ทัศนคติของนักศึกษาในบริบทที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศที่มีต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยการใช้กลยุทธ์ภาษาเป้าหมาย

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คือเพื่อสำรวจความคิดเห็นของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยการใช้ กลยุทธ์ภาษาเป้าหมายกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยนี้ ได้แก่ นักศึกษา จำนวน 20 คนจากมหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดยะลา เครื่องมือวิจัยที่ใช้ ได้แก่ แบบแบบสอบถาม และสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ข้อมูลวิจัยที่ได้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ และคุณภาพ และอธิบายในรูปแบบบรรยาย ผลของการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล พบว่าผู้เรียนมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยการใช้กลยุทธ์ภาษาเป้าหมาย ($\bar{x}$ =3.77) เมื่อพิจารณาถึงทัศนคติแต่ละด้านพบว่า ด้านที่ผู้เรียนมีทัศนะคติที่ดีที่สุดคือ สื่อการสอน ($\bar{x}$ =4.19) ด้านที่ผู้เรียนมีทัศนะคติที่น้อยที่สุดคือ ด้านกระบวนการสอน ($\bar{x}$ =3.28) ผลของแบบสอบถามแบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง และแบบสัมภาษณ์ พบว่า ผู้เรียนมีทัศนะคติต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยการใช้กลยุทธ์ภาษาเป้าหมายที่แตกต่างกัน ผู้เรียนเห็นด้วยว่ากลยุทธ์นี้ ไม่ได้แค่ช่วยให้ผู้เรียนพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษเท่านั้น แต่ยังรวมถึงทักษะความรับผิดชอบต่อตนเอง เนื่องจากช่วยให้ผู้เรียนพึ่งตนเองมากขึ้น อย่างไรก็ตาม พบทัศนะคติในด้านลบเช่นกัน ผู้เรียนเห็นว่ากลยุทธ์การสอนนี้ไม่เหมาะสำหรับผู้เรียนที่มีทักษะภาษาอังกฤษอ่อน ผลของวิจัยเล่มนี้สรุปได้ว่าการเรียนรู้โดยการใช้กลยุทธ์ภาษาเป้าหมาย สามารถนำมาใช้ในการสอนเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษ ในระดับอุดมศึกษาและบริบทที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สองได้ โดยพิจารณาปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องอย่างรอบคอบ

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์ภาษาเป้าหมาย, ภาษาที่หนึ่งของผู้เรียน, บริบทที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Thai EFL Undergraduate Students' Perceptions toward Learning English through Target Language Strategy

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate EFL undergraduate students' perceptions toward learning English through target language strategy. The participants of this study were 20 participants at a university in Yala. The research instruments included questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed for arithmetic mean and interpreted using descriptive analysis. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interview were analyzed using content analysis. The results showed that the participants had good perceptions toward learning English through target language (English) strategy ($\bar{x}$=3.77).   When considering each domain, the results showed that the most highly rated domain was instructional medias ($\bar{x}$=4.19). The least rated domain was the teaching process ($\bar{x}$=3.28). The open-ended questions and semi-structured interview results showed that the students had mixed perceptions toward learning through target language. The students perceived that target language strategy was not only helpful for developing their English proficiency but also self-directed learning and self-responsibility since it offered them to be more self-dependence. However, some negative perceptions were also found. Some students pointed out that this teaching strategy was not appropriate for students those who have low English proficiency. The findings suggest that target language strategy can be implied to improve Thai EFL undergraduate students' English proficiency with careful considerations of involving factors.

Keywords: target language strategy, student's L1**,** EFL context

Nowadays, English is considered one of the most important languages in the world. It became one of the most taught languages (Dearden, 2014). Thailand is one of those. However, Wiriyachitra (2003) affirmed that English teaching system in Thailand are in crisis since the students are lack opportunity to expose English either inside and outside of classrooms and English environments are not widely provided. Even though English has been taught every level all over Thailand for decades based on Thai core curriculum. Therefore, suggestions have been stated by various researchers that English curriculum of Thai territory level should be concentrated on listening and speaking (Ratanapinyowong, Poopon, & Honsa, 2007).

Punthumasen (2007) stated that most of Thai students do not like to learn English because they feel that English subject is boring and uninteresting. Moreover, teaching methodologies and strategies utilized by teachers are not attractive enough. Therefore, teachers of English are required to find out the most appropriate methodology and strategy to implement to teach English concerning the context.

English activities are required to be provided by teachers of English in order to practice students' English skills. Harmer (1984) asserted that effective English activities contribute stimulating and motivating students. In addition, they increase students' self-confidence to take parts in their own learning such as responding the questions and exposing their English proficiency.

There are various teaching strategies that teachers can utilize as they contribute students to learn through activities such as responding questions and exposing their English as much as they can. One of recommended teaching strategies that teachers can use is target language.

Target language is everything that students learn, listen, speak, read and write or a language that students want to learn or teachers want students to learn by using target language to communicate (Polio & Duff ,1994) since students are able to acquire a language through listening, despite their proficiency of a language is poor such as grammar rules (Krashen, 1982). Learners learn meaning of a language through words construction (Vygotsky, 1986). When learners lean from the meanings, they will be able to recognize construction of

word meaning of a language and understand what they have heard and adapt the acquired languages when using (Long, 1981; Swain, 1995).

Target language or English is a strategy that has been widely used in ESL context for decades because of teachers and students in this context outperform the EFL context where teachers and students' English are considered low-intermediate (Krashen, 1982). However, it is still necessary to utilize target language in teaching a language, despite they are different in terms of English proficiency since it offers students opportunity to mainly use English in communication. According to whole language approach, children learn through language experience and surrounding, therefore teachers should utilize target language as much as possible (Pan, 2010). There have been controversial whether possible and how to implement target language in EFL context effectively.

Turnbull & Arnett (2002) asserted that when utilizing target language in a classroom, a teacher should promote students to learn proficiently as follow:

1. Build English environment in a classroom.

2. Use appropriate instructional medias to support students' learning such as pictures, videos and body language.

3. Concentrate on meanings, not too much detail.

4. Always ask students' understanding.

5. Initiate students' interesting issues in order to increase fluency, accuracy and complication of a language.

6. Always ask students in order to let students respond. At the beginning, a teacher should use closed-ended questions, when students are confident, opened-ended questions should be added (Walsh, 2002).

Despite target language strategy has been widely used and the outcomes have been appreciated, there are various point of views according to target language whether this method is effective to develop students' English. Bateman (2007) found in his study that a half number of participants of his study indicated that a teacher of English should use target language only as it offered the students authentic language learning experience.

Most previous researchers have conducted target language strategy in their English teaching in ESL context and a limited number of studies focused in EFL context, possibly

because students are considered having low proficiency of English. Therefore, the researcher would like to examine how undergraduate students in EFL context perceive target language strategy after learning English. This paper thus aims to answer the following questions: What are the perceptions of undergraduate students in EFL context toward learning English through target language strategy?

Research methodology

1. Participants

The participants of the current study were 20 undergraduate students at a university in Yala province, who were assigned into an experimental group of 18 hours of target language strategy. They were asked to answer the questionnaires asking about their perceptions toward learning English through target language strategy.

2. Context of the study

The participants were assigned to learn English through target language strategy taught

by the researcher. In the process of learning, they were first introduced to target language strategy in terms of roles of teacher and students. Then they were asked to engage in target language strategy following major teaching stages including pre-teaching, while-teaching and post-teaching. The students were assigned to learn individually. The focus of the learning were English conversation, prepositions, describing a picture, comparative and superlative, graph and chart reading, paragraph reading (job advertisements), relative pronouns, regular and irregular plural, how much/ how many, listening (-interviewing with a swimmer) listening - Go to the movie- stop wasting time, - free time.

3. Research method

3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire used to investigate students' perceptions toward learning English through target language strategy. It consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of 20 statements asking for students' perceptions toward knowledge gained and English skill improvement, efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods, instructional medias provided by the teacher and the learning process conducted by the teacher. The questionnaire was presented in a form of five Likert scale ranging from 5 "Strongly Agree", 4 "Agree", 3

"Neutral", 2 "Disagree" to 1 "Strongly Disagree". The questionnaire distributed to the students was presented in Thai in order to gain the participants' in-depth understanding of the questions. The second part was provided for students to give suggestions and recommendations in open-ended questions.

3.2 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview included six questions. It aimed to discover the students' in-depth perceptions toward learning English through target language strategy.

4. Data collection procedures

Before the data was collected, the overall research procedure was conducted including

three phrases which were 1) Pre-treatment process, the participants were assigned to complete pre-test on English conversation, grammar, reading and listening individually. 2) Treatment process, students in the experimental group were assigned to learn in target language strategy or English. The teaching materials provided including handouts and worksheets, and they were asked to take the posttest. 3) Post-treatment process, the questionnaires were distributed to all 20 students in the target language classroom and ten participants were randomly selected for the follow-up interviews. Students' native language; that is, Thai and local Malay were used in order to ensure mutual understanding between interviewer and students.

5. Data analysis

The questionnaire offered both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were computed for the arithmetic means and interpreted through descriptive analysis. The mean scores of all statements were interpreted based on Sojisirikul (2009); that is, the mean scores of students' perceptions were divided into three levels: bad, good and very good. The classification criteria were taken from a range of scores (one to five) divided by the number of levels created. The value calculated was 1.33, which was added to each mean score, making a range of 1.00-2.33, showing students' bad perceptions toward target language strategy, 2.34-3.67 representing students' good perceptions, and 3.68-5.00, illustrating students' very good perceptions.

The qualitative data from open-ended questions and the semi-structured interview were mixed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were grouped and presented descriptively to supplement the findings from the questions.

6. Findings

The collected data from five Likert scale were calculated for the arithmetic mean. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Students' overall perceptions on learning through target language strategy

	$\bar{x}$	SD	Interpretation
knowledge gained and English skill improvement	3.59	0.58	Good
Efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods	4.05	0.59	Very good
Instructional medias	4.19	0.55	Very good
The teaching process	3.28	0.57	Good
Total	**3.77**	**0.57**	**Very good**

The results in Table 1 reveal that overall, the participants well perceived that they had very good perceptions toward target language strategy ($\bar{x}$ =3.77). When considering each domain, the results reveal that the most highly rated domain was "Instructional medias" ($\bar{x}$=4.19), followed by "Efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods" ($\bar{x}$ =4.05), "Knowledge gained and English skill improvement" ($\bar{x}$=3.59) and "The teaching process" ($\bar{x}$=3.28) respectively.

Considering the attributes of each individual domain, the data obtained from the questionnaire revealed the students' perceptions in Tables 2-5.

Table 2 Students' perceptions toward knowledge gained and skill improvement

knowledge gained and English skill improvement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I have developed my English listening skill.	0	0	10	10	0	3.50	Good
2. I have developed my English speaking skill.	0	0	12	7	1	3.45	Good
3. I have developed my English reading skill.	0	3	12	5	0	3.10	Good
4. I have developed my English grammar skill.	0	2	14	4	0	3.10	Good
5. I have developed my self-directed learning skill.	0	0	6	10	4	3.90	Very good
6. I feel more confident to use English inside and outside the classroom.	0	0	6	14	0	3.70	Very good
7. I become more enthusiastic to learn English.	0	0	1	11	8	4.35	Very good
Total						X=3.58	Good

When considering the attributes of knowledge gained and English skill improvement, the results reveal that the students perceived being more enthusiastic to learn English as the highest rank ($\bar{x}$ =4.35), followed by developing self-directed learning skill ($\bar{x}$ =3.90) and being more confident to use English inside and outside the classroom ($\bar{x}$ =3.70). Interestingly, they viewed that the development of reading and grammar skills as the lowest rank ($\bar{x}$ =3.10).

In qualitative responses, the participants also mentioned that they gained various kinds of knowledge from learning through target language. They perceived that it was not

only helpful for developing their English skills but also improving their self-responsibility to learn English.

I think I do not improve my knowledge only, but it also helps me to improve my self-responsibility because the teacher taught how to search the meaning of the vocabulary with the picture in order to be easy to recognize the meaning and it helps me to understand that to be good at English, being self-responsible is needed. (Respondent 3, interview)

I feel that teaching English by using target language helps me to be more confident to use English. Before I was not confident to speak English with foreigners. (Respondent 4, interview)

Regarding Efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods, the data obtained from the questionnaire showed the students' perceptions in Table 3.

Table 3 Students' perceptions toward Efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods

Efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	interpretation
1. The teacher selected to use easy and uncomplicated English vocabulary to communicate	0	0	2	16	2	4.00	Very good
2. The teacher used body language to explain in order to be more understanding.	0	0	3	12	5	4.10	Very good
3. The teacher always asked the students' understanding.	0	0	5	11	4	3.95	Very good
4. The teacher always tried to stimulate the students	0	0	2	12	6	4.20	Very good
5. The teacher tried to explain and gave various kinds of examples	0	0	4	14	2	3.90	Very good

6. The teacher is able to use English fluently	0	0	2	13	5	4.15	Very good
Total						**4.05**	**Very good**

The results in Table 3 show that the students had very good perceptions toward Efficiency of the teacher's teaching methods ($\bar{x}$=4.05) They viewed that the aspect of "The teacher always tried to stimulate the students" ($\bar{x}$= 4.20) as the highest rank followed by "The teacher is able to use English fluently" ($\bar{x}$=4.15), "The teacher used body language to explain in order to be more understanding" ($\bar{x}$=4.10). The teacher selected to use easy and uncomplicated English vocabulary to communicate" ($\bar{x}$= 4.00) and "The teacher always asked the students' understanding" ($\bar{x}$=3.95). Despite a good perception about "The teacher tried to explain and gave various kinds of examples", the participants perceived it as the lowest rank ($\bar{x}$=3.90).

The qualitative data reveal that some participants confirmed their positive perceptions about using target language that it might be difficult for some low English proficiency students to understand if the teacher does not understand the context and uses inappropriate methods for the learners, and the teacher would especially focus on low English proficiency students it made those students felt like they were important, as stated in the following comments:

Before, I thought I did not like to study English because I did not have basic English knowledge. I always worried when learning English, especially with the teacher who used English as a medium of instruction but with this teacher (the researcher) it made me feel that he understood the learners' context well and he would explain until the learners understand. (Respondent 19, interview)

However, the results show that some skills such as grammar and reading, the teacher should sometimes use students' mother tongue because it would help students understand more.

I think learning through target language all the time is suitable for listening and speaking skill only, for grammar skill, the teacher should use students' mother tongue. (Respondent 20, interview)

In terms of the instructional medias, the participants' views from the questionnaire are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Students' perceptions toward the instructional medias

Instructional medias	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	interpretation
1. The teacher used appropriate and easy understanding instructional medias	0	0	4	11	5	4.05	Very good
2. The teacher used pictures and videos to explain the meaning of vocabulary	0	0	0	12	8	4.40	Very good
3. The teacher used modern instructional medias	0	0	0	11	9	4.45	Very good
4. The teacher used instructional medias which were related to evaluation	0	0	4	15	1	3.85	Very good
Total						**4.18**	**Very good**

The results in Table 4 show that the students perceived the "The teacher used modern instructional medias" as the highest rank ($\bar{x}$=4.45), followed by "The teacher used pictures and videos to explain the meaning of vocabulary" ($\bar{x}$=4.40), "The teacher used appropriate and easy understanding" ($\bar{x}$=4.05) and the lowest rank of participants' perceptions found was "The teacher used instructional medias which were related to evaluation ($\bar{x}$=3.85).

In qualitative responses from semi-structured interview, the participants are likely to have mixed perceptions. On the one hand, most of the participants mentioned that the

instructional medias were key factors contributing the learners' understanding of the contents, as affirmed in the following comment:

In my opinion, illustrations and visual videos were key factors to assist me understand the contents more. (Respondent 19, interview)

I have never learned English with a teacher who used this much instructional medias before. It helped me recognize the meaning of vocabulary better. (Respondent 2, interview)

On the other hand, some participants viewed that the instructional medias needed to be various, even the instructional medias were composed of illustrations and visual videos but they might be difficult for some students, as mentioned in the following comment:

I think the instructional medias applied by the teacher were not various to help students to select the most appropriate for them. (Respondent 20, interview)

The videos and illustrations used by the teacher were not appropriate for the students those who have low basic English. (Respondent 13, interview)

In relation to the teaching process, the data obtained from the questionnaire revealed students' perceptions shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Students' perceptions to the teaching process

The teaching process	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	interpretation
1. Teaching process was systematic.	0	0	11	9	0	3.45	Good
2. Learning evaluation method was appropriate.	0	0	11	9	0	3.45	Good
3. Time allocation for learning through target language was sufficient	0	5	11	4	0	2.95	Good
Total						3.28	Good

The results in Table 5 show that the students perceived that teaching process was systematic and learning evaluation method was appropriate ($\bar{x}$=3.45), and the lowest rank of

participants' perceptions found was time allocation for learning through target language was sufficient ($\bar{x}$=2.95).

The students pointed out that before entering to each lesson, the teacher would always stimulate the students by greeting and asking simple questions that every student could answer in order to check their readiness to study in target language.

I like to study because the teacher always stimulated the students before entering to each lesson, it helped students to adapt themselves and ready to learn English through target language better. (Respondent 9, interview)

Due to stimulating students, checking students' readiness and learning grammar rules required additional time, thus the students pointed out that time allocation was not sufficient and time was required to be expanded.

I think learning through target language throughout the lesson is appropriate only for listening and speaking sills, but the grammar rules, the teacher should have used students' first language. (Respondent 13, interview)

I feel that time allocation for learning was not sufficient, especially before entering to each lesson and learning grammar rules because the teacher needed additional time to explain, so the teacher should have added more time. (Respondent 15, interview)

Discussion

When considering the students' views, the results reveal that most of the students had good perceptions toward learning English through target language. Most of them agreed that this teaching strategy is not only helpful for developing their English knowledge, listening, speaking reading and writing, but also their self-directed learning and self-responsibility (Dickson, 1996). However, some students had negative views. They pointed out that the teacher should have used their mother tongue when learning about grammar rules. This point is cohered with Levine (2003). Learning through target language is obstacle for their learning as they have never learned though this strategy before. They were much required to adapt themselves. If the teacher needed to use target language, he needed to select the most appropriate teaching materials (Ima, 2017). Especially for students those who have low English proficiency (Horasan, 2014). So, the teacher should use visual videos

and illustrations which are appropriate for different English proficiency students (Arulselvi, 2011).

Considering particular aspects of students' perceptions, it was found that time allocation provided by the teacher for each lesson was not sufficient. They viewed that learning through target language strategy, time allocation was an obstacle since some students needed more time to understand English because of limitation of vocabulary, so a teacher who prefers to use this teaching strategy is required to consider time allocation in accordance with the content of each lesson and the differences of the students' English proficiency. If some lesson contains a number of contents, time allocation should be expanded, especially in terms of grammar rules (Jack & Ricard, 2002).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study reveals that most students had positive perceptions toward target language (English) strategy in class aiming to develop their English proficiency. It can prove that target language strategy cannot only be utilized in ESL context but also in EFL context where students are considered having low English proficiency. However, some limitations are required to be addressed. The instructional medias should be various and appropriate in accordance with the different proficiency of students. and time allocation for each lesson should be flexible and expanded depending on the skill learned.

Recommendations

1. Due to this teaching strategy, a teacher is required to use various kinds of instructional medias such as videos and amplifier. So, this teaching strategy might not be appropriate for a school where has a limit number of instructional medias.

2. Due to this teaching strategy is considered a new strategy in EFL context. Therefore, a teacher is required to concentrate on the meaning of vocabulary and understanding rather than theory in order to reduce stress of students.

3. A teacher should create English learning environment in class by conducting communication activity. Especially at the very beginning of the class in order to offer opportunity for those who have better and low English proficiency students involve in their own learning.

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4. A teacher should explain to students that learning through this strategy, students might face a problem about understanding but they need to try and a teacher needs to believe in them.

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