

# Context and Language Learning Strategies:

## Thai students' strategies within the realms of learning English and Indonesian

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**Abstract**—This study aimed at finding the learning strategies of Thai students within English and Indonesian during their study in Lampung, Indonesia. This study applied the descriptive quantitative design; the subjects were 13 female Thai students taking a bachelor's degree in Indonesia; and the instrument used was a variant of SILL. It was found that overall they used different strategies in learning the two languages in different contexts. The result also shows that there are significantly differences in language strategies used by the Thai students in learning English and Indonesian especially in Cognitive strategy and Social strategy when they learn in Indonesia. The results are discussed in light of the previous research findings in relevance to those of this study

**Keywords**—LLS; foreign language; second language; context

### I. INTRODUCTION

Learning strategy is normally regarded as the factor helping to ascertain how and how well a student learns a second language. The strategies in language learning are students' certain actions, steps, behaviors or techniques for augmenting the learning quality. The actions can be in form of seeking after conversation partners or encouraging oneself to bring a difficult language task under control [1]. Cohen and Chamot postulates that such strategies as second language ones are the steps or actions sorted out by learners in an attempt to take the learning to a better degree [2,3]. They serve as apparatuses for necessary active self-directed engagement for expanding communicative skill [4]. This type of learners consciously uses those strategies to magnify their progress in apprehending, internalizing and utilizing the target language. The strategies should not be considered to be single events since they absolutely are not. They are the results of creative sequences of actions a language learner actively takes. To put it another way, they share the same explicit aim which is serving the learners enough assistance with their target language amelioration [2].

Sundry studies have considerable contribution to the crystallization of the understanding about strategies which SL (Second Language)/FL (Foreign Language) learners apply, particularly at the adult level. Such studies demonstrate that the strategies change the learners' perceptions on their roles in the process and what they should do in order to make success in the learning. Nonetheless, the studies recommending teaching strategies create a wide room for debate right up to the present

owing to the act that LLS usage is influenced by a number of factors [5].

Current researches into language learning strategies were originated from the framework of the language learning strategies of successful (good) language learners. This kind of research can provide different points of view to conduct further research into the process of English learning and the application of language learning strategies and good language learners, Gerami and Baighlou found out that successful EFL students used a wider range of language learning strategies [7]. Besides, the study by Ghee et al. showed that successful students use LLS more than less successful students [8]. Similarly, a study by Green and Oxford investigated the learning strategies used by Puerto Rican university students and they found that the successful learners use learning strategies more frequently than less successful learners [9].

Since language is socially mediated and context dependent, it would be expected that learners' use of language learning strategies may vary with the context. In Iran, for instance, for the past three decades, due to a variety of social and political reasons, Iranian EFL learners have had little or no contact with native speakers of English. The use of Internet and other media, such as satellite TV, is neither widespread nor easily accessible to all language learners. Moreover, language teaching during high school years is mostly grammar-based with no attention paid to languages [10].

Some immersion programs are also available in Indonesia. Many foreign students are willing to study in Indonesia. Since most of all teacher or lecturer's explanation and instruction use Indonesian language, many foreign students will face some difficulties in studying. This case leads to the problems in optimizing the foreign students' achievements. Dealing with those problems, they will attempt to use some strategies in learning target language especially when they have to face two new different languages in the same time [11].

In relation to those previous research, Oxford sees the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative and competence [5], while according to Wardaugh, in this world, speaking more than one language is just a normal requirement of the daily life [12].

Referring to Oxford [5] and Wardaugh [12], therefore it is important to investigate studies exploring the language learning strategies used in the multilingualism environment. Based on the background of the problem above, the questions to be focused on are:

- What strategies are employed by Thai students in learning English?
- What strategies are employed by Thai students in learning Indonesian?
- What are the differences of language learning strategies used by Thai students in learning English and those in Indonesian?

The Purposes of this study are:

- to find out indepth information about strategies employed by Thai students in learning English,
- to find out indepth information about strategies employed by Thai students in learning Indonesian, and
- to find out indepth information about the differences between Thai students' strategies in learning English and those in learning Indonesian.

## II. METHOD

The subjects were 13 Thai university students, all female, who were studying in English Education Department of IAIN Raden Intan Lampung in the Academic Year of 2016/2017. The instrument was Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which was proposed by Oxford [5]. It comprises six categories: Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social Strategies. The questionnaire was both in English and Malay in order to shrink the possibility of the participants' misunderstanding on the questionnaire items, and its reliability was confirmed by calculating Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient (table 1). The data were then analyzed, to answer the first two research questions, by means basic statistic descriptive and, to answer the third question, by means of t-test.

TABLE I. INSTRUMENT RELIABILITY

No	Strategy Type	Items	Total	English	Indonesian
1	Memory	1-9	9	0.654	0.743
2	Cognitive	10-23	14	0.643	0.654
3	Compensation	24-29	6	0.639	0.349
4	Metacognitive	30-38	9	0.720	0.744
5	Affective	39-44	6	0.683	0.729
6	Social	45-50	6	0.701	0.763
	Overall	1-50	50	0.712	0.724

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Results

#### 1) Thai students' strategies in learning English

TABLE II. OVERALL MEAN SCORE OF THE STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Strategy	Item Number	Mean	Frequency
Memory	9	2.91	Medium
Cognitive	14	2.97	Medium
Compensation	6	2.76	Medium
Metacognitive	9	3.43	Medium
Affective	6	3.12	Medium
Social	6	2.68	Medium
Overall	50	2.99	Medium

Thai students' strategies in learning English in formal context are categorized as Medium, both in general and in every type of strategy (table 2). Based on table 2, although the usage levels based up on the strategy categories, in one way or another, differ from each other, all the means fell into the range of 2.68-3.43. It designates that the whole subjects applied all the strategies at the same level.

Another detail in table 1 brings the information that Metacognitive (M=3.43) is the one of the highest frequency in learning English. It is followed by Affective and Cognitive, with M= 3.12 and M= 2.97 respectively. The fourth is Memory (M= 2.91), while the two least frequently used ones are Compensation with M= 2.76 and Social with M= 2.68.

Based on these data, it can be inferred that the subjects used all strategies when they are learning English during their study in Indonesia. Nonetheless, not all the sub-strategies are represented by the general mean of the data.

#### 2) Thai students' strategies in learning Indonesian

TABLE III. OVERALL MEAN SCORE OF THE STRATEGIES IN LEARNING INDONESIAN

Strategy	Item Number	Mean	Frequency
Memory	9	3.26	Medium
Cognitive	14	3.47	Medium
Compensation	6	3.03	Medium
Metacognitive	9	3.68	High
Affective	6	3.18	Medium
Social	6	3.67	High
Overall	50	3.38	Medium

The result above provides the insight that Metacognitive Strategy and Social are the most frequently used strategies in learning Indonesian. They are followed by Cognitive, Memory, Affective, and Compensation Strategy.

Generally speaking, most of the strategies employed by the subjects in learning Bahasa Indonesia in informal context fall into the medium category (table 3), as far as frequency is concerned. Specifically speaking, there are two types categorized into high frequency, i.e. Metacognitive and Social, and the others fall into medium frequency (table 3). These results also lead to the finding that the students' overall strategy use is also of medium frequency.

3) *Strategies used in learning english and in learning Indonesian*: As a whole, it is safe to say that there are differences in terms of strategy usage frequency when they learn English and Indonesian respectively (table 4, figure 1).

TABLE IV. RESPECTIVE MEANS OF LLS USE IN LEARNING ENGLISH AND INDOONESIAN

English			Indonesian		
Strategy	Mean	Category	Strategy	Mean	Category
Memory	2.91	Medium	Memory	3.26	Medium
Cognitive	2.97	Medium	Cognitive	3.47	Medium
Compensation	2.76	Medium	Compensation	3.03	Medium
Metacognitive	3.43	Medium	Metacognitive	3.68	High
Affective	3.12	Medium	Affective	3.18	Medium
Social	2.68	Medium	Social	3.67	High
Mean	2.99	Medium	Mean	3.38	Medium

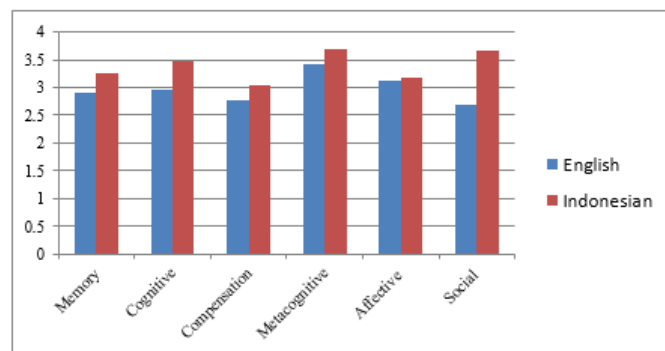


Fig. 1. Respective means of LLS use in learning English and Indonesian.

TABLE V. T-TEST

Strategy	English	Indonesian	Difference	Sig. Value	Interpretation
Memory	2.91	3.26	0.35	0.060	Not different
Cognitive	2.97	3.47	0.50	0.001	Different
Compensation	2.76	3.03	0.27	0.445	Not different
Metacognitive	3.43	3.68	0.25	0.206	Not different
Affective	3.12	3.18	0.06	0.761	Not different
Social	2.68	3.67	0.99	0.000	Different
Overall	2.99	3.38	0.39	0.000	Different

Table 5 illustrates that, as a whole, they used different strategies when they learn the two languages, —means 2.99 and 3.38, difference 0.39 and significance value 0.000. In addition, at the level of strategy types, it also has the implication that Cognitive and Social Strategies are statistically different, while the other four, i.e. Memory, Compensation, Metacognitive and Affective Strategies, are not.

All things being considered, it is a compelling fact that there is a statistically significant difference between Thai students' usage of language learning strategies in learning English and that in learning Indonesian in the realms of Cognitive and Social Strategies. It is worth highlighting that the differences among the usages of the other strategy types, i.e. Memory, Compensation, Metacognitive and Affective Strategies, cannot be statistically justified.

With all the results of the analyzed data in mind, it is safe to encapsulate that there are significant differences between Thai students' language strategy use frequencies in learning English and those in learning Indonesian, especially in the fields of Cognitive and Social Strategies.

## B. Discussion

The research result in relation to the categories proposed by Oxford leads to the realization that the Thai students chiefly used language learning strategies at the medium level in learning both English and Indonesian [5]. Additionally, the use of LLS in learning English was lower than that in learning the other one. The result also came up with the revelation that Thai students used different strategies when they learn both languages (English and Indonesian), especially in terms of Cognitive Strategy and Social Strategy.

The result of this study is in alignment with those conducted by other researchers. Suwanarak, also reported that Thai

students use the six types of strategies at the medium level which is higher than Vietnamese students [13]. Pannak and Chiramanee in his study also reveal the same result that the first year students at Thaksin University of Thailand used overall language learning strategies in medium use which is 3.13 [14]. Furthermore, Shmais also stated that the highest frequency used by Palestinian (English-major students) is metacognitive, the lowest is compensation and others are medium [15]. These facts give information that the participants in the current study seem to be relatively somehow sophisticated language learning strategy users, using all six categories of strategies at moderate levels. One possible explanation can be offered for this finding is that, these participants studied English in an EFL setting and did not need it for daily survival. Thus, it was not as urgent for them to use most kinds of strategies as it was for learners in an ESL setting [16].

In relation to the Thai students in this study, metacognitive was the most frequently used strategies in learning English and Indonesian. This strategy covers planning, monitoring and evaluating. Generally speaking, these strategies provide learners with some help to have control over their emotions and motivations in connection with Palestinian (English-major students) Palestinian (English-major students) the language learning via self-monitoring. Most of the participants of the current study reported that the strategies they used related to metacognitive strategies, such as planning on the schedules of their English study and having some evaluation on their mistakes. The high use of metacognitive strategies among Thai students in this study is similar to that observed among students from Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan, as reported in some of the studies, for examples [5,17]. On logical grounds, the connection of the recent trends in the Asian education system to this finding cannot be ruled out. Lately, instructors and students in non-Western countries shift rote learning requiring

memorization of actual knowledge into deeper approaches to learning requiring higher levels of skills, such as analysis, synthesis and instructional material evaluation [16].

The results of the social strategies used in learning English differed from those in learning Indonesian. In learning English, the strategy was the least frequently used one, while in learning Indonesian, it was almost the contrary. It was the second most frequently used one. This study accords with a few prior studies establishing the idea that social strategies is an unpopular strategy [18,19], since it reveals Thai students tend not to use social strategies in learning English. Yet, it is somewhat surprising since, according to the finding of this study, it is quite the antipodal case when it comes to learning Indonesian. This strategy is the second most frequently used in learning the language. It is plausible that the discrepancy is owing to the lack of English usage for daily communication in Indonesia. In other words, they have very limited English. In addition to this, English teaching focuses more on linguistics aspect, such as the formula of sentences and literal translation. During the learning process, the students do not use their critical thinking. Thus, less frequent use of social strategies is expected. In this study, the majority of the participants used social strategies in learning Indonesian, such as asking the other person to slow down or to repeat or clarify when they did not understand something in Indonesian, to compensate for the lack of meaningful language input.

According to Oxford, when the learners learn a new language, they mostly used cognitive strategies because these strategies work directly on incoming information. These facilitate learners to use all they have possessed of the language being learned. The participants of this study use medium use of cognitive strategies with a mean of 2,97 in English and 3,47 in Indonesian. The results of this study support other findings [20-22]. The findings of their research showed high use of cognitive strategies which is similar to the finding of this research. Some of the cognitive strategies that students reported using frequently in this research were taking notes, summarizing, practicing the sounds of English and Indonesian with mostly used mixed language.

It was found that memory strategies were a moderately frequently used type among the participants. The students applied the strategy the third most frequently both in learning English and Indonesian. In this case, this study is in contrast to the study of Oxford who regarded memory strategies as a powerful mental tool [5]. It also seems to be out of line with the widespread belief that Asian students like strategies involving memorization better than others. A likely explanation for this contradiction is that the rote memorization that Thai students are believed to prefer might differ from the specific memory techniques reported in the SILL. These techniques included making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used; using rhymes to remember new words; and connecting the sound of a new English and Indonesian word and an image of the word to help remember the word. In other words, the memory strategies considered effective involve an imaginative component as well as memory. It is the writers' conjecture that the participants of the present study were unfamiliar with the mnemonics or specific techniques to enhance their memory. For that reason, they used memory strategies less frequently.

Compared with the other strategy categories, compensation strategies were the least frequently used ones in learning Indonesian and the second in learning English among the participants. Compensation strategies are those which enable learners to make up for missing pieces of knowledge in the of the target language comprehension or production process. Not with standing that, the students were unwilling to apply compensation strategies (for instance, they did not use gestures when they encountered trouble in expressing what they had in mind in the language), neither did they make up new words to substitute for those they did not know. The finding that Taif University students employed compensation strategies less often contrasts with the findings of studies performed by [23,24], which showed that the compensation category was the highest ranking category. It is not unnatural for students to make much greater use of compensation strategies since it can allow them to guess the meaning of what they have heard or read or to stay on the right track of the conversation despite their limited grammatical and vocabulary knowledge. Nevertheless, the participants of the present study reported that they applied such strategies to guess, understand unfamiliar words or predict what the other person would say next, both in learning English and Indonesian. The students inclined to remain silent and shirk discussion which caused it to be difficult for them to communicate in the languages.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusions were drawn from the results and discussion of this study.

When Thai students learn Indonesian and English in Indonesia, they used language learning strategies in medium use in both English and Indonesian language. However, the use of LLS in English language is lower than the use of LLS in Indonesian. The result also shows that there are significantly differences in language strategies used by the Thai students in learning English and Indonesian especially in Cognitive strategy and Social strategy.

Related to the most frequently used strategies, both in English and Indonesian have same result which is metacognitive strategies. The result of social strategies differ in English and Indonesian language. In English learning, the social strategies was the least used strategies, while in Indonesian it was the second of the most used strategies. Thai students use social strategies frequently in Indonesian, it might be because in Indonesia, English is not used for communicative needs in their social and economic daily lives.

In order to support the teaching and learning process, English teachers had better be aware of the importance of students' language learning strategies and apply the teaching which accommodates students' differences so that the teachers are able to reach the ultimate goal they have set through the teaching learning process. The students should also be aware of the use of language learning strategies in order to optimize their learning achievements.

Meanwhile, for other researchers who want to carry out further research about the use of language learning strategies, it is suggested to be focused more on the students' external factors such as culture, religion, environment and other



external aspects influential in the students' choice of language learning strategies.

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