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มนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏอุดรดิต

กลวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเองเพื่อยกระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ:

กรณีศึกษานักศึกษาศาษาภาษาอังกฤษที่มีความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษสูง

วันที่รับ : 30 มิถุนายน 2567

วันที่แก้ไข : 10 สิงหาคม 2567

วันที่ตอบรับ : 13 สิงหาคม 2567

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สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ หลักสูตรศิลปศาสตรบัณฑิต

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 1) เพื่อศึกษาพฤติกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเอง (SEL) ของนักศึกษาศาษาภาษาอังกฤษที่มีความสามารถด้านภาษาอังกฤษในระดับสูง และสำรวจวิธีการที่นักศึกษาพึงพอใจใช้ในการพัฒนาทักษะภาษาอังกฤษหลักทั้งสี่ด้าน ได้แก่ การพูด การฟัง การอ่าน และการเขียน และ 2) เพื่อศึกษาเทคนิคส่วนตัวที่นักศึกษาใช้จัดการกับปัญหาที่พบในระหว่างการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเอง กลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยประกอบด้วยนักศึกษาศาษาภาษาอังกฤษจำนวน 30 คนที่มีเกรดเฉลี่ยมากกว่า 3.50 ในทุกรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลประกอบด้วยแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่ม สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลคือค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ผลการวิจัยพบว่านักศึกษาใช้เครื่องมือดิจิทัลเป็นหลัก โดยเฉพาะ Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot และเครื่องมือแปลภาษาออนไลน์ควบคู่กับการใช้เทคนิคแบบดั้งเดิมเพื่อเพิ่มพูนทักษะการเรียนรู้ภาษา และจัดการปัญหาระหว่างการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับงานวิจัยนี้ คือ ผู้สอนควรบูรณาการวิธีการแบบผสมผสานโดยใช้เทคโนโลยี AI ร่วมกับเทคนิคแบบดั้งเดิมเพื่อยกระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา

คำสำคัญ: พฤติกรรมการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษด้วยตนเอง, ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ, ปัญหาในการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ



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Self-English Learning Strategies to Achieve Higher Proficiency: A Case Study of High Proficiency English Major Students

Received : 30 June 2024

Revised : 10 August 2024

Accepted : 13 August 2024

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to 1) to explore the self-English learning (SEL) strategies employed by high proficiency English major students and investigate their preferred methods for improving the four main English skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and 2) to examine the effective techniques these students use to overcome challenges encountered in their English language development journey. The participants consisted of 30 English major students holding Grade Point Average more than 3.50 in all English subject fields. The survey instruments used for collecting the data included a questionnaire and focus group interview and to be analyzed by mean and standard deviation. The result revealed that these advanced English students primarily utilize digital resources, particularly AI chatbots and online translation tools, alongside traditional techniques to enhance their language acquisition and address specific learning challenges. Based on the results, it is suggested that instructors should integrate a hybrid approach, combining AI-powered tools with traditional techniques to enhance students' English proficiency achievement.

Keywords: Self-English learning strategies, English proficiency, English learning difficulties



Introduction

In the new era of digital globalization, English is indispensable in people's daily interactions, serving as the primary mode of communication during their everyday conversations, which represent the verbal and non-verbal exchanges between individuals in their daily routines (Fatmawati & Suryadi, 2020). Additionally, mastery in English language is now paramount for those aiming to thrive in their academic, professional, and personal pursuits. As a result, self-crafting successful approaches to bolster English language proficiency has become a primary focus for researchers, educators, and learners striving to advance professionally and personally across all language domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In the context of English education in Thailand, learning English solely in the classroom is often insufficient for achieving the required levels of proficiency due to limited exposure, a focus on theory, and a lack of practical application. Therefore, a multifaceted approach, including technology integration, self-directed learning, and interactive curricula, is necessary to enhance English language skills effectively (Yusuk, 2020; Tipprachaban, 2022; Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2022; Poonpon et. al., 2022; Waluyo & Arsyad, 2022). However, high and low proficiency English learners absolutely have their own preferred strategies to achieve their desired proficiency level. As found in some studies, high proficiency English learners predominantly use advanced cognitive and metacognitive strategies, whereas low proficiency learners rely more on basic, supportive, and social strategies (Fitria, 2021; Machimana & Genis, 2022; Jiao & Ganapathy, 2023). This distinction underscores the significant influence of proficiency levels on the selection and range of language learning strategies employed by English learners.

Among adult English learners in higher education, students at various proficiency levels strive to improve their English competency in preparation for their careers after graduation. Graduates with high English proficiency are likely to receive diverse opportunities for securing great jobs with high compensation. Therefore, especially in digital era nowadays, self-English learning (SEL) becomes significantly strategies to independently develop students' English skills during under or post- graduation. Based on the researcher's observations and conversations with learners at different English proficiency levels regarding their SEL strategies, these students shared various interesting and useful techniques for reaching higher proficiency levels. They generously taught their effective, practical strategies to close friends and classmates, fostering a collaborative learning environment. Inspired by this impressive scene of educational sharing, the researcher became interested in exploring the SEL strategies of high English proficiency students majoring in English programs. The goal was to identify their unique SEL techniques that could potentially benefit lower English proficiency students, helping them adapt these strategies to achieve higher levels of proficiency.

Apart from students' benefits, English instructors can significantly enhance their instructional methods and tailor their teaching approaches to address the diverse needs of their students. This not



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only promotes a more inclusive classroom environment but also encourages active participation and engagement. They are able to incorporate these strategies into their lesson plans, providing targeted support and fostering a positive learning atmosphere. Ultimately, this approach can enhance student outcomes, boost motivation levels, and foster a more cohesive learning community.

Literature Review

Speaking and Listening

SEL strategies for improving English speaking and Listening are universally employed by students throughout their learning process in order to facilitate their acquisition and retention of new linguistic skills. Previously, several researchers demonstrated a variety of autonomous learning strategies for speaking and listening development. Listyani & Kristie (2018) reported that role-play and group talk significantly fostered students' self-confidence while speaking English. Avilez and Larenas (2020) revealed the self-speaking English assessment contributed to students' oral communication development with more self-confidence. Self-talk in English was effectively techniques to improve students' pronunciation, expression, fluency, and vocabulary in the study of Hermansyah (2021). The study of Yanbin (2022) found that question-answering (QA) method not only increased students' accuracy in English listening comprehension but also supported the development of their speaking abilities. Kochubei (2022) disclosed that students gained skillful accuracy to interpret spoken messages through critical thinking including identifying context, recognizing speaker intentions, and differentiating facts from opinions. Sun (2022) demonstrated that self-monitoring to identify weak point for improvement on listening practice reflected students' higher listening skill achievement and led to continuous and substantial improvement.

These studies collectively underscored the effectiveness of various SEL strategies in enhancing English speaking and listening skills, although their efficacy may vary based on individual learners' needs and learning styles. Aside from these SEL strategies, in a digital age nowadays, online technology tools and artificial intelligence (AI) have become useful assistants for students. Implementing online language learning technologies facilitates students' independent practice of speaking and listening skills. These tools allow students to practice based on their English level and at convenient times and places without limitations (Suryana et al., 2020; Guo, 2023). Such technologies have become popular not only among students but also among English instructors, who apply them to help students achieve higher English proficiency more quickly. However, it is important to remember that while technology can greatly enhance language learning, it should complement rather than replace teacher instruction and interaction. Balancing technological tools with traditional teaching methods may provide the most comprehensive and effective approach to English language education.



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Reading and Writing

As seen in prior research, some researchers suggested some effective students' SEL techniques for improving their reading and writing skills. Winarto (2022) presented that peer and self-editing strategies helped students improve written quality on punctuation, content, organization, grammar, and sentence structure, as well as enhancing their reading comprehension. Goal-setting, time management, arranging the environment, seeking help, and self-monitoring were effective methods to enhance student writing skill, according to the study of Umamah et al. (2022). Umamah's study (2022) revealed students' improved writing performance when employing pre-writing plans, specific writing goals, quality self-assessment, peer/teacher feedback, and systematic revision processes. Similarly, online tools and AI have been employed to assist students' SEL with text translation and composition tasks (Rugaiyah, 2023; Fithriani, 2023). These tools have been utilized to meet students' individual needs; for example, personalized feedback, reduced test anxiety, improved peer feedback skills together with feedback literacy, boosted language and digital literacy, enhanced writing outcomes, increased student engagement, and enhanced reading comprehension (Dong et al., 2022; Yi & Kim, 2023; Rad & Jafarpour, 2023; Hwang et al., 2023). Given the diverse benefits of AI tools for language learners, users should consider integrating these technologies into their reading and writing English practices. They can be guided to use AI assistants for proofreading, generating writing ideas, and analyzing complex texts, while maintaining a balance between AI support and independent English development. While these studies provide valuable insights into effective SEL strategies for enhancing students' English reading and writing skills, further research is needed to explore additional SEL strategies employed by high-level students. This exploration could potentially benefit lower proficiency students, offering them improved support and guidance.

Research Objectives

According to the problems stated in the introduction, this research aims to address the following two research questions.

1. What self-English learning (SEL) strategies do high English skill students used to improve their English skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing?
2. What are their most preferred SEL strategies to develop each skill together with their always faced obstacles and how they deal with those problem?

Methodology

Research design

This study utilized a qualitative-phenomenological methodology due to the nature of the research inquiry. Qualitative methods were employed because the study investigates the personal



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experiences of students engaging in SEL strategies to enhance their English proficiency. Moreover, the phenomenological approach was fitting, as the students had direct, lived experiences with SEL strategies aimed at improving their four English language skills; speaking and listening, and reading and writing. This methodological approach allowed for an in-depth exploration and understanding of the participants' subjective perspectives and meanings attributed to their SEL experiences.

Participants

The study sample comprised 30 high-achieving students enrolled in the English program, all of whom maintained a Grade Point Average (GPA) above 3.50 in their English major courses, specifically in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These participants were selected through a purposeful sampling method, as recommended by Benoot et al (2016), which enables researchers to choose informants who were most likely to generate valuable data. These students were selected for their high English proficiency and use of SEL strategies, making them valuable informants for the study's objectives.

Instrument and procedures

The SEL questionnaire, a 40-item instrument using a five-point Likert scale, was employed to assess the frequency of strategy use by participants to enhance their four English key skills. Each language skill domain was represented by ten items, culminating in a comprehensive 40-item instrument. The questionnaire's content validity was established through expert evaluation by three seasoned professionals in higher education, each possessing over 15 years of experience in the field with an Item Objective Congruence (IOC) score exceeding 0.5 for all question items and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.844. The survey included variables such as gender and educational level and was conducted electronically. The participants received a Google Form via email, detailing the study's purpose, the estimated 15-minute completion time, and voluntary participation, with responses limited to one submission per participant. After collecting data through questionnaires, focus group discussions were conducted to gather in-depth information from the participants. The 15 participants were divided into three groups of five each. Prior to the formal discussions, the researchers established trust and rapport by explaining the study's objectives. Participants were given ample time to decide on their involvement and were informed about ethical considerations, such as the use of pseudonyms, confidentiality of information for research purposes only, and the option to withdraw at any time. They were encouraged to express their concerns freely. Each group spent up to 17 minutes in interview discussions, sharing their SEL strategies with one another in a joyful and enthusiastic atmosphere.

Focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed, and verified by participants to ensure accuracy and validity. Following this process, the verified transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis by the data analysts. Through this systematic approach, the researchers aimed to gather rich, firsthand



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accounts of the participants' experiences with SEL strategies, while adhering to ethical research practices and ensuring data trustworthiness.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data, including means and standard deviations, revealed the frequency of SEL strategies used to improve four main English skills. The means were adjusted to accurately reflect their scale and were subsequently assigned appropriate levels as follows.

Rating	Range	Frequency of Use
1	1.00 - 1.80	Never: The strategy is not used at all
2	1.81 - 2.60	Rarely: The strategy is used infrequently, with minimal application
3	2.61 - 3.40	Sometimes: The strategy is used occasionally, as needed
4	3.41 - 4.20	Often: The strategy is used frequently, with regular application
5	4.21 - 5.00	Always: The strategy is used consistently, as a primary approach

Qualitative data was derived from three focus group interviews of 5 participants with 8 open-ended questions to gain insights into students' SEL strategies for four English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The interviews aimed to explore the participants' preferred techniques for independently learning English, the common challenges they face in each skill area, and their personal strategies for overcoming these problems.

Findings

1. Self-learning strategies to improve English skills

According to the data provided by the participant, the most frequently used SEL strategies to improve their four main English skills varied depending on the skill being targeted. To develop their speaking skills, the participants reported taking note of their errors and using them as opportunities for improvement. When it came to enhancing their listening abilities, they mostly employed three strategies including listening to English without focusing on grammar details, continuing to listen for overall meaning comprehension despite missing certain details, and requesting repetition or rephrasing when faced with comprehension difficulties. To improve their reading skills, the students always utilized techniques like re-reading unclear parts, drawing upon their background knowledge to aid comprehension, predicting the main point by examining titles, headings, or pictures, and figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues. However, for writing improvement, the students did not report any strategies in the 'always use' frequency category. Instead, their highest reported frequency for writing strategies started at the 'often use' level. Although the aforementioned strategies were most frequently reported, students also employed other techniques with varying frequency, which will be discussed in subsequent sections.



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Speaking

Table 1 displays the self-strategies students employed to improve their English-speaking skills, arranged in order of frequency of use, with mean scores (M) and standard deviations (S.D.), along with explanations for each rank.

Table 1 Self- strategies to improve speaking skill

Strategies to improve speaking skill	M	SD	Meaning
1. I embrace mistakes as chances to expand my knowledge.	4.50	0.86	Always use
2. I use online resources (videos, podcasts, etc.) to listen to and mimic native speakers.	3.80	1.00	Often use
3. I prepare notes before having to speak English in situations like presentations.	3.73	1.41	Often use
4. I consciously focus on my pronunciation, stress, and intonation when speaking.	3.47	1.17	Often use
5. I practice speaking English out loud by myself to build fluency.	3.43	1.07	Often use
6. I role-play or practice English conversations in front of a mirror.	3.30	1.24	Sometimes use
7. I make an effort to use new vocabulary words in conversations.	3.23	1.17	Sometimes use
8. I try to notice and learn common idiomatic expressions used by English speakers.	3.10	1.12	Sometimes use
9. I seek out opportunities to talk in English with classmates or language partners.	2.90	1.09	Sometimes use
10. I record myself speaking English, then listen back and identify areas to improve.	2.83	1.42	Sometimes use
Average	3.43	1.16	Often use

The data in Table 1 shows that taking notes on errors had the highest frequency of use among strategies to improve students' English-speaking skills. (M=4.50; SD = 0.86). The often-applied strategies often applied by the students respectively included imitating native speakers from various online media (M=3.8; SD = 1.00), preparing notes for dialogue practice before having English speech or presentation (M =3.73; SD = 1.41), focusing on phonological features (such as pronunciation, stress, and intonation) during speech (M =3.47; SD = 1.17) and self-talk aloud practicing to build fluency (M =3.43; SD = 1.07). The remaining strategies, used with moderate frequency, included role-play to a mirror (M=3.30; SD = 1.24), trying to use new words (M =3.23; SD = 1.17), picking up idioms from interlocutors (M =3.10; SD = 1.12), creating opportunities for English conversations with others (M =2.90; SD = 1.09), and recording self-talk to identify and correct errors (M =2.83; SD = 1.42).

Listening

The data presented in table 2 displays the listening strategies employed by students, ranked by frequency of use from the most common to the least utilized to enhance their English listening skill.



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Table 2. Self- strategies to improve listening skill

Strategies to improve listening skill	M	SD	Meaning
1. I try to have an open mindset and listen without overthinking grammar details.	4.57	0.63	Always use
2. I continue listening to grasp the overall meaning even if missing certain details.	4.50	0.73	Always use
3. I ask speakers to repeat or rephrase if I don't understand something.	4.23	0.82	Always use
4. I try to identify key words, phrases or topics when listening to lectures/conversations.	4.20	0.89	Often use
5. I engage with various English audio materials like music, podcasts, and audiobooks.	3.97	0.96	Often use
6. I employ contextual clues to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words.	3.93	1.08	Often use
7. I practice listening for specific details and main ideas.	3.80	1.00	Often use
8. I vary the accents/speakers I listen to in order to build flexibility.	3.73	1.28	Often use
9. I start watching English movies/TV shows with English subtitles, then remove them.	3.47	1.20	Often use
10. I take notes or make summaries when listening to help me stay focused.	2.67	1.18	Sometimes use
Average	3.91	0.98	Often use

Table 2 highlights the three highest used listening strategies employed by students: open-minded listening without grammar concerns ($M=4.57$; $SD=0.63$), grasping main ideas despite missing details ($M=4.50$; $SD=0.73$), and asking speakers to repeat unclear messages ($M=4.23$; $SD=0.82$). Additionally, the students reported six strategies used with moderate frequency: catching key words in conversations ($M=4.20$; $SD=0.89$), using audio media for listening practice ($M=3.97$; $SD=0.96$), inferring unknown words from context ($M=3.93$; $SD=1.08$), practicing listening for gist ($M=3.80$; $SD=1.00$), improving accent recognition through exposure to various English accents ($M=3.73$; $SD=1.28$), and watching movies both with and without subtitles ($M=3.47$; $SD=1.20$). Among all strategies, taking notes during listening was found to be the least utilized approach ($M=2.67$; $SD=1.18$).

Reading

Regarding the students' English reading development, as seen in table 3, the pattern of strategy use mirrors that of listening strategies. Three approaches were employed with high frequency, six strategies were utilized at a moderate level, and only one strategy was used least frequently for enhancing reading ability.

Table 3 Self- strategies to improve reading skill

Strategies to improve Reading	M	SD	Meaning
1. If I don't understand something, I re-read difficult sections slowly.	4.63	0.61	Always use
2. I use my background knowledge to aid my understanding.	4.47	0.63	Always use
3. I make predictions about what I'll read based on titles, headings, or pictures.	4.37	0.81	Always use
4. I use contextual clues to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words.	4.13	1.07	Often use



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5. I monitor my comprehension and go back if I start getting lost.	3.93	0.94	Often use
6. I identify the main ideas and sort out the details that support them.	3.80	0.85	Often use
7. I try to read a variety of texts (articles, stories, websites) in English.	3.53	1.14	Often use
8. I use online tools like OpenAI and search engines to look up unfamiliar words.	3.50	1.20	Often use
9. I take notes or underline/highlight key information as I read.	3.43	1.30	Often use
10. I visualize descriptions and imagine the scene as I read.	3.10	1.56	Sometimes use
Average	3.89	1.01	Often use

The result in table 3 reveals the three mostly strategies applied by the students including: re-reading the unclear parts of passage ($M=4.63$; $SD=0.61$), using background knowledge to understand content ($M=4.47$; $SD=0.63$), and previewing the main idea by skimming visual elements or titles ($M=4.37$; $SD=0.81$). Six moderately used strategies consisted of inferring unknown vocabulary meanings from context ($M=4.13$; $SD=1.07$), reviewing the text when comprehension falters ($M=3.93$; $SD=0.94$), identifying main ideas and supporting details ($M=3.80$; $SD=0.85$), engaging with diverse reading texts ($M=3.53$; $SD=1.14$), using OpenAI to explain unfamiliar words ($M=3.50$; $SD=1.20$), and highlighting key points while reading ($M=3.43$; $SD=1.30$). The least frequently used technique was creating visual aids while reading ($M=3.10$; $SD=1.56$).

Writing

As for strategies for improving students' English writing skills, the data reveals a different pattern compared to listening and reading. No approaches were employed with the highest frequency. Instead, students used various techniques ranging from 'often' to 'sometimes' in frequency. Only one approach was utilized at the lowest level of frequency.

Table 4 Self- strategies to improve writing skill

Strategies to improve Writing	M	SD	Meaning
1. I carefully proofread my writing to correct mistakes.	4.17	0.87	Often use
2. I brainstorm or outline main ideas before I start writing.	4.03	0.89	Often use
3. I write several drafts, revising and reorganizing my ideas.	3.83	0.99	Often use
4. I use tools like OpenAI and search engines for help.	3.53	1.25	Often use
5. I review my past writing to learn from feedback.	3.47	1.25	Often use
6. I ask classmates or my teacher to give feedback on my writing.	3.43	1.28	Often use
7. I model my writing style and vocabulary after examples I've read.	3.37	1.33	Sometimes use
8. I set specific goals to improve certain writing skills or areas.	3.00	1.34	Sometimes use
9. I do freewriting exercises to improve fluency without worrying about errors.	2.63	1.35	Sometimes use
10. I practice writing in different formats (emails, essays, stories, etc.).	2.33	0.99	Rarely use
Average	3.38	1.15	Sometimes use



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Table 4 illustrates the writing strategies employed by students. The six most frequently used approaches were: reviewing compositions to correct mistakes ($M=4.17$; $SD=0.87$), outlining main ideas before writing ($M=4.03$; $SD=0.89$), drafting ideas to arrange organization ($M=3.83$; $SD= 0.99$), using OpenAI for writing assistance ($M=3.53$; $SD=1.25$), learning from previous written tasks ($M=3.47$; $SD=1.25$), and seeking corrective feedback from peers and instructors ($M=3.43$; $SD=1.28$). Moreover, students moderately employed three strategies: adapting writing styles from reviewed passages ($M=3.37$; $SD=1.33$), setting goals to improve writing ability ($M=3.00$; $SD= 1.34$), and practicing freewriting without concern for errors ($M=2.63$; $SD=1.35$). The least frequently used approach was practicing various writing formats ($M=2.33$; $SD=0.99$).

2. Students' Strategies to Overcome English Learning Challenges

Table 5-8 presents data from 15 students across three focus groups, detailing preferred strategies, common obstacles, and specific techniques for overcoming challenges in speaking, listening, reading, and writing English.

Table 5 Students' Top Strategies for Enhancing Speaking

Most Preferred Technique	Challenges in Using English	Solutions to Challenges
1. Speaking aloud to oneself in English	1. Limited English vocabulary	1. Googling the definition of an unknown word from Thai to English
2. Imitating English accents from movies and podcasts	2. Nervousness when speaking English	2. Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) like ChatGPT or mobile translators to translate statements from Thai to English
3. Practicing spoken English with classmates	3. Difficulty with English pronunciation	3. Asking the interlocutor directly during a conversation
4. Joining English speaking challenges on the TikTok app		
5. Chatting with other gamers while playing online games		
6. Talking to different foreigners on various chat apps		
7. Singing along to English songs		
8. Reading on-screen text out loud while playing games		

To improve spoken English, the students revealed their favorite approaches including speaking English aloud to themselves, reading aloud along with video subtitles, audio scripts, or on-screen text of online games, and conversing in English with classmates and foreigners through online games or chat apps. The challenges they frequently encountered included low proficiency in using extensive vocabulary, inability to control nervousness during communication, and unfamiliarity with pronouncing English words correctly. To tackle their difficulties in speaking English, they mostly utilized various online tools and AI applications for translation assistance, and sought help from interlocutors to explain unknown words.



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Table 6 Students' Top Strategies for Enhancing Listening

Most Preferred Technique	Challenges in Using English	Solutions to Challenges
1. Capturing the main idea while listening to conversations	1. Inability to carry on a long conversation due to difficulty understanding speakers	1. Googling the definition of an unknown word from Thai to English
2. Listening to English music, talk shows, and game caster	2. Unfamiliarity with different English accents	2. Inferring the meaning of unknown words using context clues
3. Watching movies with or without subtitles	3. Limited English vocabulary	3. Re-listening videos with subtitles in Thai and English at a slower speed
4. Becoming familiar with English through passive listening		3. Asking the interlocutor to repeat the statement more clearly and slowly

In terms of enhancing English listening skill, the students mentioned four preferred methods: identifying the main idea expressed in conversations or lectures, listening to a variety of entertainment media, using both subtitled and non-subtitled visual aids, and engaging in passive listening to build familiarity with general conversational themes. Their difficulties in listening to English encompassed an inability to carry on long conversations due to difficulty understanding speakers, lack of familiarity with various English accents, and a limited English vocabulary. Approaches they employed to overcome those challenges consisted of translating unknown statement with online search engines or AI apps as similarly used in assisting English speaking, using context clues to understand unfamiliar words, replaying visual or audio media at a lower speed to grasp the meaning of statements, and kindly requesting repetition from conversational partner to explain unclear statements.

Table 7 Students' Top Strategies for Enhancing Reading

Most Preferred Technique	Challenges in Using English	Solutions to Challenges
1. Skimming text to find the main idea and scanning to seek specific answers	1. Limited English vocabulary	1. Googling the definition of an unknown joke from English to Thai
2. Reading game plots and on-screen text during online gameplay	2. Misinterpretation of content in the text	2. Using ChatGPT, mobile translators, or a dictionary to translate text from English to Thai
3. Practicing reading various texts such as short stories, novels, fairy tales, comics, and international news	3. Numerous archaic or unfamiliar words in novels	3. Inferring the meaning of unknown words using context clues
	4. Many terminologies in specialized news	4. Re-reading unclear parts
		5. Finding synonyms for new words to expand vocabulary
		6. Taking notes and highlighting unfamiliar words for later rechecking their meanings

As shown in table 7, personal strategies to enhance English reading skills among the students comprise text skimming and scanning to find the main idea and specific information, and practicing



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reading various text materials such as game scenes or on-screen text, as well as paper-based materials like short stories, novels, fairy tales, comics, and international news. Every time they read these types of texts, they struggled to understand the main points and lost comprehension before finishing due to their low proficiency in extensive vocabulary, which led to misunderstandings, especially with terminologies in specific areas of international news. Likewise, googling for the meanings of unknown words or synonyms through various search engines or AI apps was commonly employed to assist in reading English. Besides using online tools, they disclosed other useful techniques to help infer text meaning or definitions, such as using context clues and re-reading unclear parts multiple times to achieve the correct main point.

Table 8 Students' Top Strategies for Enhancing Writing

Most Preferred Technique	Challenges in Using English	Solutions to Challenges
1. Practicing freestyle composition without a focus on error correction	1. Lack of extensive English grammar knowledge	1. Using ChatGPT, mobile translators, or a dictionary to translate text from Thai to English
2. Writing sales agreements for online selling	2. Inability to organize ideas effectively	2. Searching for sample passages to get ideas for building your own composition
3. Composing fairy tales and songs in both Thai and English	3. Limited use of English vocabulary	3. Asking for help from peers with higher writing skills or from teachers
4. Adapting sample passages into original versions	4. Ineffective brainstorming of ideas	4. Emphasizing sentence structure and parts of speech
5. Text chatting with foreign gamers		5. Attempting to use new words to avoid redundant writing
6. Further studying using extra textbooks or online English lessons on YouTube		6. Rechecking grammar errors via OpenAI or other online apps
7. Free-paraphrasing statements in different forms based on preference		

Regarding English writing development, the students revealed several interesting techniques for practicing their writing. These included freestyle writing tasks without worrying about errors, such as composing fairy tales or songs, online text chatting with foreigners or gamers, and paraphrasing existing text based on preferred patterns. For formal writing, one student with a part-time job as an online photo seller mentioned that her writing improved through drafting sales agreements when selling photos to foreign clients. Some students extended their writing abilities by independently studying extra textbooks and online tutorial video clips on various platforms.

Discussion

Based on the questionnaire data, the students' responses answer the first research question about which SEL strategies were most commonly employed to improve their four domain skills. Utilization of technology, particularly AI tools, for language learning assistance was the dominantly



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favorite strategy among the students. These results reflect the growing integration of digital resources in language acquisition, aligning with the findings of Stasser (2023) who supports the use of AI-powered tools to enhance English learning in the modern age, viewing them as tailored support to reduce cognitive load. Furthermore, their provided information also highlights a preference for practical, context-based learning over more traditional, structured approaches showing similar outcomes to those found in prior research conducted by Khan et al. (2021), Yasin et al. (2023), Suryadi (2023). These studies suggest that interactive and context-based approaches are more effective in improving various English language skills compared to traditional textbook-based in college settings. However, while students showed a willingness to engage with diverse materials and methods, they often overlooked specific areas. For example, they rarely tried with different writing formats or created visual aids to support their reading comprehension. It is likely that English writing is the most challenging skill for students to master. Additionally, unclear comprehension in reading may discourage them from creating visual representations of the text. Based on this observation, educators can design English teaching methods that emphasize adaptable and learner-centered strategies, aligning with students' preferred approaches.

According to the second research question, data gathered from the focus group interviews reveal that students' most chosen strategy for developing their four core English skills is the utilization of technology tools, particularly AI chatbots and online translation applications. This finding aligns with their survey responses, which indicate a strong preference for online assistance. Besides using these tools to enhance their English skills, students also relied on them to overcome challenges encountered during their skill development journey such as limited vocabulary in both oral and written communication. This finding aligns with studies by Hakim & Rima (2022), Javaid et al. (2023), Munoz-Basols et al. (2023), and Kim (2023), which recognized these tools as beneficial for enhancing English communication skills due to their versatile functions in improving language learning experiences. Apart from using online technology tools, students also preferred authentic learning experiences combined with traditional techniques to address common challenges, such as vocabulary limitations and comprehension difficulties. As seen from the data, the students demonstrated adaptability by integrating traditional methods with technology-assisted strategies, highlighting a multifaceted approach to language learning. This approach allowed them to address specific challenges in each skill area while maintaining engagement and motivation. The findings apparently underscore the importance of diverse, interactive, and technology-enhanced learning experiences in modern language acquisition, suggesting potential areas for further research into the long-term effectiveness of these combined strategies across different proficiency levels and learning contexts.



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Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the discussion section, this study could be concluded that employing online technology for English learning, particularly AI tools, has become the most favored strategy among students. They preferred utilizing digital resources and practical, context-based learning to reduce cognitive load and enhance English acquisition. Focus group interviews revealed that students primarily relied on technology tools like AI chatbots and online translation applications to develop their core English skills. Alongside these digital assistants, students demonstrated the integration of traditional techniques to address specific English learning challenges through a variety of approaches. These results underscore students' adaptable methods, incorporating both digital and traditional resources. This hybrid approach allows students to tackle vocabulary limitations and comprehension challenges effectively, fostering a more dynamic and multifaceted English learning experience. Such a balanced approach not only caters to the diverse needs of learners but also aligns with contemporary instructional theories that emphasize flexibility and student-centered education.

Suggestion for Implementation

English instructors should consider incorporating technology tools, such as AI-powered applications and online platforms, to support students' SEL preferences. Additionally, combining traditional techniques with technology-assisted strategies can help address specific challenges in each skill area, maintaining student engagement and motivation.

Suggestion for further research

Recommendations for future research include exploring the long-term effectiveness of these combined strategies across different proficiency levels and learning contexts, and further investigating the potential of interactive, context-based approaches to enhance overall language acquisition.

Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges all contributors for their valuable suggestions on this research project and extends thanks to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thepsatri Rajabhat University, for supporting the conduct of this research through personal funding.



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