

STRATEGIES OF LEARNING ENGLISH APPLIED BY THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH TEACHING DEPARTMENT OF STAIN MANDAILING NATAL

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Abstract

It is obvious that the use of learning strategy is a crucial element for EFL in studying English. Learning strategy becomes a tool for language learner in order to enhance their learning. An active application of language learning helps students in managing their own learning by developing language skill, increasing confidence and improving autonomous learning. Each of learners has different strategy to be applied in their classroom and daily life. The main objective of this study is to investigate the strategy of learning English conducted by the first year students of English teaching department of STAIN Mandailing Natal. This study was quantitative approach which carried out on the sample of 30 participants. All those participants are the first year students of English Teaching Department State College for Islamic Studies (STAIN) Mandailing Natal, Sumatera Utara. To obtain the data, researcher used two instruments namely: questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire consists of 26 questions which taken from blue print of strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). Interview is used to obtain deep and detail information about the application of learners' learning strategy. Based on the data analysis, it is reasonable to state that most of the learners used metacognitive strategy in learning English as foreign language.

Keyword: *English teaching department, language learner, English learning, Learning strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

Every learner has a different learning style. Each of them is a specialist for their own learning style. No one can exactly adopt others' ways since it occurs naturally as a gift. To learn English, it is obviously needed a strategy which can help learners to enhance their learning. Strategy is a tool for students to get successful in learning language especially for second language acquisition. Let imagine when ones enter a house, it is a light matter if has the key, he or she can enter the room quickly than those who do not have the key. This illustration seems same as learning, one who has the key means learning the lesson faster than who has not have the key.

Learning strategy is not only useful for developing language skill but also for increasing confidence and motivation. Learners both receive information and process information by applying mental activities (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)(Oxford, 1990). Having appropriate strategy means getting a kind of advantages for learners in learning language. They get access to explore deeper how the best way to learn it. Someone who used to memorize vocabulary she/he will apply cognitive strategy, ones who usually active person needs a partner for correcting his/her mistake and the appropriated strategy is a social strategy. Learners who can motivate and manage themselves are best in applying meta-cognitive strategy. Learning strategies are personal preference which is different one another, each of them has own strength and weaknesses.

In addition, the learners who apply learning strategy mostly can motivate themselves and put themselves in a manageable situation. The aims of leaning strategy is to affect the learners' motivational by selecting, acquiring, organizing, or integrating new knowledge (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986:315). They feel more confident to practice their knowledge, if they get problem they able to control it by themselves. Learners try to explore their strength and cover their weaknesses by applying their own strategy. For instance, someone who gets nervous in speaking English, he/she will do more practice with their friend or even try miming the conversation on TV program. Those who are best at memorizing they like to learn the formulae of grammar. Meanwhile, someone who likes reading lots she / he puts himself on reading habit. The core point is every student has different ways to learn English and almost none of them identically use same strategy.

Learning strategies are fundamental element in learning specifically for second language. In wider idea learning strategies are several steps taken by students on how they mastering the new language in short term. Schumaker and Deshler (2006) affirm that learning strategy is an individual's method to a duty (Schumaker & Deshler, 2006). The duty is the way how a person thinks and acts when they planning, acting, and evaluating and its outcomes. It could be noted that learning strategy is an individual tactic in facing the task, such as how to learn new language. The learners will find their own ways to complete their task.

Oxford (1989:4) describes language learning strategy is conscious steps used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall and the use of new information. Learning strategy is a media applied by learners in recalling, keeping, and enhancing new information. Ellis (1994) defines learning strategy is a mental process applied by learners in learning language from early period or very beginning. Oxford (1990) claims learning strategy is mental operations, mechanisms, tactics and procedure to deal with new learning situation. Then, Monereo (1997) explains learning strategies as follows:

Conscious and deliberate decision-making process, in which the learner selects and recalls in a coordinated manner the knowledge needed to perform a specific task or objective, depending on the characteristics of the learning situation in which the task or objective is to be achieved.

In line with above theory, there are four keywords to be noted carefully about learning strategies they are: conscious process, selecting, learning situation and objective. Learning strategy is a conscious process of selecting tactics to face learning situation. Learning strategy is applied by learners in order to achieve objective. In its broadest concept, to obtain the learning objective needs special tactics to be conducted by students. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) emphasize that learning strategy means activity employing by students to improve effectiveness of learning.

Taking into account the statements above, one fundamental concept to be noted is learning strategies help learner to achieve the learning goal. Learning strategy allows learners to explore their techniques in conquering new information on teaching process (Purpura, 1999). It also helps learner to learn language effectively without paying more extra efforts. Every learners has different of learning style to be applied in classroom activity (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Learning strategy has several features that consist of several fundamental elements. Oxford (1990) underscores twelve features of language learning strategy as follow: Contributing to the main goal, communicative competence, (2) Allowing learners becoming more self-directed, (3) Expanding the role of teachers, (4) Consisting problem-oriented, (5)

Consisting specific activity taken by learners, (6) Involving multiple aspects for learners, (7) Supporting teaching activity direct and indirect, (8) Containing observable activity (not always), (9) Consisting conscious state, (10) Consisting teachable activity, (11) Involving flexible action, (12) Influencing by several factors (Oxford, 1990).

In its larger concept, learning strategy has contribution to main goal. It makes learners becoming an independent learner in order to gain his/her goal. The learners aware of their own responsibility on doing active learners not merely as a spoon-feed learners. By having self-directed responsibility students may change their attitude and gradually increase their positive insight toward teaching and learning process.

Learning strategy has transformed traditional duty of lecturers that is merely focused on the roles into the function. Teachers or lecturers are not only as authority figures like parents' role but also as facilitator. They have to support their students to be more independent and responsible for their activity. Their status no longer based on hierarchical authority but on the quality and function of themselves as the facilitator, consultant, guide, even diagnostician. It is worth to be noted that lecturer as a facilitator who can facilitate students to build their self-confidence and strategy in learning new information.

Learning strategy should be a problem solver for the learners. The learners have different problem facing over by them during learning new language, one of ways solving the cases is by practicing learning strategy. Not all actions taken by students are learning strategies, the action should be a specific and particular. The barriers in learning new language can be minimized by choosing the direct activity that delineates their enormity tactics and techniques.

Learning strategy is a deliberate action taken by learners to develop their ways of learning a new language. After certain times practicing learning strategy can become automatic and lasts in mind robustly. The students presumably get beneficial effect by applying learning strategy on their classroom activity. One of the benefits is the internalization of habituation on students mind. Unwittingly, students accustom themselves to select the appropriate strategy when they learn something new. This good habituation soon becomes permanent manifestation for their future career.

Learning strategy is teachable and flexible action. Every applied leaning strategy can be taught and learned by the learners. In concept of practice, students can modify their strategy through strategy training where it is a basic essential part of language education. Language learning strategy utterly facilitate learner to adopt appropriate and best ways of learning new language. Every learner can gauge their own ways to face a problem of learning. It is a flexible, in other words the learners may use enormous strategies to improve their weaknesses. They may use different strategy for a diverse subject material, no permanents strategy to be conducted.

Lastly, learning strategy consists of manifold choices such as degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirement, teachers' expectation, sex, age ethnicity, general learning style motivation, the purpose of learning. As mentioned previously, every learners has different ways of practicing their strategy. The difference of students' sex and age obviously delineates different choice of learning style. Older students may use different learning strategy than young learner. Men surely apply different techniques when it compares to women. Motivated students practice a numbers of strategies than less motivated students.

There are plethora classifications of learning strategies proposed by experts. Most of them have similarity in common. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) categorized learning strategy into three major groups namely: metacognitive, cognitive and social / affective strategy. Metacognitive strategy consists of sub-parts for instance: selective attention, planning, monitoring, evaluating and learning activity. This type of strategy focuses on using of critical thinking and applying self awareness thoughts. Students empower their critical ability to

solve their difficulty in learning(O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Thoughts becomes the axis center of strategy, students may memorize unfamiliar vocabularies and rehearsal to write down in a sentence. That is one of the recommended ways for those who use metacognitive strategy.

Moreover, Oxford (1990:14) classified learning strategy into two big classes: direct and indirect strategy. Those two major classes are supported by six sub-parts (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategy). Direct strategy deals with performance new language in some steps. On other hand, indirect strategy focuses on managing the learning(Oxford, 1990). It means that indirect strategy discusses another factor over cognitive and memory. It deals with the emotional control, cooperation one another and social relationship speaker and hearer in specific context.

The students are demanded using memory strategy to remember and retrieve new information, activating their cognitive strategy to understand and produce the language, also bursting compensation strategy to use the language despite knowledge gaps. Memory strategy facilitates the students storing and retrieving new information namely; creating mental linkages, applying sound and picture, reviewing, and conducting action. Cognitive strategy accustoms the students to understand and produce new language. Students practicing the language, sending message and analyzing, these activities usually occur in writing and speaking skill where one expresses his or her idea in form of conversation even in sentence and paragraph.

Compensation strategy is a communication strategy applied by learners to compensate the lack of their language. To overcome their limitation of language, the students may use guessing strategy intelligently. The students do not give up easily in facing their weaknesses yet they try to find another ways by activating logical prediction strategy. Another ways to guess is by using body gesture. Students may use their body movement or gesture to get the words correctly.

Unlike compensation strategy that puts the memory and cognitive usage as center of activity, metacognitive strategy placed thinking management as its priority. Harris, et al (2001:18) figured out that metacognitive as a strategy directly involved in struggling with the language itself in order to prioritize the thinking process like organizing, controlling and modifying (Harris, Voe, & et al, 2001). It could be noted that metacognitive is a method conducted by students to understand the way they learning and designing thinking process. It allows students to be a more independent thinker in managing their ways of learning. This type of strategy facilitates learners coordinating the language learning, pressing the students to focus on language skill and activity, reducing their energy and effort, and evaluating errors and learning process.

Moreover, affective strategy deals with emotional and motivational control. Affective strategy mostly incorporates the activity beyond cognitive action. Students must have their strategy how to lower their anxiety of speaking English, encouraging their effort to learn English utterly, and controlling their emotional temperature. Oxford (1990) amplifies more detail activities related to affective strategy as follows:

1. lower anxiety which includes (a) using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, (b) using music, and using laughter
2. encourage oneself which includes (a) making positive statements, (b) taking risks wisely, (c) rewarding
3. take emotional temperature including (a) listening to the body, (b) using a checklist, (c) writing a language learning diary, and discussing feelings with someone else (Oxford, 1990).

Social strategy is about teamwork, empathy and cooperation in learning language. Learning a language is not merely individual activity but social action where learners must participate vise versa. During learning language activity students should get involved actively with

each other to clarify a confusing point or when they participate in a group discussion or cooperative learning group to solve a problem. Social strategy also organizes the learners to practice cultural issue and understanding social awareness in order to expand thought and feeling towards person's perspective.

In more detail, here are several activities relate to social strategy: ask for help, repetition, clarification, confirmation, cooperate with others - work with others to achieve a common goal. In specific intention, those types of activities can be figured out as following table.

Table. 1. Types of Learning strategy by Oxford (Oxford, 1990)

Types of learning strategy	Description
1. Direct Strategy	a. Memory strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Creating mental linkage- Applying image and sound- Reviewing the lesson well- Conducting action b. Cognitive strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practicing- Receiving and sending message- Analyzing and thinking critically- Designing structure for output & input c. Compensation strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Guessing logically- Overcoming the lacks of speaking and writing
2. Indirect Strategy	a. Metacognitive strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Focusing the learning activity- Managing and planning the learning- Evaluating the learning b. Affective strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reducing the anxiety- Encouraging ourselves- Managing the emotional temperature b. Social strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Proposing question and help- Asking for repetition and clarification- Doing cooperation with others- Paying empathic with others

METHODOLOGY

This study carried out on the sample of 30 participants. All those participants are in the first year students of English Teaching Department State College for Islamic Studies (STAIN) Mandailing Natal, North Sumatera, Indonesia. The participants' backgrounds are diverse in various items such as: education background, sex, age, economics, interest,

domicile, and social background. The range of participants' age is 18-23 years old. All the participants deemed as English foreign learner. This research utilized total sampling where the researcher selects all students as research sample.

To obtain the data, researcher used two instruments namely: questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions which taken from blue print of learning strategy. Questionnaire is addressed in order to get data from students about their learning strategy in learning English. To support the information revealed by questionnaire, researcher also utilized interview for extending deeper information from the participants. Researcher used semi structured interview, the questions are designed to reveal the types of learning strategy applied by tem in learning English. Open-ended questions beginning with "what, how, why" are predominantly used to probe the meaningful-rich responses from the students. The score of questionnaire sheets are tabulated in available table. Then, the score is counted and categorized by researcher.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire, researcher then analyzed each questions carefully and did percentage for all of them. The questionnaires were administered to the first years students of English Teaching Department STAIN Mandailing Natal, they were 28 students. The questionnaires which were consisted of 26 questions that divided into six learning types namely: memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and social strategy. After getting the score of questionnaires, researcher figured out into percentage in order to know what types of learning strategy mostly applied by the students.

Accordingly, there are several types of learning strategies applied by students in learning English as in the following table.

Table. 2. Type of learning strategy applied by student and the percentage

Item number	Type of strategy	Total score	Percentage (%)
No 19	Metacognitive strategy	128	98 %
No 21	Affective strategy	113	86 %
No 5	Cognitive strategy	110	84 %
No 20	Affective strategy	110	84 %
No 18	Metacognitive strategy	109	83 %

According to the above table, most of students used 3 types of strategies when they learn English, they are metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and cognitive strategy. Metacognitive strategy becomes the most strategy used by students. According to the questionnaire, 98 % students applied this strategy in learning English. The students tend to pay serious attention toward another people what they speak, how their gesture and how their expression. This strategy is kinds of indirect strategy which mostly tells about how to manage and planning the learning itself. Basic concepts of metacognitive is a strategy that involved in improving with the language itself in order to focus the thinking process such as organizing, controlling and modifying.

In its broader sense, the students imitate the ways of other people speak the words before manipulating it in their own ways. The students also focus their intention to the gesture of the speaker then they express their speaking ability by imitating the body language. They play essential role as planner and watcher in learning language, they do not directly involved but let the speakers show the strategy. The first years students of English Teaching Department STAIN Madina able to manage and control their ways of learning new language and then find their own way independently. Students can learn by themselves without involving too much with other people interrupting, the special thing about this strategy is students can do self-correction. They plan what will they learn, manage their ability by watching other people, practice it by using own strategy and correct their mistake autonomously. Most of the EFL applied metacognitive strategy in their language learning, one simple reason may occur that to learn new language needs adequate model to be manipulated or copied. Most of non native speaker do not know exactly how to pronounce the correctly and select the phrase appropriately and express the body language perfectly. Among native English speakers learning foreign languages, Purpura (1999) found that metacognitive strategies had "a significant, positive, direct effect on cognitive strategy use, providing clear evidence that metacognitive strategy use has an executive function over cognitive strategy use in task completion.

Based on the interview, the first years students English Teaching Department STAIN Madina are afraid of making mistake in learning English. They must learn correctly how to pronounce the words and the way of saying the words (gesture) from the model (in this case lecturer). After getting correct guidance they may try to speak the words. This condition also caused by the social environment which pays minor tolerance of "making mistake". Saying something wrong becomes horrible, they will get bullying, critics and being labeled as "slow" learners.

In addition, the participants have previous background as passive learners where they listen the explanation from the teacher or lecturing from the lecturer before they have chance to learn independently. It means, this strategy of learning is a strategy to minimize their activeness during classroom process. For Indonesian cultural, not much initiative from students on learning something new, most of them are fed by the teacher or lecturer. This strategy pictures their basic cultural of learning new language.

In the second place, most of the students practiced affective strategy in learning English. Affective strategy deals with how to manage their emotion, motivation and attitude toward learning activities. Students control their anxiety of speaking English by using several techniques such as : taking deep breathing before speaking, using music to manipulate their anxiety, relaxing their mind and muscle and rewarding themselves for performance. Most participants choose the right time for practicing English especially for speaking skill. They will practice speaking if they are in good mood. Some of them listen music to relax their mind and then continue practice. Another practice speaking in front of mirror, by that they can control their feeling and anxiety. Most of students still trapped into classical problem "unwillingness to speak". It needs more time to support them speaking, encourage them to memorize vocabulary and motivate them practicing writing. In the third place, cognitive was chosen by students as their strategy of learning language. This is a deliberate strategy in

processing the target language that consisted of four items namely: practicing, receiving/sending message, analyzing/reasoning, and making structure both input and output. The students practice the language, on this occasion speaking, by imitating the closest pronounce of native speaker. Students try pronouncing the words like native speaker. They repeat the word several times until sound like native. For writing skill, they drill over times for reconstructing the good order sentence. Writing skill combine several skill such as pattern of grammar, word choice, and syntax experience.

CONCLUSION

Dealing with previous finding and discussion above, it can be summarized several conclusion. First of all, the first years students of English Teaching Department of STAIN Madina applied most three learning strategies metacognitive, affective and cognitive strategy. Most of them used metacognitive strategy as way of learning new language which noted 98%. The students plan, manage, and control themselves when they English. They focus on the model or example from the speaker or lecturer before taking time to practice by themselves independently. Secondly, students used affective strategy for acquiring the language learning. By applying affective strategy, the students may identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding themselves for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk. Students select their own way and own time when they should practice their language by identifying their weakness and strengths. To cover their weaknesses they may find specific ways such as taking deep breathing before speaking English, practicing in the front of mirror, choosing the right time and mood. In the last, students applied cognitive strategy for developing their language ability. Students enable the to manipulate the language material in direct ways, such as practicing the language, note taking, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas. On this occasion, 84 % students applied cognitive strategy in their language learning strategy. Therefore, it can be concluded that language learning strategy is the basic knowledge for language learner to become a myriad success in language learning. Strategy is a way or method that facilitate the students in developing their knowledge, on the other hand they need to practice more their language learning strategy and their willingness to be more successful language learner. Every learner may have different strategy, where they may have different level of success.

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