**Evaluation of Language Learning Strategies Used by English Students**

**of FKIP Universitas Jambi**

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This research investigates the language learning strategies used by English students of Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (FKIP) Universitas Jambi. Language learning strategies, according to Scarcela and Oxford (1992), are defined as “specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task – used by students to enhance their own learning” (p. 63). Oxford (1990) classified language learning strategies into two categories: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies comprise *memory*, *cognitive* and *compensation* strategies while indirect strategies consist of *metacognitive*, *affective*, and *social strategies* (Oxford, 1990). This research used the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) designed by Oxford (1990) to obtained data from 85 students of the fifth semester class 2015 who study at English department. The statistical analysis of the data revealed that students opted for *metacognitive*, *cognitive*, *social*, *compensation*, *memory* and *affective* strategies respectively as the most strategies they have used in their language learning process. This finding informs that teachers can actually assess their students’ learning strategies, and students have actively defined individual learning strategies metacognitively to help them learning the target language. This finding implies that teachers should be aware that students have different preferences to learn so that teachers need to be prepared to conduct variety of teaching strategies in their classrooms as well as emphasing the importance of learners’s metacognitive strategies.

*Keywords: language learning strategy, strategy inventory for language learning*

**Background**

This current research investigates the language learning strategies used by the fifth semester students of English department at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Jambi University. Definitions of learning strategy are usually found in psychological literatures. Learning has been defined as the process of storing and recalling of information (Dörnyei, 2005; Rubin, 1981), while strategy has been described as technique or tool used to acquire knowledge (Rubin, 1975) or behaviours to achieve the targeted objectives (Cohen, Weaver & Li, 1996). Thus, Chamot (2005) defined learning strategies as “procedures that facilitate a learning task” (p. 112). She explained further that these strategies are “most often conscious and goal-driven, especially in the beginning stages of tackling an unfamiliar language task” (p. 112). Learning strategies are different from learning types at the level of consciousness, consistency, and deliberateness (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990). Oxford (1993 as cited in Wong & Nunan, 2011) argued that students who are aware of their learning types will use learning strategies to meet their learning types.

Bromley (2013), Dornyei (2005) and Oxford (1993) stated that the inclusion of learning strategy into education will generate active and competent students, and it contributes to student-centred instructional design. Afshar, Tofighi and Hamazavi (2016) argued that the awareness and the application of learning strategies differentiate the successful and unsuccessful students. Wong and Nunan (2011) had also investigated the distinctions between active and passive students in terms of learning styles, strategies and practices. They found that effective students were those who were communicative in their learning styles, independent in practicing their learning strategies, and applied various of learning strategies while ineffective students had to be guided and tended to be passive and solitude. Therefore, due to the acknowledged influence of the learning strategy so that the evaluation toward these learning strategies is important because at the end this evaluation provides descriptions of effective strategies to support language learning acquisition.

**The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)**

One of mostly used methods to evaluate language learning strategy is the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) designed by Oxford in 1990s. At the beginning this method was designed to assess how often students at the *Defence Language Institute Foreign Language centre* in Monterey, California used language learning strategy. There are two versions of this SILL, namely version 5.1 which consists of 80 questions for native English speakers who learn another foreign language, and version 7.0 which contains 50 questions for English as a second language or foreign language learners.Sill aims to evaluate to what extent students apply language learning strategies and provide teachers descriptions about the effective strategies used by the students so that the teachers are able to suggest which effective strategies can be used for other learners (Oxford, 1990). Sill commonly has been used to examine university students who learn foreign languages (see Afshar, Tofighi & Hamazavi, 2016; Kunasaraphan, 2015; Zhou & Intaraprasert, 2016). These research investigated the language learning strategies used by the learners, variables which influences the application of these strategies, as well as the connection between strategies used and the competences in second language.

Oxford (1990) classified language learning strategies into two types, namely *direct strategies* and *indirect strategies.* Direct strategies comprise memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies while indirect strategies involve metacognitive, affective and social (Oxford, 1990). Direct strategies are then categorized again into memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies while indirect strategies are classified into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (Oxford, 1990). The examples of memory strategies are for example: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing actions (Oxford, 1990). Cognitive strategies may involve strategies such as: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analysing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output (Oxford, 1990). Compensation strategies consist of actions related to guessing intelligently, and overcoming limitations and writing (Oxford, 1990). Meanwhile metacognitive strategies comprise actions such as: centering one’s learning, arranging and planning one’s learning, and evaluating one’s learning (Oxford, 1990). Affective strategies encompass lowering one’s anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking one’s emotional temperature (Oxford, 1990). The last strategies which is social strategies might consist of actions for instance: asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathising with others (Oxford, 1990).

**Methods**

Data were collected by administering the Strategy *the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) questionaire to the participants. The participants were 85 students of English department class 2015 of FKIP in Jambi University who were at their fifth semester when this study took place. The students were asked to respond to likert-scale questionnaires consists of statements related to memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive strategies, affective, and social strategies. Data gathered were then analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) to show the frequency of self-evaluation of students’ of their self-reported strategy use. The frequencies were then depicted to explain the strategies most chosen as well as what it implied for the learners and the teachers.

**Findings and Discussion**

The statistical analysis of the data revealed that students opted for *metacognitive (Part D)*, *cognitive (Part B)*, *social (part F)*, *compensation (Part C)*, *memory (part A)* and *affective (Part E)* strategies respectively as the most strategies they have used in their language learning process, which is shown in the following table.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | **Never or almost never true of me** | Usually not true of me | **Somewhat true of me** | **Usually true of me** | **Always or almost always true of me** |
|
|
| % | % | % | % | % |
| Part A | 4.19 | 16.2 | 37.4 | 32.7 | 9.5 |
| Part B | 1.6 | 9.8 | 33.3 | 36.3 | 19 |
| Part C | 2 | 14.3 | 33.7 | 30 | 20 |
| Part D | 1.6 | 5.5 | 22.7 | 39.6 | 25.4 |
| Part E | 10 | 17.1 | 32.7 | 27.6 | 12.8 |
| Part F | 2.6 | 8.8 | 30.8 | 35.1 | 22.5 |
| Average | **3.67** | **12.0** | **31.8** | **33.6** | **18.2** |

These findings implied that the fifth semester students of English department are aware of their own metacognitive skills which are often claimed to be rare exists among students (Rahimi & Katal, 2012) as well as the roles of others in their learning process. Several research shown that learners with metacognitive strategies are likely successful learners (Anderson, 2003). Developing metacognitive strategies encourages learners to understand their learning process and what strategies that make them succeed. Subsequently, learners with these strategies are more keen to take control of variety of choices and applications of learning strategies, as well as how they go with the strategies (Zhang & Goh, 2006). Rubin (1987) argued that metacognitive knowledge is very important for learners to assist them to choose and activate their learning strategies. Although the percentage of the metacognitive strategies is not far beyond other preferences, with the fact that students have preferred to use metacognitive skills more to help them acquire English, teachers, in particular, lecturers at English department of FKIP in Jambi University should attempt to help students to cultivate these strategies which does not necessarily mean to leave out others language learning strategies. Instead, teachers or lecturers should combine these strategies into activities such as proposed by (Banisaeid, 2015): encourage learners to be motivated in their own learning process, realize the importance of giving positive feedback to learners, understand their students’ believes and attitudes toward their language skill learning, support students to design, assess and observe their learning process, assist students to arrange and adjust their learning materials, encourage learners to understand their targets and their interests, and guide students to improve their out of class activities such as seeking study partners and teacher assistances, and evaluating their notes and assignments.

**Conclusion**

This research has investigated language learning strategies of the fifth semester students of English department class 2015 of FKIP in Jambi University by utilizing the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL). Although self-report may raise disputation related to its accuracy in a case that the learners does not report honestly, it is simply the only method to investigate learners’ mental processing (Chamot, 2004). Therefore, utilizing this kind of instrument, teacher or lecturers can actually access their students’ learning strategies. As this research revealed, students have preferred metacognitive strategies to be the most preferable for them in learning English although percentage is not dramatic compared to other preferences but lecturers in English department of FKIP Universitas Jambi should pay more attention to help students to use their metacognitive skills.

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