and discovered no significant difference between the genders. Kim (1995: 235-262) investigated the use of language learning strategies by Korean adult ESL learners. Kim found that no significant differences between males and females in the use of strategies.

3. As the field of study, significant differences in strategy use among fields of study were found. Liberal arts and Education students reported using metacognitive, affective, compensation, social, cognitive, and memory strategies more frequently than Engineering and Technology, Applied Science, Business Management, Law, and Social Science, respectively. These results agreed with Politzer & McGroarty's study (1985:103-123), where they studied thirty-seven non-native English learners who participated in a preparation course. Their findings indicated that the fields of study significantly influenced the students' choice of strategies. The results were also consistent with Chang, Liu & Lee's study (2007:235-262). They investigated strategy used by college EFL learners in Taiwan. The findings revealed that humanities and social sciences students seem to more frequently use overall strategies and the six strategies categories than do the business, management, and science and engineering students. According to the studies above, it can be said that the fields of study/university majors influence the learning strategy choice of university students.

4. Other issues in strategy used were whether language learning strategies related to language proficiency. The current study found that English proficiency level influences language learning strategy choice. The present study found that students with high English proficiency reported more frequent use of all strategy groups than medium or low-proficiency learners. The results of the findings were per the previous studies. Politzer & McGroarty (1985:103-123) studied the strategies used by thirty-seven good and poor non-native English learners. Their findings showed that learners of different language proficiency levels reported different language learning strategies. Green & Oxford (1995: 261-297) studied students' strategies across three different course levels at the University of Puerto Rico; they discovered that students with higher proficiency levels used all types

of strategies more frequently than the lower level students. It is evident that more proficient learners employ more strategies and regularly use those strategies than those with lower English proficiency. When investigating the strategies groups, the current study found that the highly proficient learners preferred to use compensation, metacognitive, memory, social, affective, and cognitive strategies, respectively, and used them more often than students with medium and low proficiency. Compensation strategies were the most highly used strategies as proficient learners used to overcome limitations in a language know. Metacognitive strategies were the following most used strategies among highly proficient students. Oxford (1990:136) claims that 'metacognitive strategies are essential for successful language learning'. For this objective, good language learners use metacognitive strategies to assist them in becoming successful language learners. Their strategies include paying attention to learning, planning for learning, and evaluating learning. The findings revealed that highly proficient adult language learners used compensation strategies the most, followed by metacognitive strategies.

### **Recommendations**

The author makes the following suggestions for further study:

#### **1. Recommendations from this Study**

1.1 The compensation strategies were the preferred strategies used by undergraduate students; therefore, language learning and language activities in class require further consideration.

1.2 The strategies used by highly proficient English students, compensation strategies, can be applied in strategy training at the undergraduate level to assist and develop the lower proficient learners' English competency.

#### **2. Recommendations for Further Study**

2.1 The highly proficient English learners' language learning strategies offer potential for reflection among other factors of interest, including learning style, the background of English learning, attitude, and motivation to learn English.

2.2 Studying other (beyond those of this study) undergraduate language groups may uncover new language learning strategies and whether they engage differently. For example, one could consider 'language' undergraduate students at various universities.

2.3 Besides a questionnaire, other research instruments should be further adapted and developed for different groups of learners and different education contexts, e.g., diary, observation, think-aloud, and discussion.

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