

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of literature related to language learning strategies forming the theoretical background for this study. It is divided into three sections. The first section concerns English education in Thailand and Thai students' English proficiency. The second section presents a review of previous studies on language learning strategies. The third section concerns factors contributing to language learning strategies.

#### 2.1 Previous Studies on English Education in Thailand

##### 2.1.1 Development of English Education in Thailand

Traditionally, in Thailand, according to Angwattanagul (สุมิตรา อังวัฒนกุล, 2535), English was first taught as a foreign language in schools by American Missionaries in the reign of King Narai the Great (1824-1851 A.D.). However, knowledge of English was limited to higher court officials and administrators. There was also no written curriculum about English subject at that time. Until 1890, according to Nampeth (อารีรัตน์ น้าเพชร, 2529), it was the time regarded as the starting point for the formulation of teaching English because the Examination Act was enacted and was used as the guideline for educational management. Moreover, English was systematically taught in schools established by American Missionaries, where ordinary people could equally study English.

Later, in 1895, English language was assigned to be studied as an optional subject taught in secondary schools. The major change, then, occurred in 1909 when English was assigned to be studied in primary schools. Later in 1921, English became

a compulsory subject for students beyond Grade 4. According to Aksornkul (1980), the objectives of this change were twofold: to produce modern thinkers for the country, and to provide students with sufficient knowledge of English to be able to function in classrooms.

In 1960, there was a change in the English syllabus for secondary schools. That is, English language was stated in the Upper Elementary Education Curriculum to be compulsory subject at the upper elementary level. Another major change was witnessed in the 1978 curriculum, which classified the English subject as optional again, and English subject was grouped together with Work Oriented Experience Area in the Special Experience Group. As for 1980 national curriculum, the English subject was classified as an elective in primary schools and compulsory subject from Grade 7 or in secondary schools.

Then, the revised English language curriculum was introduced in 1996. Although English was still an elective in primary schools, the Thai government pushed very hard for every government school to start learning English at Grade 1 onwards because there was a gap in terms of English standard between students studying English in private schools and those from government schools. To illustrate, the students studying English in private school would have experience in English instruction for 6 years at the primary level, while those from government schools would start learning English at secondary level. According to the Ministry of Education (กรมวิชาการ, กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ, 2539), the purpose of this revised proficiency-based curriculum was to provide students with the opportunity to continue their English education without interruption and to facilitate life-long learning. At this stage, emphasis was placed on the development of the students' language proficiency to fulfill a number of purposes: communication, acquisition of knowledge, use of

English in socio-cultural functions, career advancement, etc. In terms of approach to language teaching, functional-communicative with an eclectic orientation was focused.

The currently used English curriculum was introduced in 2001 when the Ministry of Education introduced the national foreign language standard and benchmarks. The motivation for this revision was to be consistent with the changing world and globalization. That is, all Thai citizens should have equal rights of 12 year-basic education. With this change, the 2001 system integrated primary and secondary into a single stream, which was divided into four sub-levels: Preparatory Level: Pratomsuksa 1-3 (Grades 1-3); Beginning Level: Pratomsuksa 4-6 (Grades 4-6); Expanding Level: Matayomsuksa 1-3 (Grades 7-9); and Progressive Level: Matayomsuksa 4-6 (Grades 10-12). At this point, six English credits are now required as part of a general education program. The current curriculum allows for 800-1000 sessions (20 to 30 minutes) in each academic year in Pratomsuksa, and 1200 sessions (50 minutes) for Matayomsuksa. Foley (2005) asserted that this current English curriculum places an emphasis on learner-centered culture and life-long learning through cognitive, emotional, affective, ethical, and cultural growths within the Thai context.

At the university level, both public and private Thai universities reformed English language curriculum in order to meet the demands of English in the workplace. According to Foley (2005), English is now required for twelve credits instead of 6 in university education, namely, 6 in general English and the other 6 in English for academic or specific purposes. Moreover, Wongsothorn, Hiranburana and Chinnawongs (2003) reveal that English curriculum in Thailand can be viewed as a paradigm shift from English as an elective to English as a compulsory subject,

emphasizing independent work, autonomous learning, innovations and new technology in English language teaching (ELT), such as self-access learning, performance standards of general English as well as English for academic and specific purposes.

In conclusion, in Thailand, English is the most popular foreign language taught in schools. Since the introduction of English language teaching in Thailand, many substantial changes have been made to the curriculum in order to make Thailand's economy more competitive in the global market, and to meet the international community's expectations and demands.

### **2.1.2 Thai Students' English Proficiency**

Although the 2001 English curriculum aims at improving the students' linguistic and communicative competence, several studies (e.g. Bunnag, 2005a, 2005b; Chulalongkorn University Academic Service Center, 2000, Gohsh, 2003; Prappal & Opanon-amata, 2002; the Office of Educational Testing of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the Ministry of Education, 1999a, 1999b; Yunibandhu, 2004) pointed out that Thai students' performance in English was far from satisfaction.

According to the national survey conducted by the Office of Educational Testing of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the Ministry of Education (1999a; 1999b) revealed that the writing skill of Grade 6, Grade 9, and Grade 12 students was considered below average and the student's proficiency in other language skills was quite low. Furthermore, the study also reported, as expected, Grade 9 and Grade 12 students' writing could not write well. These studies reflect Thai high school students' language ability does not meet the basic requirement of the

Thailand's educational policy. Meanwhile, as observed by Chirdchoo and Wudthayagorn (2001), listening skill of Thai learners of English, of all the four language skills, needed to be improved in English learning.

A recent study by Yunibandu (2004) revealed that not only do Thai students who study in Thai schools face linguistic problems, but also those who study in international schools possess relatively poor English proficiency. Using the Cambridge online test, Yunibandu, as expected, found that students' linguistic problems included poor English reading and writing skills, and lack of a good command of grammatical structures. Moreover, the data from the interviews and the speaking test also revealed that students' grammatical accuracy was unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, only 6 students from purposive sampling participated in Yunibandu's study. Therefore, they likely do not represent the population of her study because the subjects took the test and those were interviewed were not from the same group. Therefore, these results might not strongly confirm that Thai students studying in international schools are low proficiency in English. Also the research design is another case which should not be overlooked as the test used to measure students' English proficiency via online test. However, the study indicates that even international students have difficulty acquiring English competence.

Prapphal and Opanon-amata's (2002) study revealed how unsatisfactory Thai learners' proficiency of English is. The study investigated the English proficiency of Thai graduate students measured by the Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP). Thais' CU-TEP scores were equated with ASEAN students' the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores, showing that the average English Proficiency of Thai students is lower than that of students from the other

ASEAN countries<sup>1</sup>. Among the ASEAN nations, Singaporean graduates ranked first, with an average score of 596, while Laotian graduates ranked last, with an average score of 496. Thai graduates ranked next to last, with an average score of 498. At this juncture, Prappal and Opanon-amata's findings need to be carefully interpreted because CU-TEP and TOEFL are not comparable in terms of their respective test-takers. Moreover, a majority of the test takers taking TOEFL were high schools students who wanted to further their studies abroad, while most of the CU-TEP test takers were graduate students. In addition, the findings of this study were inferred from the maximum, minimum, mean scores only. The study did not provide the standard deviation which could have made the interpretation more insightful.

Bunnag (2005a, 2006b) reported that Thais who took TOEFL ranked eighth with an average score of 201 in 9 ASEAN countries. Also, Thais came fourth in 6 ASEAN countries, with an average score of 524 from the full score of 990 of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). This indicates that Thais have the second-worst English language skill among ASEAN countries as measured by the TOEFL and TOEIC. At this point, in interpreting Bunnag's studies, there are certain factors should take into account. First, the number of test takers was quite diverse and heterogeneous. In addition, the background of the test takers was relatively different. However, the studies elucidate the need for English improvement in order for Thais to successfully participate in the international community.

To sum up, although the Thai Government has launched a series of educational reforms to meet the demands of the international community, previous studies on English proficiency of Thai students show that most Thai students could

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<sup>1</sup> In this regard, such conclusion might not be valid. The standard deviation of the CU-TEP scores was 14.05, indicating that CU-TEP test takers were quite diverse and heterogeneous.

not achieve the goals of the national policy on education both in national level (Chirdchoo & Wudthayagorn, 2001; Office of Educational Testing of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the Ministry of Education, 1999a, 1999b; Yuniphandu, 2004), and international level (Bunnag, 2005a, 2005b; Prapphal & Opanon-amata, 2002).

### **2.1.3 Development of English Education in Vietnam**

The emergence of foreign languages in Vietnam is different from that in other Southeast Asian countries due to the escalating Vietnam War (1954 to 1975). Historically, at this decisive time, Vietnam was separated into two parts: the communist North and the capitalist South. For the North of Vietnam, Russian and Chinese was the major language of communication, whereas in the South, French and then English were deep-rooted at many social strata. These languages were the main foreign languages to be taught as required subjects in secondary and post-secondary education. Until the national reunification in 1975, according to Be and Crabbe (1999), Russian was the national first foreign language for a number of years, and little attention was paid to the teaching of both English and French.

Inevitably, since all schools in Vietnam were nationalized after the reunification, hundreds of private English language centers were closed, and as an immediate result of the weakening of all the commercial ties with capitalist nations. In this period, Think (2006) noted that English was only taught in a limited number of classes in high schools. To illustrate, English language was only taught in some classes of the schools in towns or in large urban areas.

Later, according to Canh (1999), in order to reform the country and adopt a market-oriented economy both in Southeast Asian countries and English-speaking

countries, Vietnam decided to expand its relations with all foreign countries irrespective of different political systems. Therefore, the Vietnamese government pursued an open-door policy, *Doi Moi*, in 1986. Think (2006) stated that this policy helped attract a considerable number of English-speaking visitors as tourists and business people to Vietnam. Social demands have forged the reemergence of English as the language for broader communication and cooperation. As a result, even though foreign languages such as French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and German are still taught in secondary schools and universities, English is in great demand and the most popular language being taught across the country. English, thus, has become the first foreign language taught and used in Vietnam. Moreover, as far as the importance of English in Vietnam is concerned, English has become the passport to a better paid job not only in the tourism and hospitality industries, but in many other enterprises.

Concerning English language instruction in Vietnam, according to Be and Crabbe (1999), English has been made compulsory in the secondary school curriculum. The teaching of English is now established in almost all secondary schools in 61 provinces and cities throughout Vietnam. However, a shortage of teachers of English still occurs in a number of schools located in the remote rural areas and in the highlands. Normally, students learn English for three 45-minute periods a week, except in Grade 6, when they learn for four periods a week.

In conclusion, for a long time, Vietnam did not have a dominant foreign language until recently. Foreign interventions and the subsequent use of foreign languages as the national or official language overwhelmed most of the nation's history (Think, 2006). English is one of the important foreign languages, especially in the South of Vietnam. In the past two decades, after Vietnam adopted *Doi Moi* Policy, the importance of English was emphasized more as the first foreign language



taught in formal education until now. However, the English education in Vietnam is popular only in the big cities, which is still limited in the remote areas.

## **2.2 Previous Studies on Language Learning Strategies**

Given the evidence that Thai learners' English is far from satisfaction, several attempts have been made to help develop their English competence. Studies on language learning strategies (e.g., Oxford, 1990; Park, 1997; Wenden, 1991) reveal that the use of appropriate learning strategies allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning by enhancing learner autonomy. Such studies claimed that language learning strategies were considered good indicators of how learners approach tasks or problems encountered during the process of language learning.

### **2.2.1 Definition of Language Learning Strategies**

The ideas of language learning strategies have emerged since the 1970s. However, numerous writers have differently defined language learning strategies (Cohen, 1998; Cook, 2001; Larsen-freeman & Long, 1991; Nisbet & Shucksmith, 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1989, 1990; Purpura, 1997; Wenden, 1991; Wenden & Rubin 1987). For instance, Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986: 24), language learning strategies are "*procedures or the process that underlie performance on thinking tasks*", while Rubin (1987: 23) defined them as "*... strategies that contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly.*" As shown, these definitions are conspicuous, leading to some clarifications on what thinking tasks and language systems are. This is because people normally use language learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously

when processing new information and performing tasks in the language classroom. Therefore, these definitions lacked clarification in terms of explicit processes contributing directly or indirectly to language learning.

Then, influenced by cognitive psychology, O'Malley and Chamot (1990:1) viewed learning strategies as "*the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.*" From their definition, language learning strategies are a combination between mind and actions in learning a language. In this case, "*the special thoughts or behaviors*" of O'Malley and Chamot' have become similar to Wenden (1991) and Larsen-Freeman and Long's (1991)' language learning strategies definition in terms of "*mental steps or operations.*" However, their definition does not clarify "*special thoughts*" as one behavior might come up unconsciously when learning a language.

Purpura (1997) and Cook (2001) viewed a learning strategy as conscious or unconscious mental or behavioural activity that the learner makes while learning or using the second language. Their definition focuses particularly on communication strategies. This raises an argument whether acquiring first and second language may employ different learning strategies.

More recently, language learning strategies have been defined as "*those processed which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language.*" (Cohen, 1998:4). Nonetheless, Cohen's definition renders an incomplete process of learning, lacking unconsciously behaviors which might occur in language learning.

For two decades, researchers and practitioners have attempted to define and explain language learning strategies. In fact, experts share some common ground in

their definition. That is, they described in terms of operations e.g., actions, learning behaviours, tactics, or techniques that language learners employ both consciously and unconsciously while learning a language. However, it is seen that such definition is not comprehensive, limiting the clarification in some aspects. Among those limitations, Oxford (1990)'s definition of language learning strategies seems to be the clearest one. She defined language learning strategies as:

*"...steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. They are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situation"*

(Oxford, 1990: 8)

Clearly, Oxford' definition attaches a behavioral aspect to the meaning of learning strategies by relating it to the concept of the *achievement of an objective* (p. 8). According to Olivares-Cuhat (2002) this operational definition is widely accepted in second language acquisition for its comprehensiveness and clarity of meaning.

### 2.2.2 Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Concerning the classification of language learning strategies, several researchers attempted to divide language learning strategies into various types, in comparison with the diversity of their definitions.

Stern's (1992) classification of language learning strategies consists of five main categories. First, *Management and Planning Strategies* are related with learner's intention to direct his own learning. Second, *Cognitive Strategies* are steps or operations used in learning or problem solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Third, *Communicative-Experiential Strategies* are gesturing, paraphrases, or asking for repetition and explanation for techniques used by learners in order to keep conversations going. Fourth, *Interpersonal Strategies* are those strategies learners used to monitor their own development and evaluate their own performance. Finally, *Affective Strategies* are those used to reduce stress.

According to Wenden (1991), in comparison, language learning strategies are divided into two categories: *Cognitive Strategies* and *Self-Management Strategies*. *Cognitive Strategies* refer to "operations that learners use to process both linguistic and sociolinguistic content" (p. 19). *Self-Management Strategies* are utilized by learners to "oversee and manage their learning" (p. 25). Wenden further divided both categories into steps or stages. That is, selecting information, comprehending information, storing information, and retrieving information are subcategories of *Cognitive Strategies*, while planning, monitoring, and evaluating are classified into *Self-Management Strategies*.

Scholars will use different criteria in classifying language learning strategies. It can be seen that Stern (1992) and Wenden's (1991) classifications especially focus

on cognitive and metacognitive process in language learning. However, their definition might not cover learning strategies of students in some cultures. For instance, Sheorey (1999) argued that Memory strategies may be influenced by the cultural background and the educational pattern of students.

Meanwhile, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) claimed that Metacognitive and Cognitive strategies were used in the initial definition of strategies. They have also drawn a conclusion that second language acquisition entails an active and dynamic mental process. Then, they recognize three main types of learning strategies used by second language learners. First, *Metacognitive Strategies* involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring the learning task, and evaluating how well one has learned. Second, *Cognitive Strategies*, on the other hand, allow learners to control their own cognition by interacting with the material to be learned, manipulating the material mentally or physically, or applying a specific technique to a learning task. Third, *Social and Affective Strategies* involve interacting with another person to assist learning or using affective control to assist a learning task.

However, the categorization by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) might not cover all strategies used in language learning. Oxford (1990) developed the taxonomy of language learning strategies that is more comprehensive, extensive, and detailed than O'Malley and Chamot's classification models. It encompasses two major strategy groups—*direct strategies* and *indirect strategies* (Oxford, 1990: 37). *Direct Strategies* include Memory, Cognitive, Compensation types, while *Indirect Strategies* include Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies.

As defined by Oxford (1990: 37), *Direct Strategies mean language learning strategies that directly involve target language. All direct strategies require mental processing of the language.* The three groups of direct strategies are as follows.

1. *Memory strategies* – techniques specifically tailored to help the learner store new information in memory and retrieve it later on, e.g., placing new words in context, using keywords and representing sounds in memory, etc.

2. *Cognitive strategies* – skills that allow students to better comprehend and produce language in different manners, e.g., note-taking, repetition, summarizing text, repetition, etc.

3. *Compensation strategies* – behaviours used to compensate and help them to employ the language, e.g., guessing while listening or reading, or using synonyms or paraphrasing while speaking or writing.

As opposed to Direct Strategies, *Indirect Strategies provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy, and other means* (p. 151).

The three sets of strategies in Indirect Strategies are as follows.

4. *Metacognitive strategies* – behaviours used for arranging, planning and evaluating one's learning, e.g., overviewing and linking with already known material.

5. *Affective strategies* – techniques which regulate emotional behaviors and motivation, e.g., using relaxation techniques, singing songs in a target language to lower one's anxiety, etc.

6. *Social strategies* – actions allowing better learner interaction with other people in the language learning process, e.g., asking questions, cooperating with peers, and developing empathy towards target language speaking people, etc. The six Oxford's classifications of language learning strategies are summarized in Figure 1.

<b>DIRECT STRATEGIES</b> (Memory, Cognitive, and Compensation Strategies)		
<i>I. Memory Strategies</i>	A. Creating mental linkages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grouping</li> <li>2. Associating/elaborating</li> <li>3. Placing new words into a context</li> </ol>
	B. Applying images and sounds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using imagery</li> <li>2. Semantic mapping</li> <li>3. Using keywords</li> <li>4. Representing sounds in memory</li> </ol>
	C. Reviewing well	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Structured reviewing</li> </ol>
	D. Employing action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using physical response or sensation</li> <li>2. Using mechanical techniques</li> </ol>
<i>II. Cognitive strategies</i>	A. Practicing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repeating</li> <li>2. Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems</li> <li>3. Recognizing and using formulas and patterns</li> <li>4. Recombining</li> <li>5. Practicing naturalistically</li> </ol>
	B. Receiving and sending message	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Getting the idea quickly</li> <li>2. Using resources for receiving and sending messages</li> </ol>
	C. Analyzing and reasoning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reasoning deductively</li> <li>2. Analyzing expressions</li> <li>3. Analyzing contrastively (across languages)</li> <li>4. Translating</li> <li>5. Transferring</li> </ol>
	D. Creating structure for input and output	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taking notes</li> <li>2. Summarizing</li> <li>3. Highlighting</li> </ol>
<i>III. Compensation strategies</i>	A. Guessing intelligently	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using linguistic clues</li> <li>2. Using other clues</li> </ol>
	B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Switching to the mother tongue</li> <li>2. Getting help</li> <li>3. Using mime or gesture</li> <li>4. Avoiding communication partially or totally</li> <li>5. Selecting the topic</li> <li>6. Adjusting or approximating the message</li> <li>7. Coining words</li> <li>8. Using a circumlocution or synonym</li> </ol>
<b>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</b> (Metacognitive, Affective, and Social Strategies)		
<i>I. Metacognitive strategies</i>	A. Centering your learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overviewing and linking with already known material</li> <li>2. Paying attention</li> <li>3. Delaying speech production to focus on listening</li> </ol>
	B. Arranging and planning your learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finding out about language learning</li> <li>2. Organizing</li> <li>3. Setting goals and objectives</li> <li>4. Identifying the purpose of a language task (purposeful listening/reading/speaking/writing)</li> <li>5. Planning for a language task</li> <li>6. Seeking practice opportunities</li> </ol>
	C. Evaluating your learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-monitoring</li> <li>2. Self-evaluating</li> </ol>
<i>II. Affective strategies</i>	A. Lowering your anxiety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or mediation</li> <li>2. Using music</li> <li>3. Using laughter</li> </ol>
	B. Encouraging yourself	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making positive statements</li> <li>2. Taking risks wisely</li> <li>3. Rewarding yourself</li> </ol>
	C. Taking your emotional temperature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listening to your body</li> <li>2. Using a checklist</li> <li>3. Writing a language learning diary</li> <li>4. Discussing your feelings with someone else</li> </ol>
<i>III. Social strategies</i>	A. Asking questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asking for clarification or verification</li> <li>2. Asking for correction</li> </ol>
	B. Cooperating with others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cooperating with peers</li> <li>2. Cooperating with proficient users</li> </ol>
	C. Emphthizing with others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing cultural understanding</li> <li>2. Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings</li> </ol>

**Figure 1.** Oxford's Strategy System Diagram

(Oxford, 1990: 18-21)

### 2.2.3 Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

The SILL (see Appendix A and 3.2.1 for further details) is one of the most often used instruments to assess the use of language learning strategies around the world at this time (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The SILL was first designed by students at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California in 1986. Since then, it has been continuously developed. However, among various versions of the SILL available, Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) asserts that two versions of the SILL: Version 5.1 (1990) and Version 7.0 (1990) are widely used in studies on second language acquisition.

These two versions share certain similarities. First, both of them cover a set of six subgroups of language learning strategies: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies. Next, all strategies in the questionnaire cover the four skills including reading, writing, speaking and listening. Finally, both Version 5.1 and Version 7.0 consist of two sections: 1) background questionnaire, and 2) strategy questionnaire.

The background questionnaire is designed to elicit geographic information on participants' mother tongue, gender, degree of motivation, language regularly spoken at home, proficiency self-ratings, the length of time already spent studying English, reasons for learning English, language learning attitude, and experience in learning English.

The strategy questionnaire is employed to ask the participants' use of language learning strategies. This part of questionnaire is a self-scoring, paper-and-pencil questionnaire which consists of a series of statements such as "I review English lessons often" to which students are asked to indicate their respond on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1-never or almost never- to 5- always or almost always).



However, Version 5.1 and Version 7.0 display certain differences. First, Version 5.1 is for *English speakers learning a new language*, while Version 7.0 is designed for *learners of English as a second or foreign language*. In addition, the number of questions of Version 5.1 are 80 items, while Version 7.0 has 50 items. Finally, each statement about language learning strategies of Version 5.1 is longer than that of Version 7.0 yet has the same content.

In spite of these similarities and differences, Version 5.1 is widely used around the world in settings such as universities, schools, and government agencies (Cohen, 1998; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Wharton, 2000). In addition, its Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients range from 0.89 to 0.98 in various studies (Grainger, 1997; Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000). Moreover, its concurrent and predictive validity have been found when relating SILL results to measures of proficiency, motivation, learning styles, and other factors (for details, see Oxford, 1996 and Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). This indicates that language learning strategies might be related to some variables, proved by the SILL. Therefore, in the present study, Version 5.1 was chosen because the results of this study could be comparable to those of most of research worldwide used this version of the SILL.

#### **2.2.4 Previous SILL-Based Studies**

A large number of important studies have addressed the goal of identifying and understanding the range and type of learning strategies used by good language learners, and the differences in learning strategies used between more and less effective learners in learning process (Bruen, 2001; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Wharton, 2000). Results from such studies indicated that integrating strategies language learners use into language instruction or course was

beneficial to students and teachers.

Takeuchi (1993) employed the *Comprehensive English Language Test* to measure English achievement among 78 Japanese first-year students of English at a women's college in Kyoto. Reporting on the strategies using the SILL, he found that four strategies could positively affect language achievement: writing notes, messages, and letters in English; trying not to translate word-for-word; dividing words into parts to find meaning; and paying attention when someone is speaking English. Conversely, asking questions in English; using flashcards; writing down feelings in a language learning diary; and trying to find as many ways as possible to use English were strategies negatively predicted language achievement. Takeuchi, then, discussed that some of these findings were based on cultural influences.

Bruen (2001), proposing strategies for success of effective learners of German, employed the 80-item SILL and in-depth interviews with 100 Irish second-year students at Dublin City University to identify how language learning strategies were associated with the achievement of proficiency in German. Bruen reported that more proficient students used more language learning strategies, in particular more Cognitive and Metacognitive strategies, such as planning goals for language learning and planning to accomplish in language learning each day or week. Furthermore, the researcher suggested that the learning process be revised based on the results of this study indicating that students mostly use Metacognitive and Cognitive strategies in order that students would master in learning a language.

Therefore, in comparison with Takeuchi and Bruen's results, it was found that successful language learners from counties used language leaning strategies differently in learning a language. Particularly, English education in Japan which is very different from other countries, might affects learners' strategies, leading to the

different results.

In order to explore how strategy use affects the outcomes of learning English, Gu and Johnson (1996) studied the vocabulary learning strategies with 850 non-English major second-year students at Beijing Normal University. The participants were asked to complete questionnaires consisting of three sections: 1) personal data, 2) belief about vocabulary learning, and 3) strategy questionnaire covering Metacognitive and Cognitive strategies. They were also given the vocabulary size tests and proficiency test to assess their English proficiency. The researcher found that Metacognitive strategies are highly correlated with the English proficiency. Moreover, it was found that self-initiation, selective attention, contextual guessing, skilful use of dictionaries, note-taking, paying attention to word formation, contextual encoding and activation of newly-learned words were predictors of EFL achievement.

Within the Thai context, Mullins' (1991) study on Thai students enrolled at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University revealed the relationship between strategy use and English proficiency. Using the 50-item SILL to explore strategy use related to various measures of English proficiency, Mullin pointed out Metacognitive strategy category use were correlated with language course grades. A correlation was found between Compensation strategy category use and language placement scores. Lastly, a negative correlation was found between Affective strategy category use and language entrance examination scores. The researcher also found that students who were very anxious and who resorted to Affective strategies did not fair well on the entrance examination.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the results from Bruen (2001) and Mullin (1991)'s studies confirm that Metacognitive strategies are highly correlated with English proficiency even though the subjects of these two studies are different

with respect to nationality. However, Memory strategies are most frequently used in Takeuchi's (1993) study conducted with Japanese learners. This leads to the question that cultural background might influence the way students learn a language, similar to Takeuchi's conclusion in his study.

A recently completed study by Baker and Boonkit (2004) explored language learning strategies in reading and writing. 116 second-year undergraduate Arts students at Silpakorn University participated in their study. The subjects were divided into two groups: high and less proficiency based on their English grades. The researchers selected triangulation for the research methodology, involving the 80-item SILL, interviews, and journals. Again, the results of this study supported Mullin (1992)'s work that Metacognitive, Cognitive and Compensation were the most frequently used strategies overall. Although, the statistical analysis showed no significant difference of use for each strategy category between the high and less proficiency groups, the data from the interviews and journals indicated that the high proficiency group used more Social and Affective category than the less one. It is possible that students in this study preferred and felt free to express their opinions by writing journal and diary more than completing the SILL. In this case, the 10 informants completing a language journal from purposive sampling cannot be overlooked in making conclusion. However, the study suggested that, in particular, the use of translation from first language at any stage of the writing process, even in planning, hindered successful writing. In terms of reading, the data from journals showed that students did use a number of Social and Affective strategies in their everyday reading in English.

The above studies suggest that appropriately used language learning strategies related to language achievement, leading to an overall gain in second language

learning (Baker & Boonkit, 2004; Mullin, 1991; Takeuchi, 1993). Also, most studies mentioned above have reached similar conclusions about the language learning strategies that characterize successful learners. Moreover, the results from such studies have reported that language learners actually engage in metacognitive knowledge and processes. In addition, such studies revealed that the use of different types and numbers of strategies might depend on the kinds of learners and settings in which learning occurs and the language task to be completed.

## **2.3 Factors Affecting the Choices of Language Learning Strategies**

Researchers in second language acquisition are interested in determining the effect of strategy use on success in learning another language. For instance, Oxford (1989) suggested that variables found to influence language learning strategy choice include age, sex, affective variable (e.g., attitudes, motivation), language learning goals, motivational orientation, learning style, aptitude, career orientation, national origin, language teaching methods, task requirements, language being learned, duration, and degree of awareness. Some of these variables such as gender, motivation, and experience in studying a language are claimed to have discernible influences on the choices of language learning strategies (Goh & Kwah, 1997; Gu, 2002; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; MacIntyre, 1994; Mochizuki, 1999; Wharton, 2000; Yutaka, 1996).

### **2.3.1 Gender**

Goh and Kwah (1997) carried out a study on language learning strategies. In their study, a group of 175 People's Republic of China students—50 females and 125 males, learning English in Singapore was assigned to complete 80-item SILL.

Reporting the overall strategy use, the researchers pointed out that students regularly employed Metacognitive strategies in language learning and rarely utilized Socio-affective strategies. Examining whether gender difference and proficiency affected the choices of language learning strategies, Goh and Kwah affirmed that female participants used all strategies more frequently than male students. The study also postulated that female students used Compensation and Affective strategies more frequently than male ones. These findings are consistent with Green and Oxford's (1995) study identifying that Affective strategies were used significantly more often by female students. Also, they also reported that females used gestures more frequently than males.

Meanwhile, Mochizuki (1999) examined the strategies Japanese university students used and the factors affecting their choices of strategies. The subjects were 44 second-year students and 113 first-year students at a state-run university in Central Japan. After having taken the placement test to determine English Proficiency, the students were divided into the upper level, the intermediate level, and low level. Then, by using an 80-item SILL with students in each group, the researcher found that proficient students used Cognitive and Metacognitive strategies more frequently than those of less proficient in English. In addition, the factors which influenced the choices of strategies are motivation, enjoyment of English learning and gender. With respect to gender, significant differences were found in all of the six strategy categories. Specifically, female students frequently used more Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategy categories than male students. That is, male students preferred to use Memory strategy category more than female counterparts.



In a recent vocabulary learning strategy study, Beijing Normal University students learning English, Gu (2002) confirmed that gender differences and academic major were variables contributing to the differences in the choices of vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary learning questionnaire adapted from Gu and Johnson (1996), vocabulary size tests, and general proficiency measures were instruments employed in this study. The author attributed his findings to the fact that female students outperformed male participants on both vocabulary size and general English proficiency. In addition, female participants reported more use of Metacognitive strategies and self-initiation than male students. They also reported significantly more use of vocabulary learning strategies than their male counterparts in Cognitive category. In this case, female students tended to be more successful, more doubtful of some memory mnemonics than in vocabulary learning. Also, female participants spent significantly more extra-curricular time on learning English their male counterparts.

In a recent study of language learning strategy use, Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) investigated learning strategy use of 55 students learning English as a second language (ESL) with differing cultural and linguistic background. The subjects were 25 males and 30 females from various countries: Brazil, China, German, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Togo. They enrolled in a college Intensive English Program at a large southwestern university in America. The subjects were tested on the 50-item SILL. This study aimed to determine the relationship between language learning strategy use and three factors: gender, English proficiency, and nationality. The results showed the students preferred to use Metacognitive strategies, whereas they depicted the least use of Affective and Memory strategies in overall strategy. Mean differences revealed that females

engaged in strategy use more frequently than males. Also, female participants reported using Social and Metacognitive strategies most and Memory strategies the least, while males favored the use of Metacognitive and Compensation strategies most and Affective strategies the least.

While considerable foreign language and second language studies using the SILL in various countries have found significantly more frequent strategies used by females, Wen and Wang (1996) employed self-designed questionnaires with tertiary second-year non EFL-majors in China to determine a relationship between learner variables and scores on English as a foreign language achievement test. Again, they found that six factors affecting directly EFL achievement scores included: gender, first language proficiency, second language proficiency, vocabulary learning, ambiguity tolerance, and mother tongue avoidance. Wen and Wang's findings correspond to Green and Oxford's (1995) study using the 50-item SILL with 374 students at the University of Puerto Rico. They demonstrated that gender was one of factors affecting the choices of language learning strategies. In their study, it is found that females used Memory and Metacognitive strategies more frequently than males.

The above studies indicate that female and male students differ significantly not just in strategy choice but also in learning achievement. Nonetheless, some studies designate that males used learning strategies more than females when learning a language. For instance, a recent study that involved language learning strategies and affective factors was conducted by Wharton (2000). 678 university students learning Japanese and French as foreign languages in Singapore participated in this study. Using Oxford's 80-item SILL with this group of students, he found that more proficient learners used diverse strategies to succeed. Additionally, this study pointed out that types, numbers, and frequency of use of language learning strategies,



cultural background, language studied, stage of learning, age, motivation, language learning goals, settings, previous language learning experience, and language learning style are factors affecting students' language learning. Particularly, in terms of gender difference, the finding showed that males used a greater number of strategies significantly more often than females. This finding confirmed the results of Tran's (1988) study of adult Vietnamese refugees. Tran discovered that males were more likely to use a variety of learning strategies than females. The study has pointed out that refugees must do everything to survive in such a circumstance; moreover, men as head of family in this context are pushed to learn English for survival need. Tran also explained that Vietnamese females had difficulty managing everyday affairs in the new country because of their English language problems. They do not have a sufficient command of English to shop for food, to apply for aid, and to contact police or other services when needed.

While the above studies showed that gender difference had an influence on language learning strategies, other studies pointed out that gender might not be one of key variables affecting the choices of language learning strategies. For example, Griffiths (2003) investigated the relationship between course level and frequency of language learning strategies used by speakers of other languages. The subjects in this study were 348 students, 114 male students and 234 females, aged between 14 and 64, from 21 different countries from Asian, Europe, and South-America. These subjects then were spread over seven levels: elementary, mid-elementary, upper elementary, pre-intermediate, mid-intermediate, upper intermediated and advanced. Employing the 50-item SILL, the investigator found a significant relationship between strategy use and course level. However, no statistically significant differences were found according to either gender or age with strategy use.

In order to survey learning strategies and the influence of proficiency level, gender, and field of specialization on strategy use, Ma (1999) conducted a study in China with mixed levels of 265 tertiary EFL majors and non-majors using interview, and adapted as well as translated Oxford's (1990) English version of SILL. The findings showed that gender had no significant effect on the choices of such strategies as Memory, Metacognitive and Affective strategies. However, a significant difference was found in strategy choice by students of different majors. Clearly, it is seen that the findings of Ma (1999) and Griffith (2003) confirmed that gender difference does not affect the choices of language learning strategies.

Judging from the studies above, research which explores language learning strategies according to gender is common. Given the fact that the participants in Ma (1999) and Wen and Wang's (1996) studies are from the same tertiary EFL in China, the studies reported conflicting results even in a single country. It should be pointed out that Ma's subjects were mixed levels of both EFL majors and non-majors, while those of Wen and Wang were second-year non EFL majors only. Therefore, their perceived and actual use of language learning strategies differed due to proficiency level, learning context, and gender. A further study to prove this issue is needed.

Overall, the relationship between gender and learning strategies are not explicit due to conflicting results generated by previous studies. Therefore, more studies are needed to verify the role of gender in determining learning strategies.

### **2.3.2 Motivation**

Despite the frequent recognition given in the literature to the potential relationship between affective factors and strategy selection, to date, research studies have increased in number, focusing on motivation. In this case, there have been a

number of studies devoted to this relationship in the area of second language learning. Due to the scope and scale of this study, it is proposed to explore the relationship between motivation and the choices of language learning strategies.

In the field of SLA, there have been rigorous efforts made by researchers to discover what comprises motivation to learn a second or foreign language (e.g., Dörnyei, 2000; Gardner, 1985). Many researchers tend to emphasize social-psychological aspects of motivation. Undoubtedly, one of the most influential models is Gardner's Socio-educational theory of motivation, which has been an inspiration for many motivational studies.

Gardner (1985) defines motivation as "*the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goals of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language*" (p. 10). In this case, Gardner has described the phenomenon of motivation as consisting of four components: a goal, effort, want, and attitudes toward the learning activity. In addition, the concept of motivation can be classified into two orientations of reasons: instrumental and integrative. The former refers to the individual's willingness and interest in having social interaction with members of the L2 (second language) group. This orientation occurs when students wish to truly become part of the culture of the language being learned. An instrumental orientation is more self-oriented, described as when students have utilitarian reasons such as they want to pass an exam or they want to get a job.

In the same study, Gardner (1985) claimed that an integrative orientation does facilitate second language learning and is, in fact, superior to instrumental ones. This statement was supported by Gardner and MacIntyre (1991), concluding that both instrumental and integrative orientations lead to more proficiency, but integrative orientation motivated students to learn more. Dörnyei (2001) then states, generally,

motivation can be a matter explaining why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it. Meanwhile, Pintrich and Schunk (2002) also point out that motivation involves all activities in the classroom because it can affect the learning of new behaviors and the performance of earlier learned behaviors. Therefore, in terms of language learning, achievement can be viewed as one of indexes of motivation since motivation can lead to and support all activities.

As far as the concept of motivation is considered to be an important feature in language learning, researchers have placed greater emphasis on classroom issues. This has resulted in researcher's proposing a number of studies on the relationship between language learning strategies and motivation (Okada et al, 1995; Mochizuki, 1999; Yutaka, 1996).

One of the most insightful strategy-related models of language learning is the study conducted by Mochizuki (1999). She examined factors that affected the Japanese learner's choices of strategies. In this study, 44 second-year and 113 first-year students were the subjects from a state-run university in central Japan. They were tested by the Second Grade Test of the Society of Testing English Proficiency (STEP) and the 80-item SILL. The results indicated that Japanese university students used Compensation strategies the most often and Affective ones the least. Although Asian students were expected to use Memory strategies most according to cultural influence, this study, in contrast, showed that Memory strategies were not being used very frequently as expected. Furthermore, this study reported the relationship between factors and language learning strategies. It is found that the connection between the degree of motivation and strategy drew a lot of attention. That is, motivation affected

the learner's choices of strategies the most strongly of all the factors: major course, self evaluation of English proficiency, enjoyment of English learning, and gender.

Using a modified 80-item SILL, Okada et al (1995) studied 36 Japanese and 36 Spanish. After having eliminated nine items related to reading and writing from the SILL, the researchers discovered that there were differences in strategy use according to mother tongue and motivation in learning language. For example, the Japanese students could not use rhyming for memorization, code switching and learning through comparison with English because it is very unnatural for Japanese. They surmised that gestures might be less useful for Japanese learners because of cultural issues associated with gesturing. The study also reported that this group of Japanese learners had a high Metacognitive use. This result might be explained by the fact that the special nature of learners of Japanese are highly-motivated and typically academically strong, suggests that motivation outside of the classroom approach are at play in terms of their frequent Metacognitive strategy use. Moreover, it is possible that

*“the use of affective and social strategies among Japanese learners is due to the unfamiliarity with the language that requires emotional control and a positive attitude on the part of the learner. It may also stand to reason that learners of Japanese who are more motivated, enthusiastic and confident of their ability, may well use strategies that help maintain high self-esteem”.*

(Okada et al, 1995: 20)

Therefore, from Okada et al's explanation, it can be said that English learning in Japan is different from that in other Asian countries. Moreover, Japanese learners may be more motivated and enthusiastic to study a language than learners from other countries. These factors play a major role in the use of language learning strategies.

Yutaka (1996) investigated Japanese learners of a second language's learning strategies used and the effect of experience of studying or living abroad. Subjects were 24 Japanese third-year college students, learners of English as a second language who were studying in England. Data on learning strategy choice and use were gathered from students using the 80-item SILL. Yutaka's study revealed that some learning strategies were not used, which was attributed to: influence of English teachers in Japan; characteristics of the Japanese language; and level of English ability. Students tended not to use strategies not learned in Japan. Students' gender, integrative motivation, and instrumental motivation affected choices of strategies significantly, but major, personality, and proficiency did not. In terms of gender, it is found that females used asking questions, co-operating with other, and reviewing strategies more than males. In terms of motivation, centering learning, and evaluating learning strategies had the influence on learning strategy use. This study also revealed experiences of both studying and living abroad also affected strategy choices significantly.

It is worth noting that the results of the effect of experiences of studying and living abroad in Yutaka's study are not supported by other studies yet since there are few research studies on the differences in the foreign language situation. Therefore, further research in this area is needed.

Judging from the literature above, it might be said that cultural background plays an important role in promoting students' motivation to learn a language. However, research on the effect of cultural background on the choices of language learning strategies is rarely found. This calls for more research to investigate how cultural background influences language learning strategies. The present study, thus, determined nationality as claimed a factor affecting language learning strategies. The

following presents a review of some research on the roles of nationality and language learning strategies.

### **2.3.3 Nationality**

In a recent study focusing on determining whether gender, nationality, and program of study affect the choices of language learning strategies, Hashim and Sahil (1994) have used the 50-item SILL, with 88 males and 158 females third-year students-- Chinese (31.3%), Malay (15%), and Indian and 2 unknown/others (0.8%). As expected, the study showed that Metacognitive strategies received the highest level of usage, while the least frequently used strategies were Memory strategies. Moreover, it was found that nationality had a significant effect on strategies used—Malay students were found to be more passive and non participative than Chinese and Indian students. The results of this study are consistent with Hong-Nam and Leavell's (2006) study above describing nationality is a factor affecting the choices of language learning strategies.

A recent study of language learning strategies for learners of Japanese as a foreign language examined by Grainger (1997) supported research focusing on ethnicity that nationality influenced the choices of language learning strategies. Subjects in this study were 32 males and 101 females of varying ethnic backgrounds: Australia, German, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, The United States. The researcher separated the subjects into three groups: English, European, and Asian background students. After they completed the 80-item SILL, it was found that the most preferred groups of strategies for English background students was Social strategies and Metacognitive strategies. Meanwhile, the preferred strategy group for students of European background was also Social, followed by

Compensation strategies. In contrast, students of Asian background preferred Compensation, followed by Social strategies. In this study, it was also found that Asian students tended to read in the new language learned far more efficiently, to compensate better, and to remember more effectively, than native English-speaking ones.

However, Grainger's study has some limitations. For example, since the researcher separated the respondents into 3 groups, this might affect the results of Grainger's study if they were not heterogeneous. Additionally, it would be useful to include qualitative data gathered from respondents in retrospective interviews in order to clarify the quantitative results. As a result of these limitations, those findings should be carefully replicated.

#### **2.3.4 Experience in Studying a Language**

A number of studies in the literature proposed a lot of factors such as gender, motivation, and nationality, contributing to the choices of language learning strategies. A variety of findings are widely discussed among researchers in second and foreign language learning. In this case, experience in studying language is also regarded one of the factors that researchers in second language acquisition claim that it might affect the choices of language learning strategies. For instance, Purdie and Oliver (1999) reported the language learning strategies used by bilingual school-aged children. The researchers used both the questionnaire adapted from Oxford (1989) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and a structured interview to collect the data from 58 students aged from 9 to 12 years. The subjects came from three main cultural groups: Asian (predominantly Vietnamese or Chinese dialect speakers), European (children who spoke Greek and those who identified themselves as speakers of



Macedonian), and speakers of Arabic. The results showed students who had been in Australia for a longer period of time (3 or less years and 4 or more) obtained significantly higher mean scores for Cognitive strategies and for Memory strategies. Therefore, these findings can serve as the insight that experience in studying a language can affect the language learning strategy choices.

Purdie and Olive's study elucidates the importance of experience in studying a language as one of the factors affecting the choices of language learning strategies. Their study also confirmed the findings of Opper, Teichler, and Carlson's (1990) comprehensive study. Opper et al (1990) investigated study abroad programs in Europe and The United States. As a result of their study, they indicated several areas of impact on participants e.g., academic effects, effects on foreign language proficiency, cultural impact, change in attitudes and views. Among this impact, they pointed out that studying abroad had an influence on students' thought and learning style, especially in their actual ability in language learning. In this view, it can be seen that studying or staying abroad can be an important factor affecting the choices of language learning strategies.

## **Conclusion**

English education in Thailand has a long history with a number of substantial revisions. From time to time, increasing pressure from the Thai government and society has changed the nature of English learning and teaching (ELT) at all levels. As a result, at present, Thai students are required to learn English in formal education for at least ten years by that time they graduate from the universities. However, recent research on Thai learners' proficiency suggests that the English performance of Thai students has not met the demands for workplace English (Office of Educational

Testing of Department of Curriculum Instruction, the Ministry of Education, 1999a, 1999b; Prappal & Opanon-amata, 2002).

While the Thai government has monitored the overall English proficiency of Thai students, studies on second language acquisition pointed out that language learning strategies can be employed to promote effective second and foreign language learning. In general, it is known that more successful learner used a wider range of learning strategies. Moreover, most of them use a combination of the strategies, rather than one particular strategy.

One of the most popular instruments to assess language learning strategies is the SILL. Previous studies using the SILL also revealed that factors such as gender, motivation, nationality, language task, etc. influenced the use of learning strategies. However, the results of previous research remain inconclusive. In terms of gender difference, there are the conflicting findings. Females used learning strategies more than males in some studies (Goh & Kwah, 1997; Gu, 2002; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006), while not in the other studies (Griffiths, 2003; Ma, 1999; Wen & Wang, 1996).

Some studies indicate that motivation is an interesting area, claiming that motivation could support successful learners. However, researchers could not draw a strong conclusion on how motivation affects language learning strategies choices since motivation is the mind process (Mochizuki, 1999; Okada et al, 1995; Yutaka, 1996).

Meanwhile, a number of researchers suggest that nationality is one of the key factors which might affect language learning strategies (Grainger, 1997; Haashim & Sahil, 1994). Also, some studies claim that experience in studying and staying abroad might be one of the factors that could affect the choices of language learning strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Opper et al, 1990; Oxford, 1989; Purdie &

Oliver, 1999).

An initial review of available literature and other research reports appear to show that a small amount of research has been carried out with students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). More specifically, no research to date has focused on the differences in using learning strategies of Southeast Asian students—and certainly none has been conducted on those of Thai and Vietnamese students. The present investigation aims to fill this gap.

To complement previous research using the SILL, the main objective of this study is to investigate what language learning strategies Thai and Vietnamese university students use while learning English. Also, the study aims to determine how three factors: gender, motivation, and experience in studying English, affect the choices of language learning strategies.