

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

English is considered the most important language in the world, since English is a tool for learning and communication. In the information age, most of information available in foreign textbooks and the internet is in English. Furthermore, in the time of globalization, English is widely accepted as a lingua franca of business and international communication. Therefore, apart from learning first language or national language, learning English is required. English is a required foreign language subject for Thai students in the basic education level. Students in grades one to twelve are registered to study English and pass it as a requirement for graduation. Moreover, English is one of the required subjects in the national entrance examination.

However, despite having English as a required subject, the Thai education system has failed in offering high quality education in English according to the report from EST, the TOEFL Test and Score Data Summaries (2001-2003) showing the low rank in English proficiency of Thai examinees compared to the examinees from other countries in Southeast Asia.

Much effort has been devoted to investigate the effective teaching and learning of English. Over the last few decades, educators focused more on learners and learning than on teachers and teaching (Lessard-Clouston, 1997), since the learners or students are the most important factor in the language learning process (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Many studies of second language acquisition and learning (e.g. Larson-Freeman, 2001; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990) indicated that language learning strategies use is one of the most important factors in second language acquisition.

Oxford (1990) stated that successful learners seem to use a wider variety of language learning strategies than unsuccessful learners. Meanwhile, a number of studies also report on the relationship between learning strategies and students' performance (e.g. Kedsuda Rachadawisitkul, 1986; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998, Narisa Thepaphaya, 2003). The studies revealed that selecting appropriate strategies could enhance the learners' performance of second

language learning. Therefore, it is quite clear that the conscious use of effective strategies is related to language achievement and proficiency in second language learning. Moreover, it is crucial for language teachers to understand the language learning strategies in order to encourage students to develop their learning performance, to facilitate their use of learning strategies effectively and to provide more effective instruction to assist less successful students to become more successful in language learning.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1.2.1 Which strategies do students use to facilitate their English language learning?

1.2.2 To what extent do students use those language learning strategies?

1.2.3 What are the similarities and differences in strategies used by students with different English achievement?

1.2.4 Is there any relationship between those language learning strategies and their achievement in studying English?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 To identify the language learning strategies used by M.5 students with different English achievement at Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School (CUD).

1.3.2 To compare the language learning strategies used by M. 5 students with different English achievement.

1.3.3 To find whether there is a relationship between students' language learning strategies and their achievement in studying English.

1.4 STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses of this study are:

1.4.1 The overall use of English language strategies of M.5 Students at Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School is in moderate level.

1.4.2 Students with very high and high English achievement use language learning strategies differently from students with medium and low English achievement.

1.4.3 Students with very high and high English achievement use language learning strategies more frequently than students with medium and low English achievement.

1.4.4 There is a relationship between student's language learning strategies and their achievement in studying English

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 The population of the study was Mathayom Suksa 5 (M.5) students at Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School. In total, the number of subjects was 215 students in academic year 2009. The sample covered 168 students out of 215 students.

1.5.2 The study focused on English language learning strategies only, not other learning strategies.

1.5.3 The English language learning strategies involved strategies in learning all four skills; speaking listening, reading and writing.

The reason for choosing M.5 students as the subjects of the study is that they are believed to be mature enough to be aware of and recognize their learning strategies.

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of terms of this study are as follows:

1.6.1 Language learning strategies refers to specific action, behaviors, steps or techniques that students often intentionally apply to facilitate their learning English.

1.6.2 LSS refers to language learning strategies.

1.6.3 SILL refers to Strategy Inventory for Language Learning version 7.0 developed by Rebecca L. Oxford. (Oxford, 1990)

1.6.4 Memory strategies refers to behaviors or techniques that students use to help them store or retrieve new information, e.g. creating mental linkages, applying image and sound, reviewing in a structured way.

1.6.5 Cognitive strategies refers to behaviors or techniques that students use in problem-solving, to understand and produce new language by different means ranging from repeating, analyzing and summarizing.

1.6.6 Compensation strategies refers to behaviors or techniques that students apply to help them use language despite their imperfect language knowledge, such as guessing wisely, using synonym or description in order to get the meaning.

1.6.7 Meta-cognitive strategies refers to behaviors or techniques that make use of knowledge about cognitive process and create an attempt to control language learning by setting goals and objectives, planning, monitoring the learning process, and evaluating the progress.

1.6.8 Social strategies refers to behavior or techniques that help students learn and select in dealing with other people.

1.6.9 Affective strategies refers to behaviors or techniques that students use to control their emotions, motivations and attitudes related to language learning.

1.6.10 Students refers to Mathayom Suksa 5 (M.5) students at Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School (CUD).

1.6.11 English achievement refers to the participants' English ability and skills. In the present study, the average of the participants' grades from two English subjects (Foundation English and English: Reading and Writing) they took in the first semester of 2009 academic year were used to determine the participants' English achievement. The possible grades that the participants reported for each subject included seven grades as follows: 1.00, 1.50, 2.00, 2.50, 3.00, 3.50, and 4.00. The average grades of the participants were used to classify the participants into four achievement groups according their average grades: very high, high, medium, and low. The excellent English achievement students were those whose average grades were 4.00. The high English achievement students were those who had the average grades 3.00, 3.25, 3.50 and 3.75. The medium English achievement students were those who had the average grades 2.00, 2.25, 2.50 and 2.75. The low English achievement students were those who had the average grades lower than 2.00

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.7.1 If it is found that there is a relationship between English learning strategies and students' achievement in English, this will be beneficial for both teachers and students. The English language teachers will be aware of their students' language learning strategies and develop appropriate instruction and learning activities to improve students' performance.

1.7.2 Teachers can plan and develop effective instruction and learning activities to promote students' effective learning of English.

1.7.3 Students can also use appropriate learning strategies to improve their English learning.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

The findings were limited only to Mathayom Suksa 5 (M.5) students at Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School (CUD) during the academic year 2009.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of English language learning strategies used by M.5 students at Chulalongkorn University Demonstration Secondary School is in this paper divided into five chapters including introduction, review of literature, methodology, results and conclusions, discussion and recommendations.

Chapter One presents the introduction of the study. Chapter Two focuses on the literature review of language learning strategies. Chapter Three presents the methodology which is employed of this study. Chapter four presents the results of this study regarding the use of English language learning strategies of M.5 students at CUD with different English achievement. The summary of the study, the summary of the findings, the discussion and the conclusion are presented in Chapter Five.