

THAI UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY USE: A QUALITATIVE PERSPECTIVE.

Nisakorn Prakongchati*¹ and Channarong Intaraprasert²

¹*Faculty of Arts, Mahidol University, 999 Phuttamonthon 4 Road, Salaya,
Nakhon Pathom 73170, Thailand*

²*School of English, Suranaree University of Technology, Mueang,
Nakhon Ratchasima 30000, Thailand.*

ABSTRACT

Language learning strategies have been defined specifically for this investigation as conscious behavior or thought processes used in performing learning actions whether observable (behavior or techniques) or unobservable (thoughts or mental processes), that Thai public university freshmen themselves reported generating and making use of to enhance their English learning in the classroom and in a free learning situation.

The focal point of the study emphasizes an exploration of Thai public university freshmen's language learning strategy use. It has been more practical for the researcher to make use of the information directly gained from Thai public university students, rather than to borrow from other researchers' language learning strategy classifications which can be obtained from language learners in other contexts where language learning strategies have been widely investigated. Language learning strategies have been variously categorized according to individual researchers' own justifications and systems that have been derived from their direct or indirect experiences as language learners, language teachers, or both. Thus, different researchers name their language learning strategy categories differently. No single classification system can be definitely used as the best uniform in all language learning contexts. The language learning strategy classification proposed here is different from the existing classifications to a certain extent. The present categorization is based on the purposes of strategy use obtained through interview data reported by 44 university freshmen learning English at different institutions in Thailand.

The results show four main categories of language learning strategy which are 10 individual strategies used for preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 11 strategies for understanding the lessons while studying in class; 12 strategies for improving one's language skills; and 11 strategies for expanding one's general knowledge of English respectively.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, public university freshmen.

INTRODUCTION

It is evident that classifying language learning strategies remains questionable in the field of language learning strategies. This may result from the fact that using different criteria and systems in classifying language learning strategies causes inconsistencies and mismatches across the existing taxonomies and other categories (Cohen, 1998). Ellis (1994) emphasizes that language learning strategy has been classified variously according to researchers' own experiences. In other words, the classification systems of language learning strategies have been derived from particular groups of participants that the researchers have worked with, the setting, and the researchers' own interests. Therefore, individual researchers have developed their own classification systems of language learning strategies, which are derived from their direct experiences; i.e., their personal experiences (Stern, 1983, 1992), the understanding discovered from their own language learning strategy investigations (Stern, 1975, 1983, 1992; Rubin, 1975, 1981; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Coleman, 1991; and Intaraprasert, 2000), or their indirect experiences; i.e., their knowledge and understanding expanded from reviewing other researchers' works and theories (Rubin, 1975, 1981; Stern, 1983, 1992; and Ellis and Sinclair, 1989).

The language learning strategy classification proposed here is different from the existing classifications to a certain extent. The present categorization is based on the purposes of language learning strategy use obtained through interview data reported by 44 freshmen learning English at different state universities in Thailand. The interviews were conducted to identify what language learning strategies Thai learners at a tertiary level reported employing to enhance their learning of English inside and outside the classroom setting.

Since the 1970's, in the field of language teaching and learning, there has been a great emphasis on how language learners' characteristics relate to their language performance. The individualized focus has resulted in an increasing number of studies

conducted to investigate the relationship between learner differences and language learning strategies that learners use in acquiring a target language. Any review of the available literature, research work, and the published books also reveals how little is known about EFL learners' use of language learning strategies. This may be because a great deal of the research has been limited to being carried out with native speakers of English learning a foreign language or non-native speakers of English learning English as a second language (ESL), as stated in Intaraprasert (2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004), and Wharton (2000). In the context of EFL in Thailand, few research works have been carried out to investigate the language learning strategy use of Thai EFL students, and only a small amount of research has been conducted with students studying at the tertiary level (Intaraprasert, 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004). In addition, no empirical research has been designed to investigate the language learning strategy use of Thai university students, specifically those who have just started their first year at public universities.

An initial review of the related literature and other research materials appears to reveal that the term, definition, classification, and characteristics of language learning strategies have been part of the fundamental problem that was continually stressed in the early studies. This problem demonstrates that there is no definite agreement for defining, terming or classifying language learning strategies. This is because different definitions of language learning strategies have been proposed largely according to a variety of the research contexts. The process of exploring the concept of language learning strategies from recent definitions is approached before arriving at the working definition of the study. As Ellis (1994) suggests, one of the best approaches to defining language learning strategies is to try to list their main characteristics. In order to do so, reviewing recent definitions of language learning strategies is one way to facilitate the process of defining the term of language learning strategies in this study. As a result, the original 'working

definition' of the study contains the following four concepts:

Conscious behavior or thought processes used in performing learning actions whether observable (behavior or techniques) or unobservable (thoughts or mental processes), that Thai public university freshmen themselves reported generating and making use of to enhance their English learning in the classroom and in a free learning situation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The present investigation was designed to be conducted under the 'research-then-theory' (termed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996), or so called 'theory-after-research' (termed by Punch, 1998) rather than the 'theory-then-research' (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996) or 'theory-first-research' (Punch, 1998). According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), and Punch (1998), the 'research-then-theory' or 'theory-after research' does not start with theory used to frame the scope of the study, but it ends up with a theory explained from the data the researcher collects. Hence, the present investigation does not aim to test any existing theories about learners' use of language learning strategies. Rather, it is designed to examine language learning strategy use of Thai public university students. It is specifically aimed at exploring the use of language learning strategies that Thai public university freshmen reported employing in enhancing their language learning in both inside and outside the classroom settings.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To achieve the aim of the research posed earlier, the researcher collected the data and accordingly analyzed the obtained data qualitatively. The student focus-group interviews were conducted with 44 Thai public university freshmen in Thailand between December 2005 and January 2006. The purpose of the

semi-structured focus-group interviews at this stage was to obtain information about students' use of language learning strategies in the classroom and in a free learning situation.

The distinctive characteristics of focus-group interviews "enable researchers to have access to the opinions, viewpoints, attitudes, and experiences of individuals" (Madriz, 2000). A series of focus-group interviews in the present study was arranged by providing participants with the opportunity of discussing and exchanging information among themselves concerning the language learning strategies they use to learn EFL, together with the researcher listening attentively and taking notes. Recommendations on optimal group size vary from seven to ten participants needed for each session (Krueger, 1994). However, the bigger the group is, the less comfortable interviewees feel to be part of a group. Furthermore, with a small group, the interviewer can more easily manage the group dynamics, process the information and attend to each member (Carey, 1994). Thus, the researcher decided to conduct the small focus-group interviews of six participants in each group with an equal number of male and female students. Each group interview lasted about one to one and a half hours. With consent from the participants, each interview was recorded (as suggested by Cohen et al., 2000; Robson, 2002; Creswell, 2003). This was very helpful since relying on the interviewer's notes alone may not be sufficient. The data obtained through the focus-group interviews, once transcribed and analyzed together with a check for the reliability and validity, would help create a better understanding and a clearer picture in Thai learners' use of language learning strategies.

The process of data collection and analysis consisted of three main phases: interview preparation; interview implementation; and analysis of interview data. Firstly, before conducting the interviews, guideline interview questions were prepared, and the selection and recruiting of group interview members took place. Reviewing the research working definitions developed the interview questions, the guideline

questions were formulated for the session and these guided questions were also used as the guideline for the initial development of themes or categories in the data analysis. The content of the interview questions partly emerged from the researcher's review of literature and related research in the field of language learning strategies and partly from the researcher's personal experiences about language learning strategies. The interview questions were piloted in Thai with four students to test the clarity and comprehensibility of all questions prior to the actual interviews. With comments from those participating in the pilot interviews and after discussion with the researcher's main supervisor, the interview questions were re-worded and re-arranged before their actual use. The piloting helped the researcher not only with the wording of questions but also with procedural matters such as the question sequence, the reduction of non-response rates, and time arrangement, as well as the information about strategy use. In this phase, four public universities located in the regional parts of Thailand including the Bangkok Metropolitan were randomly sampled to take part in the data collection.

In conducting the interviews, once formal permission from the participating universities was granted, the researcher followed her interview timetable by meeting the selected and recruited students at designated places prepared by each participating university. Having taken the ethical issues proposed by Cohen et al. (2000) into account, that is, before starting the interviews, all of the interviewees received and signed the consent forms together with a verbal summary of the present research to ensure that the possible consequences of the research were made clear to them, the researcher took a special care that the interviewees and the people they referred to would be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. After having completed the consent forms, they were given about 10 minutes to read the interview questions thoroughly and then each interview started and was audio taped simultaneously.

During the interviews, the researcher addressed the participants by their nicknames. This was one way to help establish a congenial atmosphere for the session (Measor, 1985). This also helped the researcher remember the group members individually to balance between the active and passive roles of each group member and prevented any one interviewee to dominate. The researcher followed the guidelines of conducting interviews proposed by Cohen et al. (2000) to ensure that the interviews were conducted in an appropriate, non-stressful and non-threatening manner. While interviewing, the researcher had to be a good listener rather than a good speaker avoiding any unnecessary interruptions, giving advice or opinions as well as displaying any personal facial or body expressions (Carey, 1994; Creswell, 2003). In addition, after finishing the discussion of the guideline questions and before going to next questions, the researcher gave feedback by summarizing the discussion to the group in order to have the group members clarify and correct the information. These actions were one way to increase the validity of the data, as supported by the suggestions of Creswell (2003), in that the informants have a chance to check throughout an ongoing dialogue regarding the researcher's interpretations of their reality and meanings to ensure the truth of the data.

Transcribing and translating the interview data were the main steps in the process of data analysis. The eight audio-recorded interviews, which constituted the database, were transcribed verbatim in the Thai language by the researcher and subsequently transformed into individual text electronic files. Some simple layout elements of transcription were later used to facilitate the data processing. Transcriptions are transformations of one mode – a conversation or oral discourse - into another mode: narrative discourse. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, such transformations often erase contextual and non-verbal data and make transcription inevitably selective. In this case, the interview transcripts were deliberately selective, privileging the record of verbal expressions

(where language learning strategies were reported) and keeping the transcripts as simple as possible. No systematic effort was made to reflect accurately in the transcripts the occurrence of interjections, emphasis, pauses, voice tone, gestures, etc.

To increase the reliability and validity of the interview transcripts, the researcher used three methods: comparing researcher's handwritten notes with tape transcripts; repeatedly listening and transcribing the recordings of each interview; and equating the literal meanings of transcripts through careful back-translation; the researcher emailed to ask for assistance from friends who were then pursuing their doctoral degree in the United Kingdom to check the translated data by doing an English-Thai translations, and then compared this with the original language texts.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are two main types of coding. The first one, a grounded approach, is used by an inductive researcher who may not want to pre-code any data until the researcher has collected it, seen how it functions or nests in its context or determined how many varieties of it there are. The second is to create a provisional "start list" (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of codes prior to fieldwork/interview. That list comes from the conceptual framework, the list of research questions, and the key variables that bring a researcher to the area of investigation. In the present study, the second type of coding is appropriate. Thus, the guided questions of the interviews could actually serve as the initial categories and could provide a common structure of analysis across interview sessions.

After the interview recordings had been transcribed and translated into English, coding schemes and initial coding were initially generated. Firstly, the researcher carefully read through the interview data regarding language learning strategies reported by 44 interviewees from four universities to get a whole picture of how they used language learning strategies in learning English.

Each aspect of language learning behavior or strategy, which was consistent with the working definitions of the present study, was accordingly adopted, and codes were then given to such a behavior or strategy. From the interview recordings, it was found that the interviewees produced altogether 473 statements about language learning behaviors or strategies. However, it would be impossible to include all of the 473 reported language learning strategies of the two main categories in the language learning strategy classifications. The interrelationship between categories, therefore, was further examined by seeking the differences and similarities among them. Then, the 473 reported language learning strategies were reorganized and condensed. Finally, there were 97 remaining.

Next, 20 of the 97 strategies were excluded from the language learning strategy category as they were regarded as communication strategies. A number of scholars in this field argue that communication strategies are related to language use rather than language learning (Cohen, 1998; Ellis, 1994; Tarone, 1980). The two processes (language use and language learning) are so different in terms of their function and their *psycholinguistic representation* that "they are best kept separate" (Dörnyei, 2003:168). Communication strategies are part of the language strategy use, which is defined as the ability to successfully 'get one's message across' (Tarone and Yule, 1989). Such strategies are used to enable language users to organize their utterances as effectively as possible to get their messages across to particular listeners. These strategies are also considered to be a part of the ability to repair, or compensate for, communication breakdowns.

Additionally, we could notice, from the priori language learning classifications proposed by some researchers, e.g., Stern (1975, 1983, 1992), Ellis and Sinclair (1989), Oxford (1990), that communication strategies are included in their classifications as techniques used to keep a conversation going, e.g., using circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrasing or

asking for repetition and explanation. Oxford (1990)'s taxonomy includes communication strategies under the compensation strategy category. These strategies are related to language learning strategies, which compensate for learners' lack of competence. Oxford (1990) classifies them under overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. These are switching to L1 (or 'code-switching'), getting help from others to get the messages across, using mime, gesture, or non-verbal noise such as a sigh, avoiding communication partially or totally, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words by making an L1 word sound like an L2 word, and using circumlocution or a synonym. According to the characteristics of communications strategies described above, any learning behavior or performance lacking the focus on overcoming limitations of communication difficulties (e.g., clarifying the question in order to get help, and using gestures or explaining with other words to compensate the unknown words) is regarded as a language learning strategy.

In addition, the author of the present investigation did not attempt to compare her classification with the existing ones. Further, she always kept in mind that the process of establishing classification systems for language learning strategies remains far from straightforward due to the overlapping and conflicting opinions. This is due to different researchers' various ways of classifying language learning strategies, likely depending on their own experiences as language learners, or language teachers, their investigation, and/or their literature review, as noted by Oxford (1990):

[T]here is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorized; and whether it is – or ever will be – possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies -Classification conflicts are inevitable (p.17).

After the initial step described above, the researcher further reviewed the reported statements

again to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, sequences, and differences among those 77 language learning strategies. Having had a long discussion with the main supervisor, the author had a clearer idea of how to classify the learners' reported performances and perceptions of acquiring L2 learning in the classroom context and in a free situation under the four main language learning strategy categories. They are: 1) preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 2) understanding while studying in class; 3) improving one's language skills; and 4) expanding one's general knowledge of English. Each main category includes two subcategories. The first main category of language learning strategies involves those used by the language learners to prepare themselves before or after classroom lessons. The second category consists of learning strategies employed to understand while studying in class. They could be divided into two main subcategories depending on with which the language learners play interactions: intra-personal or inter-personal. The subcategories of the last two main categories similarly comprise learning strategies applied with the support of media or non-media utilization. The media here covers newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the Internet.

To apply a structure and reference system of those categorizations, the researcher gave codes to the four main categories as follows:

- "Prep" for Preparing Oneself for Classroom Lessons;
- "Under" for Understanding while Studying in Class;
- "Imp" for Improving One's Language Skills; and
- "Exp" for Expanding One's General Knowledge of English.

An individual strategy for the four categories was then listed under their two main categories, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Language learning strategy inventory structure.

Main category		Subcategory
Category 1	Preparing oneself for classroom lessons (Prep)	1.1 Before class (PrepB) 1.2 After class (PrepA)
Category 2	Understanding while studying in class (Under)	2.1 Intra-personal interaction (UnderINTRA) 2.2 Inter-personal interaction (UnderINTER)
Category 3	Improving one's language skills (Imp)	3.1 Media utilization (ImpM) 3.2 Non-media utilization (ImpNM)
Category 4	Expanding one's general knowledge of English (Exp)	4.1 Media utilization (ExpM) 4.2 Non-media utilization (ExpNM)

For example, PrepB 1.1 was abbreviated to the first individual language learning strategy which students reported employing when first preparing themselves before classroom lessons. Although the researcher could finally classify the language learning strategies into four main categories, it does not mean that the language learning strategies under the four categories are clear-cut. Rather, some of them can possibly or always appear in different categories depending on the reported purposes of use. For example, the

language learning strategy regarding 'reviewing own notes/summary' can be grouped into either PrepB or PrepA. That means language learners may use this strategy before class to be ready for what they are going to learn in class or they may use it after class to help understand what is learned already in class.

Table 2 below illustrates the full version of language learning strategy inventory in detail.

Table 2. Language learning strategy inventory.

Main category	Subcategory
1. Preparing oneself for classroom lessons (Prep).	<p>1. <i>Before class</i></p> <p>PrepB 1. Studying the course details before hand.</p> <p>PrepB 2. Preparing oneself physically.</p> <p>PrepB 3. Attempting to attend the class.</p> <p>PrepB 4. Doing revision of the previous lessons.</p> <p>2. <i>After class</i></p> <p>PrepA 1. Reviewing own notes/summary.</p> <p>PrepA 2. Attempting to revise that day's lessons.</p> <p>PrepA 3. Doing homework or assignments.</p> <p>PrepA 4. Personally approaching the teacher by asking the teacher for clarification of what is learnt in class.</p>

Main category**Subcategory**

2. Understanding while studying in class (Under).

PrepA 5. Practicing what is learned in class with the teacher.

PrepA 6. Discussing L2 learning problems with the teacher.

1. *Intra-personal interaction*

UnderINTRA 1. Trying to get a seat in the front row.

UnderINTRA 2. Avoiding talking with other students while studying.

UnderINTRA 3. Taking notes while studying.

UnderINTRA 4. Thinking to oneself along with the teacher's instruction.

UnderINTRA 5. Trying to understand English by translating into Thai.

UnderINTRA 6. Consulting a dictionary.

2. *Inter-personal Interaction*

UnderINTER 1. Asking the teacher for clarification.

UnderINTER 2. Double-checking what is learned with friends.

UnderINTER 3. Joining a language study group.

UnderINTER 4. Choosing to sit near students proficient in L2.

UnderINTER 5 Participating in the classroom activities

3. Improving one's language skills (Imp).

1. *Media Utilization*

ImpM 1. Reading on-line materials (e.g., news, articles, stories, film scripts in English) to improve one's reading skills.

ImpM 2. Reading printed materials such as books, magazines, and newspapers in English to sharpen reading skills.

ImpM 3. Reading any English-printed resources such as labels on drugs or consumer goods, computer instructions/functions in English to enrich the vocabulary and expressions apart from what one learned in class.

ImpM 4. Contacting Thai or foreign friends through e-mails, instant messages (MSN) or SMS texts with computers or mobile phones to improve one's writing skills.

Main category**Subcategory**

4. Expanding one's general knowledge of English (Exp).

ImpM 5. Watching English-speaking films without looking at the Thai subtitles to practice listening comprehension.

ImpM 6. Watching television programs in English to help one become familiar with the accent, tone of voice, and intonation.

ImpM 7. Listening to English songs or cassette tapes of English conversations to practice listening skills.

ImpM 8. Listening to radio program in English to improve listening skills.

ImpM 9. Imitating a native speaker from media such as films, songs, cassette tapes, TV shows to practice one's speaking skills.

2. Non-media Utilization

ImpNM 1. Practicing writing with English texts such as poems, greeting cards or diaries, etc.

ImpNM 2. Conversing in English with teachers, peers, siblings or foreigners

ImpNM 3. Talking to oneself in English

1. Media Utilization

ExpM 1 Practicing English with a commercially packaged English program (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, Follow Me).

ExpM 2. Playing games for vocabulary enrichment such as English crossword puzzles.

ExpM 3 Seeking out information in English by surfing the Internet.

2. Non-media Utilization

ExpNM 1. Having extra tutorials (e.g., attending classes at a private school, having a personal tutor teach English at home, taking short English courses abroad).

ExpNM 2. Taking jobs to practice English (e.g., being a local/young guide in the hometown, working part-time at a restaurant, where there are many foreign customers).

ExpNM 3. Having one's own language-learning notebooks.

ExpNM 4. Translating English news, song lyrics, poems, etc., into Thai.

Main category**Subcategory**

ExpNM 5. Using a dictionary for vocabulary enrichment.

ExpNM 6. Joining leisure or social activities in order to practice (e.g., joining English Camps, entering singing contests, going to church on Sunday, etc.).

ExpNM 7. Practicing general English with family members.

ExpNM 8. Giving tutorials to others like junior students, peers or siblings.

When the initial analysis of the data sets was completed, a second coder involved a blinding-coding exercise conducted with a subset of transcripts, that meant the second coder did not know which codes were used by the first coder (the researcher). Both coding outcomes were compared and used to improve the definitions of coding categories and subsequently to refine the coding in the full database. The reviewed definite versions of the coding schemes and actual coding were subject to a final blind coding exercise to determine inter-coder reliability using the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

$$\text{Inter-coder reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$

In the present study, approximately 25 per cent of the reported languages learning strategies were used as a sample of the database. The other five

coders who were not involved in the development of the coding schemes coded the transcripts. These five coders included three Ph.D. students and two M.Ed. students studying at the University of Leeds, U.K. All coders were provided with printouts of a list of 28 language learning strategies and then randomly selected 30 reported statements. These language learning strategies and reported statements were randomly ordered. The five coders were then asked to match the reported statements to the language learning strategies. Once the responses were collected, agreement and disagreements were computed and coding decisions were then made by all five coders. As a consequence of the review, ambiguous definitions of codes were sharpened and some coding categories were split. These helped the final coding to be more systematic. The results obtained are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Inter-coder reliability.

Coder	Agreement	Disagreement	Inter-coder reliability
1	24	6	0.80
2	26	4	0.87
3	28	2	0.93
4	29	1	0.97
5	27	3	0.90

The inter-coder reliability level at 0.80 or above was established in all cases, there was confidence to take inter-coder reliability indicators to mean that the five coders working independently used roughly the same codes for the same segments of data and disagreements among coders did not occur if they had processed the full data base. This result also revealed that their coding was consistent with that proposed by the researcher. However, the reliability revealed that there were a few reported statements addressing a lack of clarity and insufficient explanation that could cause the difficulties to matching. For example, one of the coders, a Ph.D. student, gave comment that a clear categorization of the main categories should be done to facilitate and reduce lots of time in analyzing and matching the statements.

All in all, although the above process of interview data analysis was time-consuming, the researcher could manage this with the assistance of experts who have experience of this type of data analysis. As Robson (2002) states, in qualitative data analysis, experienced people like the researchers' supervisors and professional lecturers in the same field can help the researcher analyze the qualitative data.

DISCUSSION

In light of the investigation results presented above, the reported language learning strategies by Thai public university freshmen could be grouped into four main groups which are Preparing Oneself for Classroom Lessons (Prep), Understanding while Studying in Class (Under), Improving One's Language Skills (Imp), and Expanding One's General Knowledge of English (Exp) according to *learners' both academic and nonacademic learning performances to achieve particular L2 learning purposes*.

Based on the results of the study, it should be noted that for Thai public university freshmen, learning and practicing English fundamentally in the classroom per se is insufficient, and so they have the need to practice by employing a wider range of out-of-class strategies to improve English skills and

seriously to expand their general knowledge of English. This was noteworthy in this study and contrary to what one would expect from reading the literature from other parts of Asia which states that Asian EFL students conform to characteristics that are of highly visual, introverted, concrete learners, who look up to their teachers as a source of knowledge (Rao, 2001). That is to say, this group of Thai university students seemed to rely on both intra- and inter-personal interactions both inside and outside the classroom settings, e.g., asking the teacher for clarification, double checking what is learned with friends, joining a language study group. These strategies were employed together with strategies for understanding while studying in class in light of self-assisted learning management and self-problem solving, e.g., trying to get a seat in the front row, avoiding talking with other students while studying, taking notes while studying. Additionally, outside the classroom, the students were self-directed practitioners seeking any favorable opportunity to avail themselves of extra English practice outside the classroom instead of waiting for heaven-sent opportunities. Examples are listening to radio programs to improve their listening skills, playing English video games for vocabulary enrichment, watching English movies, and participating in informal English classes.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT FINDINGS

To improve the teaching and learning of English, the language teachers' provisions of media in various forms and out-of-class language learning activities are recommended as alternative input sources of the target language for their students. Based on the findings of this investigation, one of the language learning strategy categories reveals that students reported making use of mass media such as radio programs, video games and movies to improve their language skills. In this instance, language teachers may be able to provide interactive media in a self-access center where their students

can study on their own outside class time. As well as the role of media utilization, inter-personal interactions were also reported by the students. In this regard, teachers should encourage or direct students to go beyond the classroom goals; getting students to invest their own personal time, effort and attention to create out-of-class practice opportunities with a range of various activities outside the classroom. For example, the setting up language clubs/corners or weekly meetings enhances the students' opportunities to practice their verbal interactions with students or guests with experience of abroad.

CONCLUSION

The investigation was intended to make an exploration of language learning strategies used by Thai public university freshmen. With the careful selection and classification of the emergent language learning strategies, a strategy inventory was derived with 44 reported language learning strategies: 10 individual strategies used for preparing oneself for classroom lessons; 11 strategies for understanding while studying in class; 12 strategies for improving one's language skills; and 11 strategies for expanding one's general knowledge of English.

However, the classification proposed above is not so clear-cut, especially the distinctions among individual strategies in each category. In other words, some strategies of Category 1 maybe interpretable as either before or after class language learning strategy use. For example, the language learning strategy regarding 'reviewing own notes/summary' can be grouped into either PrepB or PrepA. That means language learners may use this strategy before class to be ready for what they are going to learn in class or they may use it after class to help understand what is learned already in class. In this study, such a strategy was classified into PrepA since the predicate "review" expresses the sense of considering making changes of anything rather than preparing things in advance. It would also be possible that some of them could appear in different categories depending on the purposes of the strategy use.

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