

CHAPTER 7

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CHOICES OF LANGAGUE LEANRING STRATEGIES

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the choices of language learning strategies and three variables: gender, motivation, and experience in studying English. This chapter presents the results of the analysis using t-test through means, standard deviations, and the significant difference, including the discussion. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Firstly, the use of the six categories of language learning strategies by gender is presented. Then, the highly-motivated and lowly-motivated students' usage of the six strategy categories is identified. Lastly, the use of the six categories of language learning strategies by students experienced in studying English in international schools and/or programs and by students inexperienced in those is presented.

7.1 Gender

In order to test whether there was the relationship between gender and the use of the six categories of language learning strategies used by Thai and Vietnamese students, the data of the two groups of students on the SILL, as classified based on gender were analyzed (see Chapter 3 for details). The following sections present the comparison of the results of the analysis within each group, and across groups of the two nationality students based on gender difference.

7.1.1 Comparison of Strategy Categories by Gender within Group

For both Thai and Vietnamese students, after the data elicited by the SILL were analyzed according to gender, a number of intriguing points were found. The results of the choices of strategies by gender among the two groups of students are presented in the following table.

Table 7.1: Variation in Use of Strategy Category by Gender within Group

Strategy Category	Thai Students			Vietnamese Students		
	Males (N=26) Mean (SD)	Females (N=58) Mean (SD)	Sig.	Males (N=24) Mean (SD)	Females (N=28) Mean (SD)	Sig.
Memory	2.86 (0.43)	2.70 (0.58)	0.21	3.05 (0.44)	3.09 (0.59)	0.80
Cognitive	3.50 (0.39)	3.23 (0.58)	0.03*	3.28 (0.45)	3.31 (0.69)	0.86
Compensation	3.72 (0.46)	3.65 (0.59)	0.55	3.53 (0.51)	3.65 (0.60)	0.45
Metacognitive	3.31 (0.59)	3.21 (0.72)	0.56	3.53 (0.47)	3.48 (0.64)	0.79
Affective	3.09 (0.70)	3.06 (0.70)	0.84	3.56 (0.49)	3.36 (0.74)	0.98
Social	3.23 (0.66)	3.21 (0.71)	0.89	3.56 (0.55)	3.54 (0.68)	0.91
Average	3.29 (0.53)	3.18 (0.65)	0.51	3.42 (0.49)	3.40 (0.59)	0.80

* $P < 0.05$.

Table 7.1 shows the results of the use of language learning strategies when Thai and Vietnamese students were grouped by gender—26 males and 58 females for Thai students and 24 males and 28 females for Vietnamese students. For Thai students, as shown in the table, there was no statistically significant difference in the overall use of strategy categories between male and female except Cognitive category ($p = 0.03$), with males reporting higher use of cognitive category than females. For Vietnamese students, Table 7.1 also illustrates there was no statistically significant

difference in all of the six categories of language learning strategies used by Vietnamese male and female students.

The results of the comparison are not consistent with several studies (e.g., Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Ma, 1999; Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito, & Sumrall, 1993) reporting that female students made a significant gender differences. As shown in the literature, it is evident that gender difference is a gray area in many research studies. There is no clear-cut answer about which gender use a wider range of learning strategies in learning a language. Furthermore, controversial results still exist among the studies. One possible explanation for this line is that there may be something beyond gender issue that has an influence on learning strategies' choice. Given that "*humans are seen as being motivated by a complex set of interrelated factors. These factors can change through time, thereby creating a picture of motivation that is not constant.*" (Oxford, 1996: 81). Therefore, other factors that influence an individual' s learning may be party represented by age, attitudes toward learning, expectancy, interest, and needs, which can ebb and flow throughout an individual's lifetime. Obviously, if this is the case, such factors cannot be controlled in the present study.

7.1.2 Comparison of Strategy Categories by Gender across Groups

The further analysis is to find out whether there was the relationship between the choices of language learning strategies used by the same gender across nationalities. The following table of 7.2 presents the comparison of the use of language strategies made by Thai and Vietnamese by Gender.

Table 7.2: Variation in Use of Strategy Category by Gender across nationalities

Strategy Category	Males		F	Sig.	Females		F	Sig.
	Thai (N=26)	Vietnamese (N=24)			Thai (N=58)	Vietnamese (N=28)		
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Memory	2.86 (0.43)	3.05 (0.44)	0.50	0.13	2.70 (0.58)	3.09 (0.59)	0.02	0.01*
Cognitive	3.50 (0.39)	3.28 (0.45)	0.01	0.06	3.23 (0.58)	3.31 (0.69)	0.97	0.56
Compensation	3.72 (0.46)	3.53 (0.51)	0.41	0.16	3.65 (0.59)	3.65 (0.60)	0.30	0.99
Metacognitive	3.31 (0.59)	3.53 (0.47)	1.94	0.16	3.21 (0.72)	3.48 (0.64)	0.10	0.10
Affective	3.09 (0.70)	3.56 (0.49)	5.58	0.13	3.06 (0.70)	3.36 (0.74)	0.69	0.07
Social	3.23 (0.66)	3.56 (0.55)	0.75	0.07	3.21 (0.71)	3.54 (0.68)	0.13	0.04*
Average	3.29 (0.54)	3.42 (0.49)	1.53	0.12	3.18 (0.65)	3.41 (0.66)	0.37	0.30

* $P < 0.05$.

The table indicates that the t-test shows no statistically significant difference in all of the six strategy categories, reflecting that both Thai and Vietnamese male students do not differ on the use of learning strategy. For female students, as shown in Table 7.2, the t-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of the six strategy categories except Memory and Social categories ($p=0.01$ and $p=0.04$, respectively). That is, Vietnamese female students reported significantly more use of such categories than Thai female students.

The results of the present study are in line with numerous studies confirming that gender differences were not one of the variables contributing to the differences in the choice of language learning strategies (Goh & Kwah, 1997; Gu, 2002; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Moshizuki, 1999; Wen & Wang, 1996). A possible explanation for this is that the gender balance of the participants, which cannot be controlled since all

questionnaires were distributed to a large number of students in order to meet the number of participants as expected.

In addition, it was found that, when compared across nationality, data analysis revealed the statistically significant differences in the use of Memory and Social categories between Thai and Vietnamese female students, with Vietnamese female students reporting higher use of such strategies than Thai female students. One explanation is that again since Vietnamese people have been influenced by Confucianism which was generated from Chinese culture (Canh, 1999), using memorization in learning English may be rooted in Vietnamese people's behaviour and thought. Moreover, in terms of the use of Social category, the finding may be explained by the fact that, since the communicative method is employed in classroom instruction, Vietnamese students use more this strategy category than Thai students.

7.2 Motivation

This section presents the use of the six categories of language learning strategies by Thai and Vietnamese students, as influenced by motivation. First, the results of the comparison on the basis of motivation and the use of strategy categories by each group of students are presented. Then, the results of those across group of students are identified.

7.2.1 Comparison of Strategy Categories by Motivation within Group

In order to determine the roles of motivation affecting the choices of language learning strategies, the SILL questionnaires completed by Thai and Vietnamese students were coded into two groups of students, highly-motivated and lowly-motivated students, particularly. In doing so, the responses to the question 12

(Why do you want to study English?) in the background questionnaire are used for classification the students. That is, the student who got the scores 15 points (60%) and above would be considered to be highly-motivated students, while 14 points and below would be classified as lowly-motivated students (see Chapter 3 for details of the criteria). From the 84 Thai students in total, 51 were classified as highly-motivated students and 33 were classified as lowly-motivated students. For Vietnamese students, 26 were highly-motivated students and 26 were lowly-motivated students. The difference in the use of six language learning strategy categories by highly-motivated and lowly-motivated Thai and Vietnamese students is shown in the following table.

Table 7.3: Variation in Use of Strategy Category by Motivation within Group

Strategy Category	Thai Students			Vietnamese Students		
	Highly (N=51) Mean (SD)	Lowly (N=33) Mean (SD)	Sig.	Highly (N=26) Mean (SD)	Lowly (N=26) Mean (SD)	Sig.
Memory	2.83 (0.52)	2.61 (0.56)	0.07	3.11 (0.59)	3.03 (0.44)	0.59
Cognitive	3.46 (0.50)	3.08 (0.52)	0.00*	3.41 (0.64)	3.18 (0.50)	0.17
Compensation	3.78 (0.57)	3.51 (0.47)	0.03*	3.50 (0.64)	3.68 (0.45)	0.25
Metacognitive	3.46 (0.63)	2.90 (0.62)	0.00*	3.68 (0.51)	3.32 (0.56)	0.02*
Affective	3.31 (0.60)	2.71 (0.68)	0.00*	3.41 (0.58)	3.31 (0.71)	0.56
Social	3.44 (0.69)	2.87 (0.53)	0.00*	3.65 (0.52)	3.44 (0.69)	0.22
Average	3.38 (0.59)	2.95 (0.56)	0.02*	3.46 (0.58)	3.33 (0.46)	0.30

* $P < 0.05$.

For Thai students, as shown in Table 7.3, the t-test shows that there are statistically significant differences in the use of language learning strategies in all of the six categories ($p < 0.05$) except Memory category. As for Vietnamese students, a

statistically significant difference was found only in the use of Metacognitive category ($P=0.02$). This finding indicates that overall the highly-motivated and lowly-motivated Vietnamese students are not different in the use of learning strategy categories except the use of Metacognitive category, with the highly-motivated students reporting higher use of Metacognitive category than the lowly-motivated students.

In conclusion, motivation is a significant factor contributing to the choices of language learning strategies, especially for highly-motivated Thai students. In sharp contrast, for Vietnamese students, motivation does not have a great influence on using learning strategies. In this case, it may be said that motivation is a significant factor for highly-motivated Thai students in learning English, which can cause action and effort to be put forth during the learning process. If this is the case, motivation may be a factor leading to the difference in English proficiency between the highly-motivated and lowly-motivated student group. Another explanation for the highly-motivated students' language learning strategies used by motivation is that they may have strong goals in learning English such as in order to complete course requirements and to study abroad, when compared to the lowly-motivated student group.

As opposed to Thai students, both highly-motivated and lowly-motivated Vietnamese groups may have a strong motivation in learning English as knowing English is imperative in Vietnamese society. Vietnamese people who can communicate in English will get a better job than those who cannot (Canh, 1999). Therefore, both groups of Vietnamese students may make an effort in learning equally in order to be accepted in workplaces when they graduate.

7.2.2 Comparison of Strategy Categories by Motivation across Groups

This section presents the results of the comparison of the use of the six categories of language learning strategies by the highly-motivated and lowly-motivated students across the two groups of Thai and Vietnamese students.

Table 7.4: Variation in Use of Strategy Category by Motivation across Nationalities

Strategy Category	Highly-Motivated		F	Sig.	Lowly-Motivated		F	Sig.
	Thai (N=51)	Vietnamese (N=26)			Thai (N=33)	Vietnamese (N=26)		
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Memory	2.83 (0.52)	3.11 (0.59)	0.38	0.01*	2.61 (0.56)	3.03 (0.44)	1.69	0.00*
Cognitive	3.46 (0.50)	3.41 (0.64)	1.66	0.96	3.08 (0.52)	3.18 (0.50)	0.37	0.44
Compensation	3.78 (0.57)	3.50 (0.64)	1.82	0.08	3.51 (0.47)	3.68 (0.45)	0.04	0.16
Metacognitive	3.46 (0.63)	3.68 (0.51)	0.72	0.13	2.90 (0.62)	3.32 (0.56)	0.27	0.01*
Affective	3.31 (0.60)	3.41 (0.58)	0.06	0.48	2.71 (0.68)	3.31 (0.71)	0.02	0.00*
Social	3.44 (0.69)	3.65 (0.52)	0.95	0.21	2.87 (0.53)	3.44 (0.69)	5.44	0.00*
Average	3.38 (0.59)	3.46 (0.58)	0.93	0.31	2.95 (0.56)	3.33 (0.46)	1.31	0.10

* $P < 0.05$.

Table 7.4 illustrates that the t-test results revealed that a statistically significant difference in the use of Memory category for the highly-motivated Vietnamese students over the highly-motivated Thai students ($p=0.01$). As for both lowly-motivated Thai and Vietnamese students, the statistically significant differences were found in the use of Memory, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social categories ($p < 0.05$). In other words, this finding indicates that lowly-motivated Thai and Vietnamese students are significantly different in using learning strategies in all of the six categories except Cognitive and Compensation categories.

In summary, it can be said that highly-motivated Thai and Vietnamese students are not significantly different in using the six categories of language learning

strategies except the use of Memory category. However, for lowly-motivated Thai and Vietnamese groups, they significantly differ in the use of language learning strategies, reflecting that lowly-motivated Vietnamese students use a wider variety of language learning strategies particularly Memory, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social categories than the lowly-motivated Thai students.

The results of the current study indicate that motivation is one of the factors that significantly contribute to the choices of the six categories of language learning strategies, particularly for the Vietnamese students. Therefore, nationality, again, has also an influence on the choices of language learning strategies. The results of this study are consistent with Mochizuki (1999) and Wharton (2000) who revealed motivation affected the learner's choices of strategies the most strongly of all the factors. Also, as mention earlier, the results confirm Oxford's (1996) conclusion, exerting that there are other factors, including culture and nationality that can influence on learning strategies' choice.

One possible explanation for the results of this study is that students enrolled at Chulalongkorn University and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi, Vietnam, typically have a strong instrumental motivation for learning English. This is because most of participants in this study, at the time of study, were learning English to advance their academic and professional lives. However, when considered as one group, it was found that overall most of lowly-motivated Vietnamese students, used more language learning strategies than the lowly-motivated Thai students. It is possible that Vietnamese language students have a stronger motivation in studying English than Thai students in general. More precisely, lowly-motivated Vietnamese students may be more interested and motivated, resulting in their endeavors to learn to fulfill their life in the future than lowly-motivated Thai group. Therefore, classroom

English teacher should highlight and put an emphasis on the importance of English, especially for lowly-motivated Thai student group.

7.3 Experience in Studying English

As one of the purposes of this study, the roles of experience in studying English affecting the choices of language learning strategies were determined. The following sections present the results of the examination of the comparison of the use of the six strategy categories both within group and across groups of Thai and Vietnamese students, respectively.

7.3.1 Comparison of Strategy Categories by Experience within Group

In determining the roles of experience in studying English affecting the choices of language learning strategies, all returned questionnaires were coded according to the responses on the question no. 13 (Experience in studying English:...) in the background questionnaire in order to classify the students into two groups of each country according to their experience: (1) students with additional experience from studying in a language center and/or going abroad in an English-speaking country but not more than 4 months and (2) students without additional experience from those (for details, see Chapter 3). After separated into group, 22 were experienced students and 62 were inexperienced students for Thai student group. For Vietnamese students, 30 were experienced students and 22 were inexperienced students. The results of the analysis of the use of language learning strategies in each of the six categories of each student group are presented in the following table.

Table 7.5: Variation in Use of Strategy Category by Experience within Group

Strategy Category	Thai Students			Vietnamese Students		
	with Additional Experience (N=22)	without Additional Experience (N=62)	Sig.	with Additional Experience (N=30)	without Additional Experience (N=22)	Sig.
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Memory	2.86 (0.48)	2.71 (0.56)	0.26	2.94 (0.47)	3.25 (0.45)	0.03*
Cognitive	3.52 (0.39)	3.23 (0.57)	0.03*	3.18 (0.58)	3.45 (0.56)	0.87
Compensation	3.82 (0.54)	3.62 (0.54)	0.14	3.51 (0.58)	3.70 (0.51)	0.23
Metacognitive	3.51 (0.65)	3.15 (0.67)	0.03*	3.43 (0.55)	3.60 (0.58)	0.30
Affective	3.25 (0.75)	3.01 (0.68)	0.17	3.26 (0.63)	3.49 (0.65)	0.20
Social	3.36 (0.60)	3.16 (0.71)	0.26	3.47 (0.62)	3.65 (0.61)	0.29
Average	3.39 (0.57)	3.15 (0.62)	0.15	3.30 (0.57)	3.52 (0.56)	0.32

* $P < 0.05$.

For Thai students, as shown in Table 7.5, two significant differences were identified in the use of Cognitive and Metacognitive categories ($p=0.03$). That is, Thai students who had additional experience in studying English in the language center and/or going abroad not more than 4 months used Cognitive and Metacognitive categories significantly more frequently than those who had no additional experience. For Vietnamese students, the t-test revealed that a statistical difference was found in the use of Memory category ($p=0.03$), with the students without additional experience reporting higher use of Memory category than the additional experienced student group.

In short, it can be said in this study Thai students experience in studying English has an effect on the choices of language learning strategies, particularly in the use of Cognitive and Metacognitive categories in learning English. Likewise, for

Vietnamese students, experience in studying English has a slight influence on the choices of language learning strategies because a statistically significant difference was found only in the use of Memory category.

It is noteworthy that the experience in studying English in this study refers to going abroad, particularly an English-speaking country, and learning from a language center. Therefore, one possible explanation for the significant use of Memory category of the students without additional experience is that strategies used in an English-speaking country may be mostly dealt with communicative strategies such as Social strategies—interacting with others, or asking for help, and Compensation strategies—guessing when the meaning is not known, or using synonyms or gestures to express meaning of an unknown word or expression more than other strategy categories. Moreover, in Grainger's (1997) study, English background students preferred to use Social and Metacognitive strategy categories most. Likewise, the preferred strategy for students of European background was also Social and Compensation categories. Therefore, students with additional background may be influenced by such strategies, and used less Memory category than those without additional background.

7.3.2 Comparison of Strategy Categories by Experience across Groups

In order to further explore the differences in using those strategy categories of the two groups of students of Thai and Vietnamese students, a comparison is made between students with additional experience of Thai and those of Vietnamese students, and students without additional experience of Thai and those of Vietnamese students, respectively. Table 7.6 illustrates the results of the comparison of the use of

language learning strategies in each of the six categories used by these two groups of Thai and Vietnamese students.

Table 7.6: Variation in Use of Strategy Category by Experience across nationalities

Strategy Category	<i>with Additional Experience</i>		F	Sig.	<i>without Additional Experience</i>		F	Sig.
	Thai (N=22)	Vietnamese (N=30)			Thai (N=62)	Vietnamese (N=22)		
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)			Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Memory	2.86 (0.48)	2.94 (0.47)	0.11	0.56	2.71 (0.56)	3.25 (0.54)	0.02	0.00*
Cognitive	3.52 (0.39)	3.18 (0.58)	1.53	0.02*	3.23 (0.57)	3.45 (0.56)	0.03	0.12*
Compensation	3.82 (0.54)	3.51 (0.58)	0.59	0.06*	3.62 (0.54)	3.70 (0.51)	0.00	0.53
Metacognitive	3.51 (0.65)	3.43 (0.55)	0.45	0.64	3.15 (0.67)	3.60 (0.58)	0.26	0.01*
Affective	3.25 (0.73)	3.26 (0.63)	0.81	0.94	3.01 (0.68)	3.49 (0.65)	0.03	0.01*
Social	3.36 (0.60)	3.47 (0.62)	0.07	0.53	3.16 (0.71)	3.65 (0.61)	0.18	0.01*
Average	3.39 (0.57)	3.29 (0.57)	0.58	0.46	3.15 (0.62)	3.52 (0.50)	0.08	0.11

* $P < 0.05$.

In terms of the experienced students, as shown in the table, the statistically significant differences in the use of Cognitive and Compensation categories were found between the Thai and Vietnamese students with additional experience, with the Thai students reported higher use of Cognitive and Compensation categories. Another comparison was made among the students without additional experience of the two groups of Thai and Vietnamese students. As Table 23 shows, these groups of Thai and Vietnamese students show differences in the use of the following language learning strategy categories: Memory, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social categories ($p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that the Vietnamese students without additional experience engaged in all strategy categories use more frequently than those of Thai students except Compensation category.

The results that experience in studying English has the significant main effect on the choices of the six categories of language learning strategies support those of Purdie and Oliver's (1999) study. The results of the present study is also congruent with Opper et al (1990) indicating that studying abroad had an influence on students' thought and learning style, especially in their actual ability in language learning.

For Thai students, it may be true that the students with additional experience group used language learning strategies in each category more than the students without additional experience. One explanation is that the students with additional experience may know and/or apply special learning strategies obtained from studying in a language center or going abroad in an English-speaking country where they can use English outside the classroom and in authentic situation. Moreover, they may have more opportunity than Vietnamese students with additional experience to practice Cognitive and Compensation strategy categories.

For Vietnamese students, nevertheless, the fact that the student group without additional experience employed the six categories of language learning strategies more than Thai students with additional experience is intriguing. One possible explanation is that Vietnamese students who recognize themselves less additional experienced in studying English, when compared to peers or counterparts, make efforts and their contribution to studying English. Taken together, they may try harder to push themselves because they determine to be successful in their life. As a result, this may reflect their use of language learning strategies, which they make use of all of the six categories except Compensation category more than the Thai students with additional experience.

Conclusion

This chapter reported the examination of the roles of three variables affecting the choices of language learning strategies made by both Thai and Vietnamese students. Gender difference is not an important factor for Vietnamese students. However, for Thai students, gender difference has an influence over the use of Cognitive category, with male students reporting higher use such strategy. Moreover, the t-test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the use of all of the six strategy categories between the Thai and Vietnamese male students. On the other hand, for female students, the statistically significant differences were found in the use of Memory and Social categories, with the Vietnamese female students making higher use of such strategy categories than the Thai female students.

With respect to motivation, the highly-motivated Thai students used the six strategy categories significantly more than the lowly-motivated Thai students except Memory category. For Vietnamese students, a statistically significant difference was found only in the use of Metacognitive category, with the highly-motivated students reporting higher use of such strategy category. Moreover, Thai and Vietnamese students are different in using Memory category only. However, the lowly-motivated Vietnamese students significantly used a wider variety of language learning strategies, particularly Memory, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social categories more than the lowly-motivated Thai students.

In addition to experience in studying English, for Thai students, experience in studying English has an effect on the choices of language learning strategies, particularly in the use of Cognitive and Metacognitive categories. Likewise, for Vietnamese students, experience in studying English has a slight influence on the use of Memory category. Moreover, it was found that the Thai experienced students

significantly used of Cognitive and Compensation categories than the Vietnamese experienced students. Meanwhile, the inexperienced groups of students make a significant difference in using all of the six strategy categories except Compensation category.