

STRATEGIES OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE BY INDONESIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

English communication skill is highlighted as the main goal in learning language. Mostly students commonly faced psychological and linguistic problems during English learning process. Due the complexities of learning languages, the language learners must take an action by implementing several kinds of language learning strategies. These facts urged the researcher to do a descriptive non-experimental quantitative approach on students' language learning strategies to figure out how language learning strategies are used by Indonesian's junior high school students in learning English as a foreign language. The researcher selected the third year students of senior high school especially who take the excellent class with English score around 80-100 as the participants. In six language learning strategies, there found Metacognitive is claimed as the most frequently used by the participant by gaining mean 3.63 which means as high average and usually used in learning English, followed by compensation with 3.36, cognitive with 3.34, social 3.14, affective with 2.99, and memory with 2.89 are claimed as the medium average and sometimes used by the participants during the English learning in the class. Analyzing every item specifically, the high average used by the participants in learning a language found 20 items that include cognitive strategy 30% with 6 characteristic items, metacognitive strategy 25% with 5 characteristic items, compensation strategy 20% with 4 characteristic items, memory strategy 10% with 2 characteristic items, affective strategy 10% with 2 characteristic items, and social strategy 5% with 1 characteristic item.

Keywords: SILL, English, and Foreign Language

INTRODUCTION

Signifying English as a global language and a foreign language in Indonesia used to communicate with people around the world; English communication skill is highlighted as the main goal in learning language. As a foreign language, it might be very challenging for Indonesian learners in any aspects of speaking skill including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and expression (Hughes, 2003). Shen and Chiu (2019) stated that mostly students commonly faced psychological and linguistic problems during English learning process; psychological problems include concern with making mistakes, nervousness, and lack of assurance, while linguistic problems include lack of vocabulary, background knowledge, and conversation context materials. Due the complexities of learning languages, the language learners must take an action by using a

variety of language-learning techniques. Since the main objective of language learning strategies is to improve the students' communicative competence, Oxford (1990) has already identified six types of language learning strategies that can increase the students' motivation and language learning fluency.

These factual matters motivates the researcher to figure out the students' language learning strategy that can impede or boost their language learning process with six categories, those are; memorization, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategy. This study occurred is also inspired by one of previous study brought by Zakaria, Zakaria, & Azmi (2018) towards secondary students of ESL students about their language learning strategy. Otherwise, Indonesians as EFL learners also have to be investigated about their language learning strategy to determine how they find out how they learn English as a foreign language and what they should act.

METHOD

This research employed a survey or descriptive non-experimental quantitative approach which is dealing with numerical data analysis and quantifiable variable of study to identify the characteristics of an observed phenomenon (Perumal, 2014). Specifically, this research focuses on how junior high school students by selecting Junior High School students of MTsN 1 Malang academic year 2022 – 2023 since they have passed their young ages and started to learn English as a foreign language got English materials in two years with various classroom situations, teachers' methods, materials difficulty level, and so forth especially for those students who stay in excellent class with score around 80-100.

To gain the data, the researcher started this research adapts a Likert Scale questionnaire well-known as SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) purposed by Oxford (1989) to know how they suit their speaking skill online learning with their language learning strategy. This instrument consists of 50 statements with 5 alternative scale answers, those are; 1 (never), 2 (seldom), 3 sometimes, 4 (often), and 5 (always). SILL likert scale questionnaire consists of several 2 types of strategies with 6 aspects which are illustrated in the table below:

Table 1.1 Strategies of Inventory Language Learning Questionnaire by Oxford (1990)

Type of strategies	Aspect	Number of item
Direct Strategies	Memory	1-9
	Cognitive	10-23
	Compensation	24-29
	Metacognitive	30-38
Indirect Strategies	Strategies	30-38
	Affective Strategies	39-44
	Social Strategies	45-50

In this study, the researcher purely plays a role as an observer who just provided all the instruments of the study in the form of likert scale questionnaire and distributed to the students in the classroom. Then, to describe the students' Language Learning Strategies Percentage, the researcher uses a percentage formula; the analyzed data is then defined how the students utilize every strategy of language learning by referring to the SILL average determined by Oxford 1990 as below:

Table 1.2 Oxford's (1990) Conversion on Frequency of the Use of Strategy

Level	Description	Average
High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
	Almost never used	1.5 to 2.4
Low	Never used	1.0 to 1.4

FINDINGS

Concerning from the whole contents of this reserach, this reserach focuses on students' language learning strategies especially English as a foreign language. After collected the data from the participants of third year of excellent class in MTsN1 Malang, the researcher then analyzed the total and the percentage of every category of memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and social strategy. The findings are simply illustrated with table below;

Table 1.3 The Average Percentage of Every Category

No	Category	Percentage of Average					
		High		Medium		Low	
		%	Items	%	Items	%	Items
1	Memory	22.23	2	44.44	4	33.33	3
2	Cognitive	42.86	6	35.71	5	21.43	3
3	Compensation	66.67	4	33.33	2	-	-
4	Metacognitive	55.56	5	44.44	4	-	-
5	Affective	33.34	2	33.33	2	33.33	2
6	Social	16.67	1	83.33	5	-	-

Table 1.3 shows about how frequent every strategy of language learning used by the participants. In detail, memory strategy has 2 items which are often used with 22.23%, 4 items are sometimes used with 44.44%, and 3 items are almost never used with 33.33%. Cognitive strategy has 6 items which are often used with 42.86%, 5 items are sometimes used with 35.71%, and 3 items are almost never used with 21.43%. Compensation strategy has 4 items which are often used with 66.67%, and 2 items are sometimes used with 33.33%. Metacognitive strategy has 5 items which are often used with 55.56%, and 4 items are sometimes used with 44.44%. Affective strategy has 2 items which are often used with 33.34%, 2 items are sometimes used with 33.33%, and 2 items are almost never used with 33.33%. Social strategy has 1 item which is often used with 16.67%, and 5 items are sometimes used with 83.33%.

From all the descriptive explanations above, all the 50 items of SILL statements are specifically measured into 3 averages (High, Medium, and Low) drawn as table illustration below;

Table 1.4 The High Average of every Item

Average High			
Category	Total of Statements	Percentage	Number of Item
Cognitive	6	30	11,12,13,14,15,16
Metacognitive	5	25	31,32,33,37,38
Compensation	4	20	24,25,28,29
Memory	2	10	1,8
Affective	2	10	39,40
Social	1	5	45
Total	20	100	

By highlighting on the high average table 1.4, it has 20 items that include cognitive strategy 30% with 6 characteristic items, metacognitive strategy 25% with 5 characteristic items, compensation strategy 20% with 4 characteristic items, memory strategy 10% with 2 characteristic items, affective strategy 10% with 2 characteristic items, and social strategy 5% with 1 characteristic item.

Table 1.5 The Medium Average of every Item

Average Medium			
Category	Total of Statements	Percentage	Number of Item
Cognitive	5	23	18,22,20,17,20
Social	5	23	47,48,46,49,50
Memory	4	18	4,9,2,3
Metacognitive	4	18	30,36,26,34
Compensation	2	9	27,26
Affective	2	9	42,43
Total	22	100	

Concluding from table 1.5 of medium average, it has 22 items that include cognitive strategy 23% with 5 characteristic items, social strategy 23% with 5 characteristic items, memory strategy 18% with 4 characteristic items, metacognitive strategy 18% with 4 characteristic items, compensation strategy 9% with 2 characteristic items, , and affective strategy 9% with 2 characteristic items.

Table 1.6 The Low Average of every Item

Average Medium			
Category	Total of Statements	Percentage	Number of Item
Memory	3	37.5	7,5,6
Cognitive	3	37.5	21,19,23
Affective	2	25.0	44,41
Compensation	-	-	-
Metacognitive	-	-	-
Social	-	-	-
Total	8	100.0	

Lastly concluding from table 1.6 of low average, it has 8 items that include memory strategy 38% with 3 characteristic items, cognitive strategy 38% with 3 characteristic items, affective strategy 25% with 2 characteristic items, and compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, social strategy have no any items listed.

DISCUSSION

The final results show that, the high average includes 20 items of every single strategy which means to be always implemented by the participants. Starting from memory strategy which has 2 characteristic items; statement number 1 & 8, “I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English” (1) & I review English lessons often (8). Oxford (1990) classified statement 1 as memory strategy since it represents memory strategy activities of creating mental link ages. This means that English learners have power of ability in remembering then linking their prior knowledge to their new absorbed materials in order to assist their long-term memory. Long-term memory also relates to statement number 8 that learners are also given structured review training to assist them in retaining the information so that retrieval is simple and becomes habitual; the review carried out at regular intervals makes the word familiar, and usage of the same occurs automatically (Balini & Jeyabalan, 2018). It is also supported by the previous study that reviewing their lesson becomes the most frequent language learning strategies used by the students. Those 2 statements are also proven as frequent used strategy in language learning as it makes information assimilate, retrievable, and restorable for language learners (Arellano, 2017).

Moving forward to cognitive strategy of language learning, it includes 6 items of statement highest frequently used those are; “I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English” (15), I read for pleasure in English (16), “I practice the sounds of English” (12), “I start conversations in English” (14), “I try to talk like native English speakers” (11), and “I use the English words I know in different ways” (13). Oxford (1990) defines cognitive strategy as the process or operations used in learning or problem solving to assist students in correctly manipulating the target language or task by utilizing all of their processes that necessitate direct analysis, transformations, or synthesis of learning materials by practicing, receiving and sending messages analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input or output. Statement number 15 and 16 are students’ processes to receive the messages they learn, and analyze it to create new input and output. The rest numbers are practicing strategies that can help them to recall and trying what they learn. These cognitive strategies have been proven in a study about cognitive strategy utilization in learning speaking by Rahmawati and Akib (2021) that cognitive strategies of practice are the most frequently used by the students to improve their oral skill; besides, receiving the messages by listening or watching the English videos then analyze it into the simple understanding really works on students’ oral skill improvement.

Next frequently used strategy by the student is compensation strategy that involves 4 items, those are; “If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing” (29), “To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses” (24), “When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures” (25), and “I try to guess what the other person will say next in English” (28). Oxford (1990) claims that students use compensatory techniques to make up for the vocabulary gaps in their knowledge of the target language. This strategy is properly used for all skill in learning English, such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Those 4 skills have been covered by the participants of this study that they most frequently use compensation strategy item number 29 for writing, 24 for reading, 35 for speaking, and 28 for listening. This theory is supported by the previous studies which found that compensation strategies are often used to facilitate the language learners to absorb and produce the language when they have difficulties of word usage by Irmawati (2019). Zakaria, Zakaria, & Azmi (2018) also supported this finding that most of the English learners relied to use this strategy since it eases them to communicate with foreigners.

Metacognitive is another strategy used for language learning. This finding found 5 items often utilized by the English learners, those are; “I think about my progress in learning English (32)”, “I try to find out how to be a better learner of English” (33), I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better” (31), “I have clear goals for improving my English skills” (37), and “I think about my progress in learning English” (38). Oxford (1990) conveyed that by centering, organizing, arranging and planning learning, setting goals and evaluating their learning, students use metacognitive strategies to help them coordinate the learning process. This empowers learners to take charge of their own learning. Those items of statement mentioned above are metacognitive strategies in language learning allowing students to choose what they want to learn, how they want to learn it, and how to monitor their progress based on their own structured planning (Irmawati, 2019). Rahimi & Katal (2012) overviewed the use of metacognitive strategies in Iran to learn English as a foreign language and found that students who use metacognitive strategies can plan, manage, and assess their learning, which leads to higher achievement and better learning outcomes. Besides, this is also supported by several previous studies that metacognitive becomes the most frequent use of language learning strategies carried out by Hapsari (2019), Bessai (2018), Sartika, Santihastuti, & Wahjuningsih (2019), Lestari & Wahyudin (2020) and Fernandez (2021).

Affective strategies are also another language learning strategy. This strategy just involves 2 items of statement often implemented by the language learners, those are; “I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English” (39), and “I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake” (40); the statements 39 shows self-confidence and statement 40 shows motivation. This is cleared by Oxford (1990) that affective strategies are indirect strategies to aid students in maintaining emotional, mental, and moral control. This tactics help students control their emotions, which has a significant impact on language learning. Affective strategy also can assist the language learners in lowering their anxiety, encouraging themselves, and taking their emotional temperature.

Lastly, Social strategies are also crucial in learning a foreign language, while this study just found 1 item that is frequently utilized by the students that “If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again (45)”. This statement shows a social teamwork in solving the foreign language learning problems. Oxford (1990) stated that social strategies are activities that students partake in in order to look for chances to be exposed to situations where practice is possible. These techniques are crucial because language learning is a social activity that always involves other people. The social strategies help the students in asking questions, cooperating with others, empathizing with others, having cultural awareness (Irmawati, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The whole findings of this study have clearly responded the research case how language learning strategies are utilized by the students of Junior high School in learning a foreign language. There are 20 items of every language learning are found as high average (always used), 22 items medium average (sometimes used), and 8 items are low average (never used). The 22 items have been elaborated in detail that, memory strategies involve 2 items of strategies, cognitive strategies involve 6 items of strategies, compensation strategies involve 4 items of strategies, metacognitive strategies involve 5 items of strategies, affective strategies involve 2 items of strategies, and social strategies involve 1 item of strategies. These findings implicate the language learning strategies are not fully implemented by the language learners during the language learning process. Every student has their own dominant language learning strategies in order to assist them to be capable in language they learn.

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