



## A STUDY OF ENGLISH LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY MATTHAYOMSUKSA 6 STUDENTS OF THE TOP TEN O-NET SCORING SCHOOLS

### การศึกษากลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ของโรงเรียนที่มีคะแนน O-NET สูงสุด 10 อันดับแรก

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#### Abstract

This study aimed to identify English learning strategies used by Thai Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of five top-ten English subject's O-NET (Ordinary National Educational Test) scoring schools in the three consecutive academic years of 2005-2007, which offered three academic programs: Science, Arts and Arts-Math. The participants were 333 students selected according to their academic programs and English proficiency levels: very high (VH), high (H) and moderate (M). The research instruments were a questionnaire and interviews.

The results revealed that:

1) The most-used English learning strategies used were compensation strategies, followed by cognitive strategies, social strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and memorization strategies respectively.

2) The most-used strategies of the VH proficiency students were cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, whereas the ones shared by the H and the M proficiency students were compensation strategies. All three different proficiency students employed memorization strategies as the least-used ones.

3) English learning strategy use was found not significantly correlated to students' academic programs; there was no different in strategy use among students in the three academic programs. However, it was found significantly correlated to the English proficiency levels; the higher proficiency students used more strategies than the lower proficiency students.

4) The VH proficiency students showed a greater potential ability than the other groups in applying metacognitive strategies. The VH proficiency students focus on both learning process and product, whereas the H and the M proficiency students concentrated only on learning process and product respectively. The VH proficiency students also employed the characteristics of self-learning while the H and the M proficiency students relied on others.

**Keywords:** English Learning Strategies, O-NET Top Ten O-NET School

### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษากลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ของโรงเรียนที่มีคะแนน O-NET สูงสุด 10 อันดับแรก 3 ปีอย่างต่อเนื่องตั้งแต่ปี พ.ศ. 2548-2550 และเป็นโรงเรียนที่เปิดสอนแผนการเรียนทั้งสาม คือ แผนการเรียนวิทย์คณิต ศิลป์ภาษา และศิลป์คำนวณ จำนวน 5 โรงเรียน กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักเรียน จำนวน 333 คน ซึ่งเรียนแผนวิทย์คณิต จำนวน 111 คน ศิลป์ภาษา จำนวน 111 คน และศิลป์คำนวณ จำนวน 111 คน โดยแบ่งนักเรียนในแต่ละแผนออกเป็น 3 กลุ่มตามผลการเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ กลุ่มที่มีการเรียนระดับดีมาก ดี และพอใช้ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ แบบสอบถาม และแบบบันทึกการสัมภาษณ์ครูและนักเรียน

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า

- 1) กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษที่มีการใช้มากที่สุด คือ กลวิธีการจดเขียนข้อบกพร่อง ตามด้วย กลวิธีด้านปัญญา กลวิธีด้านสังคม กลวิธีด้านอภิปัญญา กลวิธีด้านอารมณ์ และกลวิธีด้านการจดจำ
- 2) นักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษดีมากที่สุดใช้กลวิธีด้านปัญญาและกลวิธีด้านอภิปัญญามากที่สุด ส่วนนักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษดีและพอใช้ ใช้กลวิธีการจดเขียนข้อบกพร่องมากที่สุด และนักเรียนทุกระดับผลใช้กลวิธีด้านการจดจำน้อยที่สุด
- 3) การใช้กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษไม่มีความสัมพันธ์กับแผนการเรียนของนักเรียน โดยนักเรียนในทุกแผนมีการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษไม่แตกต่างกัน แต่พบว่าการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษมีความสัมพันธ์กับระดับผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ กล่าวคือนักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับสูงกว่ามีการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษมากกว่านักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับต่ำกว่า
- 4) นักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับดีมีศักยภาพในการประยุกต์ใช้กลวิธีด้านอภิปัญญาได้มากกว่านักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับดีและพอใช้ นักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับดีให้ความสนใจทั้งขั้นตอนการเรียนรู้และผลจากการเรียนรู้ ในขณะที่นักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับดีให้ความสนใจเฉพาะขั้นตอนการเรียนรู้ ส่วนนักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับพอใช้ให้ความสนใจผลของการเรียนรู้เท่านั้น นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่า นักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับดีมีลักษณะการเรียนรู้แบบด้วยตนเอง ในขณะที่นักเรียนที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับดีและพอใช้มีลักษณะการเรียนรู้แบบพึ่งผู้อื่น

**คำสำคัญ:** กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ, โรงเรียนคะแนน O-NET สูงสุด

## Introduction

Since the late seventies, in the field of second language or foreign language learning and teaching, teachers have faced an increasing numbers of options in the selection of teaching methods and materials. Parallel to that, interest in considering the learner's point of view and in shifting the focus of classrooms from teacher centeredness to learner centeredness has gradually grown [1].

Learner centeredness is designed for educating learners to reach a point where they are able to make decisions about what they want to learn and how they learn it. Learner centeredness then concentrates on the learning process rather than on the content [2]. Only few students have the skill to process their own learning effectively. In fact, most students who can go through a continuous process of learning how to learn are usually only guided by their teachers. Learner-centered instruction is not a matter of handing over rights and powers to learners only, nor does it devalue the teacher. Rather, it is a matter of educating learners to gradually take greater responsibility for their own learning. Consequently, in learner centeredness, learners are active agents who are directly involved in the learning process [3].

Learning process is a mental operation that accepts incoming information and encodes it into knowledge structures. The techniques that control the encoding of information are cognitive strategies [4], and the main process of cognitive process in language learning is the language

learning strategy [5].

Language learning strategies are an essential part of improving learning, which is the ultimate goal of successful learning and teaching language. The appropriate language learning strategies will assist learners in improving their language proficiency [6-7]. They are tools or techniques that learners may use to acquire languages [1]. They are also the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, retain new information [8] and 'to make their learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations' [6].

Language learning strategies are categorized mainly into (1) cognitive strategies such as repetition or taking notes, (2) metacognitive strategies such as self-planning, self-evaluation, and (3) social strategies such as practicing with peers [1,6,8]. However, the use of different strategies depends on various factors, for example, age, gender, proficiency level, anxiety and other personality traits such as attitude, learning style, self-image, and strategy awareness [6,8-9].

Numerous studies indicate that there is a significant relationship between using language learning strategies and language proficiency [6,10]. Many studies have also revealed that more successful English learning students use a wider range of learning strategies and use them more frequently than less successful students. The other way around, good learners of English use English learning strategies to help them learn English successfully.

In Thailand, one of the indicators that measure the success of English learning is the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET). According to average O-NET's scores of English subject in 2005– 2007, there is a certain group of schools for which the scores are routinely in the top ten. Thus, it raises the question: are these students using special methods, learning processes or language learning strategies, to achieve such high results? Once the successful learners' learning strategies are identified, they then could be made available to less successful learners [1]. This is the starting point of teaching language learning strategies in the classroom in order to improve students' learning. If language teachers know more about the effective language learning strategies employed by successful learners, they will be able to teach these strategies to less proficient learners not only to enhance their language skills but also to become self-directed learners [6,11].

Because of the importance and benefits of effective language learning strategies, this study sought to identify the English learning strategies used by Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of schools scoring in the top ten of O-NET.

## **Aims**

1. Identify English learning strategies used by Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of the top ten O-NET scoring schools in the three consecutive academic years of 2005, 2006 and 2007.

2. compare English learning strategy use in terms of students' academic program and English proficiency level.

## **Research Questions**

1. What English learning strategies do the Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of the top ten O-NET scoring schools use?

2. What English learning strategies do the Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of the top ten O-NET scoring schools use in terms of academic program and English proficiency level?

## **Materials and methods**

### **Population**

The target population of this study was Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students at the schools that had earned top ten scores in English subject's Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) in three consecutive academic years of 2005–2007; also, these schools offered three academic programs (Science, Arts, and Arts–Math). With these criteria, there were five schools: 1) Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School, 2) Mater Dei School, 3) Srinakharinwirot University Demonstration Secondary School (Patumwan), 4) St.Joseph Convent School, and 5) Triam Udom Suksa School. The total number of students was 2,740.

### **Participant Selection**

The participants were Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of the academic year 2009

from those five top ten O-NET scoring schools. Yamane's sample size of specified 95% confidence interval and + 5% precision was applied to get the sample size of 333 participants [12]. The participants were selected according to their academic programs and English proficiency levels. There were 333 participants: 111 in Science program, 111 in Arts program, and 111 in Arts-Math program. Each program group was divided into three groups based on their English proficiency level. English proficiency level was based on the participants' accumulated grade point average (GPA) in English for the previous two academic years (Matthayomsuksa 4 (10<sup>th</sup> grade) and Matthayomsuksa 5 (11<sup>th</sup> grade). Three English proficiency groups were: a) very High (VH- GPA equal to or more

than 3.5), b) high (H, GPA between 3.0-3.49), and c) moderate (M, GPA less than 3.0).

#### Research Instruments

Instruments were a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was in Thai and consisted of two main parts: (a) background information which covered participants' academic programs and proficiency levels; and (b) English learning strategy use, which were a five-point rating scale: 1) the most, 2) often, 3) medium, 4) seldom, and 5) the least) and an open-ended question. The questionnaire consisted of 36 English learning strategy items summarized from Oxford's six main language learning strategies. The specification of English learning strategy question items is shown in the following table 1.

**Table 1:** Specification of English Learning Strategy Items in the Questionnaire

| Strategy      | Number of Oxford's language learning strategies and items |   |                      | Number of English learning strategy items in the questionnaire |                                   |
|---------------|---|---|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
|               | Number of sub strategies                                  | Number of Strategy items in each sub strategy | Total strategy items | Number of strategy items in each sub strategy                  | Number of strategy question items |
| Memorization  | 4   | 3, 4, 1, 2                                    | 10                   | 2, 2, 1, 1   | 6                                 |
| Cognitive     | 4   | 5, 2, 5, 3                                    | 15                   | 2, 1, 2, 1   | 6                                 |
| Compensation  | 2   | 2, 8  | 10                   | 2, 4   | 6                                 |
| Metacognitive | 3   | 3, 6, 2                                       | 11                   | 2, 3, 1  | 6                                 |
| Affective     | 3   | 3, 3, 3                                       | 9                    | 2, 2, 2  | 6                                 |
| Social        | 3   | 2, 2, 2                                       | 6                    | 2, 2, 2  | 6                                 |

The questionnaire's content measured by Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was 0.85, and the reliability verified by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.964

Another instrument was interview; there were two groups of interviewees: the participants and the teachers. The participants were interviewed on their use of English learning

strategies. The teachers of English were interviewed about teaching English learning strategies and about observations of students' using English learning strategies.

#### **Data Collection**

All 333 questionnaires were delivered and collected by researcher. The appointments with participants and teachers were also made. The interviews were in Thai and face-to-face. After transcribing those interview data, only the unclear data were verified by the interviewees via telephone.

#### **Data Procedure and Analysis**

This section consists of quantitative data and qualitative data.

1) Procedure and Analysis of Quantitative Data:

Based on the questionnaire, quantitative data were processed to obtain two main types of data: 1) English learning strategy use, and 2) English learning strategy item use. Moreover, all data were also processed in two view-aspects of participants' academic programs and English proficiency levels.

#### **Identification of English learning strategy use**

To determine whether participants used certain strategies, a criterion was set that among six strategy items in each type of strategies, when the number reporting "the most" and "often" were equal to or more than three, those strategies was considered to be used by participants. On the other hand, when the number of reporting "the most" and "often" were less than three, those strategies were considered not to be

used. This data of English learning strategy use were resulted by percentage.

#### **Identification of English learning strategy item use**

To identify English learning strategy item use, scores were given according to the levels of use: the most (5), often (4), medium (3), seldom (2), and the least (1). The data of English learning strategy item use were resulted by mean and standard deviation scores. Furthermore, this study also sought for the relationships of English learning strategy use among participants' academic programs and English proficiency levels. The data of these relationships were resulted by Chi-Square tests.

2) Procedure and Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were gathered from open-ended questions in the questionnaire and interviews that involved 10 participants and 5 teachers. The semi-structured interviews were used in this study.

## **Results**

The result of this study presents the analysis of data as quantitative data and qualitative data.

#### **Analysis of Quantitative Data**

The quantitative data derived from the questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS in aspects of: 1) the overall strategy use, 2) strategy use in terms of academic program, and 3) strategy use in terms of proficiency level. Each aspect looked for English learning strategy use and English learning strategy item use.

### 1) The overall English Learning Strategy Use

The findings showed that a total number of using strategies of all 333 participants is 1,051 (100%). Compensation strategies—those which help learners make up for the inadequate language—were used the most (24.64%) followed by (in order of descending frequency): cognitive strategies—those which help learners understand new language (20.08%), social strategies—those which facilitate learning through interaction with others (16.37%), metacognitive strategies—those which assist learners in overseeing and arranging their own learning process (15.89%), affective strategies—those which aid learners in dealing with emotion, motivation and attitudes (13.32%), and memorization strategies—those with which learner store and retrieve information (9.71%).

### 2) English learning strategy use in terms of academic programs

The finding found that Arts program—participants employed strategies the most (3.32), followed by Science—program participants (3.10) and Arts—Math—program participants (3.05). However, the Chi-Square test's result ( $p > 0.00$ ) of relationship between English learning strategy use and academic program revealed that there is no significant correlative relationship between English learning strategy use and academic program.

### 3) English learning strategy use in terms of English proficiency level

The findings indicated that VH proficiency participants used English learning strategies the most (4.67), followed by H proficiency participants (3.08), and the M proficiency participants (1.72). Moreover, the Chi-Square test result ( $p < 0.00$ ) of relationship between English learning strategy use and English proficiency levels showed that there is a significant relationship between English learning strategy use and English proficiency level.

The findings also found that VH proficiency group's most-used English learning strategies were cognitive and metacognitive strategies, while H and M proficiency groups' were compensation strategies. In addition, these three different proficiency participants were not so different in their use of direct learning strategies (memorization, cognitive, and compensation strategies) [6] for example, all proficiency level participants use the same memorization strategy item; the VH and H groups used the same strategy items in cognitive and compensation strategies. However, the way in which the different groups used indirect learning strategies (metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) [6] was significantly more varied. Using metacognitive strategy items obviously showed the difference of strategy use among these three groups. The other outstanding difference use was social strategy use.

Quantitative data regarding metacognitive strategy use indicated that differences in the three



most-used metacognitive strategy items were noted for each of the three proficiency groups. The VH proficiency participants favored the selection of “I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me improve”; while the H proficiency participants tended to choose “I pay attention in class, but if I don’t understand something, I take notes and work out the meaning later”, the M participants used “I evaluate my English learning process, such as checking quiz score”. Likewise, the findings of participant interviews revealed that the VH proficiency participants tend to process all three steps: planning, monitoring and evaluating. They established plans to deal with learning English, and they participate both input stage and in the outcome of learning (e.g. by noticing their own mistakes). They even created their own input by learning from that outcome (mistake). The H proficiency participants seem to concentrate on the process of learning input by paying attention in class, taking notes, and clarifying the new language later. The M proficiency participants seem to focus on the outcome without establishing a plan.

Quantitative data analysis of social strategy use items indicated that VH proficiency participants used the item of “I notice expressions used by native English in various situations for better understanding of their thoughts and feelings.” whereas H and M proficiency participants used the item of “I ask proficient friends or native English speakers to correct my speaking or writing.”

### **Analysis of Qualitative Data**

This qualitative data analysis were derived from two sources: 1) an open-ended question in Part B, and 2) the interviews of participants and teachers

#### **1. Qualitative Data from Questionnaires**

There was no report of any English learning strategy use other than what listed in 36 strategy items in the rating scale questions.

#### **2. Qualitative Data from Interviews**

Interviewees in this study were teachers and participants. Data from interviews with teachers showed that teachers of these five schools taught English learning strategies in classrooms in order to help learners round out insufficient information (compensation strategies), understand the language (cognitive strategies), and extend memory (memorization strategies). Furthermore, the analyzed data from observation imply that good English students tend to demonstrate the characteristics of concern for their own learning and of practicing English with native speakers.

The data from participants’ interviews regarding metacognitive strategy use revealed that the VH proficiency participants tend to process all three steps: planning, monitoring and evaluating. They established plans to deal with learning English, and they participate both input stage and in the outcome of learning (e.g. by noticing their own mistakes). They even created their own input by learning from that outcome (mistake). The H proficiency participants seem to concentrate on the process of learning



input by paying attention in class, taking notes, and clarifying the new language later. The M proficiency participants seem to focus on the outcome without establishing a plan.

The data from interviews concerning social strategy use indicated that the VH proficiency participants *notice* the expression of native speakers; this suggests an attempt to learn on their own. On the other hand, the H and M proficiency participants preferred to *ask* others as a means of gaining confidence when using English.

## Conclusions and Discussion

This section examined the findings to answer the two purposes via the two research questions.

**Research Question 1: What English learning strategies do the Matthayomsuksa 6 students of the top ten O-NET scoring schools use?**

### Findings:

The findings of this study showed that English learning strategies used by Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of the top ten O-NET scoring schools were compensation strategies, cognitive strategies, social strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and memorization strategies respectively.

### Discussion:

The discussion in this section covered the utilization of the first two most-used strategies, namely compensation strategies and cognitive strategies, and the least-used ones, memorization strategies.

Compensation strategies were found the most (24.64%) and the most-used compensation strategy item was “when I don’t know the meaning, I guess based on what was said or what will be said”. The data gained from the questionnaire happened to coincide with the data from the interviews, which indicated that the teachers taught their students learning strategies, especially reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, or getting the meaning from the context by looking for some linguistic clues. This practice could possibly lead students to use the compensation strategies more than the others. The finding from this study is along the same line as various studies of English learning strategies conducted in Thailand. For example, Kaotsombut [13] discovered that graduate Mahidol University Science students used compensation strategies the most. The finding is, moreover, similar to the findings of researches into English learning strategies conducted in Asia. Lee [14] found that Korean secondary school students used compensation strategies most frequently, while Yang [15] also reported that Taiwanese junior college students used compensation most frequently.

The second most-used strategies were cognitive strategies (20.08%) and the most-used cognitive strategy item was “I use several resources, such as the grammar books or dictionary, in order to understand new meanings and to produce new language”. The data indicated that the participants learned new language from grammar books. This could be influenced from teachers’ teaching behavior,

which seemed to pay more attention to grammar structures than communication as implied from the excerpt of the teacher's interview. This finding corroborates with the claim of O'Malley and Chamot [8] that Asian students preferred to learn language rules more than to communicate.

Memorization strategies were found to be used the least (9.71%) and the most-used memorization strategy item was "I group together words with the same meanings or similar structures to help me remember". This was supported by the teacher's interview, which indicated that prefix, suffix, word roots, and word formation were taught to students in order to help them categorize words with the same meanings and structures. This result coincides with the findings of Yang's study [15], which showed that Taiwanese junior college students used memorization strategies the least. The result is also in line with Liu's [16] research result indicating that memorization strategies were used the least by the students at the Chinese technological institute.

**Research Question 2: What English learning strategies do the Matthayomsuksa 6 (12<sup>th</sup> grade) students of the top ten O-NET scoring schools use in terms of academic program and English proficiency level?**

**Findings:**

The results of this study revealed that English learning strategy use was found not significantly correlated to participants' academic programs. In other words, three academic program participants showed no different in their choice of English learning strategy use.

In terms of English proficiency level, on the other hand, the findings of this study indicated that English learning strategy use significantly correlated to the English proficiency levels. The higher proficiency participants used more strategies than the lower proficiency ones.

**Discussion:**

The discussion of Research Question 2 contains two main issues: English learning strategy use in terms of academic program, and English learning strategy use in terms of English proficiency level.

***English Learning Strategy Use in Terms of Academic Program***

The Chi-Square test of relationship between English learning strategy use and academic program presenting the result ( $p > 0.00$ ) concluded that there was no relationship between English learning strategy use and participants' academic programs. However, the data revealed that the ratio of used strategies per participant of Arts program (3.32) was higher than the one of Science program (3.10). This indicates that the participants in Art program tend to use more English learning strategies than the ones in Science program. This finding is in line with the research result of Oxford and Nyikos [17] which claimed that students majoring in Humanities used more strategies than those in Science.

***English Learning Strategy Use in Terms of English Proficiency Level***

The discussion of English learning strategy use in terms of proficiency level in this section covers three main aspects: the relationship between English learning strategy use and

English proficiency level; the VH proficiency participants' English learning strategy use; and the utilization of metacognitive strategies and social strategies.

The result ( $p < 0.00$ ) of Chi-Square test of relationship between English learning strategy use and English proficiency level showed that there was a significant relationship between English learning strategy use and English proficiency level. In other words, the higher proficiency participants used more strategies than the ones of lower proficiency. Specifically, the numbers of English learning strategies used per participant of the VH proficiency participants (4.67) were higher than the H proficiency participants (3.08) and the M proficiency participants (1.72) respectively. This result confirms the findings from the previous researches that the more successful language learners employ a wider range of strategies than the less successful ones [6,8,10,18]. The result of this study also revealed that the higher proficiency participants used metacognitive strategies more frequently than the lower proficiency ones. The result coincided with those reported in Suthiwartnareput and Soranastaporn's study [19].

As previously presented, the compensation strategies were used the most, followed by cognitive strategies, social strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and memorization strategies. However, it was found that the VH proficiency participants' most-used English learning strategies were cognitive and metacognitive strategies, while the compensation

and social strategies came in the second, the affective strategies the third, and the memorization strategies the last. These results illustrate a remarkable point about the learning methods used by VH proficiency participants that they use both direct and indirect strategies as the tools to assist their English learning: direct ones through cognitive strategies and indirect ones through metacognitive strategies. They arranged their English learning through understanding language as the direct learning approach while managing their learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluating as the indirect learning approach.

This study also discovered an interesting issue of the utilization of metacognitive strategies and social strategies among the three different proficiency level participants. When employing metacognitive strategies, the VH proficiency participants tended to emphasis on both learning process and product whereas the H proficiency participants concentrated on process and the M proficiency participants on product only.

The VH proficiency participants tended to pay attention to both learning process and product while using metacognitive strategies. This was witnessed by their most-used metacognitive strategy item: "I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me improve" and their interviews identifying the employment of certain learning plans. They established plans such as a plan of doing daily 10-minute English exercise, then monitored their learning process (noticing) and evaluated the outcome product

(mistakes). They also wisely applied the outcome to be an intake of the next learning process. In other words, the VH proficiency participants created their own input from the previous outcomes. Thus, it revealed that the VH proficiency participants applied all three steps of planning, monitoring, and evaluating in their learning.

The H proficiency participants, however, seemed to concentrate on input learning process by paying attention in class, taking notes, and working them out later. The evidence was supported by two main sources. The first source was their most-used metacognitive strategy item: "I pay attention in class, but if I don't understand something, I take notes and work out the meaning later". The other was an excerpt from the interviews when they reflected that attentive learning in the classroom would help them get the great scores.

The M proficiency participants, on the other hand, seemed to focus on the outcome without establishing any plans. This was supported by their most-used metacognitive strategy item: "I evaluate my English learning progress, such as checking a quiz score", and the interview excerpt reflecting their belief on the process of their learning by the scores they earned.

The findings could, thus, be summarized that all participants used metacognitive strategies, but employed them differently. The VH proficiency participants showed a greater potential ability than the other groups in applying metacognitive strategies to perform all three processes of planning, monitoring, and evaluating the language.

The result is in line with Aegpongpaow's [20] study of metacognitive strategies in reading and Ellis [21] who points out that awareness of the learning process raise learners to become better in learning language. The findings also support Lightbown and Spada [22] who state that one of the good language learners' characteristics is enjoyment in learning process.

By the same token, the difference in social strategy use of the VH proficiency participants compared with the others indicated that the VH proficiency participants tended to learn by themselves. This was identified by the data of the VH proficiency participants' most-used social strategy item: "I notice expressions used by native English in various situations for better understanding of their thoughts and feelings". The excerpt of teacher interviews confirmed the result as it revealed that only the high score students often came to discuss on their mistakes. Oppositely, the H and the M proficiency participants preferred to ask for help from others as seen from their most-used social strategy item: "I ask proficient friends or native English speakers to correct my speaking or writing". The excerpt from their interview was also showed that they asked the proficient friends to correct their English.

These findings echo Hedge's [11] suggestion that good learners have the characteristics of developing independent learning. Such autonomous learning and the employment of learning strategies are the main supports for learners to become more successful than those

who depend on others. There are a number of pedagogical implications derived from this study. First, the English higher-proficiency students use English learning strategies more frequently than the lower proficiency ones. Second, the high proficient students wisely applied metacognitive strategies to both learning process and product; they also employed self-directed characteristics.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that metacognitive strategies and social strategies play crucial roles in learning English effectively. The high proficiency participants show ability in applying three steps of planning, monitoring, and evaluating to help them regulate both learning process and product. They also display self-directed characteristics, which lead them to become autonomous learners.

#### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study offer many vital implications for teachers, educators, and students in informing the use of English learning strategies. The most obvious implication is that teachers should teach both direct and indirect learning strategies particularly metacognitive strategies. Teaching metacognitive strategies is the key to support self-directed characteristics which eventually lead the students to become autonomous learners. Thus, less proficient students should be encouraged to develop learning strategies used by the proficient students. Teachers, therefore, should provide opportunities as well as encourage the less proficiency students to practice English learning strategies through

various tasks in class and extracurricular English activities.

#### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Recommendations for further studies are presented as follows:

1. Becoming higher proficient English learners is not resulted from only the learners themselves, but also the in-class teaching. Further studies, therefore, should explore English teaching of the top ten O-NET scoring schools in terms of activities both inside and outside the classroom.
2. As the high-proficiency students particularly used metacognitive strategies more frequently than the low-proficiency group, future studies should focus on teaching metacognitive strategies in all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).
3. Since memorization strategies are used the least, further studies should investigate the effectiveness of teaching memorization strategies for the retention of language.
4. The data from this study indicated that English learning strategies were taught in classroom; thus, further studies should explore the effect of training teachers on how to teach students English learning strategies effectively.

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