



The Efficacy of Procedural and Declarative Learning Strategies on EFL Students' Oral Proficiency

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Abstract

Style and strategies in EFL learning contexts and the effects of task types were explored to enhance language learning strategies. Using a quantitative pre-test, post-test design and interviews, this study investigated the effects of procedural and declarative learning strategies on EFL learners' acquisition of English past tense performing narrative tasks. The participants were 396 male and female Thai students enrolled in a general English course (intermediate level) in Walailak University in Thailand. The main data was the interview which took 12 weeks of total 24 hours. Participants completed a timed and untimed grammaticality judgement test (GJT) as a pre-test, and were then randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions of dictation, individual reconstruction, or collaborative reconstruction activity. Analysis of performance in the oral test indicated that learners who applied procedural strategy benefited more than those who carried out the oral test with declarative one. This study may contribute to a deeper insight in teaching and evaluation of learning strategies, performing narrative tasks, and highlighting careful selection of tasks. The focus on procedural and declarative strategies for one task could lead to the learners' use of appropriate learning strategies, enabling the learners to become more independent, creative, and dynamic.

Keywords: Style, Strategy, Procedural, Declarative, EFL, and Task

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Introduction

Students learn in their own way based on their backgrounds, capabilities, weaknesses, wants, characteristics, and motivations towards learning (Reiff, 1992; Wong & Nunan, 2011). For example, visual learners are sensitive, and their perceptions play a key role in the learning process, learners with memory strategy preference learn by imagery and grouping, enabling them to remember the information (Oxford, 1990). Language students require to use their own unique way of learning as learners have different learning preferences. Oxford (2003, p. 3) defines styles as “the general approaches to learning a language” or the “biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others”, while strategies are “the specific behaviors or thoughts learners use to enhance their language learning”. In other words, language learning strategies are methods that allow the learners to start and incorporate new knowledge to transform into a more efficient and pleasant experience, while learning styles are the “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (Oxford, 2003, p. 1). Learning style preferences are based on their academic majors (Fazarro & Martin, 2004). Students’ learning styles are usually influenced by their genetics, previous learning experiences, their culture, and the society (Kneefe, 1979, p. 4).

Literature Review

The four dimensions of learning style that are likely to be among those most strongly associated with L2 learning are sensory preferences, personality type, desired degree of generality, and biological differences, where all the strategies use often relates to style preferences (Oxford, 2003). Learning styles are explained by Haynes (2005) as the activities suitable for students with different learning styles and learning preferences. In fact, then learning will occur if only a teacher’s style matches the student’s learning styles. The types of styles for different students are

interviewing, debating, participating on a panel, giving oral reports, and participating in oral discussions of written material for *auditory learners*, computer graphic, maps, graphs, charts, cartoons, posters, diagrams, text with a lot of pictures for *visual learners*, drawing, playing board games, and making models for *tactile learners* playing games that involve the whole body, movement activities, making models, and setting up experiments for *kinaesthetic learners*, and choral reading, recorded books, story writing, computer programs, games, group activities for *global learners*, and information presented in sequential steps, teacher directed, clear goals and requirements for *analytic learners*. (Xu, 2011)

Factors that distinguish and explain individual learner differences are beliefs, affective state, age, aptitude, learning style, motivation, and personality. Therefore, learning style is one of the individual learner differences (Ellis, 2005, cited in Xu, 2011). For example, there are some English language service providers, such as

Cambridge English, in the Cambridge English Teaching Framework and the Celta/Delta syllabuses which consider 'learning styles' as a concept which teachers should be aware of, alongside other concepts, believing that a prescriptive one-style-per-student concept is reductive and limiting (Davidoff & Van den Berg, 1990).

Learning style could also be described from two perspectives: the *strong version* of the theory (now been discredited, mostly based on cognitive grounds) considers the learning styles as a limited set of styles (e.g. concrete/abstract and reflective/active as proposed by David Kolb (1984), or wholistic/analytic and verbal/imagery as proposed by Richard Riding (2002)). This limited classification is used to divide individuals into one-style-per student, and that style (assumed to be dominant and stable) learning materials are fitted in accordingly. On the other hand, according to *the weak version* individuals can learn differently, and possess their preferences/styles/modes in learning process. Their main difference is that in weak version of the theory, despite the strong version, students are not restricted to one particular learning style. Both versions include not only the cognitive domain, but also the affective and physiological domains (Oxford, Hollaway, & Horton-Murillo, 1992). A learning style consists of five elements: environmental elements (sound, light, temperatures, design), emotional elements (motivation, persistence, responsibility), physical elements (perception, intake, time, mobility), sociological elements (self, partner, team, mentor, varied), and psychological elements (global/analytical, impulsive/reflective) (Keefe, 1979; Reiff, 1992).

The six major groups of L2 learning strategies are listed by Oxford (1990): cognitive strategies (enabling the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways), metacognitive strategies (e.g. identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task, gathering and organizing materials, arranging a study space and a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy), memory-related strategies (which help learners link one L2 item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding), social strategies (e.g. asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms), compensatory strategies (e.g. guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and writing; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words), and affective strategies (such as identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk).

Research on language teaching styles and strategies

Despite learning strategy research that is growing and that EFL/ESL researchers show more enthusiasm in learning strategy, learning style research is considered outdated because of the lack of reliable and valid testing results (Amini & Ibrahim-González, 2012). However, it is useful to revise the research for the basic ideas of learning style.

Strategies as the approaches used across curricular areas to support the learning of students (Herrell & Jordan, 2004) which may be used only on occasion (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011) provide the opportunity for the individual learners to choose particular strategies if they have a “clear purpose for using them”, and they feel that doing a particular task “has value to them personally” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.164). Gavriilidou and Psaltou-Joycey (2009) summarised the factors that affect choice of language learning strategies and the language learning strategy instruction: proficiency level (e.g. Griffiths, 2003), age (e.g. Peacock & Ho, 2003), gender (e.g. Psaltou-Joycey, 2008), motivation (e.g. Schmitt & Watanabe, 2001), learning style (e.g. Li & Qin, 2006), field of study or career (e.g. Peacock & Ho, 2003), culture (e.g. Psaltou-Joycey, 2008), beliefs (e.g. Purdie & Oliver, 1999), task requirements (e.g. Skehan, 1998), language teaching methods (e.g. Oxford & Nyikos, 1989), and language being learned (e.g. Politzer, 1983). The language learning strategy instruction involves the language of strategy instruction (e.g. Chamot & Keatley, 2003), integration of strategy instruction (Oxford & Leaver, 1996), and direct or embedded instruction (e.g. Vandergrift, 2003) (Gavriilidou & Psaltou-Joycey, 2009).

The instructional sequences are implemented by language teachers to assess the effectiveness of strategy training, to conduct the strategy in their own foreign language lessons (e.g. O'Malley & Chamot, 1995), and instructional sequences and teaching approaches (e.g. Grunewald, 1999) have been the subject for research on language learning strategy teaching (Oxford, Hollaway, & Horton-Murrillo, 1992; Kinoshita, 2003).

Qualitative and quantitative methods with observational and non/observational data from questionnaires, interviews, in-class observations, reflective portfolios and students' diaries could be used for assessing the effective strategies in language learning (De Araúz, 2009). Intervention studies are also used in assessing strategies training. Intervention studies are experimental studies providing the strategies training to one group (experimental group) but not the other group of learners (control group). This is to discover whether the two groups have a different performance in terms of the levels of learning achievement, and if the strategies are teachable (Abhakorn, 2008). Research shows a significant relationship between gender and language learning strategies (Wei, Hoo & See, 2011; Olagbaju, 2014), as language strategies are used more frequently among female learners (Green & Oxford, 1993).

Natascha Thomson (2012) conducted a research on *Language Teaching Strategies and Techniques Used to Support Students Learning in a Language other than Their Mother Tongue* in Kongsberg International School among teachers working in Primary Years Programme. The types of language use were reported asking open and closed questions (15%), asking a specific student (7%), response to and repetition of student answers (20%), giving instructions (18%), and activity related language (11%).

The strategies and techniques the teachers used during class were vocabulary checks using different methods (21%), eliciting (bringing forward student's ideas to extend and sustain discussion (20%), modelling of target language (context authenticity, 19%) think alouds (offering of a teacher's inner dialogue or opinions out loud for students to hear their thoughts, ideas, and thinking process, 13%), modelling activity (explicit clearance of an activity, 8%), Student thinking time after a question (6%), re-casts (the repetition of a student's utterance making changes to convert it to a correct phrase or sentence, 5%), error correction (1%, the least frequently used language strategy, incorporating small group and pair work in lessons as a powerful tool for enhancing language acquisition, elaborated input (repetition, paraphrasing, slower speech, etc.) (Thomson, 2012). The findings from these studies could shed light on the common strategies preferences or at least the usual practice in the real classroom contexts. Therefore, based on the socio-cultural and individual characteristics of groups of students and individual students' personality traits, the practices could be adjusted according to their needs to fill in the performance or proficiency gaps individually and specifically (Amini, Alavi, Zahabi, & Vorster, 2017). The personality features are of Extraverted vs. Introverted, Intuitive-Random vs. Sensing-Sequentia, Thinking vs. Feeling, Closure-oriented/Judging vs. Open/Perceiving types (Oxford, 2003). Different assessment methods could be used for different strategies, such as self-report surveys, observations, interviews, learner journals, dialogue journals, and think-aloud techniques (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Rahimi, Esfandiari, & Amini, 2016).

In evaluating whether a particular strategy has been successful in terms of instruction, the instructors are advised to seek individuals' progress and development toward L2 proficiency. This could also be accompanied with the signs of increased self-appreciation, self-efficacy, self-esteem, or general and language learning motivation. Therefore, the context in which each style and strategy is used is very important and could be different with different learners from different backgrounds. The significance and the need for these is even more with the students who are not aware of the power of consciously using L2 learning strategies for making learning quicker and more effective (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993) as for example ESL students from a variety of cultures were tactile and kinaesthetic in their sensory preferences.

Teaching language learning strategies and styles

Silver, Strong, and Perini (2000) categorise teaching the learning styles as demonstration to teach about perception and judgment, reflecting in style to ask students to recall their previous work, descriptions, and case studies by letting students read descriptions about the four styles and reflect on the style that sounds most like/unlike them, checklists and inventories as valuable tools to help students speculate on their preferred behaviors, a grid with four style descriptions called “style amoeba” used as a fun and effective method for teaching style to elementary students where the students draw an amoeba in the middle, placing most of the body in the quadrant they feel most expresses their style, and other styles, such as “style symbols” demo, and style reflection chart (Silver, Strong, & Perini, 2000). Furthermore, learning styles are not dichotomous (black or white, present or absent). In other words, they blend and act together and we can set boundaries for them as they “operate on a continuum or on multiple, intersecting continua” (Oxford, 1999).

Teaching language-learning strategies is possible through uninformed strategy instruction where students are unaware of the name, purpose, or value of the specific learning strategy (e.g. textbook rubrics), or direct and integrated instruction where the teacher tries to raise the learners’ awareness of the purpose and logic to use the strategy, identifying the strategy, and providing opportunities for learners’ practice and self-evaluation (Kinoshita, 2003). Instruction are required for language learners in how to use strategies effectively for strengthening their language learning and performance (Cohen, 1998). Effective teaching and learning in foreign language learning depends to a considerable extent on raising levels of positive behaviour associated with learning in the classroom (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Banner & Rayner, 2000).

A framework from *Scope and Sequence Frameworks for Learning Strategy Instruction* in O’Malley and Chamot (1995, pp. 158-9) is adapted by Kinoshita (2003) in order to implement the learning instruction into the language classes. The four-stage framework starts with “*previewing* teaching material and activities to identify strategies for instruction”, then “*presenting* the strategy by naming it and explaining when and why to use it”, thirdly “*modelling* the strategy by providing opportunities to practice the strategy with various activities/tasks”, and finally “*developing* learners’ ability to evaluate strategy use, and develop skills to transfer strategy use to new tasks”.

Language teachers should be able to distinguish between clear classifications to teach language learning strategies (Amini, Ayari, & Amini, 2016). Cohen (2003) categorised the main strategies into four types: “by goal, i.e. either to learn a language or to use a language”, “by language skill”, i.e. the receptive and productive skills and skill-related strategies cutting across all four skill areas, e.g. vocabulary learning, “by function”, i.e. cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social functional groups (cited in Abhakorn, 2008).

Table 1. Classification and examples of learning strategies (Cohen, 2003)

| By Skill | By Goal | By Function | Example |
|-----------------|--|------------------------|--|
| Listening | Language learning strategies: conscious processes learners select in order to learn language | Memory strategy | Using keywords |
| Reading | | Cognitive strategy | Taking notes, summarizing |
| Writing | Language use strategies: learning strategies: conscious processes learners select in order to use language | Metacognitive strategy | Organizing, self-monitoring, self-evaluation |
| speaking | | Social strategy | Asking for correction |
| | | Compensation strategy | Coining words |
| | | Affective strategy | Relaxing |

A report published in 2005 at www.uteach.utexas.edu, by the New Teacher Center (NTC) in California suggested six effective strategies for English language teachers to accelerate academic language development. The Vocabulary & Language Development, Guided Interaction, Metacognition & Authentic Assessment, Explicit Instruction, Meaning-Based Context & Universal Themes, and Modelling, Graphic Organizers, & Visuals were processed to address every individual's language requirements, improve language development and adolescent literacy (e.g. learning words like algorithm by native speakers, boost learners' language development and subject knowledge by improving academic language skills, introducing subject-matter concepts at first, and providing motivational and culturally responsive resources for learning).

In addition, learning strategies are used purposefully and not randomly, as they are consciously controlled by the student and using learning strategies is considerably associated with learner achievement and proficiency (Oxford, 1999). However, no single L2 instructional methodology fits all students. This is in line with the Oxford's example in the same article that students from Asian cultures, for instance, are often highly visual, with Koreans being the most visual, i.e. the need to use different strategies and language learning styles. Second language teachers should consider different approaches in the preparation and the conduct of the strategy use in the class.

In a nutshell, it should be noted that there is no good or bad strategy or style and it is essentially neutral until the context of its use is thoroughly considered. A "good" language learner usually tends to communicate, is not afraid of making in learning and communicating, is a good guesser, seeks language patterns, is involved in more speaking, and monitors their own learning (Rubin, 1975).

Using particular styles and strategies for language learning could help teachers in attaining the awareness of their preferences and of possible biases as it is evident

that the more teachers try to understand and learn about the learner style preferences, the more effectively they can orient their L2 instruction. Therefore, teachers' creativity in using different approaches which are aligned according to expectations, qualities, and the needs of all or at least most of the students in the class. We found the advice given quite useful in terms of using "small strategy interventions" in certain cases, or "instructional method" (the instruction interwoven with the general communicative language teaching approach) in some other cases depending on how quickly the teachers want to move onto the strategy-based instruction.

Perhaps as the most important part of strategy instruction, the learning outcomes of strategy instruction should be taken into account as highlighted by Kinoshita (2003) that by exploring "how", "when" and "why" to use language learning strategies, and autonomous learning learners would be more active in language learning process, where learners' understanding from learning strategies becomes procedural; therefore, there will be "a positive backwash effect on motivation levels, self-efficacy, learner autonomy, transfer skills, and language proficiency" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1995, p. 145, cited in Kinoshita, 2003). Therefore, an efficient learner can develop the skills to organize and conduct their own learning events efficiently. An enthusiastic teacher would build several steps leading to the creation of autonomous differentiation (Banner & Rayner, 2000).

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

As stated in the previous section, due to the scarcity of the existing literature over the role of the two core aspects of language learning: *procedural* and *declarative knowledge*, and to what extent the results in foreign language performance vary over the same course among the participants of the study, the current research examined the role of these two aspects in EFL context of Thailand at university level. Meanwhile, the research tried to find out if there is any effect on individuals' performance over the pre-/post-test and delayed post-test and finally to what extent foreign language learning could be more effective using either one of these strategies.

Method

Participants

The participants were 396 students, from among a total of 1129 students enrolled in a full-time general English course in WULI (Walailak University Language Institute) in Thailand. They were randomly assigned to the study through cluster random sampling for 24 hours. 216 of the participants were female and 180 male with the age mean of 20 (age mean: 20 years old). Considering the homogeneity matter, the participants had been given an in-house placement test earlier in the year to determine their proficiency level. All the participants were Thai with the same first language, Thai, which makes them even more homogeneous. The participants were selected at the intermediate level as they are more likely to be developmentally ready to perform narrative task, but without having yet done so.

Design

Participants completed a timed and an untimed grammaticality judgement test (GJT) as a pre-test and were then randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions: a dictation, an individual reconstruction, or a collaborative reconstruction activity. There were twelve separate treatment administrations, one week apart. Two weeks following the final treatment, participants completed a delayed post-test. For the general assumptions building upon the literature there was a control group in the study to compare the general efficacy of the two aspects of language learning in proficiency development with that of the control group.

Treatment

There were two different treatment types in the experimental group A (procedural) and B (declarative). The groups registered for the course which took 12 weeks of total 24 hours to complete. During this period, the teachers, whose classes were assigned as the experimental and control group, used the first class as the introduction to the treatment and to obtain their consent as the participants of the study. So the total hours of treatment were 22. Each treatment provided participants with both focused audio-visual and written input on general interest topics that covered the target structure (past tense). There were a total of 10 written and audio-visual samples of the target structure across the treatment period. Participants in each group, depending on their group either procedural or declarative received instructions on task completion only through student-teacher and peer negotiation in each group except the control one. In the control group, the students were presented with the exact same material, hence the teacher did not use the procedural/declarative knowledge activation as a learning strategy for the task completion. The teachers made sure that all the participants completed these tasks through reading the passages in the form of group activity and reproducing them with their own words or watching an episode and trying to narrate the story to the class. The treatment itself involved completing four passages containing the target structure mainly. There were another three short episodes and three related oral tasks.

Data collection

The main phase of data collection was the teacher-student interview before the final exam. Before the last meeting, the participants were interviewed over general topics and audio recorded between at least three minutes to maximum six minutes. For achieving data saturation, if the teacher realized that the interview was not lengthy enough to extract the intended information, the interview time increased up to a reasonable length of time, but mostly students would fulfil the data collection requirements within the given time span. These one-by-one interview were audio recorded and later were transcribed. Another set of data were collected from the participants of all three groups on their final test (post-test). This test, like the pre-test, mainly focused on grammar and vocabulary but for the sake of the study only the grammatical section was included in the study as the second main data.

Data Analysis

As participants in the study completed multiple treatments and tests, t-test was used to investigate the group performances. The t-test analysis was run to see if the comparison between the experimental group A and B as well as control group bears any significant difference over their pre- and post-test results. This method is considered liberal in that it compares means for all possible data sources separately, rather than combined. For all statistical analysis, the alpha level was set at .05. For effect sizes, Cohen's *d* values were calculated. This study also compared the two experimental groups' differences in performance across the application procedural and declarative knowledge.

Results

Pre-test Results

First the results for the t-test analysis of the pre- and post-tests are presented and described in the following table.

Table 2. Pre-test Samples Test of Experimental group A

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|----------|--------|----|------|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | | |
| CONTROL – EXPERIMENTALA | -8.42500 | 15.34206 | 2.42579 | -13.33163 | -3.51837 | -3.473 | 39 | .061 | |

In the following table the two groups of control and experimental results of t-test show that there was no significant difference between them prior to the treatment and all the students were at the same level.

Table 3. Pre-test Samples Test of Experimental group B

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|----------|-------|----|------|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | | |
| CONTROL - EXPERIMENTALB | -6.35000 | 19.23612 | 3.04150 | -12.50201 | -1.19799 | 2.088 | 39 | .070 | |

As the above tables present the results, the groups are statistically at the same level with a marginal difference that is allowed in the experimental studies due to its insignificant values.

Post-test Results

As is represented in the following table, the post-test results showed a significant gain when compared to the control group, which in turn proves that the treatment each group received over the entire course was effective. Table 3 shows a mean comparison of the post-test between the control and experimental group A, whereby experimental groups with the Mean score of M=75 outperformed the control group with the Mean score of M=70. Moreover, the experimental group B, with the Mean score of M=74 also outperformed the control group. It can be clearly inferred that both treatments were effective in promoting students English language ability.

Table 4. Post-test Comparison between Groups

| Paired Samples Statistics | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| CONTROL | 70.05 | 40 | 14.87719 | 2.35229 |
| EXPERIMENTAL A | 75.00 | 40 | 9.87096 | 1.56074 |
| EXPERIMENTAL B | 74.82 | 40 | 7.95464 | 1.25774 |

Comparing the performance of the two experimental groups, referring to the table 3, group A (procedural) slightly outperformed the group B (declarative) in their grammatical written test. However these data are considered secondary when compared to the main data obtained from the interview which will be explained in the following section.

Delayed Post-test results

After the participants had their final exam, two weeks later a delayed post-test was administered for the two experimental groups and the results were compared to evaluate if these strategies were going to yield similar effect over a longer period of time.

Table 5. post-test comparison between groups

| Post-test Results | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| EXPERIMENTAL A | 74.12 | 32 | 8.97090 | 1.57084 |
| EXPERIMENTAL B | 71.87 | 32 | 7.65474 | 1.29175 |

Building upon the obtained results, research question 2 stating if there is any effect on individuals' performance over the pre-/post-test and delayed post-test proved that application of these two strategies in EFL context was significantly effective in enhancing the general knowledge of the participants in experimental groups. Meanwhile further analysis of the interview data will provide even more

academically sound justification over the efficacy of either of these strategies between experimental groups.

Summary of the Results

The treatments had an effect on general acquisition of language grammar. Both experimental groups outperformed the control one in their post- and delayed post-test results. However, the interview data analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the performance of group A and B. In the meantime, the tasks mainly had effect on acquisition of grammatical items only. There was no difference between the oral and audio-visual tasks on acquisition.

Discussion and Conclusion

Learning English as a first, second, or foreign language needs incorporation of different techniques, styles, and strategies (Oxford, Hollaway, & Horton-Murrillo, 1992). Language learners use their potentially different metacognitive, cognitive, or social/affective strategies to engage in the language-learning tasks (Amini & Amini, 2017). Despite first language learning, or acquisition, which does not require much deliberate effort from the learners (children), the ESL and EFL learners (usually adults) must adopt techniques, tasks, learning strategies, and styles that are compatible with them individually. In learning a second or foreign language the advantage that adult learners have over children is that adults can both learn subconsciously and consciously (Brown, 2002). Since the last two decades, the focus on learning strategies and styles which could help learners systematically to learn more efficiently and the way to apply them into curriculum has been continuously increasing (Nunan, 1989). To provide educators with an effective tool for developing FL communicative competence, the theoretical analysis and adaptation of the model to our conditions must be followed by detailed instructions for its didactic application (Oxford & Leaver, 1996). As for declarative knowledge, teachers may use any methods and techniques to present information and assist learners to consciously create a comprehensible inner representation of a FL grammar system, which is a starting point for proceduralization.

When the effects of the two perspectives were compared, findings indicated that all learners who were in the experimental group B were able to perform the interview task more proficiently while only two thirds of the participants from group A were able to do so. The obtained pattern of results was also supported earlier in post- and delayed post-test results. When the oral data were analysed in relation to the learners' proficiency, results indicated that all low proficiency learners from the procedural group were able to orally produce longer chunks of target language in the interview session. None of the control group participants reached to this level of readiness based on their immediate and delayed post-test.

In a nutshell, the crucial factors in adopting appropriate language learning style and strategies are adult learners' perceptions and needs; blending strategy training in

usual classes; using strategy training for the tasks are going to be assigned later; assigning relevant tasks strategies to different types of students based on the suitability of the task for a particular student; and formative and summative assessment of the progress in the use of strategy and class performance (Oxford, 1990). Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of learner-oriented strategies and tasks in the process of language teaching and learning. As aligned with previous studies (e.g. Abhakorn, 2008), the strategy training programmes should be able to help in raising, emphasising, and enhancing learner awareness about their own potential strengths and weaknesses in learning a new language as well as the varieties of strategies to choose for effective language learning, i.e. metacognitive knowledge, and promoting the responsibility for learner's independent learning, i.e. learner autonomy. It has been argued in the literature that research investigating the strategic learning should use proper measurement tools in order to avoid biased findings. Using oral picture-description task, the present study revealed that these two strategies are more effective compared to the results of the control group. While suggestive, this finding should be interpreted with caution because factors other than the ones investigated could have contributed to the reported outcomes. The target feature could be one of those factors.

Pedagogical implications

One clear outcome is that these activities prove to have effect on language proficiency in general and specifically on grammatical knowledge. It is possible that such tasks to be accompanied with either more explicit types of instruction or more extended exposure may be needed to have an effect on the oral production skill as well. Another outcome was the differential effect the treatments had on EFL general language enhancement. Successful performance on a classroom activity is thus not necessarily a good predictor of ultimate language development. Of course, the benefits for acquisition are not the only consideration for teachers. Tasks that lead to better immediate performance may motivate learners more.

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