

Applying Cognitive Strategies to Enhance English Major Students' Listening and Speaking Skills

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประยุกต์ใช้กลยุทธ์ในการเรียนรู้และเข้าใจทักษะการฟังและพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีปีที่ 3 ในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารธุรกิจในภาคเรียนที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2563 เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับกลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้จากนักศึกษาจำนวน 60 คน ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารธุรกิจ ส่วนการศึกษากลยุทธ์การเรียนรู้ด้านการฟังและการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบ่งเป็น 4 กลยุทธ์ ได้แก่ 1) กลวิธีการฝึกปฏิบัติ 2) กลยุทธ์การรับและการส่งสาร 3) การวิเคราะห์และการใช้เหตุผล และ 4) การสร้างประโยคและข้อมูลเชิงธุรกิจ โดยใช้กลุ่มตัวอย่างนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษที่เรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อธุรกิจจำนวนทั้งหมด 60 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ประกอบด้วย (1) การทดสอบก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียน (2) การสอบย่อย (3) แบบสอบถามก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียน และ (4) การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกด้วยการคัดเลือกนักศึกษาแบบเจาะจงจำนวน 10 คน

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า

นักศึกษาสามารถประยุกต์ใช้กลยุทธ์ในการรับรู้และเข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษได้ และโดยส่วนใหญ่ นักศึกษามีความสามารถในการปฏิบัติ การใช้ทักษะการรับและการส่งข้อความ การวิเคราะห์และการให้เหตุผล และสามารถสร้างประโยคที่เกี่ยวข้องกับข้อมูลและผลผลิตเชิงธุรกิจ ตัวอย่างเช่น คำศัพท์ด้านธุรกิจ บทสนทนาทางธุรกิจ การประชุมทางธุรกิจ และการเจรจาต่อรองทางการค้า

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to apply cognitive strategies to develop the third-year students' listening and speaking skills in English for Business Communication from semester 2 academic year 2020. The research

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examined the cognitive strategies used by the 60 students who enrolled in English for Business Communication. There are divided into four types: (1) Practicing, (2) Receiving and Sending Messages, (3) Analysis and Reasoning and (4) Creating Structure for Input and Output. The research sampling was 60 third-year English major students. The research instruments were used by (1) pre-post achievement test, (2) formative tests, (3) pre-post questionnaire and (4) in-depth interview. For the in-depth interview, the researcher used ten case studies.

The research results found that:

The students were able to apply the cognitive strategies during the instruction. Generally, they are capable to practice, receive and send messages, analyze and reasoning, and create a structure for input and output about business content for example; business vocabularies, business phrases, business conversation, business meetings, and business negotiation.

Keywords: Cognitive Strategies, Listening Skills, Speaking Skills

1. Introduction

The research examined the cognitive strategies used by the students who enrolled in “English for Business Communication”. The results showed that the students were able to apply the cognitive strategies during the instruction. Generally, they are to practice, receive and send message, analyze and reasoning, and create the structure for input and output about business content; for example, business vocabularies, business phrases, business conversation, business meetings, and business negotiation. In this age of globalization, English has gradually become the medium in every field of communication, both in local and global contexts. Consequently, there is a stipulation for speakers who can use English effectively. English is called the Global language of many countries in the world. Among the four skills of the English language, listening and speaking are supposed to be the most important skills that must be able to communicate globally. In Thailand, English instruction intends to improve language proficiency and provide students with useful learning processes and strategies to enhance the use of

English skills for global communication. Therefore, it appears predictably that many university teachers must assess students' background knowledge such as vocabulary, phrases, and grammar usage repeatedly before they can keep on employing their English skills. To improve students' listening and speaking skills, strategies are particularly important for language learning because they are tools for active and self-directed involvement and are essential for developing communicative competence (Vanniarajan, 1990). Listening and speaking are the key elements of language learning. People spend much more time on listening and speaking than reading and writing in their daily lives. Most language learners consider the ability to listen and speak as crucial to language learning. They need to be both confident and proficient in listening and speaking to communicate perfectly. Because of the importance of both listening and speaking skills, these two skills have been taught to students by both Thai and foreign teachers. Educators have tried to find a new method of teaching to help students develop their English communication skills, instead of the old-fashioned teaching approach of focusing on grammar. Although Thai students have studied English both academic and communication, Thai students still have problems with their English listening and speaking. Thai students are good at grammar, but when they have to speak English, they fail to utter the language correctly. Similarly, Wanthanasut found that students were afraid of making mistakes while speaking English and did not dare to speak English with others as they were afraid that they would be misunderstood (Wanthanasut, 2008). However, the problem is not only the method implemented, but it also can be assumed that some problems are the students themselves because the most important factor in language learning is the language learner. Learners tend to blame teachers, conditions, and learning materials for their lack of success in listening and speaking skills, whereas possibly the most important reason for their lack of success can be found in themselves. One of the aspects that are involved in the process of developing speaking and listening skills is the language learning strategies used by the learners themselves. This is because the learners learn by themselves. Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning (Vanniarajan, 1990: 11). Language

learning strategies constitute a useful tool kit for active and conscious learning, and these strategies pave the way toward greater language learning proficiency. In addition, Vanniarajan also states that the use of appropriate language learning strategies is a major contribution to the development of communicative competence. It can be assumed that if inappropriate strategies are applied it will not result in the improvement of proficiency to be communicatively competent (Vanniarajan, 1990: 8). Thus, learning strategies are among the main factors that help to determine how well learners learn a foreign language. Language strategies can be significantly beneficial in assisting students to know how to learn effectively and give them a chance to use various learning strategies to enhance their listening and speaking skills.

2. Objective

To apply cognitive strategies in the listening and speaking skills of Bachelor's degree students of Maejo University.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Strategies-based instruction

Strategies-based instruction is a learner-centered approach to teaching that has two major components: firstly, students are explicitly taught on how, when, and why strategies can be used to facilitate language learning and language use tasks; secondly, strategies are integrated into everyday class materials, and maybe explicitly or implicitly embedded into language tasks (Broer, 2001). It has been suggested that strategies-based instruction may help learners in three ways; First, learning strategies instruction can help students to become better learners, second, skills in using learning strategies assist them in becoming independent and confident learners, and finally, they become more motivated as they begin to understand the relationships between their use of strategies and success in learning a language (Chou, 2004; Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). In strategies-based instruction, students are expected to work independently and be responsible for their own learning. Learners are therefore challenged to manage their language studies in a variety of ways. Students who have a repertoire of strategies at their

disposal can make sophisticated learning decisions. In other words, strategies-based instruction aims to assist learners in becoming more responsible for their efforts in learning and using the target language. It also aims to assist them in becoming more effective learners by allowing them to individualize the language learning experience. Learning strategies instruction is also a teaching approach that raises learners' awareness of learning strategies. It provides learners with systematic practice in how, when, and why to use learning strategies and helps them to develop self-monitoring skills that facilitate active engagement in the learning process. O'Malley and Chamot state that "learning strategies are special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (O'Malley and Chamot, 1989: 434). Vanniarajan also points out learning strategies are specific actions taken by learners to help their own learning, to make the learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable. By employing the right strategies, the process of learning the language will improve significantly. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved, faster language proficiency. Language learning strategies play an important role in the process of learning a language (Vanniarajan, 1990).

3.2 Speaking and Listening skills

1. Speaking is an ability to orally express opinions, thoughts, facts, and feelings to other people, animals and even to oneself. Speaking is a productive oral skill that consists of constructing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. In a slightly different statement, Brown points out that "speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information". In speaking, the students learn how to organize ideas, arrange sentences, and express language in spoken form with good pronunciation and comprehensible language (Brown, 2004: 140).

2. Listening is a process of receiving and constructing meaning forms and a process of reacting to verbal and nonverbal information (Carrier, 1999: 73). Date back to 1976, Besides these compositions, advocates that the foreign language comprehension procession is also linked with people's

mother tongue. He points out that listening comprehension includes feeling to know, decoding, prediction, and choice. As listening has often been called a passive skill, O'Malley and Chamot state that listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and existing knowledge while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement (O'Malley and Chamot, 1989: 434). The scholar also holds the same view. He states in detail, and quote; listening comprehension is a complex, active process in which the listeners must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger social structural context of the utterance. Coordinating all these involves a great deal of mental activities on the part of listening. In particular, listening is to catch the words the speaker says, grasp his or her thoughts, decipher the information, divide the content, and get the shift of speakers' images, impressions, ideas, beliefs, emotions, and attitudes. Under this view, listening is conventionally referred to as a receptive skill. For recognizing the speaker's intentional message, the hearer must positively utilize the knowledge linguistically and non-linguistically. The linguistic source includes the following items such as vocabulary, syntactic, and phonetic problems. The non-linguistic source refers to background knowledge. Hearer can recognize the continuous sound as meaningful units only by applying his knowledge of the language, and he can interpret the meaning only by comparing these units with the shared knowledge between himself and the speaker. In fact, most utterances that we hear in daily life could be seen as carrying different meanings in different circumstances. If the listener failed to process the linguistic signals, he would also fail to understand the meaning. But it is very hard for the hearer to realize his misunderstanding when he continues non-stop to involve himself in the communication. He would be better aware that some clues are less important than others in the message. Hence, even if he doesn't know some pieces of language, he should be told not to panic as he can make use of other clues to understand the message to achieve his basic purpose better. Listening signifies that the hearer should

look for interesting things in the speaker's words, find out the most relevant, reconstruct the relevant information from the speaker's message, and understand the strategy of the speaker's way of expressing.

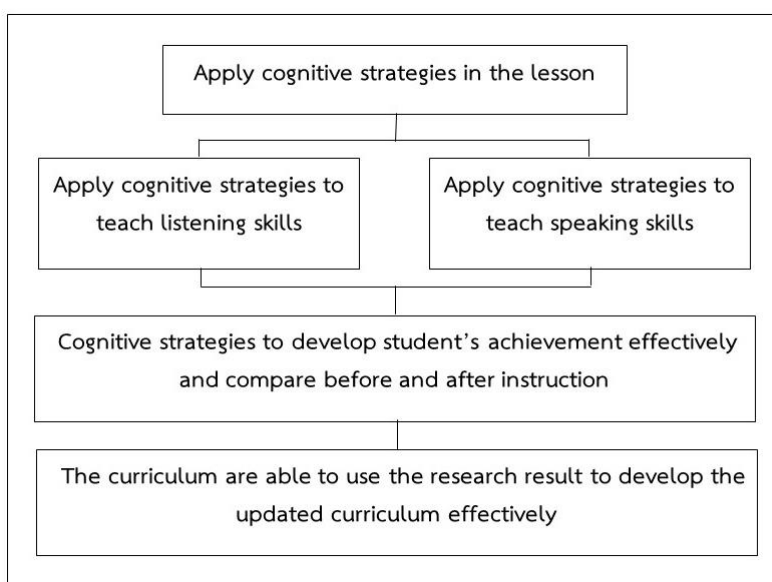


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

3.3 Research Design and Methodology

This research was conducted to apply cognitive strategies to develop students' listening and speaking skills. Sampling students were selected from all enrolled students, 60 students, in the English for Business Communication (EN373) course during the second semester of the 2020 academic year.

3.3.1 Research instruments

The research instruments were examined and approved by the Ethics Committee on Human Research. Research instruments (cognitive strategies-used questionnaire in listening and speaking skills, achievement test, formative test, in-depth interview) were applied to assess students' listening and speaking skills after the instruction. All research instruments were approved by from three academic experts. The lesson plans were based on cognitive strategies. These lesson plans purpose to improve students'

listening and speaking skills. The lesson plans cover six units from English for Business Communication (EN373).

3.3.2 Data collecting instrument

1. Cognitive strategies

It used questionnaire in listening and speaking skills (Pre/Post) The questionnaire consists of questions asking the students to identify the cognitive strategies used before and after the instruction. During the first instruction, the students were asked to complete the cognitive strategies used and at the end of the instruction students were asked to complete the questionnaire again to compare before and after the instruction.

2. Achievement test

The achievement test was pre-test and post-test. Students were asked to complete the test to assess students' achievement in listening and speaking skills before and after applying cognitive strategies. There were five listening tests and ten speaking tests. The test was designed from the objectives and the contents of English for Business Communication (EN373).

3. Formative tests

Throughout the instruction, the formative test was used to assess the student's effectiveness. The test was quizzed on each unit that aimed to assess students' effectiveness in listening and speaking skills during the instruction. The quiz was designed from the objectives and the contents of English for Business Communication (EN373).

4. In-depth interview

The in-depth interview was used after the instructions. Ten case studies were purposively selected to answer the in-depth interview questions.

5. Data Analysis

1) Cognitive strategies used questionnaire in listening and speaking skills (Pre/Post) The questionnaire is five points Likert's scale (5-point scale) are: Level of frequency in using cognitive strategies 5 = Always, 4 = Very often, 3 = Often, 2 = Rarely, 1=Never For analyzing Mean Scores, standard deviation, percentage, and T-test are utilized to find any significant differences between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire.

2) Achievement test (Pre/Post)

The achievement test in this research referred to pre-test and post-test. After students did the test, the researcher analyzed the score by using a t-test. The achievement test covers the content from units 1 – 6 of English for Business Communication.

3) Formative tests

The formative test in listening and speaking skills was evaluated as follows: Listening to formative tests and Speaking formative tests

4) In-depth interview

The in-depth interview was used after the instructions. Subjects were purposively selected to answer the questions.

4. Results

The result of pre-questionnaire (cognitive strategies)

Language learning strategies used by students before the instruction. Before the instruction, most students have been chosen questionnaire no.6 ‘You have reviewed and practiced the English language outside the classroom with the intention of improving your listening skills.’ The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 2.081 means ‘rarely’. Additionally, questionnaire no.3 ‘You have learned English from online media in order to enhance your knowledge and understanding.’ The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 2.068 means ‘rarely’. The result obviously shows that students have reviewed and practiced the English language outside the classroom with the intention of improving their listening skills. The research result of post-questionnaire (cognitive strategies) after the instruction, the results were diverse, most students have been chosen questionnaire No. 3 ‘You have learned English from online media for improving your knowledge and understanding’. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 3.959 means ‘very often’. Moreover, most students have chosen questionnaire no. 2 ‘You have learned English from books or other social media so as to improve your speaking skills’. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 3.797 means ‘very often’. The result obviously shows that students have learned English from online media to improve their knowledge and understanding. The students have evidently improved themselves after the instruction.

The results of the pre-post achievement test of listening were significantly different at 0.01, and the results of the pre-post achievement test

of listening and speaking were significantly different at 0.01. It can be interpreted that students have effectively improved their listening and speaking skills. Throughout the instruction, formative tests were used to assess the students' effectiveness. The tests were quizzed on each unit that aimed to assess students' effectiveness in listening and speaking skills during the instruction. The quizzes were designed from the objectives and the contents of English for Business Communication (EN373).

The results of the in-depth interview

The in-depth interview was used after the instructions. Subjects were purposively selected to answer the questions. The results illustrate that most students try to learn and practice the pronunciation of the songs and movies empathetically. They also watch movies twice or more to continually learn the vocabulary and phrases. Some of the students have improved their English from native and non-native teachers in both junior high school and high school. They have taught students in English. Some students had completed the English presentation in English academic skills and had also talked to a native speaker and friends from Europe, Switzerland, Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines. They have practiced daily conversation with teachers, and they also have had a chance to practice conversation with native teachers both in junior high school and high school. Students always learn English from social media like YouTube which teaches them about listening skills, grammar, and romantic novels. They have repeatedly watched English series and listened to songs. So, their listening skills have obviously improved for example, words, phrases, and sentences. Students have watched BBC News and BBC English learning to practice their speaking skills. Their English pronunciation and presentation have meaningfully improved, and they have more confidence to talk with foreigners. However, students would like to learn more academic vocabulary in the class. Students have an obvious change about using more vocabulary for a conversation. For listening skills, they have tried to listen repeatedly and could comprehend the gist. Additionally, the improvement of speaking and listening skills are gradually increased.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Before the instruction, students were asked to complete the pre-questionnaire. The results presented that most students have chosen the questionnaire No. 6 ‘You have reviewed and practiced English language outside the classroom with the intention of improving your listening skills’. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 2.081 means ‘rarely’. Additionally, questionnaire no.3 ‘You have learned English from online media in order to enhance your knowledge and understanding’. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 2.068 means ‘rarely’. The result of pre – questionnaire obviously displays that students have reviewed and practiced the English language outside the classroom with the intention of improving their listening skills. According to the study of Chamot and O’Malley (1994), learning strategies instruction can help students to become better students, skills in using learning strategies assist them in becoming independent and confident students and students become more motivated as they begin to understand the relationships between their use of strategies and success in learning the language. Afterward, the students were also asked to complete the post – post-questionnaire. The result noticeably illustrates that after the instruction, the results were diverse, most students have been chosen questionnaire no.3 ‘You have learned English from online media for improving your knowledge and understanding’. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 3.959 means ‘very often’. Moreover, most students have chosen questionnaire no.2 ‘You have learned English from books or other social media so as to improve your speaking skills’. The mean score ($\bar{X}$) was 3.797 means ‘very often’. Chamot and Rubin mention that strategies-based instruction is a learner-centered approach to teaching that has two major components: firstly, students are explicitly taught how, when, and why strategies can be used to facilitate language learning and language use tasks; secondly, strategies are integrated into everyday class materials, and may be explicitly or implicitly embedded into language tasks (Chamot and Rubin, 1994: 771).

The result obviously shows that students have learned English from online media to improve their knowledge and understanding. Cognitive strategy instruction is also a teaching approach that raises students’ awareness of learning strategy. It provides learners with systematic practice in how, when, and why to use learning strategy and helps them to develop repetition, organizing new

language, summarizing meaning, guessing meaning from context that facilitate active engagement in learning process (Castles, Holmes, Neath and Kinoshita, 2003; Kinoshita, 2003). From the research, the result presented that the students applied the learning strategies after the instruction more frequently than the pre-implementing. According to the study of Cotton (1998), a strategic learner means a learner who can read, listen, speak, and listen well enough, a learner who is aware of what they need to learn, and who knows how to make and to follow the plan, and a learner who has the learning outcomes. Cotton also mentions that one supportive way to help the students to be more aware of English learning is for the teacher to implement the strategies-based English language instruction to the English class. Also, there are many research studies that show the improvement of the students after the strategies implementation (Cotton, 1998). Regarding to speaking and listening ability, O'Mally, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper and Russo found that the learning strategies have improved the students speaking and listening skills (O'Mally, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper and Russo, 1985). Cohen, Weaver and Li found that the cognitive strategy instruction had a positive influence on the 10 weeks' course result (Cohen, Weaver and Li, 1995).

6. Recommendations and suggestions

Strategies-based instruction is a learner-centered approach to teaching that has two major components: firstly, students are explicitly taught how, when, and why strategies can be used to facilitate language learning and language use tasks; secondly, strategies are integrated into everyday class materials, and may be explicitly or implicitly embedded into language tasks (Chamot and Rubin, 1994: 771). It has been suggested that strategies-based instruction may help learners in three ways; firstly, learning strategies instruction can help students to become better learners, secondly, skills in using learning strategies assist them in becoming independent and confident learners, and finally, they become more motivated as they begin to understand relationships between their use of strategies and success in learning language (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994).

Therefore, the researcher has applied the cognitive strategy in order to enhance students' listening and speaking skills. Cognitive strategy regularly plays

the important role during the instruction such as remembering and understanding the business vocabularies, useful expressions, business conversations, negotiation, meeting and presentation. This research can be advantageous for English instructors who are interested in applying cognitive strategy.

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