行政院國家科學委員會補助專題研究計畫成果報告

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※對以語言學習策略訓練為輔的大一英文課之系統化研究　※
※　　A Systematic Study of a Language Learning　　　※
※　　Strategy-Based Freshman English Class　　　　　※
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計畫類別：■個別型計畫　　□整合型計畫

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計畫主持人：楊乃冬

本成果報告包括以下應繳交之附件：
　　☑出席國際學術會議心得報告及發表之論文各一份

執行單位：國立台灣大學外國語文學系

中　華　民　國　90　年　2　月　12　日

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫成果報告

對以語言學習策略訓練為輔的大一英文課之系統化研究

A Systematic Study of a Language Learning Strategy-Based Freshman English Class

一、中文摘要

與助訓練的學成學子學信與
念有訓語文英形訓略言課語。
解以英的情略言學析電言學信動
信策一生略策語學分的語學的互
略了策評用略學用和研究過各種言複雜
習的習評估的討略學言效信本省出生在
生形學在的討略學言外內納學存在
學情言旨輔探策言語對生學此
對用語言究為及習語對生學遠。英文歸
師之以略成效和證學導學對深學
教之以略效和證學導學對深學
英其能知策影有內信念與
學策教動策學信結提。略響關容信
學於之學之學研究確認習效生件習念關係。

關鍵詞 : 英語學習策略、語言學
習信念、語言學習策略訓練
、英語教學、第二語言習得
、大一英文

Abstract

A better understanding of students' language learning beliefs and learning strategy use is helpful to language teachers' teaching and conducting learning strategy instruction in the classroom. This study devised a language learning strategy-based class to investigate its effects and to explore Freshman English students' beliefs about language learning and their strategy use. The results revealed that the learning strategy training could achieve its goal—to raise learners' awareness about learning strategies. Teaching students effective strategy use may affect students' beliefs about language learning and their learning achievements profoundly. Content analyses of the e-mail writing entries by the participat-ing students about their learning process revealed various learners' beliefs about language learning. This study also discovered complex interactions between learners' beliefs about language learning and their learning strategy use.

Keywords: English Learning Strategies, Beliefs about Language Learning, Language Learning Strategy Training, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Second Language Acquisition, Freshman English

II. Background and Methodology

As our language teaching paradigm shifted toward learner-centered, the importance and value of training learners in effective strategy use and becoming autonomous have also been recognized by many researchers and language teachers [1, 2, 3, 4]. Various suggestions were offered on how to conduct a strategy training program [e.g., 4, 5]. For example, a complete strategy training program should take language learners' motivation, beliefs, and attitude into consideration [6]. It is best implemented by foreign language teachers in the regular course of instruction over an extended period of time [7, 8]. Besides, researchers have suggested teachers follow the procedures of diagnosis, preparation, instruction, and evaluation when conducting learning strategy instruction [9, 10, 11].

Many attempts to teach students to use learning strategies have indeed produced promising results [e.g., 12, 13]. However, not all studies on second language learning strategy training have been uniformly successful or conclusive [14, 15]. Thus, more research is essential in the area of learning strategy training. As revealed by the

preliminary study of the learning strategy-based (LSB) instruction [16], while the goals of learning strategy training were mainly to raise learners' awareness about learning strategies and to teach students effective strategy use, it is of great interest to examine how the learning strategy training affected students' beliefs about language learning and their learning achievements. Therefore, the study intended to study the effects of the LSB instruction and to explore Freshman English students' beliefs about English learning and their strategy use in a LSB Freshman English class.

The subjects were students from the Freshman English classes taught by the author (Course title: Freshman English with Oral/Aural Training). In the beginning of the semester, an English Learning Questionnaire was administered to the students for their strategy use and beliefs about language learning. Besides, a general English proficiency test, which include tests of listening comprehension, structural knowledge, vocabulary and reading comprehension, was administered to the students as pretest.

Based on the course evaluation and students' feedback from a pilot study, instructional materials were selected and language learning strategies were integrated into the instruction during the semester. After a semester's LSB instruction, students were tested again for their reading and listening achievement and their beliefs and strategy use at the end of semester.

An e-mail writing activity between students and the instructor was designed as part of the strategy instruction. The content of the e-mail writing were analyzed for students' beliefs about language learning and their learning strategy use.

Table 1 summarizes the information concerning the LSB freshman English classes of the three years, which includes major course materials and topics of e-mail writing.

III. Results and Discussions

Table 2 presented the statistic results of this project, including pre-test and post-test results and pair t-test results.

1. As shown in Table 2, significant differences were found between the subjects' overall test scores (combining listening and reading test results) for all three years. This indicated that LSB instruction was beneficial to students' English learning.

2. The content analyses of these students' e-mails (total 828 entries) provided in-depth understanding to their beliefs about language learning and strategy use as well as their reactions and attitude toward the LSB English classes. For example, these students could articulated in their e-mails when they learned best as well as why they felt poor in English. These students also revealed specific ways they believed that could help them improve English vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing, which were found to correspond mostly to their plans and learning strategies. In fact, practicing every day and making good use of media were listed as the best ways by the majority of the students. Students also discussed about a variety of learning strategies they used for learning English. They described the effect of using new learning strategies they learned. In the final self-evaluation, most students were happy about their progress.

3. The results of the final course evaluation showed that most students were satisfied with the teaching materials, various class activities, and learning results of the LSB instruction. They also felt that the LSB English class helped them to learn about how to study English and take responsibility for their own learning.

IV. Concluding Remarks

This study implemented the learning strategy-based instruction in the Freshman English classes and evaluated its effects on students' English learning. Part of the results was presented at the 12th World Congress of Applied Linguistics, Tokyo, Japan [17].

The results showed that the learning strategy training could achieve its goal—to raise learners' awareness about learning strategies. Teaching students effective strategy use may affect students' beliefs about language learning and their learning achievements profoundly. Content analyses of the e-mail writing entries by the participating students about their learning process revealed various learners' beliefs about language learning. This study also discovered complex interactions between learners' beliefs about language learning and their learning strategy use, which are worth further study.

V. References

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Table 1

Summary of the Language Learning Strategy-Based English Classes

Classes (Academic year)	86 Class	87 Class	88 Class
Reading material	*Steps to Reading Proficiency* by Sanne Dye Phillips and Peter Elias Sotiriou (Wadsworth)	*Reading in English for Students of English as a Second Language* by Dorothy Danielson, Rebecca Hayden, Helen Heinze-Rocher, and Daniel Glicksberg (Prentice-Hall)	*Breaking Through: College Reading* (Fourth ed.) by Brenda D. Smith (Harper Collins)
Listening material	*Listening for It: A Task-based Listening Course* by Jack Richards, Deborah Gordon, and Andrew Haper (Oxford University Press)	*Move Up Advanced* by Simon Greenall (Heinemann)	*Interactions One: A Listening/Speaking Skills Text* (Third ed.) by Judith Tanka and Paul Most (McGraw-Hill).
Topics of e-mail writing	E-mail #0 self-introduction, #1-6 (goals and expectations, self-assessment, study methods/learning strategies, plans, problems, self-evaluation)	E-mail #1-6 (self-introduction, goals and expectations, study methods/learning strategies, plans, self-assessment, problems, self-evaluation)	E-mail #1-self-introduction, #2-goals and plans, #3-the best way of learning English, #4-group discussion on reading, #5-journal (problems, etc.), #6-self-evaluation

Table 2

Statistic Results of Data Analyses

Classes (Academic year)	86 Class	87 Class	88 Class
Subjects	Total = 45 Female = 28 (62.2%) Male = 17 (37.8%)	Total = 48 Female = 31 (64.6%) Male = 17 (35.4%)	Total = 45 Female = 28 (62.2%) Male = 17 (37.8%)
Pre-test results	N = 45 Listening: M = 28.87, range: 47-18 Structure: M = 29.96, range: 38-19 Reading: M = 41.14, range: 53-23	N = 48 Listening: M = 27.10, range: 42-10 Structure: M = 31.13, range: 37-22 Reading: M = 38.31, range: 52-25	N = 45 Listening: M = 27.58, range: 43-9 Structure: M = 29.67, range: 36-20 Reading: M = 36.62, range: 51-25
Post-test results	N = 44 (one student missed the test) Listening: M = 58.95, range: 90-32 Reading: M = 77.86, range: 94-52	N = 48 Listening: M = 55.65, range: 82-22 Reading: M = 79.98, range: 95-64	N = 45 Listening: M = 58.98, range: 88-30 Reading: M = 77.36, range: 90-54
Pair t-test results: Comparison between pretest and posttest	Overall, $t = -5.14$, ($p < .0001$) Listening, $t = -0.78$ ($p = .44$) Reading, $t = -6.68$, ($p < .0001$)	Overall, $t = -7.74$, ($p < .0001$) Listening, $t = -0.90$ ($p = .37$) Reading, $t = -12.32$, ($p < .0001$)	Overall, $t = -9.50$, ($p < .0001$) Listening, $t = -2.19$ ($p = .034$) Reading, $t = -10.50$, ($p < .0001$)

行政院國家科學委員會補助國內專家學人出席國際學術會議報告

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一、簡介

　　國際應用語言學協會(AILA)是一國際性之組織，首創於法國南西大學，係為加強國際間應用語言學之學者專家間相互聯繫與合作研究之組織，每三年輪流在世界各地區召開世界大會。該會議為應用語言學界最盛大的國際會議。參加者包含來自歐洲、美洲、亞洲、非洲、紐、澳等世界各國之應用語言學研究教學的學者專家及其他相關領域研究人員，大家聚集一堂，彼此相互吸收交換研究經驗及心得。

　　本次會議為第十二屆世界大會，在日本東京早稻田大學舉行。參加的代表來自世界六十多個國家，共數千人，可謂相當盛大。正式會期由八月一日至六日，四日半間共計一千多場次(八月四日安排為訪問日)，期間有專題演講，學術論文宣讀報告和展示，專題座談會，以及最新教材之展示介紹等。此外大會之學術論文分別代表了三十六個不同領域：包含電腦語言學，社會語言學，外語教學法，民族誌語言學，心理語言學，雙語教學，殘障輔助科技，溝通和語言，法律和語言，生態學和語言，頭腦和語言等等。本屆大會主題為 The Roles of Language in the 21st Century: Unity and Diversity (二十一世紀語言的角色：單一性與多樣性)。這主題反映了語言溝通乃是人類社會發展迄今之主要表徵，而且為國際社會之安定與發展所不可缺少的。而當今世界英語為一共通之語言，英語的單一性與多樣性值得我們深入探討。□

二、參加會議經過

　　筆者於七月三十一日中午起程，飛抵日本東京機場，再換搭小型巴士到此行之目的地——東京市。抵達旅館已是萬家燈火，第二天早上出門熟悉環境，搭乘地鐵到早稻田大學辦理報到手續，領取名牌及資料。當晚則閱讀相關資料挑選欲參加場次，並準備本人報告。

　　筆者在本次大會所提出的論文報告題目為：An Empirical Study of Language Learning Beliefs and Learning Strategy Training（語言學習信念與策略訓練之研究），與其他六位外國學者共同合作於專題座談會中發表。該專題座談會之主題為 Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learner Strategies, Styles, Beliefs, and Attitudes（跨文化對學習者之學習策略、風格、信念、和態度的觀點），安排在八月五日中午十一點二十分至一點二十分及下午二點三十分至四點三十分兩個時段發表。當日由負責組織座談會的主持人 Dr. Rebecca Oxford（美國外語教學及師資培育之著名學者）以 Lanugage Learning Styles and Strategies: A Brief Introduction 為題開場，她將歷年來在學習策略、風格與學習信念和態度之研究做了精闢的介紹。Ana Maria Barcelos 接著發表其論文：A Critical Review of Current Approaches to the Investigation of Language Learning Beliefs（對當前語言學習信念研究方式之批評）。筆者於十二點開始報告，該篇論文著重探討語言學習信念和策略之訓練與教學，並就近年應用語言學習策略理論於大一英文教學課程之成果以及正在進行國科會專題研究提出報告。筆者依照語言學習信念研究和學習策略訓練之原則來設計課程，期以影響學生學習信念和提升其語言學習策略意識，並輔導學生使用適當的學習策略以輔助其於聽、說、讀、寫方面的運用，促進學習成效。總而言之，藉著融合學習策略之訓練與實際英語教學，該研究結果不但有助於英語教師對學生學習策略的使用情形和教導學生語言學習策略之可行性的了解，並提供語言學習策略訓練之教學建議，讓英語教師能輔導學生採用更有效的英語學習策略，而達到自動自發學習語言的目的，有助於英語教學的成效。筆者運用事前準備的投影片講

述本人論文報告內容，共計三十分鐘。第四位講者為來自阿根廷的學者 Ana Longhini，她論文題目為：The Effects of Self-Efficacy and Attitude on EFL Learning（自我效力和態度於英語學習之成效）。最後二十分鐘為聽眾發問，討論相當熱烈。

中午午餐後展開第二部分的專題座談會，首先由來自紐西蘭的學者 Carol Griffiths 報告她的論文：Language Learning Strategies and Age（語言學習策略與年齡）。第二位講者為南非的學者 Carisma Dryer，她論文題目為：Reviewing the Learning Strategies, Learning Styles, Gender and Proficiency of South Africa Students（南非學生的語言學習策略、風格、性別和能力）。第四位講者為韓國的學者 Dr. Young Ye Park，她論文題目為：Learning Strategies and Styles of Korean University Students（韓國大學生的語言學習策略和風格）。最後 Dr. Rebecca Oxford 主持問題討論並為整個座談會做總結。會後，與會之學者和聽眾一致認為此次座談會是一難得機會，藉由發表相類似之題材，交換各國研究心得，索取相關論文，彼此都收穫匪淺。

會議期間，由於同時進行許多場次論文發表及研討，無法分身全部參與。只有選擇與自己教學及研究相關或新近發展的專題或場次參加。會議圓滿結束後，隨即返國。

三、與會心得與建議

四日半會議下來，雖然精疲力竭，但學術及教學上的收穫豐碩無比。有關教學方面，筆者印象最深的一場特別專題演講係由語言教學界著名學者及哈佛大學教授 Dr. Wilga Rivers 演講，她演講題目為：Cycles and Cycles: Reflecting on Sixty-Five Years of Langauge Learning and Teaching（回顧六十五年之語言學習與教學）。Dr. Rivers 以風趣之口吻帶領聽眾（全場爆滿）回顧她自十一歲學習法語到後來從事語言教學之經歷與寶貴心得，她最後特別指出幫助學生語言學習的最大助力不在教法而在一位關心的老師。此外，筆者覺得幾場有關英語與網際網路 (Internet)，第二語言學習與認知研究，語言學習信念研究之演講或專

題座談會，收益頗多。筆者感受到語文教師應不斷學習，面對挑戰以及妥善運用當今科技為教學輔助。有關語言學習策略與學習信念的研究方面，筆者藉由發表論文的機會，與聽眾交換意見，並且在會議期間，尤其是語言學習信念研究之專題座談會，除了聆聽十篇論文發表，也趁機與出席之專家學者討論交談，分享近年個人相關研究結果，彼此切磋琢磨，對日後研究方向及合作裨益良多。

歷年來國人參與學術研討會的人數有逐年增加趨勢，且發表論文在質與量方面都有顯著的進步。積極參與國際學術會議，有助於開拓視野，加強學術交流，及保持與世界同步的研究。

最後，承蒙行政院國家科學委員會經費補助筆者參與此次會議，在此謹致謝忱。

12th WORLD CONGRESS OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS (AILA 99)

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Learner Strategies, Styles, Beliefs, and Attitudes

Symposium organizer: Rebecca Oxford

An Empirical Study of Language Learning Beliefs and Learning Strategy Training

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Tokyo, Japan. August 1 - 6

An Empirical Study of Language Learning Beliefs and Learning Strategy Training

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Abstract:

This article reports a study in which language learning strategy instruction was incorporated into college Freshmen English course. The study intended to investigate the feasibility of teaching college students effective beliefs and learning strategies for developing language proficiency and to evaluate the impact of learning strategy instruction on students. An English Learning Questionnaire was administered to the students to investigate their strategy use and beliefs about language learning. Students' English proficiency was evaluated in the pre-test and post-test. To raise students' awareness about learning strategy use and to create more effective beliefs about language learning, a series of e-mail assignments were designed to guide students in discussing with their instructor about their goals, plans, and problems in learning English. The results show that students made significant improvement in their final achievement, especially in reading. Also, most students had positive reactions toward the strategy instruction.

1. Background

Since learning strategies play an important role in second language learning, the study of learning strategies has been an area of interest by many researchers and classroom teachers in recent years. In summary, most studies in language learning strategies have found that (1) the use of appropriate language learning strategies leads to improved proficiency and achievement overall or in specific skills (e.g., Chamot & Küpper, 1989; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987); and (2) successful language learners generally used more learning strategies, and more facilitative ones, than do poor learners (e.g., Bialystok, 1981; Chamot & Küpper, 1989; Oxford 1990, 1993; Ramirez, 1986; Rubin, 1975, 1987). In addition, the importance and value of training learners in effective strategy use and becoming autonomous have also been recognized (e.g., Oxford, 1990, 1996; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Wenden, 1991; Yang, 1998).

Researchers have offered various suggestions on how to conduct a strategy training program. For example, it is noted that the training program should take language learners' motivation, beliefs, and attitude into consideration (Oxford et al., 1990) and include multiple kinds of strategies (Wenden and Rubin, 1987). To ensure the success of such strategy training, teachers should develop appropriate teaching techniques, provide a motivational framework, and convince students of the value of learning strategies (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-

Dinary, Carbonaro & Robbins, 1993; Chamot & Küpper, 1989; Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, learning strategy instruction should be implemented by foreign language teachers, conducted in conjunction with the regular course of instruction, and offered over an extended period of time (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1987). Researchers have also suggested a sequence of steps to follow when conducting learning strategy instruction (e.g., Hosenfeld et al. ,1981; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 1993; Weinstein & Underwood, 1985). Teachers can follow the steps to: (1) identify and assess students' learning strategies; (2) develop students' awareness of different strategies and their goals for strategy use; (3) provide direct and informed instructions on learning strategies and varied practice opportunities; and (4) help students evaluate their own strategy use and at the same time evaluate the whole strategy training and revise the training component if necessary.

The aforementioned sequence for conducting learning strategy instruction may serve as a framework for the strategies-based instruction (Weaver & Cohen, 1997). According to Weaver and Cohen (1997), strategies-based instruction (SBI) is "a learner-focused approach to teaching that emphasizes both explicit and implicit integration of language learning strategies in the language classroom" (p. 24). This approach aims to help learners become aware of what kinds of strategies are available to them, understand how to use learning strategies more effectively, and learn when and how to transfer the strategies to new language learning and using contexts. Weaver and Cohen (1997) indicated that SBI contained two components. One is strategy training, in which teachers teach students explicitly how, when, and why strategies can be used to facilitate language learning and language use activities. The other component is strategy integration, in which teachers integrate strategies into everyday class materials or language tasks explicitly and implicitly to provide students with contextualized strategy practice and reinforcement.

In brief, many attempts to teach students to use learning strategies have indeed produced good results. However, not all studies on second language learning strategy training have been uniformly successful or conclusive. Research review has shown mixed results from different studies (e.g., O'Malley et al. 1985; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, Carbonaro & Robbins, 1993). Thus, more research is essential in the area of learning strategy training.

In the context of Taiwan's English education, there have been a number of studies which examined the variety and frequency of EFL students' use of learning strategies (e.g., Chao, 1996; Hsiao, 1997; Klassen, 1994; Sy, 1996; Yang, 1992, 1994). Nevertheless, few study has attempted to implement learning strategy training into general English teaching. Therefore, this study attempted to investigate the feasibility of integrating learning strategy instruction into a Freshman English course and examine students' reaction toward the training on language learning beliefs and strategies.

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2. The Study

The objectives of this study included the following: (1) to investigate the feasibility of teaching college students effective beliefs and learning strategies for developing language proficiency; and (2) to evaluate the impact of the language learning beliefs and learning strategies training on students' learning. The study has been conducted in two continuous years with different classes of college students, the present paper will report the results of the first year.

2.1. Subjects

In this study, college students enrolled in a Freshman English course were selected as subjects. In the first year, 45 college students (17 males and 28 females) participated. Except for 2 juniors, the rest 43 students were freshmen. About 42% (19 students) of these students majored in law and social sciences, 55% (25 students) came from College of Management, and one student from the animal husbandry department.

2.2. General Procedures

In the beginning of the semester, an English Learning Questionnaire composed by the author was used to assess students' strategy use and beliefs about language learning[1]. The information collected from the questionnaire was used to adjust the course contents and to accommodate individual differences. A general English proficiency test was then given as a pretest to evaluate students' listening comprehension, structural knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension[2]. During the semester, students received language instruction as well as learning strategy instruction designed and taught by the author. Then at the end of semester, students were tested again for their learning achievement at posttest. The results from the pretest and posttest were compared by using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Students' attitudes and reactions toward the semester-long strategy training were also evaluated.

2.3. Course Design

The learning strategy training for all four skills of English was included in the course design, though reading and oral-aural strategies were given more attention to match the course requirements. The general understanding of Taiwanese college students' learning strategies and learners' beliefs from previous studies (e.g., Klassen, 1994; Yang, 1992, 1994, 1996) were taken into account when designing the course.

Two textbooks were selected as major course materials: *Steps to Reading Proficiency* (Philips & Sotiriou, 1996) for reading training and *Listening for It: A Task-Based Listening Course* (Richards, Gordon, & Haper, 1995) for listening practice in the language lab. Video

programs, such as *Family Album, U.S.A.* (Kelty, 1991) and selected audio tapes were chosen as supplementary materials for this course. Handouts on learning strategies devised by the author were used as the base for learning strategy training.

E-mail writing activities were adopted to guide students to reflect on their own English learning (cf. Matsumoto, 1996). The topics for e-mail writing included students' goals, self-assessment, use of learning strategies, study plans, problems, and self-evaluation of their own English learning. In replying to students' e-mails, the instructor tried to offer encouragement, clarify student's misconceptions on language learning, and suggest effective learning strategies to students. Out-of-class listening and reading practices were also assigned to provide students with more opportunities to practice some of the learning strategies taught in class.

3. Results

The following sections presented students' preconceived beliefs about language learning and their use of English learning strategies, which were assessed to help modify the course. The impact of the learning strategy training was studied by examining students' achievement. Students' attitudes and reactions toward the course were surveyed through course evaluation and e-mail responses.

3.1. Students' Beliefs about Language Learning

Influenced by previous learning experiences, students often held some preconceived beliefs about language learning, which may affect their English learning in varied ways (Horwitz, 1988). Students' sense of self-efficacy and beliefs about the effectiveness of specific learning and communication strategies could also affect their choice of learning strategies (Yang, 1999). Students in this study generally showed similar beliefs to those found in previous study with college students (Yang, 1992). Yet, these college students were more confident and expressed greater interests in communicative and cultural learning. For example, 49% of the students in this study judged English as an easy language and 88% believed that they would learn to speak English very well; while only 39% and 80% believed so respectively in previous study (Yang, 1992). Compared to previous study, less students agreed that learning grammar (7% versus 25%) and translation (4% versus 21%) were the most important parts of learning a foreign language; whereas more students (76% versus 54%) felt that it was necessary to learn about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English. More students in this study agreed that they enjoyed practicing English with English native speakers (77% versus 66%), while slightly less students would feel timid speaking English with other people (31% versus 39%).

3.2. Students' Use of Learning Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies could be categorized into six subgroups: (1) memory strategies. (2) cognitive strategies, (3) compensation strategies, (4) metacognitive strategies, (5) affective strategies, and (6) social strategies. As for the students in this study, the most frequently used group of learning strategies was compensation strategies. The others, according to their rank order of usage, from most to least frequently used, were affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and memory strategies (See Table 1). Although some variations were expected to occur due to different samples, the pattern of using various learning strategies by these students, in general, looked very similar to those reported in previous studies. Specifically, the order was exactly the same as those found with 505 college students in Yang's 1992 study as well as with 66 students in the pretest of Yang's 1994 study. A summary of these comparisons is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Comparisons of the Means and Rank Order of Usage of the Six Subgroups of Learning
Strategies for this Study, Pretest in Yang's (1994) Study,
and those in Yang's (1992) Study

Strategy Name	THIS STUDY		PRETEST (YANG, 1994)		YANG (1992)	
	Mean	Rank Order	Mean	Rank Order	Mean	Rank Order
Memory Strategies	2.88	6	2.92	6	2.74	6
Cognitive Strategies	3.15	5	3.02	5	2.89	5
Compensation Strategies	3.54	1	3.57	1	3.33	1
Metacognitive Strategies	3.39	3	3.16	3	3.07	3
Affective Strategies	3.46	2	3.28	2	3.17	2
Social Strategies	3.08	4	3.05	4	2.97	4

Some of the memory and cognitive strategies which were used less frequently by these students included grouping vocabulary into categories for memorization; writing notes, messages, and reports in English; making summaries from listening and reading; and thinking in English. Practicing with other students was also reported as a less-often-used social strategy by these students. The training on these learning strategies, thus, were especially incorporated into the course. Pair and group work for cooperative learning were emphasized in many class activities.

3.3. Students' Achievement

Students' achievement through the class was estimated by comparing the pretest and posttest scores of the English proficiency tests. In the pretest, students' average preliminary scores for the three parts of the proficiency test are as follows: (1) listening comprehension: 28.87 (50 items, one point per item, score ranges: 18-47, standard deviation = 8.09); (2) structure and written expression: 29.96 (40 items, score ranges: 19-38, standard deviation = 5.09); and (3) vocabulary and reading comprehension: 40.91 (60 items, score ranges: 23-53, standard deviation = 6.85). As the Freshman English course focus on reading and oral/aural training, the posttest (in similar format with the pretest) at the end of the semester included both listening and reading comprehension sections. Their average scores (transformed in percentages) are as follows: (1) listening comprehension: 58.95 (50 items, score ranges: 32-90); and (2) vocabulary and reading comprehension: 77.86 (50 items, score ranges: 52-94). Therefore, the overall test scores were created by combing the listening and reading-vocabulary test results (both transformed in percentages). Paired t-tests were also conducted to compare only the results of the listening and reading tests. According to the results of paired t-tests, the overall test scores were found to have a significant difference (t = -5.14, $p < 0.001$, see Table 2). Although students' listening scores did not show significant improvement, their reading scores increased significantly after a semester's training (t = -6.68, $p < 0.001$).

TABLE 2

Paired T-Tests for Listening and Reading Test Results

Tests	N [b]	M	SD	(Difference) M	(Difference) SD	t Value	df	2-tail Prob. [c]
Overall (pretest)[a]	44	63.41	12.33	-5.00	6.45	-5.14	43	.000*
Overall (posttest)		68.41	12.65					
Listening (pretest)	44	57.95	16.31	-1.00	8.52	-0.78	43	.44
Listening (posttest)		58.95	17.63					
Reading (pretest)	44	68.86	10.58	-9.00	8.94	-6.68	43	.000*
Reading (posttest)		77.86	9.69					

Note:

[a] Overall test score = Mean [Listening Comprehension (in %) + Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension (in %)].

[b] N = Number of pairs (one student dropped out during the semester), M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, df = Degree of freedom, Prob. = Probability.

[c] Two-tailed test, * $p < 0.001$,

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3.4. Students' Reactions and Attitudes Toward the Course

3.4.1. Course Evaluation

The results of the open-ended course evaluation revealed these students' reactions and attitudes toward the course, which are summarized as follows.

In general, about one half of the 42 students who answered the anonymous course evaluation felt satisfied with the contents of the course. Most students (about 71%) enjoyed the listening practices in the language lab every week and found the two major listening course materials (the audio tapes and video programs) interesting and practical, though there were a few students who felt the materials were too easy.

Over one-third of the students considered the reading instruction helpful. With the training, they found they either increased their reading speed or could read other English textbooks or materials more effectively at the end of semester. However, some students felt the reading selections in *Steps to Reading Proficiency* were "boring," "too difficult," or contained "too many new words." Others thought the lectures on reading skills were boring and asked for more interesting and easier reading materials for practice. The others expressed having a hard time in practicing with rapid reading. They complained that they could not catch up with the reading speed nor understand the reading materials because of their limited vocabulary. Several students felt that they needed more time and practice to acquire the reading skills well.

As for the question concerning how they think of the out-of-class listening and reading practices, some students wrote that they were able to take advantage of the campus audio-visual equipment and resources. Some also felt these practices were helpful to their language learning, and they could choose materials for their own level or needs. Yet, there were other students indicated that they didn't know how to select appropriate materials and needed further guidance. A few students also thought the exercise ineffective or not helpful because they didn't pay attention, didn't have time, or felt pressure for completing assignments.

When asked about the e-mail writing activities, over one half (24 students) of the students felt it was useful to learn how to use e-mail and computer. Several students considered this practice an "up-to-date," "interesting," and "rewarding" learning experience. With e-mails, they said they could practice their English and writing skills, communicate with foreign friends or the instructor more quickly and easily, hand in assignments at more flexible time, or increase interest in writing. Still there were some students complained about the troublesome assignments for various personal reasons. A few students suggested writing on other topics besides English learning. In summary, these students wrote about their opinions about the course and offered many suggestions for the improvement of next semester.

3.4.2. E-mail Responses

Students' e-mail responses provided further understanding of their reactions and attitudes toward the learning strategy training. The following discussion followed the topics of e-mail writing.

1. Goals/Purposes: Students appeared to have strong motivations when they discussed their goals for learning English. They wanted to improve their English, especially speaking and listening ability, for various reasons. These goals or purposes included: passing the TOEFL test, going abroad for advanced study, traveling abroad, communicating with foreigners, learning about foreign cultures, learning latest knowledge in English, reading other English textbooks, meeting course requirements, getting better jobs in the future, liking English, and feeling interested in learning languages.

2. Self-assessment: When being asked how good they feel about their English ability, many students felt dissatisfied with their speaking and listening ability in comparison with their reading and writing ability. This kind of self-assessment is often related to their goals for improving oral communication skills in English.

3. Study Methods/Leaning Strategies: When students discussed the best way to improve or learn English, many of them mentioned the importance of practicing every day and using visual and audio media for practice. Students also discussed about a variety of learning strategies they used for listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary learning. (In replying, the instructor confirmed some learning strategies and also suggested students keep exploring more effective learning strategies for themselves.)

4. Plans: Students discussed various plans they had for learning English in the semester, which were found, in many cases, consistent with their discussion about their beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies. Some planned to listen to radio programs regularly, while others planned to read English newspapers or magazines to improve their English. Other plans included memorizing new words, studying grammar, attending every class, participating in class activities actively, and completing assignments seriously and regularly.

5. Problems: Students had problems or difficulties with rapid reading most. The asked questions concerning the reading strategies taught in class. They wrote about their troubles in keeping up the speed, reading under time pressure, getting the main ideas in a short time, or having too many new words. Some of them also wrote about how they tried to solve the problems they encountered by using some specific learning strategies.

6. Self-evaluation: In self-evaluation, some students were happy about their progress in listening, reading, speaking, or writing. Specifically, some found that they could "read faster", "get the main idea now" or "not be afraid of reading information in English any more." Others found that they could "speak with more confidence" or "understand more than before." Some students felt that they learned about "how to study English" and "being responsible for their own learning." But there were also other students who felt sorry about not completing their original plan or not practicing as regularly as they had expected.

4. Discussion and Suggestions

The following discussion focused on examining the course design and strategy instruction as well as evaluation procedures of this study. Suggestions for future improvement were also included.

4.1. Course Design and Strategy Instruction

The subjects of this study had different opinions about the course materials. Several students felt dissatisfied with the course material for reading instruction Although the textbook offered various suggestions for reading skill training, yet some of the students indicated in their course evaluation and e-mails that the materials for reading practice were too difficult and some of the contents were "boring." Without great interest in the reading materials, students were possibly unwilling to practice the reading strategies or skills taught in class. On the other hand, the listening materials received different reactions. Many students found them interesting and practical. But there were also students who felt that the listening course materials were easier than the tests. This caused students problems in transferring the learning strategies they learned in the course during the test situations.

As students had varied language proficiency (c.f. students' pretest score ranges, especially in their listening ability), it was natural that they might think differently about the difficulty of the course materials. According to results of the course evaluations, a few students in this study found the listening materials were too easy and not challenging enough, while the others thought they were appropriate to their level. Some students felt the reading materials were too difficult, while other students found the materials were helpful to their improvement in reading. Interestingly, it was these students' reading score, not their listening score, that increased significantly at the posttest. One possible reason might be that, to some students who received little training in listening skills previously and whose listening ability were at low to low-intermediate level, the listening tests were simply too difficult.[3] In other words, while some of these students still struggled with comprehending sentences, the listening pretest and posttest required the students to be able to understand not only simple conversation but also longer academic speeches. As two students commented, "The class content is easy to learn, but the test is too difficult." Besides, there was not enough time for the

first-semester instruction to include strategy training for basic and advanced listening tasks, which were both evaluated in the tests. This might be another reason why students did not make significant improvement after the training for just a semester.[4]

Based on students' reactions, e-mail writing activities provided students with a communicative environment for practicing English. With carefully selected topics, it allowed students to reflect on their own English learning process, their beliefs about language learning, and their use of learning strategies. The instructor could also provide students with individual guidance on learning strategy use as well as clarification on some misconceptions about language learning. However, frequent e-mail writings between the instructor and students (about once every two weeks) may impose a heavy work load on the instructor. Students also suggested that the topics should not be limited to learning strategies. Accordingly, it might be more helpful to establish a forum on a web page so that students can post their opinions and discuss on a variety of topics. Other alternative methods could be also explored.

The out-of-class listening and reading practices offered students freedom to choose materials meeting their needs and interests. Yet, as some students suggested, more specific guidance on selecting appropriate materials and using learning strategies should be provided in class so that students may take better advantage of these extra opportunities for strategy practice and use.

4.2. Evaluation Procedures

Several points for the evaluation procedures were noted for improvement during this study. These points may also serve for implications for future research. First, though the course evaluation in this study provided some useful insights for effectiveness of the learning strategy instruction, the open-ended questions in the course evaluation can be transformed into five-point scale items so that it is possible to do quantitative analysis on the data. Second, to investigate the effect of learning strategy instruction, the researcher could survey the students' use of learning strategies and their beliefs again at the end of the semester for a comparison with that in the beginning of the class. Third, it may be more appropriate or practical to focus on assessing specific learning strategies and beliefs for some English courses. For example, the Freshman English course in the study focused on reading and oral/aural training, it may be more instructive to examine respective strategies and beliefs.

Other research implications included: first, a follow-up instructional study with a quasi-experimental component should be carried out in the Freshman English class and compare a class receiving strategy instruction with a class not receiving the instruction. Also, the results of the current study in the pretest and posttest should be explained with cautions. Further examination of the two proficiency tests used in this study will be helpful in the development of a better measurement for language proficiency. The current study adopted TOEFL practice

tests rather than teacher's designed achievement tests as a more objective measurement for comparison. Further study could examine the differences between these two types of tests.

4.3. Suggestions for Instruction

1. The course materials for strategy instruction should be chosen with care so that they can match students' current level of language ability and facilitate the strategy instruction.

2. The course design should also allocate more time for students to practice the new learning strategies and to facilitate strategy transfer in different learning tasks, especially those new or difficult learning skills for rapid reading and advanced listening tasks.

3. Various activities can be adopted to raise students' awareness in language learning strategy use. Take listening (and reading) strategy training as an example, teachers may expand the scope of pre- and post-listening (and reading) discussions so that they can include more "process-based" discussion (Goh, 1997) on strategy use and beliefs relevant to that particular listening (and reading) task. In addition, general group discussion about learning is useful for awareness-raising (Matsumoto, 1996; Yang 1996). Through discussion, students became more aware of their own and other students' beliefs, attitudes, and strategies. By finding out what other students are doing, they can evaluate and improve their own learning practices.

5. Conclusion

The study intended to integrate learning strategy research into actual language teaching practice and to promote students' self-regulated language learning. Therefore, the aforementioned framework for strategies-based instruction—i.e., diagnosis, preparation, instruction, and evaluation—was incorporated into the course design and research design. In addition to providing students with learning strategy training in English reading and aural-oral practice, the course attempted to teach them appropriate language learning beliefs and learning strategies to assist their learning. One of the course requirements—the e-mail writing—was thus designed as awareness-raising and training activities for such purpose. The results show that students made significant improvement in their final achievement, especially in reading. Also, most students had positive reactions toward the strategy instruction. Although there were stills limitations and areas for improvement, it is hoped that the results of this empirical study of language learning beliefs and learning strategy training will be helpful for: (1) language teachers to better understand their students and thus adapt their teaching to students needs more effectively; and (2) other language teachers and researchers to incorporate the learning strategy training into their second language courses which teaches students how to learn a second language more efficiently and effectively.

Notes

1. The English Learning Questionnaire (revised version) consists of three sections. The first section asked questions about individual background information. The second section of the English Learning Questionnaire, adopted from Horwitz's (1987) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), included 35 items to assess students' beliefs about language learning. The third section, adopted from Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), contained 49 items to assess students use of language learning strategies. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and tested for validity and reliability.

2. The test items come from *Reading for TOEFL* (1991, 2nd edition, pp. 110-128), edited by ETS. The first part of listening test contains 50 items. The second part, "Structure and writing expression," contains 40 items. The third part, "Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension," contains 60 items.

3. Since English listening is not tested in the college entrance exam, most of the students indicated that they tended to neglect it in the past and also had much less training in listening than in reading and writing.

4. After the instructor supplemented a third listening material (i.e., *Selected Topics: High-intermediate listening comprehension*, by Kisslinger, 1994) and provided a series of more advanced listening strategy training like listening to speech and taking notes in the second semester, these students showed better improvement in their final listening test (Average score: 65.9, score ranges: 34-92) in comparison with the average score of 58.95 at the end of the first semester.

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