

The Relationship between Beliefs about English Language Learning and Perceptions of Metacognitive Strategies of Thai University Students
ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษและมุมมองเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีการจัดการการเรียนรู้ของนักศึกษาไทย

Sasikarn Howchatturat¹
Natjiree Jaturapitakkul²

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาเพื่อตรวจสอบหาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและมุมมองเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีการจัดการการเรียนรู้ของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่หนึ่ง คณะวิทยาการจัดการ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร จังหวัดเพชรบุรี กลุ่มพลวิจัยคือนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีชั้นปีที่หนึ่งจากหลายวิชาเอกของคณะวิทยาการจัดการ จำนวน 105 คน เครื่องมือวิจัยคือแบบสอบถามการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษซึ่งได้รับการดัดแปลงจากแบบสอบถาม BALLI และ SILL วิธีการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้การหาค่าสถิติพรรณนาและค่าความสัมพันธ์แบบเพียสัน ผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่านักศึกษามีความเชื่อว่าการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ แรงจูงใจ และธรรมชาติในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ มีบทบาทอย่างมากต่อความสำเร็จในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ โดยแรงจูงใจเป็นความเชื่อที่มีบทบาทมากที่สุด นอกจากนี้ผลการศึกษาพบว่ามีความสัมพันธ์ในแง่บวกระหว่างความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับแรงจูงใจ และความยากในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษกับมุมมองเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีการจัดการการเรียนรู้
คำสำคัญ: ความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ มุมมองเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีการจัดการการเรียนรู้ ความสัมพันธ์

Abstract

This study aims at investigating the relationship between beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies of freshmen in the Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University, Petcheburi IT Campus. There were 105 first year undergraduate students from different majors of Management Science who participated in this study. The EnglishLanguage Learning Questionnaires adapted from two questionnaires, BALLI and SILL (version 7.0) were used as a research instrument. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used in data analysis. The findings showed that the subjects had beliefs that difficulty of English language learning, motivation and nature of English language learning have strong impact on their success in English language learning, and motivation was the most outstanding one. In addition, there were significantly positive relationships between beliefs about motivation ($r = .361$) and difficulty of English language learning ($r = .351$) of the subjects and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies.

Keywords: beliefs about English language learning, metacognitive strategies, relationship

¹ M.A. participant, ELT program, School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi as well as teaching assistant, Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University.

² Lecturer, Department of Language Studies, School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

I. Introduction

In Thailand, English is a foreign language used to communicate with other English-speaking people in the country and in the world. Therefore, Thai students of all levels must study English as a foreign language. Wiriyaichitra [1] described EFL situations in Thailand that English is an important language in Thailand as it is used in communication with foreigners. The government has tried to make Thailand to be a bilingual country but this effort has been criticized by many Thai people because they are proud that Thailand has never been colonized and Thai is the native language that represents national stability.

Additionally, teaching Thai students to be able to use English effectively seems to be very difficult because Thai is used as the official language so there are few opportunities for them to use English. However, a number of teachers and researchers have tried to improve the English proficiency of Thai students by using various teaching methods. In addition, Wenden (1986), cited in Cotterall [2] reported that to find out the characteristics of successful language learners, learners' beliefs should be researched to know how they approach learning. This can help teachers in preparing appropriate teaching methodologies which are compatible with learners' beliefs.

Yang [3] suggested that learners' beliefs are important determinants of their behavior. Thus, language teachers should try to foster positive beliefs that lead to effective learning strategy use and minimize negative beliefs that inhibit learning. Teachers can remove students' misconceptions by providing knowledge or illustrations concerning the nature and process of second language preliminary information in preparing appropriate teaching methodologies for them. By taking Horwitz's and Cotterall's suggestions for future research, it might also be worthwhile

and beneficial to replicate their study, but in different contexts and with different subjects, which can yield interesting findings and implications of English instruction.

This research is, therefore, conducted to survey students' beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies as well as the relationship between their beliefs and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies. The findings may be used as guidelines for researchers as well as teachers to design appropriate lessons and suitable activities for their students to become successful language learners.

II. Research questions

The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What beliefs about English language learning do the Silpakorn University freshmen have?
2. What are students' perceptions about metacognitive strategies?
3. Is there any relationship between their beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies?

III. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are three folds:

1. To investigate students' beliefs about English language learning.
2. To survey students' perceptions about metacognitive strategies.
3. To examine the relationship between their beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies.

IV. Methodology

A. Subjects

The population approximately consisted of 800 first year undergraduate students at Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University, Petchaburi IT Campus. In this study,

105 freshmen were selected as the subjects. They were from 7 majors: General Business Management, Tourism Management, Community Management, Marketing Management, Hotel and Lodging, Business Management and English, and Public Administration. Random sampling was used as a sample selection technique. There were 50 males and 55 females, and most of them had studied English for 15 years since they were in kindergarten. And, most of them reported that they had never been to foreign countries.

B. Research instrument

The English Language Learning Questionnaire was used as a key instrument of the study. It was adapted and integrated from the questionnaire of Horwitz [4], Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and the questionnaire of Oxford [8], Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL version 7.0 for ESL/EFL learners). The English Language Learning Questionnaire was translated into Thai to avoid misinterpretation and consisted of three sections.

1. The first section contained a 5-point checklist and some gap-fill questions about the students' background information which may influence their beliefs and metacognitive strategies in English language learning.

2. The second section was a 5-point Likert scale. It contained 34 items from BALLI (Horwitz [4]) that covered 5 major areas: foreign English language aptitude, the difficulty of English language learning, the nature of English language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivations and expectations. In this section, the subjects were asked to read statements and decide if they agree with the statements provided.

3. The third section was also a 5-point Likert scale. It contained 9 out of 50 items of Oxford's SILL [8] which concern three sets of metacognitive strategies: centering learning, arranging and planning learning, and evaluating learning. The subjects were asked to respond

to the statements on a five-point scale: (1) "I never or almost never do this." (2) "I often do this." (3) "I sometimes do this." (4) "I usually do this." or (5) "I always or almost always do this."

C. Procedure

Before conducting the main study, it was found in a preliminary study using Oxford's [8] questionnaire that metacognitive strategies were the most obvious English language learning strategy used among freshmen. The questionnaire items concerning metacognitive strategies were integrated with Horwitz's [4] Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) to make a new questionnaire called the English Language Learning Questionnaire. Then, it was translated into Thai, pilot tested, and modified for the main study. The questionnaire was examined and it was found that it had a Cronbach alpha of 0.97 for internal-consistency reliability.

The data were collected in the second semester of the academic year 2010. And then, they were analyzed quantitatively.

D. Data analysis

The SPSS program (version 13) was a tool for calculating the findings from questionnaires. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze the findings concerning learners' beliefs about English language learning and perceptions of metacognitive strategies. Also, the Pearson correlation was applied to analyze the relationship between learners' beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies.

V. Results

The findings of this study are presented in accordance with research questions as follows:

Research question 1: What beliefs about English language learning do the Silpakorn University freshmen have?

The findings were analyzed in accordance with 5 major areas about English language

learning beliefs which are (1) difficulty of English language learning, (2) English language learning and communication strategies, (3) English language aptitude, (4) motivation, and (5) nature of English language learning. By applying the Weight Mean Score (WMS) method (Yamane [9]), the criteria for interpreting the

findings are as follows:

- 4.21 - 5.00 strongly agree
- 3.41 - 4.20 agree
- 2.61 - 3.40 neutral
- 1.81 - 2.60 disagree
- 1.00 - 1.80 strongly disagree.

Table 1: Mean of Beliefs about the Difficulty of English Language Learning

No.	Description	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Some languages are easier than others.	3.74	0.92	agree
2.	I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.	3.08	0.73	neutral
3.	It is easier to speak than understand English.	3.62	0.95	agree
4.	It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	3.44	0.83	agree

The findings in Table 1 revealed that the subjects believed that some languages might be easier than others (Mean=3.74, SD=0.92). They also believed that for studying English, it is easier to speak than to understand the meaning of it (Mean=3.62, SD=0.95). They also believed that reading and writing English are easier than speaking and understanding it (Mean=3.44, SD=0.83). So, it means that they believed that speaking, reading and writing English are not as difficult as understanding it.

In addition, there are two checklist items, which are quite different in way of statements' interpretation, including beliefs about difficulty of English language learning whose results are presented in percentage form. The findings revealed that more than half of the subjects (53.3%) believed that English is a moderately difficult language. About 38.1% also believed that if they spent one hour a day learning a language, they would take 3-5 years to speak the language very well.

Table 2: Mean of Beliefs about English Language Learning and Communication Strategies

No.	Description	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.	3.79	0.98	agree
2.	You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	2.13	1.15	disagree
3.	I enjoy practicing English with the foreigners I meet.	3.27	1.05	neutral
4.	It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.	3.13	1.01	neutral
5.	It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	4.22	1.06	agree
6.	I feel timid speaking English with other people.	3.36	5.13	neutral
7.	If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	3.15	1.01	neutral
8.	It is important to practice with audio CDs.	3.45	0.94	agree

The findings in Table 2 revealed that the subjects believed that when studying English, it is important to repeat and practice a lot (Mean=4.22, SD=1.06). They also believed

that it is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation (Mean=3.79, SD=0.98), and it is important to practice with audio CDs (Mean=3.45, SD=0.94). So, it means that

they believed repeating and practicing a lot, speaking with excellent pronunciation and practicing with audio CDs are crucial

methods for their English language learning and communication.

Table 3: Mean of Beliefs about English Language Aptitude

No.	Description	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	3.77	0.98	agree
2.	Some people have a special ability for learning English.	3.96	0.93	agree
3.	People from my country are good at learning English.	3.21	0.90	neutral
4.	It is easier for someone who already speaks English to learn another language.	3.40	0.85	neutral
5.	People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English.	2.56	1.13	disagree
6.	I have a special ability for learning English.	2.77	0.81	neutral
7.	Women are better than men at learning English.	2.68	1.17	neutral
8.	People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	3.59	0.89	agree
9.	Everyone can learn to speak English.	4.36	0.94	strongly agree

Table 3 revealed that the subjects believed that everyone can learn to speak English (Mean=4.36, SD=0.94). They also believed some people have a special ability for learning English (Mean=3.96, SD=0.93). However, they believed that it is easier for children than adults to learn English (Mean =3.77, SD=0.98). They also believed that

people who speak more than one language are very intelligent (Mean=3.59, SD=0.89). So, it can be interpreted that people have the ability to speak English which is not too difficult to learn. Speaking ability can also reflect people's intelligence. However, learning English should be done at an early age as children can learn English better than adults.

Table 4: Mean of Beliefs about Motivation

No.	Description	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	3.87	0.96	agree
2.	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know foreigners better.	3.65	0.94	agree
3.	If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	4.09	0.94	agree
4.	I want to learn to speak English well.	4.20	0.89	agree
5.	I would like to have foreign friends who can speak English.	4.02	0.95	agree

From Table 4, the data showed that most subjects wanted to speak English well (Mean=4.20, SD=0.89). They also believed that if they learn English very well, they will have better opportunities for a good job (Mean =4.09, SD=0.94). They would also like to have foreign friends who can speak English (Mean=

4.02, SD=0.95). So, it means that for the subjects, speaking seems to be the most important among other language skills. In addition, having better opportunities for a good job and having English-speaking friends help motivate them to learn English.

Table 5 Mean of Beliefs about the Nature of English Language Learning

No.	Description	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.	3.51	0.78	agree
2.	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	3.46	1.10	agree
3.	The most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary words.	4.14	0.93	agree
4.	The most important part of learning English is learning the grammar.	3.03	1.13	neutral
5.	Learning English is different than learning other academic subjects.	3.40	0.95	neutral
6.	The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	3.35	0.90	neutral

The findings in Table 5 revealed that the subjects believed that the most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary words (Mean=4.14, SD=0.93). They also believed that it is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English (Mean=3.51, SD=0.78). In addition, they believed that it is best to learn English in

an English-speaking country (Mean=3.46, SD=1.10). So, it can be interpreted that learning vocabulary and English-speaking cultures are important for their English language learning. Moreover, learning English in an English-speaking country helps them learn English best.

Table 6: Mean of the Five Areas of English Language Learning Beliefs

No.	Description	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Difficulty of English language learning	3.48	0.53	highly believe
2.	English language learning and communication strategies	3.31	0.74	moderately believe
3.	English language aptitude	3.37	0.37	moderately believe
4.	Motivation	3.97	0.68	highly believe
5.	Nature of English language learning	3.48	0.54	highly believe

Table 6 shows a comparison of means of five areas of beliefs in English language learning. By applying the Weight Mean Score (WMS) method (Yamane [9]), the following criteria are used for interpreting the findings:

4.21 - 5.00	very highly believe
3.41 - 4.20	highly believe
2.61 - 3.40	moderately believe
1.81 - 2.60	scarcely believe
1.00 - 1.80	do not believe at all

Among the five areas of beliefs, motivation is the area in which the subjects highly believed (Mean=3.97, SD =0.68). The nature of English language learning is also the

area in which they highly believed (Mean=3.48, SD=0.54). The difficulty of English language learning is also the area in which the subjects highly believed (Mean=3.48, SD=0.53) whereas English language aptitude (Mean=3.37, SD=0.37) and English language learning and communication strategies (Mean=3.31, SD=0.74) are areas in which they moderately believe. From this result, it can be highlighted that motivation, nature of English language learning, and difficulty of English language learning have strong impact on their success in English language learning.

Research question 2: What are students' perceptions about metacognitive strategies? The findings were analyzed and interpreted by using the same criteria as in research question 1 as follows:	4.21 - 5.00	strongly agree
	3.41 - 4.20	agree
	2.61 - 3.40	neutral
	1.81 - 2.60	disagree
	1.00 - 1.80	strongly disagree

Table 7: Mean of Perceptions about Metacognitive Strategies

		Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	3.25	0.95	neutral
2.	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	3.43	0.83	agree
3.	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	3.70	0.93	agree
4.	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	3.77	0.87	agree
5.	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	2.93	0.93	neutral
6.	I look for people I can talk to in English.	3.15	0.91	neutral
7.	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.28	0.93	neutral
8.	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	3.69	0.92	agree
9.	I think about my progress in learning English.	3.88	0.89	agree

The findings in Table 7 revealed the subjects' perceptions about metacognitive strategies. It was found that they agreed with thinking about their progress in learning English (Mean=3.88, SD=0.89). They also agreed with trying to find out how to be a better learner of English (Mean=3.77, SD=0.87), paying attention when someone is speaking English (Mean=3.70, SD=0.93), having clear goals for improving their English skills (Mean=3.69, SD=0.92), and noticing their English mistakes and using that information to help them do better (Mean=3.43, SD=0.83). It means that to become successful learners of English, they believe they would especially contemplate their progress, find out better ways to learn English, set goals for improving English, and learn from their mistakes. They are also aware of when people speak English.

Research question 3: Is there any relationship between their beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies?

In order to investigate the relationship between beliefs about English language learning and perceptions about metacognitive

strategies, correlation coefficients (r) were calculated and the hypothesis was set as follows:

Hypothesis: There is relationship between their beliefs about English language learning and their perceptions about metacognitive strategies.

(H1: r diff. of Eng lg. learning \neq r per. of metacog)

(H2: r Eng lg. learning \neq r per. of metacog)

(H3: r Eng lg apt. \neq r per. of metacog)

(H4: r motivation \neq r per. of metacog)

(H5: r nature of Eng lg learning \neq r per. of metacog)

In interpreting these findings, the range of correlation coefficient (r) in a study conducted by Fenfang Li [10] was applied in this study as follows:

< 0.20 means lowest correlation which is usually ignored

0.21-0.40 means low to moderate significant correlation

0.41-0.70 means sound significant correlation

0.71-0.90 means high significant correlation

> 0.9 means highest correlation which scarcely occurs

Table 8: The Correlation between Five Areas of Beliefs about English Language Learning and Perceptions about Metacognitive Strategies

Five areas of Beliefs	Difficulty of English language learning	English language learning and communication strategies	English language aptitude	Motivation	Nature of English language learning
Perceptions about Metacognitive Strategies					
Pearson Correlation	.351(**)	.119	.290(**)	.361(**)	.157
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.227	.003	.000	.110
N	105	105	105	105	105

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 showed that there were three areas of the subjects' beliefs about English language learning which positively correlated to their perceptions about metacognitive strategies: belief about motivation ($r=.361$, $p<.01$) which had moderate significant correlation, difficulty of English language learning ($r=.351$, $p<.01$) which had moderate significant correlation, and belief about English language aptitude ($r=.290$, $p<.01$) which had low significant correlation. There was no significant correlation between belief about English language learning and communication strategies and belief about the nature of English language learning with perceptions about metacognitive strategies.

VI. Discussion

This study showed that the subjects highly believed that motivation, difficulty of English language learning and the nature of English language learning have strong impact on their success in English learning. It is possible that learners have positive beliefs towards English learning. They are likely to see the importance of using English nowadays especially for their future careers, socializing with foreigners and even continuing higher education. Speaking is also becoming a skill they need to master even more. Therefore, they are highly motivated to learn English and consider English as a moderately

difficult language that can be overcome by a lot of practice.

Concerning perceptions about metacognitive strategies, it was surprising that the subjects agreed with five out of nine sub-strategies, focusing on arranging and planning their learning, and evaluating their learning while ignoring centering their learning. It can be said that this finding is from learners' overall perceptions, not their actual use. Then, what they perceived as neutral might be intervened by their perceptions. It is also possible that some sub-strategies they perceived as neutral were the ones they have rarely used or have never trained in before.

Regarding the relationship between learners' beliefs and perceptions of metacognitive strategies, the findings indicate a positive moderate relationship between beliefs about motivation and beliefs about difficulty of English language learning and perceptions of metacognitive strategies. This is also in accordance with the findings in research question one. Thus, it can be said that learners' beliefs in motivation and difficulty of English language learning led to their perceptions of metacognitive strategies, or learners' perceptions of metacognitive strategies shaped their beliefs about motivation

and difficulty of English language learning. It is also possible that other factors may cause learners' beliefs and affect their perceptions of metacognitive strategies.

From the aforementioned findings, the following implications may be drawn for more effective teaching and learning.

1. Metacognitive strategies training can be conducted to apply for all four language skills of English as suggested by Oxford, 1990.

2. Group discussion can be enhanced in class to raise students' metacognitive awareness (Yang [11]) especially for centering their learning, and arranging and planning their learning.

3. Group work or pair work can be used to promote interaction, cooperation and the sharing of genuine personal information among learners. This can help create motivation in classrooms as suggested by Dörnyei [12].

4. Diary-keeping is also a useful tool for reflection on learning (Goh [13]; Matsumoto [14]). This can help motivate students to keep track of their learning.

5. More authentic activities related to job interview or job application can be introduced in class in order to highly motivate students to learn English.

6. A communicative approach to EFL teaching should be integrated into a lesson since the students in this study had strong beliefs about the need to master speaking skills.

VII. Conclusion

In summary, this study provided an understanding of the beliefs about English language learning and perceptions of metacognitive strategies of undergraduate students in Thailand. It was found that the subjects believed that motivation, the difficulty of English language learning and the nature of English language learning have strong impact on their success in English language

learning. In addition, there was a significantly positive relationship between the beliefs about motivation and difficulty about English language learning and the perceptions about metacognitive strategies. A variety of English instruction as well as metacognitive strategies training should address students' beliefs as proposed in this study.

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