CHAPTER 4

THAI STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

One of the purposes of this study is to investigate Thai university students' language learning strategies by using the questionnaires (the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or SILL) and semi-structured interviews. This chapter presents findings from the SILL questionnaires and the interviews, concerning the use of language learning strategies of Thai university students. The chapter is divided into two main sections: the first section (4.1) presents the overall use of the six strategy categories based on the data elicited by the SILL, and the second section (4.2) reports the use of individual strategy based on the data elicited by the SILL and from the interviews.

4.1 Overall Learning Category Strategy Use

After 200 SILL questionnaires were distributed to first and second-year Arts students at Chulalongkorn University, 104 SILL questionnaires were returned (52%). Of these 104 SILL questionnaires, however, 20 SILL questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because they did not meet the criteria laid out in 3.1.2. That is, 12 SILL questionnaires were from the students who had more than 4-month experience in an English speaking country, 5 from those who answered the test incompletely, and 3 from those who used to study in international schools and/or program. Therefore, the findings reported in this chapter were based on 84 SILL questionnaires completed by 26 males and 58 females.

The SILL questionnaires were coded according to the six categories of language learning strategies put forward by Oxford (1990): Memory category,

Cognitive category, Compensation category, Metacognitive category, Affective category, and Social category (see details about these categories in Chapter 2). According to the summarized descriptive statistics, Thai university students used various learning strategies in each category. Table 4.1 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, minimum scores, and maximum scores on each language learning strategy. In this case, the mean scores and standard deviations were interpreted from the 80 items of the SILL ranging from 1 to 5 representing the degree of learning strategies used by Thai students, ranking from never or almost never true, generally not true, sometimes true, generally true, always or almost always true, respectively.

Table 4.1: Overall Learning Strategy Category Used by Thai University Students

Rank	Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
1	Compensation	3.67	0.55	1.63	4.75
2	Cognitive	3.31	0.54	1.64	4.32
3	Metacognitive	3.24	0.68	1.50	4.81
4	Social	3.21	0.69	1.44	4.78
5	Affective	3.07	0.70	1.43	4.71
6	Memory	2.75	0.54	1.33	4.00
	Average	**3.19**	**0.48**	**1.80**	**4.23**

N = 84

An examination of the mean scores in Table 4.1 shows that the average use of language learning strategy category among Thai students was 3.19. The mean score of using learning strategy categories ranked from 2.75 to 3.67. The following criteria, as articulated by Oxford (1990), were used for evaluating the degree of strategy use frequency. That is, 1.0 to 2.49 signifies low frequency use, 2.5 to 3.49 means moderate frequency use, and 3.5 to 5.0 represents high frequency use. Therefore, the average use of language learning strategies among Thai students is considered to be moderate. Moreover, as can be seen from the table, Compensation category is the

most commonly used strategy, while Memory is the least used category among the six categories of language learning strategies.

The results are in accordance with previous research conducted by Mullins (1992) on Thai university students and a recent study by Baker and Boonkit (2004) on reading and writing strategies of Thai university students, which revealed three categories of the six learning strategies: Compensation, Cognitive, and Metacognitive being used more than the others. Also, the results partly confirm Peacock's (2001) study revealing that Asian university EFL learners using cognitive and compensation categories more than the others. Therefore, the consistency of these results illuminates the importance of these three strategy categories for Thai EFL learners.

In terms of direct and indirect strategies, as defined by Oxford (1990), direct strategies consist of Memory, Cognitive, and Compensation strategies, while indirect strategies comprise Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies (see Chapter 2 for details). The findings showed that Thai students reported using direct strategies (M=3.24) more than indirect strategies (M=3.17). In other words, their common denominator lies in their involving directly the target language. One explanation is that, as shown in Chapter 2, since English education in Thailand had a long history in developing English curriculum, Thais had experienced the use of grammar traditional method and audio lingual method in learning English in the past. Communicative approach was just promoted in learning English in Thailand in 1996 (กรมวิชาการ, กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ, 2539). Thus, Thais are probably familiar with traditional approach which was deep-rooted more than communicative language teaching in English instruction.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that Thai university students variably used each of the six strategies as shown by their mean scores. The reported average score

of overall strategy categories indicates that Thai students moderately use learning strategies across all categories. However, as for the individual strategy in each category, a number of interesting results were found. Therefore, the following section presents the results of the analysis of the use of individual strategy.

4.2 Frequencies of the Use of Individual Category

In order to obtain further insights into strategy use in each category, this section reports the results based on the findings from the SILL, and the data from the interviews with 8 informants selected from all 84 Thai participants as described in Chapter 3. For the interviews, these 8 informants were chosen to represent both highly-motivated and lowly-motivated students based on their responses to the question no. 12 ("Why do you want to study English?") (see 3.3.2 for selected criteria). They comprised 3 second-year students—2 females and 1 male, and 4 first-year students—2 of each gender. The interviews were guided by a series of questions devised to support information on each of the six major categories of strategies covered in the SILL (see Appendix C).

The following sections present the findings from the analysis in order of the preference from the most to the least used strategy categories. It should be noted that the individual strategy under each category were also ranked from the most to the least used strategies based on their mean scores.

4.2.1 Compensation Strategies

With respect to *Compensation Strategies* **(Questionnaire items 41 to 48)**, it can be seen, as shown in Table 4.2, that the strategy no. 41, *"Guessing meanings of unfamiliar words"*, followed by the strategy no. 46 *"Using circumlocutions or*

synonyms", and the strategy no. 45, *"Asking others for word if they are stuck"*, are the three most preferred learning strategies used by Thai university students, respectively.

Table 4.2: Overall Reported Compensation Strategy Used by Thai Students

Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	S.D.
41	Guessing meanings of unfamiliar words	4.19	0.96
46	Using circumlocutions or synonyms	4.19	0.92
45	Asking others for word if they are stuck	3.81	0.94
44	Using gestures or own langauge when they are stuck	3.73	1.07
42	Reading without looking up all new words	3.57	1.13
43	Anticipating what person will say	3.57	0.84
47	Inventing new words when they are stuck	3.29	1.02
48	Changing to a topic which they know words	3.01	1.02
	Average	**3.67**	**0.55**

Meanwhile, the strategy no. 48, *"Changing to a topic which they know words"* is regarded the least frequently used strategy, followed by the strategy no. 47, *"Inventing new words when they are stuck"*, and the strategy no. 43, *"Anticipating what person will say"*. In this case, it can be seen that the mean scores of each strategy tend to be high, reflecting that compensation category is the most preferred strategy category among the six learning strategy categories. The results from Table 4.2 are also evident in the students' responses from the interviews reflecting how Thai students perceive the importance of using context clues when they do not understand the words they heard or read. The following presents the results from the interviews[1].

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[1] T1 to T5 represents highly-motivated Thai students, and T6 to T8 represents lowly-motivated Thai students. The responses form the interviews were translated form Thai into English by the researcher. They were, then, submitted to the experts in English for corrections.

(1)   *If I don't understand the word when I'm reading or hearing,*
       I will try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by considering
       the clues and context.   *[T1]*

(2)   *I will use the contexts and notice from the gestures of*
       the speakers e.g., pointing and intonation to understand what
       it means.   *[T5]*

Therefore, it can be seen that guessing meanings of English words from the contexts and using circumlocutions during communication are the important compensation strategies that the Thai students tend to use frequently. The responses from the interviews (3) to (8), moreover, illustrate most of the informants preferred looking up the words in the dictionary when they do not understand the meaning of English words when learning English.

(3)   *I use context clues to guess and to understand the meaning*
       of unknown words. Also, I look up in the dictionary, or ask my
       friends.   *[T2]*

(4)   *When I don't understand the word I read or hear, I will write*
       it down in my vocabulary notebook and look it up later in
       the dictionary.   *[T3]*

(5)   *I usually look up in the dictionary or ask my friends*
       when I don't understand or think English words to write.
       Sometimes, I will search that word from the Internet.   *[T4]*

(6)   *When I don't understand what my teacher is talking about,*
       I always look up the unknown words in my electronic dictionary.
       Sometimes, I ask my friends too.   *[T6]*

(7)   *Look up that word in the dictionary and find the meanings*
       that I think it is right and suitable to use.   *[T7]*

(8)   *I will consult my friends, look up dictionary, or ask*
       my teacher, or even someone who know better than me.   *[T8]*

4.2.2 Cognitive Strategies

As for *Cognitive Strategies* **(Questionnaire items 16 to 40)**, of all twenty-five items of Cognitive strategies, no. 31, *"Using glossaries or dictionaries for help"* is the most popular strategy used by Thai students. In this case, it seems that this strategy is typical of these particular students because it is substantiated by the responses from the interviews (9) to (11).

(9)   *Dictionary is a tool I can trust when using English words.* *[T1]*

(10)   *I use dictionary both paper dictionary and talking*
           dictionary when finding out the word and its meaning.   *[T2]*

(11)   *I think the quickest way to know the exact meaning*
           of English word is to look up dictionary.   *[T7]*

At this point, it is noteworthy that the interview data (9) to (11) above highlighting the importance of using dictionary as a tool in learning English for this group of students repeat the responses from the interview (3) to (9) in Compensation strategies. This raises an intriguing question in terms of what borderline between the use of Compensation and Cognitive strategies of Thai students is. The answer to this question is probably from the SILL questionnaire itself that cannot cover or list all learning strategies used in learning a language. This point should be taken into consideration in conducting future research with respect to the instrument.

The other two most frequently used strategies are the strategy no. 29, *"Skimming then reading carefully"*, followed by the strategy no. 37, *"Trying not to translate word-by-word"*. In sharp contrast, as shown in Table 4.3, the three least strategies used by Thai students are: the strategy no. 26, *"Attending events in which English is spoken"*, followed by the strategy no. 21, *"Using idioms or other routines"*, and the strategy no. 33, *"Making summaries of English materials"*. The

results regarding the reported use of cognitive strategies by Thai students are summarized in the following table.

Table 4.3: Overall Reported Cognitive Strategy Used by Thai Students.

Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	S.D.
31	Using glossaries or dictionaries for help	4.10	1.18
29	Skimming then reading carefully	3.68	0.98
37	Trying not to translate word-by-word	3.67	1.12
24	Watching TV, movies, or listening to the radio in English	3.64	1.21
18	Reading dialogue several times until I understand	3.62	0.89
17	Imitating the way native speakers talk	3.60	1.09
38	Trying not to transfer words or concepts from own language	3.57	0.97
40	Developing own understanding of English	3.44	1.00
25	Trying to think in English	3.39	1.33
35	Finding meanings by dividing word into parts	3.37	1.00
19	Revising English written work to improve writing	3.35	1.10
39	Looking for patterns in English	3.31	1.01
20	Practicing English sounds or alphabet	3.29	1.02
36	Seeking similarities or contrasts between Englsih and own langauge	3.29	1.18
30	Seeking specific details in what heard or read	3.27	0.87
27	Reading for pleasure in English	3.25	1.12
22	Using familiar words in different ways	3.19	0.98
32	Taking class notes in English	3.18	1.08
28	Writing personal notes, messages, etc.in English	3.14	1.11
34	Applying general rules to new situations	3.12	0.97
23	Initiating conversations in English	3.05	1.02
16	Saying or writing new expressions repeatedly	3.02	1.10
33	Making summaries of English materials	2.86	1.00
21	Using idioms or other routines	2.85	0.92
26	Attending events in which English is spoken	2.65	0.98
	Average	3.31	0.54

The responses from the interviews also illustrated that Thai university students did not like taking notes or summarizing English lessons in English. Most of the informants stated that they preferred taking notes in Thai, while some of the informants reported sometimes taking notes in English, using English words from instructions.

(12)   *Yes, I always take notes in English.*   *[T1]*

(13)   *I will take notes in English as much as possible when*
         my teacher are teaching. But I will use the words from her
         (the teacher) instruction in my note-taking.   *[T2]*

(14)   *I seldom think or summarize in English even though in class*
         where my teacher will teach me in English.   *[T3]*

(15)   *No, I usually think and summarize in Thai but sometimes*
         I will take notes or summarize in English.   *[T4]*

(16)   *It depends. If I can follow or catch the words that my*
         teacher uses, I will use that words too. But if I get lost, I will write or
         take notes in Thai.   *[T5]*

(17)   *I take notes both in Thai and English.*   *[T6]*

(18)   *No, I always take notes in Thai.*   *[T7]*

(19)   *I never take notes in English. I think I can write in Thai faster*
         than English.   *[T8]*

In this case, the responses from the interviews above substantiate the findings in Table 4.3, indicating that *"Making summaries of English materials"* is one of the cognitive strategies that Thai infrequently used. It is very surprising that Thai students seldom used this strategy even though they are expected to be exposed to English when studying English in class. At this point it can be said, from the interviews' responses (13) to (19) that even though they take notes in English, they will use the words their teachers use in the instruction, not in their own words.

4.2.3 Metacognitive Strategies

For *Metacognitive Strategies* **(Questionnaire items 49 to 64)**, as Table 4.4 shows, the three strategies were frequently used strategies. They are: the strategy no. 63, *"Learning from own mistakes"*, followed by the strategy no. 51, *"Paying special attention to specific English aspects"*, and the strategy no. 62, *"Noticing language errors and finding out why"*.

Table 4.4: Overall Reported Metacognitive Strategy Used by Thai Students

Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	S.D.
63	Learning from own mistakes	3.81	1.08
51	Paying special attention to specific English aspects	3.80	1.11
62	Noticing language errors and finding out why	3.65	1.01
50	Playing attention when someone is speaking	3.61	1.08
52	Trying to find out about English learning	3.46	1.11
54	Arranging physical space to help learning	3.32	1.10
60	Trying to find ways to practice English	3.31	1.05
56	Having clear goals for learning English	3.25	1.35
59	Identifing purposes of language activities	3.20	0.94
64	Evaluating the general progress	3.19	1.01
49	Previewing lessons to get a general idea	3.11	1.08
58	Analyzing task type and own skills for task	3.01	1.09
61	Finding people to talk to in English.	2.93	1.20
55	Organizing language information in English notebook	2.86	1.09
53	Planning schedule to have time to study	2.82	1.11
57	Planning learning objectives each week	2.50	1.15
	Average	**3.24**	**0.68**

On the other hand, the strategy no. 57, *"Planning learning objectives each week"*, followed by the strategy no. 53, *"Planning schedule to have time to study"*, and the strategy no. 55, *"Organizing language information in English notebook"*

were three strategies that Thai students used least, respectively. Given that strategy no. 57 is the least used strategy, the finding is very interesting in the sense that a majority of the Thai undergraduates did not plan or set their English lessons each day or each week. In this case, it should be noted that planning for a language task, setting goals and objectives, and considering the purpose can help learners to arrange and plan their language learning in an efficient and effective way (Oxford, 1990). However, in order to support this finding, the researcher further asked the informants the question *"How do you prepare yourself before attending English classes?"*. Three of them responded that they usually did not prepare themselves before class.

(20)   *I hardly prepare myself before learning English. I don't
         have much time because I have a lot of assignments to do.*   *[T1]*

(21)   *Sometimes, I don't know what Ajarn is talking about because
         I don't finish the readings before coming to class.*   *[T6]*

(22)   *Always, I go and jump in class without reading the
         lesson first.*   *[T8]*

Differently, five of them responded that they read their textbook and did their homework before attending English classes.

(23)   *I prepare to read and study the contents which I'm
         going to study by myself.*   *[T2]*

(24)   *I read the textbook, especially for English classes. I hope that
         this way I will understand more what I'm going to learn about.*   *[T3]*

(25)   *I read and look up the meanings of new vocabulary
         before class because I'm afraid I will not understand and
         catch up with friends in my class.*   *[T4]*

(26)   *I will try to finish my homework and readings for the
         the next class. However, I can do it sometimes.*   *[T5]*

(27)   *Do homework! I do my homework only.*   *[T7]*

4.2.4 Social Strategies

In terms of *Social Strategies* (**Questionnaire items 72 to 80**), as shown in Table 4.5, the strategy no. 72, *"Asking speakers to slow down, repeat, or clarify what was said"* was reported the most frequently used strategy by Thai students.

Table 4.5: Overall Reported Social Strategy Used by Thai Students

Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	S.D.
72	Asking speakers to slow down, repeat, or clarify what was said	3.75	1.15
80	Paying attention to speakers' feelings	3.54	1.02
77	Asking for help when talking with native speakers	3.27	1.06
73	Asking others to correct English or comprehension	3.25	1.04
74	Asking other people to correct pronunciation	3.15	1.17
79	Trying to develop culture understanding	3.13	1.16
78	Asking questions to maintain dialogue	3.07	1.00
75	Practicing with other students	2.92	1.18
76	Having a regular English learning partner	2.90	1.26
Average		**3.21**	**0.88**

The finding is not surprising that Thai students tend to use this strategy most as the responses from the interviews reflect the idea that when most of Thai students talk with a native speaker and have problems in communication or speaking, they might ask for help from their listener.

(28)   *I will guess from some words that I can clearly listen to and*
         understand. However, if I do not really understand what he
         is talking about, I will ask them to say that again.   *[T1]*

(29)   *I think they will try to understand what I said. But if*
         I don't understand what they are talking about or don't hear clearly,
         I will ask them to say that again.   *[T2]*

(30)   *When I don't understand something he is talking about*
         I try to listen more carefully, and sometime I asked him to explain
         it to me one more time.   *[T3]*

(31)   *I always ask them to speak slowly or even to say again*

            if I don't understand.   *[T4]*

(32)   *Sometimes, if I don't understand what they mean, I just keep*

            quite because I don't know what they are saying and they will

            ask me again.   *[T5]*

(33)   *Surely, I will ask them to say again if I don't understand*   *[T6]*

(34)   *I will say, "Pardon, sorry, or again please"*   *[T7]*

(35)   *Because my English is not so good, I try to listen very*

            carefully to what he is saying.   *[T8]*

The other two strategies that Thai students tended to use most are the strategy

no. 80, *"Paying attention to speakers' feelings"*, and the strategy no. 77, *"Asking for*

help when talking with native speakers". Based on these findings, it might be said

that Thai students pay attention to the feelings of the people, including the preference

for talking to native speakers. This is because, when the researcher asked the

informants the question concerning the pronunciation *"If you have a chance to speak*

English with the native speakers, do you ask them to correct your English or your

pronunciation?", the responses from the interviews also confirm that most Thai

university students do care for the pronunciation as illustrated:

(36)   *I rarely ask them to correct my English but I think*

            it is a good opportunity to speak English like native speakers

            because it can help me a lot to use the correct English pattern.   *[T2]*

(37)   *I think if I ask them to correct my English, my English will*

            be better. So, if I have a chance to do so, I will try.   *[T4]*

(38)   *I like to speak English with the native speakers and I want*

            them to correct my English.   *[T7]*

(39)   *I like speaking English with native speakers since they will*

pronounce in the right way but I don't care how their accent is

since accent doesn't count but pronunciation does. Hardly do I

ask them to correct my pronunciation or accent because

I really know that most native speakers always correct words or

pronunciation while I use the wrong pronunciation.   *[T1]*

Moreover, some of the students reported that they have never asked the native speakers to correct their pronunciation as reflected by the following responses:

(40)   *No, I never ask them to correct my pronunciation*

but I'm pleased if they do.   *[T3]*

(41)   *I don't want native speakers to correct my pronunciation.* *[T5]*

(42)   *No, I never do that.*   *[T8]*

In addition, Table 4.5 shows the three strategies were used least by the Thai university students. They are: the strategy no. 76, *"Having a regular English learning partner"*, followed by the strategy no. 75, *"Practicing with other students"*, and the strategy no. 78, *"Asking questions to maintain dialogue"*. According to Wharton (2000), most of successful learner will use these strategies to reach communicative competence. Also, asking question, cooperating with native speakers, cooperating with peers, and becoming culturally aware powerfully aid sociolinguistic competence. These strategies, therefore, should be substantially promoted to Thai students.

4.2.5 Affective Strategies

With respect to *Affective Strategies* (**Questionnaire items 65 to 71**), as Table 4.6 shows, most students engaged in active use of strategy no. 65, *"Trying to relax whenever anxious"*, followed by the strategy no. 67, *"Encouraging self to take wise risks"*, and the strategy no. 66, *"Encouraging self to try harder"*.

Table 4.6: Overall Reported Affective Strategy Used by Thai Students

Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	S.D.
65	Trying to relax when anxious	3.73	1.18
67	Encouraging self to take wise risks	3.60	1.10
66	Encouraging self to try harder	3.39	1.13
71	Talking to someone about attitudes and feelings	3.14	1.33
69	Noticing when tense or nervous	2.87	1.03
68	Rewarding self for doing well	2.81	1.22
70	Recording feelings in learning diaries	1.95	1.14
	Average	**3.07**	**0.70**

The finding indicates that Thai students will try to relax when they feel anxious about using or learning English. This finding is substantiated by the interview data in which most of the informants reported trying to relax by several means when they are tired of learning English.

(43)   *I quit the class or stop doing my homework.*   [T1]

(44)   *When I have stress, I try to calm down and speak to myself "not to be stressed". Then I will ask someone such as teachers and my close friends to explain what I don't understand.*   [T2]

(45)   *When I'm tired of learning or reading English, I listen to my favorite music and get enough sound sleep.*   [T3]

(46)   *I will stop learning suddenly and take a nap to relax.*   [T4]

(47)   *I will stop learning unconditionally if I am stressed. And I will try to relax.*   [T5]

(48)   *I will sleep. And sometimes, I will turn to do another thing instead and then back to study again when I get ready.*   [T6]

(49)   *Sleep, sleep only!*   [T7]

(50)   *I quit and sleep!*   [T8]

Interestingly, from the table, most of the Thai students reported that they rarely used the strategy no.70, *"Recording feelings in learning diaries"*. This finding

reflects that Thai students are not familiar with writing diary or journal to express their feelings about learning English as this practice belongs to western culture. The other two least strategies used by these students are the strategy no. 68, *"Rewarding self for doing well"*, followed by the strategy no. 69, *"Noticing when tense or nervous"*.

4.2.6 Memory Strategies

With regard to *Memory Strategies* **(Questionnaire items 1 to 15)**, it was found that the most preferred strategy for Thai university students was the strategy no. 7, *"Visualizing the spelling of new English words"*, followed by the strategy no. 1, *"Connecting new materials with already known"*, and the strategy no. 10, *"Connecting words and their location"*.

In sharp contrast, it was found that Thai university students were relatively inexperienced in the strategy no. 11, *"Using flashcards to remember new English words"*, followed by the strategy no. 9, *"Connecting known words related to new English words"*, and the strategy no. 5, *"Using rhyming to remember words"*. All of the results concerning the reported used of memory strategies by Thai students are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Overall Reported Memory Strategy Used by Thai Students.

Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	S.D.
7	Visualizing the spelling of new English words	3.52	1.05
1	Connecting new materials with already known	3.32	0.96
10	Connecting words and their location (e.g., on page)	3.21	1.16
8	Using sounds and images to remember the English words	3.10	1.09
2	Putting new English words in a sentence to remember it	2.96	0.96
3	Placing new English words in group with similar words	2.93	0.97
6	Connecting words with images or pictures	2.88	1.29
13	Reviewing often	2.79	1.02
15	Refreshing memory of things learned earlier	2.75	0.98
4	Connecting word sounds with known word sounds	2.65	1.11
12	Acting out physically new English words	2.52	1.22
14	Scheduling regular review sessions	2.31	1.01
5	Using rhyming to remember words	2.19	1.17
9	Connecting known words related to new English words	2.12	1.05
11	Using flashcards to remember new English words	1.96	1.21
	Average	**2.75**	**0.54**

Furthermore, the data from the interviews revealed the use of other memory strategies such as *"learning by heart"* and *"using mnemonics, poem, context, or a sentence to help remember new English vocabulary"* in memorizing the new English words, as shown by the interview responses below:

(51)   *After I get a new English word, I try to recite it as much as possible until I think I can remember it in my mind.*   *[T1]*

(52)   *When I want to memorize new English words, I will use the context in which it usually occurs. And I always recite it to add it in my memory.*   *[T2]*

(53)   *I always learn by heart when I would like to memorize the new English words I have learned or heard from the class. This is a technique I like to use most.*   *[T6]*

Some of the informants stated in the interviews that *"synonym and part of speech"* was another strategy or technique used to memorize the new English words. This finding was substantiated by the following responses:

(54)   *I try to look at similarities in the meaning and group them in my head. After that I will learn them by heart.*   *[T3]*

(55)   *When I memorize the new English words in my mind, I will think of their meanings so that I will group them into the synonyms I have in my head.*   *[T4]*

(56)   *I will memorize the context together with the new English words that come together. And I will try to divide them into smaller units and try to understand the meaning in each part.*   *[T5]*

(57)   *I always recite the new English word together with its part of speech to make it easy when I put or use it in a sentence.*   *[T7]*

Interestingly, only one informant reported:

(58)   *I will consider its meaning by memorizing it as a picture or mental image.*   *[T8]*

As can be seen from the above responses, it cannot be denied that memory strategies are one of the strategies Thai students use when learning English, especially in memorizing the new English words even though those memory strategies are part of the category which was ranked last among the six categories of language learning strategies.

Conclusion

In the present study, it was found that Thai EFL students preferred compensation category most, followed by Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social, and Affective categories. The least preferred strategy was Memory category. Meanwhile, the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews shed some light on the

importance of each strategy used in learning English. That is, most of the responses from the interviews reflect and strengthen the data elicited by the SILL. In this case, the results from the interviews are vital. Moreover, the results are in line with the previous research conducted by Baker and Boonkit (2004) and Mullins (1992). Their studies indicate that most of the Thai students prefer using Compensation, Cognitive, and Metacognitive strategy categories, which are considered the learning strategies supporting successful language learning (Oxford, 1990).

With regard to individual strategies, Thai students preferred to guess meanings of unfamiliar words, and use circumlocutions or synonyms most (M=4.19), while they infrequently recorded feelings in learning diaries (M=1.95), and used flashcards to memorize new English words (M=1.96). Moreover, Thai students tended to visualize the spelling of a new English word and learn from their own mistakes. In conversation, they would ask speakers to slow down, repeat or clarify words that they did not understand. In addition, if learning English became stressful for Thai students, they would try to relax by sleeping or listening to music.