English Language Teaching Innovation from Learning Strategies of
High-performing Students in a Government University in Ayutthaya

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Abstract
This study aims to (1) investigate students' English learning strategies; (2) analyze the learning strategies of high-performing students; (3) construct innovative lesson plans based on successful learners. The purposive samples are 35 students majoring in English for International Communication who enrolled in 22 English related subjects from Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi. This study is a mixed methods research - quantitative and qualitative methods. The two instruments are (1) questionnaires and (2) focused group interview forms. The questionnaire consists of 50 items in 6 learning strategies: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social. Semi-structured interview was held for five high-performing students. The research methods are (1) the questionnaire was filled out by the samples; (2) five high-performing students were selected for the focused-group interview; and (3) the findings from the interview were utilized for constructing the lesson plans. The data were statistically analyzed with mean and standard deviation. The findings are as follows: (1) students' English learning strategies are Memory ($\bar{x}$ = 3.55), Cognitive ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86), Compensation ($\bar{x}$ = 3.71), Metacognitive ($\bar{x}$ = 4.28), Affective ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6) and Social ($\bar{x}$ = 3.79); (2) the learning strategies of high-performing students are memorizing new vocabulary as a picture and connecting it with context; building up new vocabulary and expressions by watching online game casting and joining social network sites like Tinder, Hello Talk, etc. (3) A lesson plan based on successful learners is Vlogging yourself, etc. The discussions of the findings are further discussed in detail.

Keywords: learning Strategy; high-performing students; English Teaching Innovation

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Introduction

English is considered as a medium of instruction in today's world. Being able to communicate in English can widen better opportunities in working and studying. English proficiency is also necessary for career promotion in the future both in economic, industrial and social aspects. These are essential for country development and manpower. English learning performance affects life advancement, thus English language policy is the ongoing universal practice.

Thailand requires all students to study English as compulsory subjects for at least 12 years from basic education to the level of higher education. As the rank showed that English proficiency of Thai students was becoming deteriorated and undesirable which resulted in the 3rd worst in Asia (James, 2015). Along with the latest 2019 report by the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index, Thailand ranked 74th out of 100 (EF EPI, 2019) with a score of 47.61 ranking in "very low proficiency" (Educational First, 2019). It is clear that several learners are not able to perform well in using their English skills in everyday life.

There are plenty of factors affecting the English language learning; Learning strategy is one of them. Strategies are essential in learning a language as Griffiths (2007) defines language learning strategies as activities selected with learners' consciousness for the purpose of controlling their own language learning system. While Richards and Platt (1992) give an explanation that language learning strategies are used by the learners with their intentional behavior and thoughts for understanding, learning and remembering new information. These strategies play an important role in language learning performance in the fast changing digital era.

At present, learners' behaviors involve the use of technology and digital media. Apart from computers, smart phones and internet-accessible devices are increasing and become readily available for the English language teachers to shift from traditional to modern classrooms. Pourhosein Gilakjani (2013) stated that the use of these technologies has the great potential to change the existing language teaching methods. Moreover, according to Eady & Lockyer (2013), technology has always been an important part for teachers to facilitate learners' learning from the beginning of preparing learning experiences through to teaching and learning process. Bennett, Culp, Honey, Tally, and Spielvogel (2000) verified that the use of computer technology leads to the development of teachers' teaching and learners' learning in the classes.

From the essence of English language for both education and workforce to the integration of technological enhancement from language strategies focusing on learners' behavior, this paper mainly studies the learners' English language learning strategies with their use of modern technology materials.

Language Learning Strategies

Cohen (1998) stated, the term strategy, in the second language learning (SLL), has appeared in order to be applied to the conscious moves adopted by second language users determined to be useful in both learning and employing a second language. Oxford (1990 a, p. 209) and Wenden and Rubin (1987) also defined language learning

strategies as the particular thoughts or behaviors and tasks that learners apply to assist them to comprehend, learn, and retain new data. Strategies help learners in acquisition, storage, retrieval, and the retention of information to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more efficient and more transferable to novel situations. A combination of learning strategies is a device used by good language learners for the self-directed involvement which is developing communicative ability (Oxford, 1990b). While Rubin (1975) suggested that successful learners use a strategic collection dependent on their own personality, style of learning, and their individual needs.

Stern (1975, 1983) came up with a list of ten strategies of good language learners, including planning strategy, active strategy, empathetic strategy, experimental strategy, formal strategy, semantic strategy, practice strategy, communication strategy, monitoring strategy and internalization strategy. While O'Malley et al (1985b)'s taxonomy identified 26 strategies divided into three categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and social and communication strategies. Moreover Ellis and Sinclair (1989: 151-154) have also classified strategies into four categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, social strategies and communication strategies. It can be seen that communication strategy is widely used across all strategies because it encourages teachers and students to share ideas and experience.

This study, the language learning strategies are based on Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995). They have proposed the following classification of the language learning strategies applied by EFL/ESL learners:
1. Memory strategies: grouping, imagery, rhyming, and structured reveling
2. Cognitive strategies: reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, as well as general practicing.
3. Compensation strategies: guessing synonyms from the context in reading and listening, using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning when the precise expression is not known.
4. Metacognitive strategies: paying attention, consciously searching for practice opportunities, planning for language tasks, self-evaluation of one's progress, and monitoring errors.
5. Affective (emotional, motivation-related) strategies: anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and self-reward.
6. Social strategies: asking questions, cooperating with native speakers of the language, and becoming culturally aware.

Innovation

Technology is the practical use of knowledge especially in a particular area and is a way of doing a task by using technical processes, methods, or knowledge. The usage of technology consisted of not only machines (computer hardware) and instruments, but also involves structured relations with other humans, machines, and the environment (İŞMAN, 2012). While Dockstader (2008) defined technology integration as the use of technology to improve the educational environment and promote the classroom teaching through creating opportunities for learners to finish assignments on the computer or mobile devices rather than the normal pencil and paper.

Objectives

This study aims to
1.	investigate students' English learning strategies;
2.	analyze the learning strategies of high-performing students;
3.	construct an innovative lesson plan based on successful learners.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The participants of the study were 35 bachelor's degree students who were purposely selected from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, majoring in English for International Communication at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi, Ayutthaya Campus, Thailand. The samples were currently in the fourth year and had already enrolled in 22 English related subjects taught by both Thai and foreign teachers.

Instruments

This study is a mixed methods research - quantitative and qualitative methods. The two employed instruments were as follows:

1. The adapted version of Strategy for Language Learning questionnaire (SILL, Oxford, 1990) was administered to investigate the participants' English language learning strategies. It consists of 50 items covering 6 learning strategies: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social. The participants were asked to respond to each statement on a five-point Likert scale. The answers ranged from '1 = never or almost never true of me' to '5 = always or almost always true of me.' The back-translation was performed into Thai language which is the respondents' mother-tongue. Language accuracy was performed by Three English language teachers, followed by the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) to find the content validity which was done by three research experts.

2. Focused group interview form was created and designed based on the aforementioned questionnaire. To get more deep details and insights from the selected five high-performing students, one interview question was raised to be the representative of each strategy. The content validity check was done by three research experts to make sure all 6 interview questions can extract respondents' learning strategies.

Procedures

There were three phases. The first phase was qualitative research design which was employed through survey methodology. The adapted SILL questionnaire was distributed to 35 purposely selected students in the classroom and time was given. The data were statistically analyzed with mean and standard deviation. Then, the students' grades of 22 English related subjects were collected to divide learner categories. Out of 35 students, there were 5 students whose grades ranged from 3.54-3.95 fell into two types of honorary bachelors. The First honorary bachelor's GPA

must be equivalent to or more than 3.75 while the Second honorary bachelor must have at least 3.5 GPA (RUS Student Manual, 2019). The group of 5 high-performing students participated in a semi-structured interview using the focused group interview questions. Those questions selected from each of six strategies and follow-up questions used to get deep details of individual learning strategies. After that, the data were qualitatively transcribed. Finally, the findings from the interview were conducted to construct a sample lesson plan.

Findings

1. Students' English learning strategies

The summary of the use of learning strategies consists of memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. The top three frequently used were metacognitive ($\bar{x}$ = 4.2857 and SD = 0.7412); cognitive ($\bar{x}$ = 3.8653 and SD = 0.0.9155); and social ($\bar{x}$ = 3.7952 and SD = 0.9016). While the least frequently used strategy was Memory ($\bar{x}$ = 3.5555 and SD = 0.9909); as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The summary of the use of learning strategies

No.	Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	**SD**	**Level**	**Rank**
1.	Memory	3.5555	0.9909	high	6
2.	Cognitive	3.8653	0.9155	high	2
3.	Compensation	3.7190	1.0134	high	4
4.	Metacognitive	4.2857	0.7412	high	1
5.	Affective	3.6333	0.9337	high	5
6.	Social	3.7952	0.9016	high	3
	Overall SILL	**3.9159**	**0.8496**	**high**	

1.1 Memory strategies

The top three used memory strategies were 1) previous and new knowledge connection ($\bar{x}$ = 4.0286, SD = 0.7065); 2) making a mental picture for new words ($\bar{x}$ = 3.8000, SD = 0.8677); sound and image connection ($\bar{x}$ = 3.8000, SD = 0.9641); 3) words' original location ($\bar{x}$ = 3.8000, SD = 0.9641); and 4) word in a sentence context ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6286, SD = 0.9727). The least used strategy was flash cards at medium level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.0286, SD = 1.3824); as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Memory strategies

No.	Memory Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	**SD**	**Level**	**Rank**
1.	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	4.0286	0.7065	highest	1
2.	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3.6286	0.9727	high	3
3.	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help remember the word.	3.8000	0.9641	high	2

No.		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
4.	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.8000	0.8677	high	2
5.	I use rhymes to remember new English words.	3.4857	0.9194	medium	4
6.	I use flashcards to remember new English words.	3.0286	1.3824	medium	7
7.	I physically act out new English words.	3.2857	1.2964	medium	5
8.	I review English lessons often.	3.1429	0.8452	medium	6
9.	I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	3.8000	0.9641	high	2
	Total	**3.5555**	**0.9909**	**high**	

1.2 Cognitive Strategies

The top three used cognitive strategies were 1) pronunciation practice ($\bar{x}$ = 4.2857, SD = 0.7504); 2) watching TV or movies ($\bar{x}$ = 4.2286, SD = 1.0596); and 3) impersonating native English speakers ($\bar{x}$ = 4.1143, SD = 0.9000); While the least used strategy was writing notes, messages, letters, or reports ($\bar{x}$ = 3.0286, SD = 0.9231); as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Cognitive strategies

No.	Cognitive Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
10.	I say or write new English words several times.	3.8286	0.9544	high	9
11.	I try to talk like native English speakers.	4.1143	0.9000	high	3
12.	I practice the sounds of English.	4.2857	0.7504	high	1
13.	I use the English words I know in different ways.	4.0857	0.6585	high	4
14.	I start conversations in English.	4.0571	0.8023	high	5
15.	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	4.2286	1.0596	high	2
16.	I read for pleasure in English.	3.4857	1.0675	medium	12
17.	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	3.0286	0.9231	medium	13
18.	I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	4.0286	0.9231	high	6
19.	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	3.7714	1.1137	high	10
20.	I try to find patterns in English.	3.7714	0.8432	high	10
21.	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.9429	0.9375	high	7
22.	I try not to translate word-for-word.	3.8571	0.9121	high	8
23.	I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	3.6286	0.9727	high	11

		Total	3.8653	0.9155	high	

1.3 Compensation Strategies

The top three used compensation strategies were 1) gestures ($\bar{x}$ = 4.4286, SD = 0.7778); 2) guessing ($\bar{x}$ = 4.3143, SD = 0.7581); and 3) using synonyms ($\bar{x}$ = 4.1429, SD = 0.9121). While the least used strategy was avoiding using a dictionary ($\bar{x}$ = 2.7429, SD = 1.1464); as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Compensation strategies

No.	Compensation Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
24.	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	4.3143	0.7581	high	2
25.	When I can' t think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	4.4286	0.7778	high	1
26.	I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	3.1714	1.3391	medium	5
27.	I read English without looking up every new word.	2.7429	1.1464	medium	6
28.	I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	3.5143	1.1472	high	4

No.	Compensation Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
29.	If I can' t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	4.1429	0.9121	high	3
	Total	3.7190	1.0134	high	

1.4 Metacognitive Strategies

The top three used metacognitive strategies were 1) self-improvement ($\bar{x}$ = 4.7143, SD = 0.5725); 2) paying attention to the speaker ($\bar{x}$ = 4.6000, SD = 0.6039); and 3) learning from mistakes ($\bar{x}$ = 4.5714, SD = 0.6081). While the least used strategy was planning study schedules ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6571, SD = 0.9684); as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Metacognitive strategies

No.	Metacognitive Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
30.	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	4.1429	0.7724	high	6
31.	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	4.5714	0.6081	highest	3
32.	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	4.6000	0.6039	highest	2
33.	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	4.7143	0.5725	highest	1
34.	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	3.6571	0.9684	high	9

No.		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
35.	I look for people I can talk to in English.	4.0286	0.8220	high	7
36.	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.9714	0.8907	high	8
37.	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	4.3714	0.7311	high	5
38.	I think about my progress in learning English.	4.5143	0.7017	highest	4
	Total	**4.2857**	**0.7412**	**high**	

1.5 Affective Strategies

The top three used affective strategies were 1) relaxing when being afraid ($\bar{x} = 4.6571$, SD = 0.5392); 2) being total patient in speaking practice ($\bar{x} = 4.4571$, SD = 0.6572); and 3) expressing feelings ($\bar{x} = 3.8286$, SD = 0.9544). While the least used strategy was writing a feeling diary ($\bar{x} = 2.2000$, SD = 1.2788); as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Affective strategies

No.	Affective Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
39.	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	4.6571	0.5392	highest	1
40.	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	4.4571	0.6572	high	2
41.	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	3.6000	0.9139	high	4
42.	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	3.0571	1.2589	medium	5
43.	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	2.2000	1.2788	low	6
44.	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	3.8286	0.9544	medium	3
	Total	**3.6333**	**0.9337**	**high**	

1.6 Social Strategies

The top three used social strategies were 1) asking the speaker to slow down ($\bar{x} = 4.7143$, SD = 0.4583); 2) learning culture ($\bar{x} = 4.2000$, SD = 0.9641); and 3) asking questions ($\bar{x} = 3.7429$, SD = 0.9500). While the least used strategy was asking a native for help ($\bar{x} = 3.1429$, SD = 0.9121); as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Social strategies

No.	Social Strategies	Statistics			
		Mean	SD	Level	Rank
45.	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	4.7143	0.4583	highest	1
46.	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	3.4000	1.2414	medium	5
47.	I practice English with other students.	3.5714	0.8840	high	4
48.	I ask for help from English speakers.	3.1429	0.9121	medium	6

49. I ask questions in English.	3.7429	0.9500	high	3
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	4.2000	0.9641	high	2
Total	**3.7952**	**0.9016**	**high**	

2. Learning strategies of high-performing students

The use of learning strategies is from the top five high-performing students answering six questions. They represent learning strategies: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. The details are as follows:

2.1 Strategy 1: Memory

Table 8: Memory Strategies

Strategy: How do you remember English vocabulary, expressions and new structures from inside and outside the classroom?
Details: • Use multimedia: songs, VDO clips, TV series, movies • Watch vlog from both native & non-native speakers • Make use of Google Translation and mobile phone • Form sentences in their heads • Memorize new word as a picture • Imagine a situation that fits the new word

2.2 Strategy 2: Cognitive

Table 9: Cognitive Strategies

Strategy: Which media do you use to help practice English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills?
Details: • Watch series, movies, online game casting, vlog and interview on YouTube • Listen to music then look for lyrics to study about grammar and vocabulary • Find new foreign friends via *Hello Talk* and *Tinder*, the applications that help you to match the one with the same interests and also allow both interlocutors to fix language problems such as grammar, spelling and so on.

2.3 Strategy 3: Compensation Strategy

Table 10: Compensation Strategies

Strategy: How did you find a way out if you were unable to recognize the words during communication in both face-to-face and online chatting,
Details: • Open online dictionaries • Use synonyms or say it indirectly • Provide examples • Give more detailed explanation • Use hand gestures and body language

2.4 Strategy 4: Metacognitive Strategy

Table 11: Metacognitive Strategies

Strategy: What is your goal in learning and using English?

Details: • Travel around the world
    • Talk to foreigners to exchange cultural knowledge
    • Be an office worker, writer, translator, teacher and well-known tutor
    • Teach hill tribe children on the mountains

2.5 Strategy 5: Affective Strategy

Table 12: Affective Strategies

Strategy: How do you handle the situation when facing obstacles during learning English and feel discouraged?

Details: • Stop what you are doing, come back again later
    • Exercise, sleep, and talk to friends
    • Find something fun to watch on TV
    • Listen to easy listening, sad, and EDM songs; sing karaoke

2.6 Strategy 6: Social Strategy

Table 13: Social Strategies

Strategy: How do friends and people around you influence the way you learn English?

Details: • The teachers during their first year.
    • Foreign teachers teaching in English.
    • A lot of chances to practice listening and speaking given by teachers
    • Thai teachers should teach English in English.
    • Teachers give comments right after student role play or presentation.

3. An innovative lesson plan

Lesson plan was created with objectives, contents, activities, assessment and measurement as follows:

Topic: Vlogging yourself

Lesson objectives: Students will be able to tell their routine via a video clip that uploaded onto YouTube

Language function: introduce oneself and story-telling

Resources: mobile applications - Hello Talk, Tinder, YouTube, Facebook; movies; songs; games, etc.

Assessment: Speaking rubric

Skills: Speaking - story-telling, introducing oneself, and expressing feelings

Duration: 3 hours

Conclusion and Discussions

According to the summary of the use of learning strategies, it was found out that the most used strategy was metacognitive strategies which are used for plan, organize,

focus and monitor learning, followed by cognitive strategies which are used for comprehension and production. In the details, it showed that the top three used metacognitive strategies were 1) being a better language learner; 2) paying attention to the speaker; and 3) learning from the mistakes; while in the cognitive, the respondents chose to practice pronunciation, watch TV or movies and impersonate native English speakers. These findings of this study correspond to Brown, Bransford, Ferrara and Campione (1983) who conducted a research on non-L2 and found out that to create an effective language learning, learners often used metacognitive strategies such as organizing, evaluating, and designing their learning; incorporating with cognitive strategies such as analyzing, reasoning, transferring information, taking notes, and summarizing. Finally, Oxford (1990b, 1999) claimed that proper learning strategy applications adopted by language learners make learning effortless, quicker, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations can lead to second language proficiency.

The data pointed out that the technology from student strategies focused on social media added in classroom activities. Most of them prefer to use online applications and websites to help find their needed information and interact between target groups of people. All of the strategies and technology implementation contribute to the language learning process. Further than this, the innovative lesson plans affect and respond to the students' needs. It is an alternative way for teachers and students in the language classrooms including educators and curriculum planners, in order to frame the language learning policy by the integration of strategies and technology.

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