THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF INDIRECT LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AND CHINESE LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT IN READING AND WRITING AMONG STUDENTS IN YEARS 7 TO 10 AT ASCOT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine the use of indirect language learning strategies and the relationship between those strategies and Chinese academic achievement of year 7 to year 10 students who are learning Chinese as a foreign language at Ascot International School in Bangkok, Thailand. The study followed a quantitative research methodology utilizing two research instruments: the questionnaire of indirect learning strategies for Chinese learning and the unit quizzes of the IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) Chinese course. The study was carried out during the second term of academic year 2015-2016 with 91 respondents. The use of indirect learning strategies focused on the use of metacognitive, affective and social language strategies. The Chinese achievement focused on reading and writing achievement. The study resulted in the following main findings. Year 7 to year 10 students used at a high level both metacognitive and social strategies for their Chinese learning. They used affective strategies at a medium level. Also, the use of overall indirect learning strategies was medium. There was a positive significant relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies and Chinese achievement. There was no significant relationship between affective strategies and Chinese achievement. There was a positive significant relationship between the use of social strategies and Chinese achievement. There was a positive significant relationship found between the use of overall indirect learning strategies and Chinese achievement as well. Recommendations for Chinese teachers, students and future researchers are also provided in this study.

Keywords: Indirect Language Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies, Affective Strategies, Social Strategies, Chinese Achievement, Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language.

Introduction

Foreign language learning is a traditional subject to learners. Contemporary research of language learning strategies (LLS) started since the 1970s. At the beginning stage,

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the research focused on successful LLS. In the1980s, the main research field was more associated with psychological areas. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) divided language learning strategies into three categories, metacognitive, cognitive and social affective (Lee, 2010; Oxford, 2003).

Oxford (1990) classified strategies of foreign language learning into two main categories: direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies. Direct learning strategies include three aspects: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. Indirect learning strategies consist of three aspects: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Based on this theory, Oxford (1990) produced a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire-Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). SILL aims to investigate the use of foreign language learning strategies.

Appropriate language strategies play an essential role in learners' achievements and improved their language skills (Thompson & Rubin, 1996). Starting from Ascot International School academic year 2015-2016, Chinese has become the required IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) examination subject for all the year 11 students (Ascot International School, 2015). Therefore, secondary students (year 7 to year 10) need to acquire more understanding about their Chinese language learning strategies, in order to prepare for their IGCSE examination in year 10.

Objectives
There are two objectives:
1. To identify the use of indirect learning strategies, metacognitive, affective and social, for learning Chinese as a foreign language of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School
2. To determine if there is a relationship between the use of indirect learning strategies, metacognitive, affective and social, for learning Chinese as a foreign language and academic achievement in Chinese reading and writing of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School.

Literature Review

Language Learning Strategies
Bialystok (1978) noted that learning strategies represent available information which can be applied by learners to improve their learning competence. Wenden and Rubin (1987) described learning strategies as a variety of operations, plans and methods, which are used by learners for solving problems in their learning. Oxford (1990) argued that learning strategies are specific actions used by learners to make learning easier, more enjoyable and more self-directed. In the next decades, research of learning strategies was more deeply concerned with effective learning and autonomous learning (Schunk, 2005; Simons & Beukhof, 1987; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

The early research provided a strong foundation for classifying learning strategies in further research. In the 1980s, LLSs were simply classified into three categories: cognitive, metacognitive and social-affective (Brown & Palinscar, 1982;

O'Malley, Chamot, Kupper & Sabol, 1987). Oxford (1990) further divided LLSs into two main categories: direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies.

Oxford developed six categories of language learning strategies in the 1990s. The six categories were 1) memory strategies, 2) cognitive strategies, 3) compensation strategies, 4) metacognitive strategies, 5) affective strategies, and 6) social strategies. The six strategies were grouped into two main categories: direct LLSs and indirect LLSs (Oxford, 1990).

As Oxford (1990) indicated, direct learning strategies are a set of mental processes for learning, such as memory, cognitive and compensation strategies, which influenced and were involved in foreign language learning directly. Indirect learning strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Although indirect learning strategies are not involved directly in language learning, they can support direct learning strategies and manipulate language learning. The six groups of language learning strategies support and impact each other (Oxford, 1990).

Indirect learning strategies are subdivided into three subfields: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. All the strategies in this group are related to self-related learning, cooperative learning and autonomous learning (Kozmonová, 2008; Oxford, 2003).

Metacognitive Strategies
The main contents of this category focus on coordinating, centering or arranging learning. Metacognitive strategies include three items: centering learning; arranging and planning learning; evaluating learning (Oxford, 2003; Vlčková, Berger & Völkle, 2013).

Affective Strategies
Affective strategies are used to reduce the degree of negative emotional factors which can arise in language learning. For instance, under the item lowering learners' anxiety, there are a few strategies, such as using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, using music, or using laughter (Oxford, 2003; Vlčková et al., 2013; Kozmonová, 2008).

Social Strategies
Social strategies help to develop learners' cooperative skills and skills of social communication. Acquisition of these skills is an essential goal of language learning. Therefore, this set of strategies provides methods which language learners can apply in their daily lives (Oxford, 2003; Vlčková et al., 2013).

Conceptual Framework
The main purpose of this research was identify if there was a relationship between the use of indirect learning strategies (metacognitive, affective and social) for learning Chinese as a foreign language and students' achievements in Chinese language reading and writing among year 7 to year 10 students learning Chinese as a foreign language. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework.

(See Figure 1 on the next page)
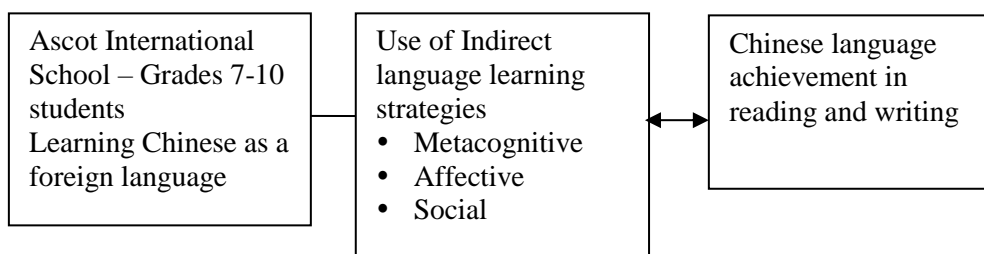
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Study

Method
This research was a correlational quantitative study that utilized two research instruments – a questionnaire and a Chinese language test.

Population
The population of this study was the students from year 7 to year 10 who are learning Chinese as a foreign language at Ascot International School in Bangkok, Thailand.

Sample
The sample group of this research was 91 students who are learning Chinese as a foreign language in year 7 to year 10 at Ascot International School in Bangkok, Thailand. The study was conducted in the second term of academic year of 2015-2016.

Instrument
The instrumentation of this study included two sections:
  a) the questionnaire of Indirect Learning Strategies for Chinese Learning;
  b) the unit quizzes of IGCSE Chinese examination course.
  The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning Questionnaire (SILL) was produced by Oxford (1990) .This is a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire which aims to investigate the use of foreign language learning strategies by learners. There are 50 items in total: 29 direct strategies and 21indirect learning strategies. This study only used indirect learning strategies' part. It consisted of 21 items: metacognitive-9 items, affective- 6 items and social- 6 items.

Validity and Reliability
The SILL has been used broadly in studies of foreign language learning, especially in English as a foreign language study. According to Lai (2005), the SILL has good predictive validity and is a highly reliable instrument to use for studies of foreign language learning strategies. Oxford (1999) reported the range of Cronbach alpha coefficients of internal consistency of the SILL questionnaire as .89 to .90 in English and the other language versions, such as Korean and Japanese. In addition, the SILL questionnaire has been used worldwide. By the end of the 1990s, the SILL questionnaire was translated into at least 17 languages, used by more than 9,000 students worldwide, and provided research data for more than 40 dissertations, theses,

and other studies. Therefore, the SILL has well documented reliability and validity (Oxford, 1999; Oxford, 2003).

The alpha values of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies performance utilized in the current study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning Questionnaire

Value component	Number of items for each component	Item numbers	Park's Alpha value of SILL (2011)	Alpha value of current study
Metacognitive strategies	9	1-9	.78	.69
Affective strategies	6	10-15	.45	.60
Social strategies	6	16-21	.70	.48
Total (Indirect learning strategies)	21	1-21	.83	.72

*Unit Quizzes of IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) Chinese Examination Cour*se

IGCSE is the abbreviation of International General Certificate of Secondary Education. It is an international certification for end of secondary school. IGCSE Chinese examination aims to test four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (IGCSE, 2015). This study only focused on testing reading and writing skills. When comparing with listening and speaking skills, Chinese reading and writing skills are more related to the application skills of Chinese characters. Students' negative moods, such as frustrate, anxiety are more often emerged when they coming to learn Chinese characters.

In terms of different students' learning levels, 4 different unit quizzes were used to test 4 different years (year 7 to 10). All the quizzes were from *Easy Steps to Chinese Book1* and *Book 2* (Ma & Li, 2007). This series of book is recommended by IGCSE examination center to CFL students who need to prepare for the IGCSE Chinese examination. According to the Syllabus of the IGCSE Chinese examination, *Easy Steps to Chinese Book 1* and *Book 2* involve 27 topics that are required by the IGCSE Chinese examination. Additionally, these Unit quizzes are in the *Easy Steps to Chinese Teachers' Book*. Hence, students could not see these quizzes until the examination. Therefore, the validity and reliability of the unit quizzes have indicated.

Procedure

A total of 93 questionnaires were distributed on 14[th]January and 15th January 2016. There were 91 questionnaires completed and usable. This gave a 98.7 % return rate. The unit tests of Chinese reading and writing were held on 19th January and 20th January 2016. There were 93 students of year 7 to year 10 took the tests and 93 test paper returned. Therefore, the researcher took out 2 scores from year 10 students whose questionnaires were not completed. Descriptive statistics involving means and standard deviations were used to identify the use of indirect language learning strategies and levels of students' Chinese achievement of reading and

writing. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the use of indirect language learning strategies and academic achievement in Chinese reading and writing.

Findings

In terms of the two research objectives, the main findings are given below.

Research Objective One

The use of overall indirect learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School was medium.

The use of metacognitive strategies was high overall. The lowest mean score in 9 items was *I look for people I can talk to in Chinese*.

The use of affective strategies was medium overall. One item that had a very low usage was *I write down my feelings of learning Chinese in language learning diary*.

The use of social strategies was high overall. The highest usage item in this group was *if I do not understand something in Chinese learning, I ask the others to slow down or explain it again*.

Research Objective Two

The findings indicated a moderate positive significant relationship between the use of overall indirect learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language and academic achievement in Chinese reading and writing of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School.

Additionally, the findings indicated that a positive significant relationship was found between the use of metacognitive learning strategies and students' Chinese achievement in reading and writing. A positive significant relationship was also found between social learning strategies and students' Chinese achievement in reading and writing. However, there was no significant relationship found between the use of affective learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language and academic achievement in Chinese reading and writing of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School.

Table 2 shows the summary of the main findings.

Table 2: Summary of the Main Findings (n=91)

Scale	Interpretation	Correlation with Chinese Achievement in Reading and Writing
Overall Indirect Learning Strategies	Medium Usage	There was a significant relationship.
Metacognitive Strategies	High Usage	There was a significant relationship.
Affective Strategies	Medium Usage	There was no significant relationship.
Social Strategies	High Usage	There was a significant relationship.

Discussion

For the overall indirect learning strategies, the findings showed a medium usage. It meant that year 7 to year 10 students of Ascot International School sometimes used indirect LLSs for learning Chinese as a foreign language. This finding may be understood by considering that, compared to English and Thai language, Chinese is the only language that students do not have opportunity to use in their daily lives. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that even in the high usage group-metacognitive LLSs, the item *I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study Chinese* was reported in a medium use as well. Secondly, Chinese teachers do not offer students sufficient guidance and training in using language learning strategies. As mentioned above, some indirect learning strategies need specific training, such as affective strategies. Therefore, if teachers do not have sufficient professional training in LLSs use, they certainly cannot provide appropriate guidance to CFL students.

For the overall usage of metacognitive LLSs, the findings of this study showed that the students highly used metacognitive strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language. The possible reason of this result is that metacognition is *thinking about thinking*; therefore, it can be seen as a foundation of whole learning process (Livingston, 1997). Oxford (1990) also indicated that metacognitive LLSs were in charge of planning, organizing, monitoring and evaluating language learners' overall learning process. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that the use of metacognitive LLSs for learning Chinese as a foreign language was at a high level.

For the overall use of affective LLSs, the findings of this study showed that year 7 to year 10 students had medium usage of affective strategies. This finding is consistent with many previous studies (Fazeli, 2012; Khamkhien, 2010; Lai, 2005). Numerous researchers have indicated that affective language learning strategies can help learners regulate their moods, motivations and learning attitudes for achieving effective learning outcomes (Cohen, 2003; Oxford, 1990). However, some researchers also have noticed that affective factors are not easily depicted within definable limits, and few students consider and measure the use of affective LLSs in their language learning (Brown, 1987; Oxford, 1990). Thus, Oxford (1990) pointed out that if there was no specific training from teachers about how to use affective LLSs efficiently, it was difficult for students to use affective LLSs. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that the item *I write down my feelings of learning Chinese in a language learning diary* had a very low usage.

For the overall usage of social LLSs, Oxford (1990) pointed out that appropriate social strategies were very important for the language learning process, since the essential purpose of language is communication. The findings of this study showed that year 7 to year 10 students highly used social strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language at Ascot International School. Ascot International School provides an intercultural environment to all students.. Collaboration and communication are proposed clearly as school educational objectives. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that the use of social LLSs was at an overall high level.

For the relationship between indirect learning strategies and Chinese achievement in reading and writing, this study found some interesting findings. There was a medium positive significant relationship found between the use of overall indirect LLSs and students' Chinese achievement in reading and writing. Also, the

mean scores of students' Chinese achievement in reading and writing were found in a medium level. These findings were consistent with the majority of previous research: high academic achievement correlates with high usage of appropriate LLSs, and medium achievements do relate to medium usage of LLSs (Oxford, 1990; Pintrich, 1990; Schunk, 2005).Specifically, year 7 to year 10 students used overall indirect LLSs for learning Chinese reading and writing in a medium level, it would lead to the medium level of their Chinese achievements in reading and writing.

For the relationship between affective LLSs and Chinese achievement in reading and writing, it was interesting to see that there was no significant relationship between affective strategies and Chinese achievement in reading and writing of year 7 to year 10 students at Ascot International School. This finding supported some previous studies (Lai, 2005; Oxford, 1999; Peacock & Ho, 2003). Oxford (1999) proposed the possibility that anxiety or other negative emotions could lead to greater use of affective strategies and lower language proficiency. Therefore, the findings of the current study were further consistent with the unique feature of affective strategies.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Chinese Teachers
Based on the findings of medium use of overall indirect learning strategies, the researcher presents the following recommendations for Chinese teachers at Ascot International School:
- develop different activities to guide students using appropriate learning strategies;
- differentiated methods should be used to promote students' interest.

Since the use of affective LLSs had a medium usage, the researcher proposes the following:
- join in language learning strategies professional in-service training;
- guide students to use more affective LLSs to reduce their negative emotional factors.

According to the moderate positive relationship was found between the use of overall indirect LLSs and students' Chinese achievement in reading and writing, the researcher proposes the following:
- teachers should develop a series of effective strategies for Chinese language teaching;
- teachers should understand more about indirect language strategies generally.

Recommendations for CFL Students
Since this study found that overall indirect learning strategies had medium usage, the researcher presents the following recommendations to students:
- find out appropriate strategies for individual learning;
- practice using more metacognitive strategies for organizing Chinese learning;
- reduce negative mood factors by using affective strategies;
- use Chinese as much as possible to increase the use of social strategies.

By doing the above, CFL students can develop appropriate strategies that can promote their Chinese language learning.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Given that overall indirect learning strategies had a medium usage, the researcher makes the following recommendations for future researchers:

- include all six categories of SILL in their research;
- investigate Chinese language learning achievement involving all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- Investigate various foreign language learners by using SILL.

Since there was no significant relationship found between the use of affective LLSs and students' Chinese achievement in reading and writing, the researcher proposes the following recommendations to further researchers:

- pay more attention on affective strategies factors;
- use the modified version of SILL from previous research in field;
- expand the range of participants' ages in order to cover more age groups and obtain more comprehensive data.

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