



Foreign literacy practices and learning skills among Indonesian and Thai students of graduate education studies

Riswanda Setiadi ^{a,*}, Araya Piyakun ^{b,1}

^a Faculty of Language and Literature Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

^b Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham, Thailand

Article Info

Article history:

Received 8 February 2017

Revised 8 October 2017

Accepted 12 December 2017

Available online 2 January 2018

Keywords:

English proficiency,
language acquisition,
learner types,
literacy

Abstract

The research aimed to identify the English language competence of Indonesian (N = 73) and Thai (N = 60) students through describing their study skills by documenting their foreign language learning strategies, and documenting ways they used their competence in English or other foreign languages to facilitate their learning processes. Participants of the study possessed foreign language skills other than English. In this case, some Indonesian students were able to speak French and Japanese, and some Thai students were able to speak Chinese and Lao. However, their foreign language skills were mostly poor. Only a few students claimed that they were good foreign language speakers. It is believed that when individuals did not practice their foreign language skills frequently, they lost their skills acquisition as they were not able to keep their language knowledge in their memory. In terms of language use, they spoke their foreign language(s) mostly for academic and cultural purposes. In sum, both Indonesian and Thai graduate students were mostly classified into the receptive type of learners because they tended to manipulate receptive skills rather than productive ones. For their academic purposes, they only needed to read and listen. Hence, their writing skills were rarely developed. It is recommended that the students improve their literacy skills in order to enhance their study skills and a further study be conducted to gather more valid and accurate data.

© 2017 Kasetsart University. Publishing services by Elsevier B.V.

Introduction

English is commonly used as a medium of communication for various purposes in addition to other major foreign languages. In the academic sphere, it is not only a disciplinary subject at different educational levels, but a lingua franca to achieve academic goals, since literature and teaching materials are written in this language. For non-English speakers, speaking and using English requires

individuals to learn it in formal or non-formal education settings. Therefore, sometimes foreign language acquisition becomes a very hard struggle for some or many people.

A particular phenomenon related to foreign language acquisition can be seen at the tertiary education level in Indonesia in particular. Studying a foreign language constitutes a choice for students to develop their academic, linguistic, and intellectual capacity, and to pursue socio-cultural, economic, or professional goals. Furthermore, they are studied and analyzed in many respects. In other words, people learn those languages, learn about them, and learn through them. It is indeed believed that university graduates with foreign language skills face exciting employment opportunities given the increased demand for such skills in the global market.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: riswandasetiadi@upi.edu (R. Setiadi).

Peer review under responsibility of Kasetsart University.

¹ Co-first author.

As a part of the global community, Indonesia has adopted an education system which encourages people to learn and study foreign languages in order to communicate with other peoples and understand their cultures. Many other developing countries have developed similar policies for their education system. Thailand is one of those countries that apply an education system which includes foreign language learning into its curriculum. Indonesian and Thai people do not speak international languages used in international communities or bodies such as the United Nations. Exposure to the international languages in both countries only belongs to those who study them or who have chances to communicate with people from different nationalities. English is a dominant international language spoken in various areas in both countries. One of the interesting phenomena to which many people pay attention is using English to develop learning skills, and this phenomenon can be found in learning processes among graduate students who do not major in English. They have to develop their study skills by acquiring English in particular as they read literature and instructional materials in English. Frankly speaking, most of the textbooks intended for graduate students in Indonesia and Thailand are written in English. It is the reason why some students, if not all, at graduate education level deal with an extra burden in completing their study.

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), a teacher training and education university located in Bandung Indonesia and Mahasarakham University (MSU) in Thailand share similar circumstances where graduate students who do not major in English or other foreign languages are required to master foreign language skills due to the above mentioned reasons. At the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia for instance, graduate students have to achieve at least a 450 TOEFL score as evidence of their English language acquisition. They have to present an English language proficiency certificate to the Graduate School at the end of the first semester. In addition, they are required to publish a manuscript in an international journal or present a paper in an international seminar or conference. When they have this evidence, they are allowed to submit their thesis for final examination. This requirement proves that English is not only a foreign language but also an academic language. However, how they make use of it to facilitate their study is still a question because they in fact speak Indonesian as the instructional medium. Up to now, not much effort has been made to document this dilemmatic situation. A similar circumstance applies in Thai universities, particularly Mahasarakham University and supports undertaking this research.

The research aimed at identifying Indonesian and Thai graduate students' competence in English in particular, describing their foreign language learning strategies or skills, and documenting the ways they use their competence in English to facilitate their learning processes. Furthermore, the research was expected to provide data and information about: (1) foreign language proficiency among Indonesian and Thai graduate students who did not major in English; (2) how the students developed learning skills by making use of English or; (3) how they used English for academic purposes; and (4) possible strategies or

policies which could be developed by both universities to help the students improve their foreign language competence. In addition, this research is expected to encourage other researchers to conduct further joint research at the international level on foreign language skills or other fields of study, particularly because there has not been much effort to document the academic literacy skills of graduate students in both Indonesia and Thailand.

Literature Review

This section discusses the theoretical perspectives of literacy, foreign language learning models, and learning skills for academic purposes.

Literacy in Different Perspectives

The debate about what "literacy" means continues as there have been several definitions of terms which looked at literacy from a number of perspectives. Basically, literacy is the ability to read and write, the ability to read different types of texts for various purposes, and the ability to write in a variety of contexts. In a broader sense, [Winch, Johnson, Holliday, and Ljunhdahl \(2001\)](#) stated that literacy involves reading, writing and speaking skills, critical thinking as well as mathematical and symbolic abilities. Furthermore, UNESCO defined literacy in the following broader sense.

It involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing and critical thinking. It includes the cultural which enables a speaker, writer or reader recognize and use language appropriate to different social situations. Literacy allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, to create and question, which helps them to become more aware of the world and empowers them to participate more effectively in society (Dean, 2000, p. 49).

This definition includes the language skills that must be learned and mastered by individuals to actively participate in various social events. This means that literate people are those who can use language skills to understand and live in a social world. In many ways, the term "literacy" is usually connected with more favorable aspects of human life, and is closely related to better socioeconomic status in human society. It has long been recognized that literacy plays a crucial role in human development ([Setiadi & Piyakun, 2013](#), p. 51).

In particular, [Anstey and Bull \(1996, p. 40\)](#) argued that

Literacy, then, suggests a state of being and a set of capabilities through which the literate individual is able to utilize the interior world of self to act upon and interact with the exterior structures of the world around him to make sense of self and other.

Thus, basically literacy involves internal and external factors that encourage individuals to function in a variety of personal and social contexts.

As an important part of literacy, reading has become a focal point for many experts from various disciplines to describe how the reading process occurs. Learning to read is constantly changing in line with changes in language learning and literacy. According to [Stone \(2011\)](#), there are

two perspectives that influence learning to read, namely cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. Winch et al. (2001) found cognitive psychology has contributed greatly to the understanding of reading and how to teach it. This view emphasizes the individual skills and cognitive skills to develop reading skills without regard to the social context. Instead, the sociocultural view emphasizes the importance of the social context in the learning process. Furthermore, Stone (2011) stated that the social context affects the reading process in three ways through the social context of current, past, and future. This idea was further supported by other authors (Tighe, Barnes, Connor, & Steadman, 2013). For adult learning, literacy can be seen as a purposeful and meaningful practice for social purposes. Papen (2005) stated that adult literacy involves language and discourse that enable individuals to make and convey meanings. Hence, literacy practice should indicate meanings and present purposes clearly.

Foreign Language Learning Theories and Models

To fully understand how a foreign language is acquired and learned, it is necessary to consider some theoretical perspectives. The literature describes a number of foreign language learning theories and models. Brown (1988), Freeman and Freeman (1996), Scovel (2001), and Willis and Willis (2007) proposed theories and models in different ways. Based on their work, there are three general classifications which cover foreign language learning theories and models: innatist, cognitive, and constructivist. However, it is necessary to emphasize that in general, a theory results in a model. Therefore, theories and models share the same names.

Innatist Model

Stephen Krashen is one of the experts who has written various articles on foreign language acquisition and proposed five hypotheses: (1) The Acquisition- Learning Hypothesis, (2) The Monitor Hypothesis, (3) The Natural Order Hypothesis, (4) The Input Hypothesis, and (5) The Affective Filter Hypothesis. However, the original theory was proposed by Noam Chomsky (Ochs, 1988). In his first hypothesis, Krashen (1997) stated that adult learners of a foreign language adopt two ways of mastering a target language: acquisition and learning. Foreign language fluency, according to him, is achieved through an acquisition process, rather than a learning process. Acquisition is more dominant than learning, and both processes are separate. The second hypothesis suggests that learning involves the process of monitoring (correction), and learners are aware of this process. The third hypothesis states individuals master language rules naturally (unpredicted). The fourth hypothesis contends that foreign language learning processes occur when learners understand language inputs slightly better than their language competence. The final hypothesis mentions that language acquisition will occur in an environment where learners have low anxiety or an affective filter.

Considering those five hypotheses, we can conclude that language input is a crucial source for foreign language learning. However, learner competence and learner

involvement in the interactional processes of acquisition and learning are not taken into account. In this case, the learners are actively engaged in producing their own knowledge structure in the communicative processes (Ochs, 1988).

Cognitive Model

Among other experts, there is one writer who has made a significant contribution to the development of the cognitive model, McLaughlin (1987, 1990) proposed the Attention-Processing Model, which puts emphasis on the control and automatic information processing mechanism. The control process involves limited and temporary capacity and competence, while the automatic mechanism includes wider and more complex processes. However, this model was further elaborated by Busemeyer and Diederich (2010) into prototype and exemplar models. The former proposes that learners predict the central tendency of examples they have experienced during the learning process, while the latter contends that learners memorize all experienced examples during the learning process.

Constructivist Model

The man behind this model was mainly Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, who presented the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory (Vygotsky, 1997). The so-called ZPD is a potential distance between learner's independent learning and more capable adult assistance in learning processes (Ruddell & Ruddell, 1996). In terms of foreign language learning, Michael Long is a constructivist who has presented ideas on how a foreign language is acquired or learned in a social context. From Long's perspective, interaction and language input are two major factors in the foreign language acquisition process (Long, 1996).

With the emphasis on social interaction, we can conclude that the classroom is not only a place to develop language skills, but also a setting for learners to interact with each other and make interaction a language acquisition facilitator. Considering the above mentioned theories, there are a few practical implications teachers and learners should take into account in their language learning processes: (1) teacher and learner should consider various variables which lead to foreign language learning complexity; (2) language instruction should focus on acquisition process or at least balance acquisition and learning processes; (3) foreign language learning is also foreign culture learning; (4) learning is a process of dialog and interaction; and (5) personal, cognitive, and social components when combined will be very important sources of successful foreign language learning processes.

Study Skills

In many ways, study skills are similar to learning strategies. A skill or strategy is closely related to metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective aspects (Nunan, 1999). At the higher level of education, study skills cover the following skills: (1) understanding syntax, (2) recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices, (3) interpreting discourse markers, (4) recognizing functional value, (5) recognizing

the presuppositions underlying the text, (6) recognizing implications and making inferences, (7) recognizing rhetorical structure, and (8) prediction (Nuttall, 1996). Based on this conception, it can be concluded that study skills and reading skills are interchangeable. For the purpose of this study, study skills will be connected with reading skills or reading strategies.

However, study skills are not only concerned with written language, but spoken language as well. In the context of higher level learning in particular, there is one thing to consider that in the oral process, with speakers or readers there should be interaction. In the writing process, writers do not need to directly interact with their readers. It is therefore necessary to re-emphasize that “in many ways there is a close relationship between speech and writing because both are a crucial part of language competence and support each other” (Winch et al., 2001). In particular, Byrne (1988) presented differences between spoken and written language as shown in Table 1.

In this case, the students did not find a lot of chances to practice their spoken language skills as their academic activities were conducted in their national language—Indonesian or Thai—despite the availability of abundant learning sources written in English and other foreign languages. However, it can be argued that when students are able to manage and manipulate those skills for their academic purposes, there will be high quality learning outcomes. As mentioned above, however, study skills are closely related to reading activities. In many respects, the use of a foreign language by graduate students involves reading activities since the students are frequently exposed to literature written in foreign languages, especially English.

In many ways, there is a close relationship between speech and writing because they are a crucial part of language competence and support each other. Winch et al. (2001, p.151) contended that “written language is organized differently from spoken language, and the world as seen in writing is different from the world as heard in speech”. A comparison between speech and writing can help us understand some of the difficulties we experience when we write. Like the reading process, writing also involves a

variety of factors that influence its smooth flow. According to Byrne (1988), there are three factors that cause writing difficulties: psychological, linguistic, and cognitive. Specifically, Winch et al. (2001) suggested that feelings and emotions are crucial factors to the writing process because they act as driving forces during the writing process.

In general, graduate students deal with academic writing tasks to improve their writing skills in various forms of academic work. They write position or research papers to meet the academic requirements set by their lecturers. Therefore, their writing activities are mainly academic in nature. This research slightly focused on academic writing activities carried out by the graduate students of education studies in Indonesia and Thailand as their academic tasks mainly require them to be read and be completed in their national language.

Methods

Participants

When this current research was being conducted, there were approximately 800 graduate students of education studies at UPI and 400 students at MSU who were enrolled in different departments other than the English Department. As population was not accessible due to limited research time and personnel, they were finally selected by applying a purposive sampling technique. Thus, the selection of samples was judgmental. In this case, every class was then represented by five students at most and they participated in this study on a voluntary basis and were invited to sign a letter of consent to prove their readiness to participate. A two week deadline was set to finally decide on the number of participants from both universities. By the deadline, 73 UPI and 60 MSU graduate students had handed in the letter of consent to the research personnel. This number was a manageable size of samples that would make this research workable and attain accountable validity. Based on their personal data, they were mostly prospective teachers and teachers of elementary and secondary schools, who were assigned for further in-service education and training.

Table 1
Differences between speech and writing

Speech	Writing
1. Takes place in a context, which often makes references clear (e.g. 'that thing over there')	1. Creates its own context and therefore has to be fully explicit.
2. Speaker and listener(s) in contact. Interact and exchange roles.	2. Reader not present and no interaction possible.
3. Usually person addressed is specific.	3. Reader not necessary known to writer.
4. Immediate feedback given and expected: (a) verbal: questions, comments, murmurs, grunts; and (b) non-verbal: facial expressions.	4. No immediate feedback possible. Writer may try to anticipate reader's reactions and incorporate them into text.
5. Speech is transitory. Intended to be understood immediately. If not, listener expected to react.	5. Writing is permanent. Can be reread as often as necessary and at own speed.
6. Sentences often incomplete and sometimes ungrammatical. Hesitations and pauses common and usually some redundancy and repetition.	6. Sentences expected to be carefully constructed, and linked and organized to form a text.
7. Range of devices (stress, intonation, pitch, speed) to help convey meaning. Facial expression, body movements and gestures also used for this purpose.	7. Devices to help convey meaning are punctuation, capitals, and underlining (for emphasis). Sentence boundaries clearly indicated.

Data Collection

In line with its purposes, the research adopted a survey method to describe the current state of Indonesian and Thai graduate students' foreign language proficiency and study skills. To collect data from them, a questionnaire and interview were administered. The questionnaire contained 25 items regarding students' proficiency in foreign language(s), foreign language learning experiences, frequency of foreign language use, the acquisition of foreign language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and learning strategies in relation to the use of foreign language. The interview focused on questions in relation to learning materials written in a foreign language, attempts made to handle foreign language difficulties (if any), development of foreign language skills, the contributions of foreign language skills to the selection of appropriate study skills, and acceleration of academic task completion.

Before data collection, the research instruments underwent a process of validation. First, the questionnaire was distributed to 11 Indonesian and seven Thai students who did not participate in the study who were asked to complete it, while the interview sheet was judged by experts from UPI and MSU for its validity and reliability. Second, a process of back translation was executed to make sure that both instruments were readable and understandable to the Indonesian and Thai participants. Based on the data on instrument tryout, both processes in Indonesia and Thailand resulted in valid and reliable research instruments, so there was no doubt to using them.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out on the basis of foreign language proficiency, literacy activities in the foreign language(s), and foreign language learning styles. These three categories were further adjusted to the foreign language acquisition models.

Foreign language proficiency was measured on the basis of an available proficiency test certificate the students held before or after the admission to the graduate school, but for the purpose of this research, no TOEFL test was administered. As usual, most students had taken an English test at an authorized language testing center before being admitted to a graduate study program. In the case of UPI students, the School of Postgraduate Studies arranged an institutional TOEFL test in cooperation with the university's language center. This English language requirement is intended to strengthen their previous English language acquisition. As the students were required to do academic assignments based on English-written textbooks, reading and writing were main practical activities in the use of foreign language. In fact, speaking English was not a habitual classroom activity. In carrying out those foreign

language activities, they adopted different learning styles in order to fulfill academic demands and requirements.

Data analysis was done by adopting descriptive statistics to present a simple summary of the quantitative data collected in this study, but it only included central tendency that involved frequency or percentage. However, interview data were added to strengthen those quantitative data. The following section discusses data on foreign language proficiency, literacy activities, learning styles, and the foreign language proficiency models into which the students were categorized.

Results and Discussion

Foreign Language Proficiency

The data showed that graduate students who got involved in the study possessed different foreign language skills other than English. Some Indonesian students were able to speak French and Japanese, while Thai students could speak Chinese and Lao. However, their foreign language skills were mostly poor in terms of communication skills. Only a few students claimed that they were good foreign language speakers. It is believed that when individuals did not practice their foreign language skills frequently, they lost their skills acquisition as they were not able to keep their language knowledge in their memory. This is a common phenomenon in language acquisition. Furthermore, most of the students were not foreign language learners because they did not study any foreign language for academic purposes. Consequently, most of them only acquired foreign language skills at a superficial level. Considering this situation, the Innatist model is appropriate to describe why the students' foreign language competences are mostly poor. In this case, the first hypothesis of the Innatist model is applicable, namely, foreign language fluency is achieved through an acquisition process, rather than a learning process. Acquisition is more dominant than learning, and both processes are separate. However, most of the students perceived that they were fairly good English speakers. Table 2 below presents information about foreign language skills and model category of Indonesian and Thai students.

In terms of language use, they spoke foreign language(s) for academic and cultural purposes only. In this case, foreign language use was closely related to efforts to improve their learning outcomes. Of the 73 Indonesian students, 70 students spoke English mainly for academic benefit, and two students expected cultural advantages. Five Indonesian students spoke basic French and 10 students were learning Japanese for professional purposes. Of the 60 Thai students, 54 students spoke English, Chinese, or Lao for completing academic assignments, and six students used it to understand a foreign culture. In the interview,

Table 2
Foreign language proficiency

Nationality	English requirement	Acquisition of other languages	Foreign language model
Indonesian	450 TOEFL score	French and Japanese	Innatist
Thai	No TOEFL score required	Chinese and Lao	Innatist

they claimed that they spoke Chinese because they were Chinese family descendants, and some of them spoke Lao as they came from regions adjacent to one or more Thai-Lao border provinces. For those purposes, they usually adopted the following strategies: (a) note taking, (b) asking questions, (c) reading more books, (d) discussion with fellow students, and (e) brainstorming with more capable colleagues. When practicing a foreign language, they would mostly read, speak, and listen so it can be assumed that they were possibly good readers in a foreign language. However, they also admitted during the interview that vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and semantics are common, difficult obstacles in their foreign language learning. Table 3 shows the tendency of habitual foreign language practices among Indonesian and Thai students.

At the graduate level, foreign language learning for academic purposes depends much on the instructional setting and learning tasks given by the lecturers, and understandability is the most important thing to the students. As most students are not exposed to foreign language communities, they tend to show a positive attitude toward the foreign language to keep them familiar with it. Although 10–30 percent of books are written in foreign languages, mostly in English, this has not enabled them to use any foreign language fluently and accurately. In addition, they did not study their academic subject in English or in English-speaking classes as such international classes are not available in either university. Therefore, they made a variety of efforts to improve their foreign language acquisition, such as memorization, translation, and asking questions.

Foreign Language and Literacy Activities

As mentioned above, up to 30 percent of learning materials are mostly written in English. So using those materials is barely avoidable to graduate students. In addition to academic activities in their mother tongue or the national language, sometimes they have occasion to use a foreign language for academic purposes. They claimed that they had to write from one to 10 papers in a foreign language, mostly English, during their study period, but the data showed that they had read only a few foreign language books during their study. In fact, Indonesian and Thai students have spent much time reading printed materials written in their national language as it is much easier to

understand, and publication in the national language has been improving in both countries.

In literacy activities, the subjects had spent much more time reading and writing as they did not have opportunities to communicate with native speakers for academic purposes. In reading activities, they coped with reading difficulties by considering such textual components as vocabulary, sentences, or lexical clues and consulting a dictionary. For the sake of better reading comprehension, they adopted the following strategies: (a) using a variety of senses, (b) making connections, (c) analyzing text structure, (d) recognizing words and understanding sentences, and (e) reading the text repeatedly. When they had to write a course assignment in a foreign language, they tended to write a descriptive genre. Like reading activities, they also faced a similar problem with grammatical components. Table 4 presents the percentages of students who decided to use the most preferred reading strategies.

Regarding writing activities, the interview revealed that most Indonesian and Thai students agreed and admitted that writing in English was very difficult, but they had to do it because all Indonesian students in particular, must present a paper at an international seminar or publish an article in an international journal as a requirement for the completion of their study. For both groups of students, instead of writing, translating texts from English to their native language was a common practice in their academic assignments. The texts translated could be a book chapter, a journal article, or handouts. Hence, foreign language writing was not frequently practiced during the academic period of their graduate degree.

Foreign Language Learning Styles/Skills

Considering the ways the students learn to improve their foreign language skills, they could be classified into different categories of learner style. Both the Indonesian and Thai graduate students shared similar characteristics such as being visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, field-independent, field-dependent, reflective, and impulsive types of learners. Approximately 65 percent of the subjects were visual learners because they usually enjoyed reading and tended to recognize the words they read. To help them understand more what they were reading, they learned by looking at pictures or illustrations. When they preferred to learn by listening, they were auditory learners and enjoyed

Table 3
Purposes of foreign language use

Nationality	Academic	Professional	Economic	Cultural	Others
Indonesian	70 students (95%)	–	–	3 students (5%)	–
Thai	54 students (90%)	–	–	6 students (10%)	–

Table 4
Reading comprehension strategies

Nationality	Using sensory capability	Making connections	Analyzing text structure	Word recognition
Indonesian	7 students (9.5%)	15 students (20%)	20 students (27%)	31 students (42.5%)
Thai	6 students (10%)	24 students (40%)	6 students (10%)	24 students (40%)

Table 5
Foreign language learning skills

Nationality	Visual	Auditory	Tactile	Kinesthetic	Field-independent	Field-dependent	Reflective	Impulsive
Indonesian	65%	14%	0%	0%	7%	9%	3%	2%
Thai	65%	8%	0%	0%	15%	11%	1%	0%

spoken language and conversations. About 14 percent of the Indonesian students were categorized into this type of learner, and 8 percent of Thai students belonged to this category. The rest of the students were included in the field-independent, field-dependent, reflective, and impulsive types. Seven percent of the Indonesian students and 15 percent of Thai students were field-independent as they focused on language details, such as grammatical rules and paid attention to words and sentences. Nine percent of Indonesian students were field-dependent because they did not care about rules. Finally, 11 percent of Thai students were classified in this category. They thought that transmitting messages and conveying ideas was more important than obeying language rules. Among the students, only 3 percent took into account language rules and ways of presenting messages accurately. In this case, they thought they were very careful about using the language and avoiding mistakes. One percent of Thai students claimed that they learned reflectively, but no Indonesian students were in this category. Finally, there were also some students (about 2 percent of Indonesian students), who were categorized as impulsive learners. They took any chance and even risk to use language, and did not worry about making mistakes. The most important thing for them was to communicate fluently, and other people (mostly the lecturers or faculty members) understood what they communicated. However, no Thai students were included in this category (Table 5).

In terms of reading comprehension, most Thai and Indonesian students (98%) coincidentally believed that they were capable of understanding what they had read by distinguishing the following characteristics: (1) understanding syntax, (2) recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices, (3) interpreting discourse markers, (4) recognizing functional value, (5) recognizing the presuppositions underlying the text, and (6) recognizing implications and making inferences. These characteristics could be easily seen in their chapter or book summaries. In sum, both Indonesian and Thai graduate students were mostly classified into the receptive type of learners. Another 2 percent did not make any choice. It is understandable that they tended to improve receptive language skills rather than productive ones because for their academic purposes, they only needed to read and listen. Under such circumstances, speaking and writing skills were seemingly secondary to them. Hence, study skills they could develop during their graduate study had mostly relied on those receptive competences.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In addition to a few differences, the UPI and MSU graduate students shared many similarities in foreign language proficiency and study skills as identified by

categories. When considering the linguistic and sociocultural background, it is no wonder why they presented similar characteristics. In most cases, they spent much time performing academic tasks spoken or written in their national language. Furthermore, they were apparently similar types of learners so it could be easily predicted that they had acquired the same categories of study skills. Taking into account the foreign language learning theories, the most appropriate theory describing the phenomenon found among the Indonesian and Thai graduate students is the Innatist theory (Krashen, 1997) as it suggests that adult learners of a foreign language adopt two ways of mastering a target language: acquisition and learning. Foreign language fluency, according to Krashen, is achieved through an acquisition process, rather than a learning process. Acquisition is more dominant than learning, and both processes are separate. The second hypothesis suggests that learning involves the process of monitoring (correction), and learners are aware of this process. The third hypothesis states individuals master language rules naturally (unpredicted). The fourth hypothesis contends that foreign language learning processes occur when learners understand language inputs slightly higher than their language competence. The final hypothesis mentions that language acquisition will occur in an environment where learners have low anxiety or affective filter. This was exactly what happened to the participants in this study.

As verbal communication for academic purposes was rarely carried out, the students focused more on the receptive language skills of reading and listening rather than the productive ones to acquire their foreign language(s). This enabled them to search for textual and contextual clues when they tried to communicate their ideas and thoughts and academic settings. It was barely possible to push them to make use of the foreign language(s) in native speaking ways. Hence, the acquisition of foreign language skills in the case of Indonesia and Thailand was not a major determinant to mastering good study skills. However, when the students were able to manage and manipulate those skills for their academic purposes, they would achieve high quality learning outcomes.

Conflict of Interest

This manuscript publication does not contain any conflict of interest. It is only for academic purposes.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the Indonesian Ministry of Education for technical and financial assistance.

References

- Anstey, M., & Bull, G. (1996). *The literacy labyrinth*. Sydney, NSW, Australia: Prentice Hall.
- Brown, J. D. (1988). *Understanding research in second language learning: A teacher's guide to statistics and research design*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Busemeyer, J. M., & Diederich, A. (2010). *Cognitive modeling*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Byrne, D. (1988). *Teaching writing skills*. London, UK: Longman.
- Dean, G. (2000). *Teaching reading in secondary schools*. London, UK: David Fulton.
- Freeman, D. E., & Freeman, Y. S. (1996). *Between worlds: Access to second language acquisition*. Portsmouth, MA: Heinemann.
- Krashen, S. (1997). *Explorations in second language acquisition and use*. California, CA: Language Education Association.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie, & T. K. Bahtia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of second language learning*. London, UK: Edward Arnold.
- McLaughlin, B. (1990). Restructuring. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 79–86.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Hong Kong: Newbury House.
- Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Oxford, UK: Macmillan Heinemann.
- Ochs, E. (1988). *Culture and language development: Language acquisition and language socialization in a Samoan village*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Papen, U. (2005). *Adult literacy as social practice: More than skills*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Ruddell, R. B., & Ruddell, M. R. (1996). *Teaching children to read and write: Becoming an influential teacher*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Scovel, T. (2001). *Learning new languages: A guide to second language acquisition*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Setiadi, R., & Piyakun, A. (2013). *Understanding the process of reading in teaching literacy*. Bandung, Indonesia: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.
- Stone, G. (2011). *The digital literacy classroom*. Leicester, UK: UKLA.
- Tighe, E. L., Barnes, A. E., Connor, C. M., & Steadman, S. C. (2013). Defining success in adult basic education settings: Multiple stakeholders, multiple perspectives. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 48(4), 415–435.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). Interaction between learning and development (Chapter 4). In M. Gauvin, & M. Cole (Eds.), *Readings of the development of children*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Winch, G., Johnson, R. R., Holliday, M., & Ljunhdahl, L. (2001). *Literacy: Reading, writing, and children's literature*. Sydney, NSW, Australia: Oxford University Press.