

# STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS KATAKANA LOANWORDS AND THEIR LEARNING STRATEGIES

**Premvadee Na Nakornpanom**

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Dusit, Bangkok*

*E-Mail: [p\\_nakornpanom@hotmail.com](mailto:p_nakornpanom@hotmail.com), [premvadee.na@ssru.ac.th](mailto:premvadee.na@ssru.ac.th)*

## ABSTRACT

With the increase of Katakana loanwords in Japanese, educational issues regarding them among learners of Japanese as a foreign language have arisen. With the assumption that attitudes and language learning strategies are considered as important factors for influencing the success of language learning, attitudes towards Katakana loanwords and learning strategies was investigated among the first year student majoring in Japanese at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Forty one students participated in this study. The quantitative data was collected by means of a questionnaire. The analyses showed evidence of positive attitudes of students towards Katakana loanwords. The result revealed that Katakana loanwords can help students link their meaning in Japanese to their corresponding words in English, so they can access the meaning of Katakana loanwords easier. Japanese academic achievement was also found to be significantly related to the sub-strategy of metacognitive learning: controlling schedules to have time to study and trying to find learning resources beyond the classroom, but there was no significant meaning between students' attitudes towards Katakana loanwords and their learning strategies.

Keywords —attitudes, Katakana loanwords, learning strategies

## INTRODUCTION

The work described in this paper is part of a broader research project entitled "Students' Attitudes towards Katakana loanwords and their learning strategies". Student's attitudes has frequently been studied and reported by many scholars as well. Language learning strategies have been considered as a key factor for successful language learning. In learning, students will develop their own learning strategies to make the best of their learning strengths. Sometimes, they may be aware or even not be aware that they are using learning strategies since they do it automatically or naturally. (Bilash, 2009). For students who make use of learning strategies without being aware of it, if the teacher suggests learning strategies to them, it can help them learn and produce results more effectively. For teachers, understanding which strategies are the most effective for their students, can also support student success in the classroom.

For many decades, it was shown that Thai students prefer to learn Japanese as a foreign language. Japanese classes are available in many universities in Thailand, and at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University as well. Japanese introduces thousands of English loanwords (Katakana loanwords) into their language and this has caused difficulty to both Japanese students and Japanese language learners. Katakana words are difficult because usage and pronunciation have changed. They are reshaped as words with Japanese sounds when presented in Katakana (Igarashi, 2007). Despite their links to foreign language words, the word forms used in Japanese are different from the original words. From Daulton's (2004) point of view, Katakana loanwords are a useful source of latent vocabulary and are also a beneficial tool in teaching and learning in the EFL classroom.

Most researchers have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of Katakana loanwords, but little has been done with Thai students who learn Japanese as a foreign Language. Therefore, it is worth studying how students learn and view Katakana loanwords. This research concentrated on finding out students' attitudes towards Katakana loanwords in Japanese. It also examined learning strategies students utilized when studying Katakana loanwords, as well as the relationships between their attitudes and their learning strategies.

## LITERATURE & THEORY

The theoretical framework of this study is based on language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Oxford discussed the differences between learning styles and learning strategies. Learning styles are the general approaches that students use in learning a new language or any subject (Cornett, 1983). Learning strategies are defined as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques which students use to enhance their own learning (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Learner strategies can be classified into six major groups (Oxford, 1990b) which can be summarized as: 1) cognitive strategies: reasoning, analyzing, summarizing; 2) metacognitive strategies: paying attention, self –monitoring; 3) memory-related strategies: grouping, imagery; 4) compensation strategies: guessing meaning, using synonyms; 5), affective strategies: self-encouragement, anxiety reduction; and 6) social strategies: asking questions, becoming culturally aware. Thus learning strategies are tools for self-direction for learners. The use of appropriate language learning strategies for every student condition gives positive results in overall achievements in specific skill areas. (Thompson and Rubin, 1996).

## RELATED WORKS

There has been a great deal of study on the role of “attitude” in second language or foreign language learning. The overall findings indicated that attitudes are involved in students’ English proficiency. (Yang, 2012). In Yang’s study, which was conducted with 20 University of Malaysia Master’s students, showed that “learners who were highly and positively involved in their English proficiency had positive attitudes”.

The relationship between learners' attitudes and learning strategies were studied with 1,201 university students in China by Yin (2008). It was revealed in the study that two sources of influence were the most powerful in relation to the learners' use of language learning strategies were: ability / belief, and motivational orientation, especially orientation toward competition and academic self-efficacy.

Another study presented the attitudes and language learning strategies of second year students majoring in English at 5 Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok. In the study, students were classified into four groups: advanced, intermediate, elementary and foundation, by their grades from their English subjects. The results revealed that students in more advanced groups tended to have highly visual preferences, and those with global-oriented learning styles tended to have highly metacognitive learning strategies (Teeraporn Plailek, 2012). In addition, the advanced group tended to have highly metacognitive learning strategies.

In the study of English Learners’ Attitudes towards Gairaigo, Daulton (2011), examined 113 freshmen at a private mid-level University. The results indicated that students recognized pronunciation discrepancies to be the biggest weakness of loanword cognates. However, it could not determine the relationships between English proficiency and gairiago (English-based loanwords) attitudes. Daulton (2004) found that as many as 45.5% of the 3000 most-frequent word families in English were found to have correspondences with common Japanese loanwords.

While many researchers focused on students’ attitudes towards English loanwords, Yegt (2014), paid attention to the attitudes towards English loanwords in Dutch news broadcasts: The influences of gender and age. The findings highlighted the fact that female participants have more positive attitudes towards English loanwords than male participants.. The paper further indicated that most participants do not prefer alternative words to the loanwords used, and even more regarding pronunciation.

Although many educators have conducted research on attitudes and language learning strategies, little evidence has been shown about the attitudes and learning strategies of Thai undergraduate students towards Katakana loanwords. This current study was undertaken with the desire to know students’ responses and reactions to Katakana loanwords at the tertiary level.

## METHODOLOGY

### 1. Sample of the Study

The students who participated in the study consisted of 41 freshmen majoring in Japanese, and having English as their minor, at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand. They represented four proficiency levels of Japanese: very high proficiency, high proficiency, intermediate proficiency and low proficiency,

divided by their grades in Foundation Japanese 2. The study was conducted during the last week of second semester in the 2015 academic year.

## 2. Development of Instruments

A set of questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The participants were asked to rate their level of attitudes towards Katakana loanwords using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Level 1: strongly disagree to Level 5: strongly agree. There were 15 items concerning Katakana loanwords of which 4 items were positive and 11 items were negative. The questionnaire items were selected from the survey instruments used by Daulton (2011) and modified to meet the recent study requirement.

The questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990) which has been widely used by ESL/EFL researchers was used to collect data on learning strategies. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 36 items which were divided into 6 groups. This six groups of learning strategies include 1) memory 2) cognitive 3) compensation 4) meta-cognitive 5) affective, and 6) social strategies. The 5-point Likert scale asked the participants to evaluate 6 items on memory strategy, 5 items on cognitive strategy, 5 items on compensation strategy, 6 items on meta-cognitive strategy, 8 items on affective strategy, and 6 items on social strategy.

## 3. DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics, including frequency, means and standard deviations were calculated to identify their attitudes towards Katakana loanwords and the learning strategies of the participants. A One-way ANOVA analysis test was also used to determine the effects of academic Japanese achievement variables on students' attitudes and their learning strategies. To measure the degree of relationships between students' attitudes and their learning strategies, and determine any significant differences, the Pearson r correlation (2-tailed) was used.

## RESULTS

### 1. Students' Attitudes towards English Loanwords and their Learning Strategies

The results of the descriptive analysis shows that the overall mean score of English loanwords attitudes among the participants was 3.49 (SD= 1.18) on the Likert scale, meaning positive attitudes towards Katakana loanwords. That of overall learning strategy usage was 3.65 (SD=.75). The result showed that Katakana loanwords can help students to link the meaning of such words in Japanese to the corresponding words in English or other foreign words (Mean=4.47, S.D=.77), so they can access the meaning of Katakana loanwords easier (Mean=4.27, S.D=.77). It was also revealed that affective strategies (Mean= 3.80, S.D= 3.69) were highly employed while compensation strategies (Mean 3.42, S.D=.69) were moderately used.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis: Overview score of Katakana loanwords attitudes and learning strategy usage

	Mean(S.D)
Help you to link meaning of such word in Japanese to the corresponding words in English or other foreign words	4.47(.77)
Help you to access the meaning of new	4.27(.77)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.49(1.18)</b>
Memory	3.51(.75)
Cognitive	3.64(.91)
Compensation	3.42(.69)
Metacognitive	3.76(.73)
Affective	3.80(.69)
Social	3.79(.77)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.65(.75)</b>

As far as the group classification is concerned, the result showed that Japanese academic achievement was also found to be significantly related to the sub-strategy of metacognitive learning: controlling schedules to have time to study and trying to find learning resources beyond the classroom, but there was no significant meaning between the students' attitudes towards Katakana loanwords and their learning strategies.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Student Japanese achievement and the use of language strategies are investigated in this study though a significant relationship was not found between students' attitudes and their use of language strategies as Yang (2012) found in his study. Never the less, the study can provide us a way to understand the Katakana learning strategies used by students. As the study revealed Japanese academic achievement was found to be significantly related to the sub-strategy of metacognitive learning: controlling schedules to have time to study and trying to find learning resources beyond the classroom, therefore it will be beneficial for teacher to utilize this strategy in Japanese classes.

Since the current study, there have been a limited number of participants. A future study should have more sample sizes and take other factors such as age, experience of Japanese and English learning into consideration.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the financial support of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. I am grateful to all with whom I have had the pleasure to work with during this and other related projects. Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than the members of my family. I would like to thank them all.

## REFERENCES

- Cohen, A.D., (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. Essex, U.K.: Longman.
- Cornett, C.,(1983).*What You Should Know about Teaching and Learning Styles*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.
- Daulton, F. E(2004). The Importance of a High frequency Built-in L exicon' for EFL in Japan. 龍谷大学国際センター  
一 研究年報.Vol13,69-82.
- Daulton, F.E. (2011).*The Ryukoku Journal of Humanities and Sciences* Vol.32.
- Bilash, Olenka (2009). *Learning Styles and Language Learning Strategies*.  
<http://www.edduc.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.Bilash/best%20of%20bilash/language%20learning%20strats.html>.
- O'Malley, J.M. & Chamot, A.U., 1990: *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York: Newbury House Publishers.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990b). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Teeraporn Plailek.(2012). A study of English Learning Styles and English Learning Strategies of Second Year Students, Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok. Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Thompson, I., and Rubin, J. (1996). Can strategy instruction improve listening comprehension? *Foreign Language*

*Annals*, 29(3), 331-342.

Yin, Chengbin. (2008). Language Learning Strategies in relation to Attitudes, Motivations, and Learner Beliefs:

Investigating Learner Variables in Context of English as a Foreign Language in China. Ph.D. Dissertation

University of Maryland.

Vegt, Wouter. (2014). Attitudes towards English loanwords in Dutch news broadcasts: The influence of gender and

M.A Thesis. Leiden University.