

CHAPTER I

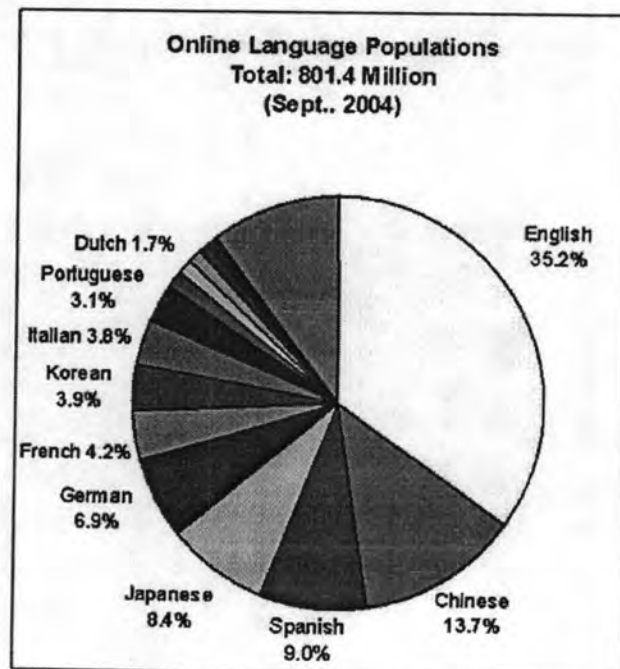
INTRODUCTION



1.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

As the world grew smaller and even closer once we have reached the new millennium, people of different countries who share nothing in common are very much in need of a mutual way to communicate with each other. That mutual way of communication lies in form of *lingua franca*, which is *English*. This scenario creates the need to learn the language, particularly in the countries where their mother tongue is different from this lingua franca. According to John Naisbitt's research in 1994, its findings showed that 60% of radio programs broadcasting around the world is in English, while another 25% of telephone conversations are conducted in English. Most importantly, 80% of information online is occurred in English. The chart below is one of the good examples showing the percentage of English used online in the United States which still outnumbers any other languages (Global Reach Project, www.greach.com/index.php3). Should this be the case, it is inevitable to learn the world's lingua franca, English, as an international language, in order to interact with the rest of the world.

Figure 1.1
Online Language Populations



The education system of Thailand has also seen the importance of learning English since the early Bangkok Period when it was slowly emerging to be the lingua franca of the Far East (International Schools in Thailand Handbook, 2002). Unfortunately, regardless of the long history of English as a compulsory subject in Thai education system, the language proficiency, especially communication abilities, of Thai students is rather limited. The cause of this incident can be stated that the local environment does not fully support the opportunity in using English in real life (International Education in Thailand: Learning Opportunities with Excellence – A Guide to International Schools in Thailand, 2005). International education, thus, is formed and regarded as one of the best options for enhancing the English language proficiency of students.

Although, originally founded to serve children of expatriates and Thai government officials who had returned from working abroad, international schools have long been recognized for bringing out full potential of a student. Its superior curriculum and teaching methods promote class participation through a small size of class, encouraging students to express their ideas, exchange their points of view, explore the world around them freely and think rationally, contrasting sharply with the rote-learning method, in which students receive all knowledge from teachers. Besides proficiency in the English language, being exposed to a diversified cultural learning atmosphere also broadens students' perspectives and enables them to learn about other cultures from classmates of varied nationalities, helping them to understand why people behave in different ways. These will help to bridge cultural gaps and enhance unity among different nationalities, which eventually lead to cooperation across nations and a peaceful world. International education, in summary, has proven to lead to the development of well-rounded students with strong academic and social skills. It also improves the chances of finding a job since employers today, in an increasingly globalized society, tend to seek qualified employees with knowledge of international issues and language skills (Widen Your Horizons with an International Education: *International Education Handbook 2004*).

With these benefits provided to their students, a huge attention and a high demand were raised and targeted towards the international school business in Thailand, not only among the expatriates but Thai parents also. In the past decade,

the international schools market sector in Thailand has rapidly grown and spread out across the country. There are, at the moment, over 100 international schools all over Thailand. These schools offer education based on the British or American education systems, or follow the internationally accepted International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Other national systems include Japanese, French, German and Swiss, for instance. However, only 77 international schools including boarding schools are members of the International Schools Association of Thailand (Learning Society: A Guide to International Education in Thailand, 2006).

Despite many systems offering in the market, there are three major curricula adopted by international schools in Thailand, namely American, British, and International Baccalaureate (IB). Each has its own philosophy and methodology in delivering the knowledge to the students. Although there may be some overlapping within these groups, the uniqueness in characteristic of each system can be illustrated as follows. The schools following *American system*, such as International School of Bangkok, KiddyKare International Kindergarten, and Ruamrudee International School, require the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science to be studied from Kindergarten through high school, with Information Technology, Humanities, Creative Arts and Physical Education making up the foundation subjects. While the *British system* schools such as Bangkok Patana School, Harrow International School, and Shrewsbury International School have English, Mathematics, Science and Information Technology being regarded as core subjects. The Humanities, Creative and Performing Arts, Modern Languages and Physical Education are also provided as foundation subjects (International Education in Thailand: Learning Opportunities with Excellence – A Guide to International Schools in Thailand, 2005).

As for the *IB world schools*, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) offers three coordinated programs of study for children 3-19 years of age. All three programs have a similar pedagogical base and are learning-centered and inquiry-based, with the aim of developing well-rounded, reflective, and compassionate young adults. In addition to providing a rigorous academic program of high standards, the IBO approach places a strong emphasis on the ideals of international understanding and responsible global citizenship (International Education in Thailand: Learning

Opportunities with Excellence – A Guide to International Schools in Thailand, 2005).

These three programs are as follows:

- *The Primary Years Program* (PYP) for students aged 3 to 12
- *The Middle Years Program* (MYP) for students aged 12 to 16
- *The Diploma Program* for students in the final two years of school before university

The IB World schools system works quite differently from the former two of American and British system. Since the IB curriculum is clearly divided into three educational programs, schools can select only the program that they find most appropriate to their philosophy. For international schools in Thailand, the IB Diploma is adopted not only in the IB World schools but also in other schools following the American (Ruamrudee International School) and British (Bangkok Patana School) systems. However, the truly IB World schools in Thailand which adopted all three programs of PYP, MYP, and IB Diploma are New International School of Thailand and PremTinsulanonda International School. Other schools, such as KIS International School and Concordain International School, are currently offering PYP and MYP to their students, and will extend to become a full IB World school as the students grow each year.

With its newness and uniqueness, the IB system attracts not only expatriates working in Thailand but also Thai nationals and residents in its neighboring Asian countries. As a result, the population of the IB world schools in Thailand comprises different nationalities varied from students having English as their mother tongue i.e. British and American to students considering English as a foreign language e.g. Thai, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese. Though this is an ideal milieu of a truly international school which brings in the internationalism, the observations and interviews with current staff suggest that students sharing the same language or ethnicity seem to form their own groups. According to Robinson (1985), living, playing and interacting among one's own are not inherently bad habits; indeed, they may be inherently natural. The study of anthropology gives credence to the saying "birds of a feather flock together." This can be applied to human in the sense of people who are similar to each other often spend time together. Coincidentally, there is a tendency toward

group maintenance, not only for groups of animals but for human as well. This statement gives a clear explanation of why the incident happens in many international schools.

At the research international school, though the current number of student's nationalities stands approximately at 25, it is also facing the incident of "birds of a feather flock together." The history of the school starts when it was founded in 1998 and adopted the system of International Baccalaureate (IB). It is one of the first IB world schools in Thailand authorized to offer the inquiry-based, transdisciplinary Primary Years Program (PYP – Kindergarten to Grade 5) providing students with an academically challenging, internationally recognized program of study. Its secondary school program offers the Middle Years Program (MYP) for Grade 6 to Grade 10 with continued studies toward the IB Diploma in Grade 11 and 12. In addition to high academic standards, each program places strong emphasis on the ideals of international understanding and responsible citizenship, in the hope that IB students will become critical and compassionate thinkers, lifelong learners and informed participants in the global community.

However, with the current situation of "birds of a feather flock together," the school tries to boost the use of English as the language of instruction as well as promote different mother tongues in the school environment at the same time. The goal is to furnish today's children with opportunities to learn to adapt themselves within the rapidly changing world as well as to understand and respect other people from different backgrounds and cultures through communicating the same language of English (www.kis.ac.th, KIS International School, 2005).

In order to achieve this goal, the concepts of understanding and cooperating with others should be emphasized, along with the proficiency in English language. In the field of language learning and teaching during the past two decades, there has been a prominent shift of interest where a greater emphasis being put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. In parallel to this movement, how learners process new information and what kinds of strategies they employ to understand, learn or remember the information has been the primary concern of the researchers dealing with the area of foreign language learning (Hismanoglu, 2000).

Apart from identifying characteristics of 'good language learner', different strategies for language learning have been receiving an ever-growing attention in the area of second language teaching and learning by many researchers such as Rubin (1981), Stern (1983), O'Malley and Chamot (1985), Oxford (1990), Cohen (1990), Wenden (1991), Rubin and Thompson (1994), Mendelsohn (1994), Dornyei (1995), McDonough (1995), and Embi (2000).

The language learning strategies (LLS) are defined and grouped differently according to each researcher's category. However, there are some repetitions amongst them, which can be categorized into two main groups: *Direct Strategies* and *Indirect Strategies*. The direct language learning strategies are those which have a direct involvement with the target language. These strategies are *memory*, *cognitive*, and *compensation*. They all require mental processing of the language but in different ways and different purposes. On the other hand, the indirect strategies support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. They are divided into three groups of *metacognitive*, *affective*, and *social strategies*. Although they are divided into two major categories, language learning strategies are interconnected; both direct and indirect strategies provide and support one another (Oxford 1990). These strategies are used to assist language learners to improve their knowledge and understanding of a target language.

Out of all LLS categories provided in the field of language learning and teaching, Oxford's typology provides the most comprehensive and moderate model to follow. Despite some overlap with others' classifications, her strategies explore deeper in details with clearer types of behavior divided into different sets and subsets according to their characteristics. Based on Rubin's (1981) original of direct and indirect strategies and O'Malley and Chamot's (1985) three group of metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective strategies, Oxford built up on those and proposed two classes of direct and indirect strategies. Each class comprises three sets of strategies i.e. direct strategies – memory, cognitive, and compensation / indirect strategies – metacognitive, affective, and social. According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies, such as creating mental linkages and reviewing well, assist in entering information into long term memory and retrieving information when needed for communication. Cognitive strategies, e.g. practicing as well as analyzing and reasoning, are utilized

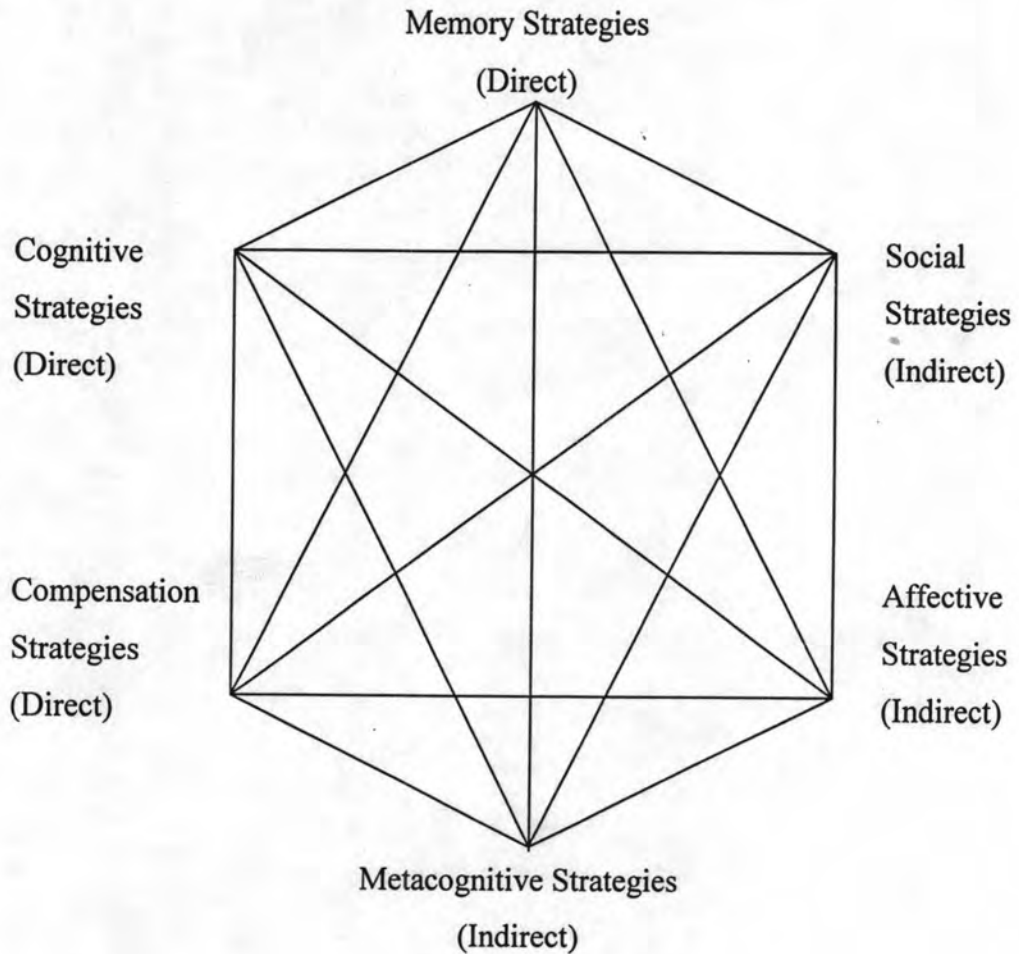
for forming and revising internal mental modes and receiving and producing messages in the target language. Compensation strategies, like guessing unknown words while listening and reading or using circumlocution in speaking and writing for instance, are needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language.

For those of indirect strategies category, metacognitive strategies help learners exercise executive control through focusing, arranging, planning, and evaluating their own learning process. Affective strategies, such as lowering anxiety and encouraging themselves, enable learners to control their feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning. Lastly, social strategies, i.e. asking questions, cooperating and empathizing with others, can facilitate interaction either one-on-one or in group setting, especially in a discourse situation. From this explanation, it can be concluded that Oxford's typology furnishes the complete set of language learning strategies covering both direct and indirect strategies. It also provides the list of different behaviors that are easy to follow whether as a researcher to conduct a study, a teacher to observe his students, or a language learner to improve his learning. These strategies are interlinked and can be illustrated in the figure 1.2.

Furthermore, in her *Language Learning Strategies*, Oxford (1990) stated that social strategies i.e. asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others are used not only for speaking and listening but in fact are helpful and essential to all four language skills. For example, new language learners can ask their teachers to correct them if there are errors in their speech, practice using the language with peers and/or with proficient users to enhance communication skills in the target language. Other strategies involving empathizing with others help students sharpen their cultural understanding as well as help them understand more clearly what is communicated and suggests what to say and do. These are harmonized with ESL Standards for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 developed by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 1997. There are three major goals of language use to be taken in by language learners. These are:

1. to use the second language to communicate in social settings
2. to use the second language to achieve academically in all content areas
3. to use the second language in socially and culturally appropriate ways

Figure 1.2
Interrelationships Between Direct and Indirect Strategies
and Among the Six Strategy Groups (Oxford, 1990: 15)



Thus, not only being able to speak the target language fluently, the learners also need to be able to communicate the target language appropriately. Educators then have a responsibility to ensure that language learners have many opportunities to develop and refine their communication abilities so that they will lead more fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Taking that into account, to become a responsible participant of the global community, he or she needs to be able to communicate with the world's lingua franca in effectively and appropriately in both intellectual and cultural aspects. Thus, with support from numerous studies regarding LLS, the findings show positive results when utilizing them effectively.

In this case, Oxford's language learning strategies are appropriate to apply and integrate into the lessons in order to provide students the opportunity to accomplish in those standards and goals. Social strategies particularly are offered to develop competency in social use of English as well as to encourage social interaction by communicating through questions and cooperation. Teachers can also try to structure opportunities for students to use English outside of the classroom. Cooperative learning encourages the use of language in social manner. Positive social interaction can help students perceive the classroom as a comfortable and friendly place, where they will feel safe using their new language skills and where they may find intrinsic motivation for communicating in English. These strategies of asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others harmonize with the three main goals of ESL Standards (TESOL 1997; cited in Becker, 2003). They are also believed to encourage the language learners with different first language background to utilize the target language in culturally appropriate ways, which concerted with the PYP students' profile as caring and open-minded communicators. Therefore, based on the above rationale, the research framework can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1.3

Research Conceptual Framework

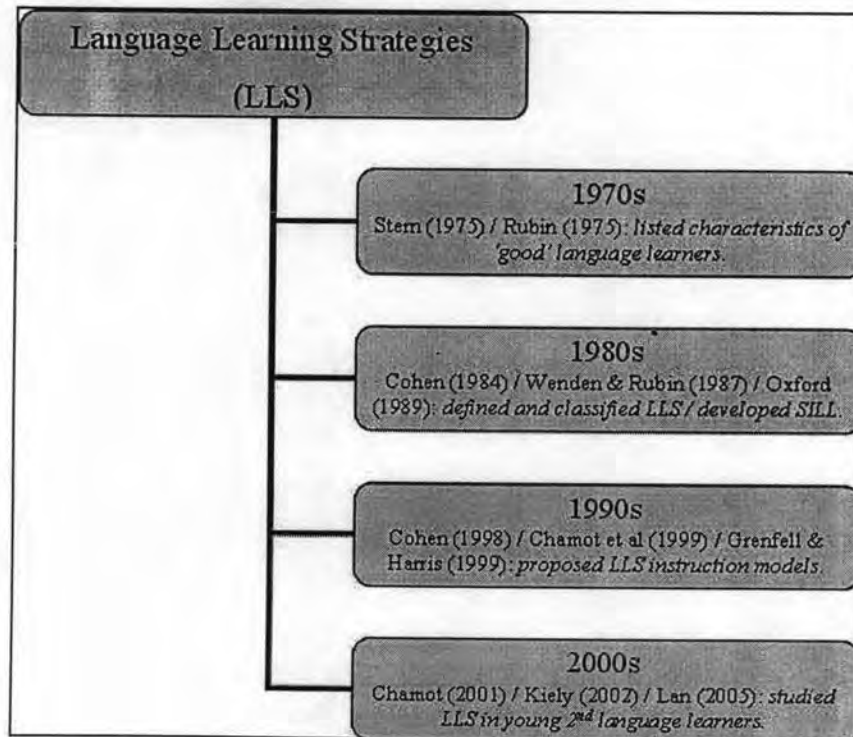
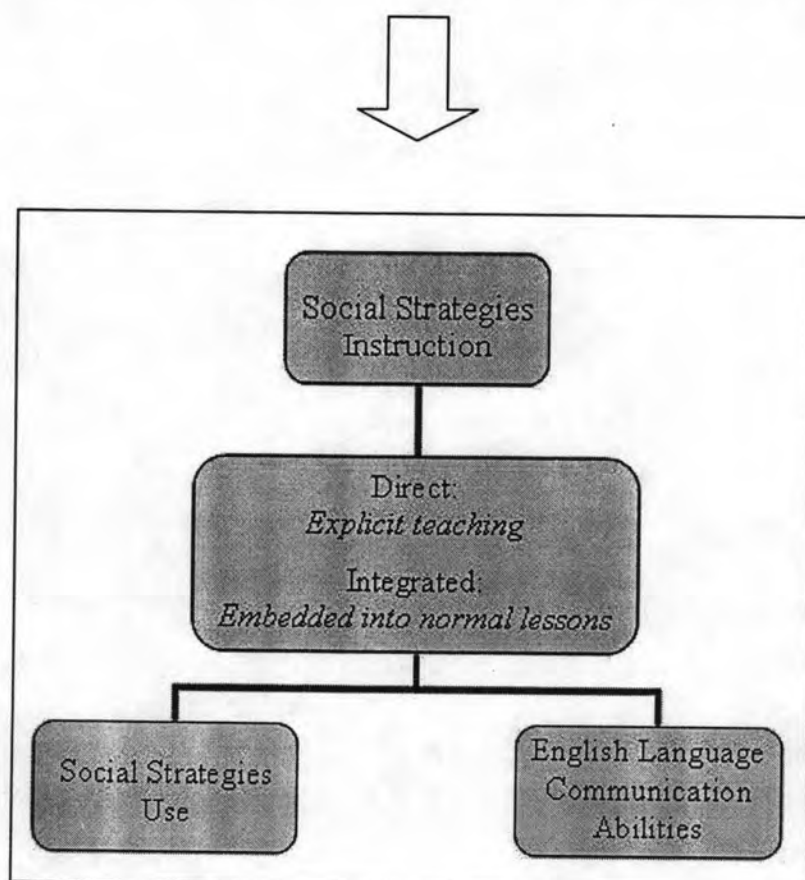
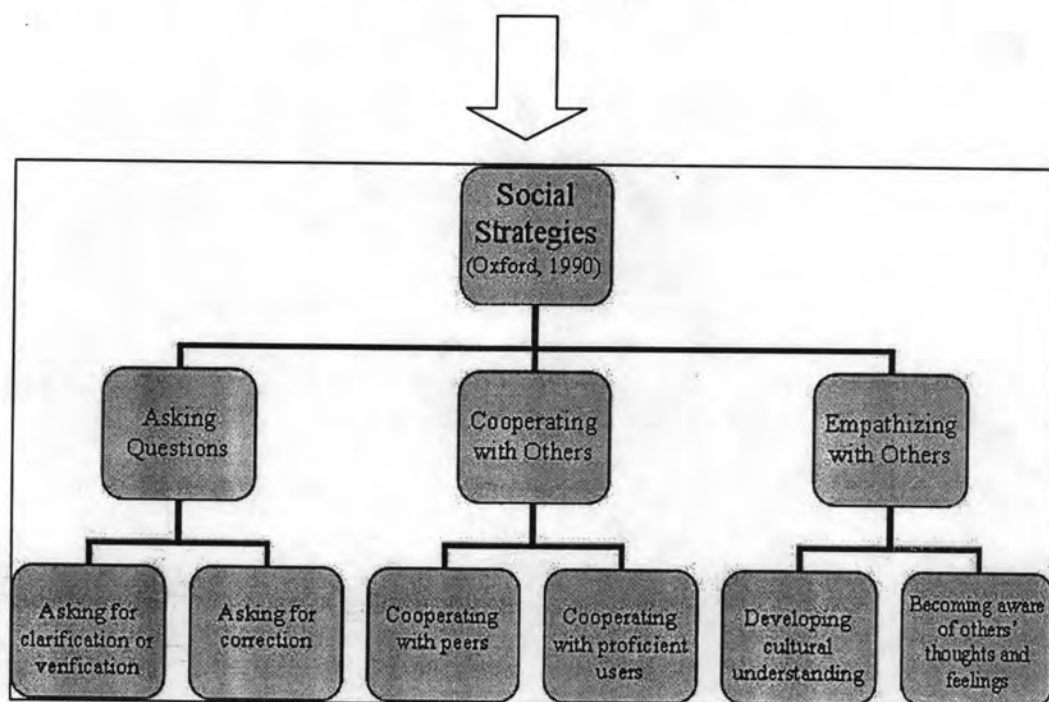


Figure 1.3 (Continued)

Research Conceptual Framework



So far, there has been a limited number of research on social strategies in relation with English language communication abilities (Oxford, 1990b; 1994, Chamot, 2000), especially in young language learners context, it then creates the needs for research on the topic. This study aims to explore the effects of social strategies instruction on students' use of social strategies as well as their English language communication abilities. Hopefully, the research findings can suggest how and when these social strategies can be introduced to young language learners in international schools, especially those using IB curriculum.

1.2 Research Questions

1.2.1 Is there any difference on the use of social strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction?

1.2.2.1 Is there any difference on the use of asking questions strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction?

1.2.2.2 Is there any difference on the use of cooperating with others strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction?

1.2.2.3 Is there any difference on the use of empathizing with others strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction?

1.2.2 Is there any difference on English language communication abilities between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To investigate the effects of social strategies instruction on students' social strategies use and their English language communication abilities in the following aspects:

1.3.1 To compare the use of social strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction

1.3.2.1 To compare the use of asking questions strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction

1.3.2.2 To compare the use of cooperating with others strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction

1.3.2.3 To compare the use of empathizing with others strategies between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction

1.3.2 To compare English language communication abilities between students receiving and not receiving social strategies instruction

1.4 Research Hypotheses

Many past research, though conducted with the adolescent or adult learners, have shown positive effects of strategy instruction emerged for proficiency in speaking (Dadour & Robbins, 1996 and O'Malley & Chamot, 1985) and reading (Park-Oh, 1994). Chamot et al. (1996), Cohen et al. (1995), and Cohen & Weaver (1998) investigated the effects of strategy instruction among native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages and found some positive results mixed with neutral findings. In other studies, strategy instruction led to increased EFL learning motivation (Nunan, 1997) and, among native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages, greater strategy use and self-efficacy (Chamot et al., 1996).

Assuming the same positive results within young language learners, the following hypotheses then were set to apply into this study.

1.4.1 Students receiving social strategies instruction will use social strategies more than those not receiving social strategies instruction.

1.4.1.1 Students receiving social strategies instruction will use asking questions strategies more than those not receiving social strategies instruction

1.4.1.2 Students receiving social strategies instruction will use cooperating with others strategies more than those not receiving social strategies instruction

1.4.1.3 Students receiving social strategies instruction will use empathizing with others strategies more than those not receiving social strategies instruction

1.4.2 Students receiving social strategies instruction will gain higher scores on English language communication abilities test than those not receiving social strategies instruction.

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 The population of the study is primary students currently enrolling in schools using International Baccalaureate curriculum

1.5.2 The variables in the study can be categorized into two groups as follows:

1.5.2.1 *Independent variable*: Social strategies instruction

1.5.2.2 *Dependent variables*: Students' use of social strategies in the aspects of asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others and their English language communication abilities.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The participants were assumed to be familiar with the international school setting and the fact of using English as a language of instruction and communication in the school. They were also assumed to give honest responses to the social strategies questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, it was assumed that they put effort in participating the social strategies lessons as well as the arranged activities.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study can be focused on the research instruments. The instruments using in the study were designed to be appropriate to young participants'

level, both in terms of age and competence. Thus, the language used as well as the format of the instruments had to be simplified and contained visual features to make it easy and attractive to young participants. In this regard, the instruments may be adopted in the study involving with children only.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

The key terms employed in the study can be defined as follows:

1.8.1 *Social Strategies* refer to specific actions, behaviors, or techniques that learners engage in which provide them opportunities to be exposed to and practice their knowledge on the target language. These behaviors or techniques are:

1.8.1.1 Asking questions for clarification, verification, and/or correction such as *Can you repeat that, please?, Pardon me, I don't understand – can you explain it again please?, What does that mean?, Is this right?, Am I correct?*

1.8.1.2 Cooperating with others i.e. peers and/or proficient users of the language such as *interact well with peers, group work, practice the target language with proficient users.*

1.8.1.3 Empathizing with others - to develop cultural understanding and become aware of others' thoughts and feelings; for examples, *compare and contrast students' culture and the target culture, read about the target culture, listen to the target culture music, watch the target culture movies, be caring and open-minded.*

1.8.2 *Social Strategies Instruction* refers to a language learning strategies instruction focusing on social strategies of asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. The social strategies instruction is direct but integrated in the library skills lesson. Each lesson is conducted in the school library and includes all three skills of library, social strategies, and English language communication abilities. It aims to be delivered to the experimental group in order to enhance their use of social strategies and their abilities of English language communication.

1.8.3 *Social Strategies Use* refers to participants' utilization of social strategies, in all three aspects of asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others, during the experimental period. The utilization of social strategies will be recorded by social strategies questionnaire, students' self-reflection, and teachers' observation.

1.8.4 *English Language Communication Abilities* refer to the ability to speak, listen, read, and write the target language fluently and cultural-appropriately e.g. get the ideas across, utter correct pronunciation, with less grammatical errors, and know the vocabulary needed at the primary level.

1.8.5 *Primary Students*, in this study, comprises Grade 1 and Grade 2 students age between six and eight years old enrolling at KIS International School. Their nationalities varies from native English speaking countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom to ESL and EFL countries such as Thailand, Japan, Korea, and China. They have been at this school and experienced the International Baccalaureate curriculum and English as a language of instruction for at least one year (former Kindergarten 3 and Grade 1 in the last academic year).

1.8.6 *International Baccalaureate Curriculum* refers to the programs originated by a non-profit organization called International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). Despite the full three programs offered from kindergartens to high school, the Primary Years Program (PYP) for students aged 3 to 12 is the focus curriculum in this research. It aims to develop the whole child both in the classroom and the world outside. The 10 PYP student profiles are fundamental to the curriculum. They are inquirers, caring, principled, balanced, reflective, open-minded, thinkers, risk-takers, knowledgeable, and communicators.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This study aims to provide the insights of social strategies instruction in order to increase the interaction between students from different backgrounds in

international school settings. Social strategies instruction is not only fostering English language communication abilities in children but also encouraging them to have better understanding amongst each other regardless of their diversity and uniqueness. Therefore, the study will certainly provide some guidelines to ministers, principals, curriculum developers, and, most importantly, English teachers to apply its findings in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning English, especially for communication purposes in schools using International Baccalaureate curriculum in Thailand.

1.10 An overview of the Study

Firstly, in this chapter, the general background of study as well as the statement of problem have been discussed and followed by other important issues of the study. Those issues are the research questions, the objectives of the study, the research hypotheses, the scope of the study, the assumptions of the study, the limitations of the study, the definitions of terms, and the significance of the study. Finally, it presented the overview of the study as an outline of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 discusses the related research and literature both locally and internationally. The concentration is on different aspects of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) with the concentration on social strategies, second language teaching and learning, Language Learning Strategies Instruction, social strategies and social skills, children's second language acquisition and English language communication abilities, and an overview of international education and cross cultural aspects.

Next, the research methodology is discussed in Chapter 3. The statement of hypotheses is introduced at the beginning of the chapter and then followed by research procedures providing details of research population and samples, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis methods.

In Chapter 4, the research findings are presented and divided into two parts of quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The quantitative part focuses on the data obtained from the English language communication abilities test, questionnaire,

teachers' observation, and students' self-reflection. While the descriptive part concentrates on the data gained from the focused-group interview.

Chapter 5 summarizes the overall study as well as its findings. Then, the discussion of the research findings is presented and followed by the pedagogical implications and recommendations of this study for future use and further research.