EFL LEARNING STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS OF VOCATIONAL PROGRAM AT UNIVERSITAS BRAWIJAYA

Dini Kurnia Irmawati*
English Language Teaching, Hotel Management Study Program, Vocational Education Program, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia

*Email: dinikurnia@ub.ac.id

ABSTRACT
In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the state of being successful in foreign language learning should not be only determined by how well they perform in the written test but also by how good they are at using the target language to communicate messages orally. Beside getting more exposure to the target language as the language input for language learning, implementing appropriate learning strategies has proven to be one of influential aspects in contributing to the students' success in learning English. In relation to this, this study aims to investigate kinds of learning strategies that have been implemented by successful students majoring in Hotel Management at Vocational Program of Universitas Brawijaya. After careful selection of the successful students, in-depth investigation to reveal their kinds of learning strategies were done by observing their classroom performance, distributing questionnaire, and interviewing them for further details of information. The results show that the students have employed compensation, meta-cognitive, social and cognitive strategies in helping them learn the target language. Future researchers are suggested to conduct a study on language learning strategies involving more learners from other majors in relation to their language learning.

KEYWORDS
EFL (English as a Foreign Language); learning strategies; successful students

INTRODUCTION
Considering the place of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia, English Language Teaching (ELT) nowadays should focus on teaching English language rather than teaching about English language. In other words, the emphasis of English Language Teaching should be not only on linguistic competence of language learners but also on the development of their communicative ability. That is based on one of the principles in language teaching and learning which is the so-called communicative competence (Brown, 2001: 68). According to Johnson & Johnson (1999:62), communicative competence is defined as the knowledge that enables someone to use a language effectively and to use the knowledge of language for communication. In line with this, Nunan (1999: 226) states that to be able to speak another language, it is important to know and understand the communicative competence. Communicative competence includes not only linguistic competence but also a range of other sociolinguistic ad conversational skills that enable the speaker to know how, what, to whom, and when to say.

Regarding this, being able to learn the target language maximally is the main goal of EFL learners. In order to be able to achieve the learning objectives, implementing learning strategies is considered essential. Learning strategies are defined as steps taken by students to enhance their own learning (Oxford, 1990). She further states that strategies are important because they are
tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Moreover, she highlights that appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence.

Oxford (1990) explains that there two main categories namely direct strategies and indirect ones. Direct strategies refer to kinds of language learning strategies which directly involve the target language. Direct strategies cover memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Meanwhile, indirect strategies are those which support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. Indirect strategies consist of three kinds of strategies namely metacognitive, affective and social strategies. According to Oxford (1990), although indirect strategies do not directly involve learning the target language, they support and regulate the learner’s language learning based on his or her learning style, affective traits and behavioral patterns.

A number of studies have been done regarding language learning strategies (Gu, 2002; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Su, 2005; Randic & Bobanovic, 2008; Wharton, 2008; Tomoana, 2012; Bessai, 2018). However, some limitations of the previous studies are noted. First, the learners being investigated in the previous-mentioned studies are mostly from secondary levels of education. There are limited studies focusing on how students at university level, particularly those who are non-English Department students taking ESP (English for Spesific Purposes) implement their learning strategies in learning English. A study done by Su (2005) investigated students from technological and vocational background in learning English as a Foreign language. Nonetheless, her study focused on how low achiever students used learning strategies to help them improve their English proficiency. Thus, it can be said that there is still a need to have further studies regarding language learning strategies involving other kinds of students in helping them learn English.

In relation to this, the present study tries to fill in the gap of the above-mentioned previous studies by conducting a further study to investigate how successful students at university level make use of learning strategies to help them learn English in Indonesian context. Different from the previous studies, this study focuses on how students majoring in hotel management make use of language learning strategies to help them improve their communicative competence in English. Their communicative competence in English is greatly essential for them because their future work will be closely related to hospitality and communication with people. Thus, mastering English as one of foreign languages is greatly beneficial for them.

With regard to the importance of hotel management students’ communicative competence in English, this study aims to investigate how successful students majoring in hotel management of vocational program at Universitas Brawijaya implement their learning strategies in learning English as A Foreign Language. More specifically, this study aims to find out what kinds of learning strategies implemented by successful students majoring in hotel management of vocational program at Universitas Brawijaya in learning English. The result of this study will give insight for other students to do what has been done by those successful students so that they will be easier to learn English as the target language and be able to improve their ability in communication using English.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)
According to Oxford (1991:1), learning strategies are defined as steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. More specifically, she explains that learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations. She further states that appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence. This is in line with what has been stated by Saville-Troike (2006:91) that learning strategies refer to behaviors and techniques that the learners adopt in order to learn and use language.

Table 1 shows key features of language learning strategies as what has been stated by Oxford (1991).

| No | Language Learning Strategies                                                                 |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence                                        |
| 2  | Allow learners to become more self-directed                                                  |
| 3  | Expand the role of teachers                                                                  |
| 4  | Are problem-oriented                                                                         |
| 5  | Are specific actions taken by the learner                                                     |
| 6  | Involve many aspects of the learner, not just cognitive                                      |
| 7  | Support learning both directly and indirectly                                                |
| 8  | Are not always observable                                                                    |
| 9  | Are often conscious                                                                           |
| 10 | Can be taught                                                                                 |
| 11 | Are flexible                                                                                  |
| 12 | Are influenced by a variety of factors                                                        |

Categories of Language Learning Strategies (LLS)
A number of experts have categorized kinds of language Learning Strategies (LLS). However, the one which become the theoretical basis on the present study is the categories postulated by Oxford (1990). According to Oxford (1990:15), there are two main categories of LLS, namely direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are the strategies that affect the language learning directly, such as memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Meanwhile, indirect strategies are those which affect the language learning indirectly, such as metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Table 2 presents categories of LLS completed with definition for each type of LLS from the two main categories as stated by Oxford (1990) and Ambrosi-Randic and Kostic-Babanovic (2008).

| No | Main Category | Type  | Definition                                                                 |
|----|---------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Direct Strategies | Memory | Help learners enter long information in long-term memory and retrieve it when necessary |
|    |                | Cognitive | Involve formation and revision of internal mental models                     |
|    |                | Compensation | Used to overcome lack of knowledge of the target language                 |
RESEARCH METHOD

Participants
This study involves 10 successful students that have been selected from 70 students who have taken English courses as one of compulsory courses in their first semester. The criteria of selecting the successful students consist of possessing TOEIC score at least 500, being active in classroom activities and getting A in their grade for English course.

Research Instruments
The instrument used in this study is questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990) which is specifically designed to find out language learning strategies. The questionnaire is namely the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SLIL) Version for Speakers of other languages learning English (ESL/EFL). The questionnaire consists of groups of strategies, namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. Those six strategies are then written in the forms of 50 statements which have to be answered by the students using likert scale 1-5 (1: never or almost never true of me; 2: usually not true of me; 3: somewhat true of me; 4: usually true of me; 5: always or almost always true of me).

Data Collection
After selecting the successful students using the set criteria, the researcher set a schedule with those 10 participants. Then the researcher explained the purpose of the study and then distributed the questionnaire to the students. In prior to the filling questionnaire time, the researcher had to explain one by one for all the statements in the SLIL questionnaire to make sure that all the participants had understood. After making sure that all the participants have understood the instructions and the content of the questionnaire, they were then assigned to fill in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis
The data collected were then coded and entered into a computer by optical scoring, and analyzed. Descriptive statistics including means were reported in order to understand the participants' language learning strategies. Average scores of 3.5-5.0 on the 5-point Likert scale were defined as high use; average scores of 2.5-3.4 were defined as medium use; and average scores of 1.0 and 2.4 were defined as low use.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the result regarding what kinds of language learning strategies used by the successful students majoring in hotel management at Universitas Brawijaya.

| No | Strategies | Mean       |
|----|------------|------------|
| 1  | Compensation | 3.61 (high use) |
As shown in Table 3, compensation strategy has been placed as the first kind of learning strategy which gets the highest mean score compared to the others with the mean score 3.61. The mean score indicates that compensation strategy is highly used by the participants in learning English as the target language. Then meta-cognitive strategy gets the mean score 3.57 which reflects that the participants also have used this strategy frequently in improving their English proficiency. Next, social strategy is placed on the third frequent strategy used by the participants with the mean score 3.53. Then the next highly-used strategy is cognitive strategy with the mean score 3.45. Meanwhile, the other two strategies are in the level of medium use, namely affective strategy with the mean score 2.72 and memory strategy with the mean score 2.67.

The next result of this study is related to the kinds of activities of each language learning strategies done by the participants (see Table 4). Compensation strategies are used to overcome lack of knowledge of the target language. These are done through guessing and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. Then meta-cognitive strategies help participants manage their learning by centering learning, arranging and planning learning, setting goals and evaluating learning. Next, social strategies facilitate interaction with others by asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others. Then in relation to cognitive strategies, the participants involve information and revision of internal mental models through practicing, analyzing and reasoning, summarizing. Regarding affective strategies which enable learners to control emotion and attitudes related language learning, the participants have done a number of activities such as lowering anxiety, encouraging themselves, and controlling their emotional temperature. Lastly, in the context of memory strategies that help learners put information in long-term memory and retrieve it when necessary to communicate, the activities done by the participants include creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds to remember words, reviewing, employing action.

Table 4. Categories of Activities Related to Kinds of Language Learning Strategies Implemented by the Participants

| No | Strategies | Activities |
|----|------------|------------|
| 1  | Compensation | Guessing, overcoming limitations in speaking and writing, paraphrasing, adjusting information, using gestures, coining words |
| 2  | Meta-cognitive | Centering learning, arranging and planning learning, setting goals, evaluating learning |
| 3  | Social | Asking questions, cooperating with others, empathizing with others, having cultural awareness |
| 4  | Cognitive | Practicing, analyzing and reasoning, skimming and scanning, summarizing |
| 5  | Affective | Lowering anxiety, encouraging yourself, taking emotional temperature |
The results of the present study have contributed to the body of knowledge dealing with TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) for hotel management students as the participants of this study in several ways. First, having seen the above-presented results, all of the six types of strategies are used by the participants in learning the target language. This is in accordance with what has been revealed by a number of previous studies postulating that English proficiency has great correlation with the overall kinds of language learning strategies used by learners. More specifically, previous studies have revealed that students who are better in language performance generally reported higher levels of overall strategy use and frequent use of a greater number of strategy categories in learning the target language (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995; Jiang, 2000; Lin & Lu, 2005; Tim, 2013; Yuan et al., 2018). It is also in accordance with Brown (2003) who states that one of the factors contributing to the success of foreign language learning is the role of the learner in the process that is recognizing and using good language learning strategies.

In addition, compensation strategies have become the most widely used strategies in learning English as the target language by the participants. The high use of compensation knowledge indicates that the participants have more vocabulary items that make them able to convey their intended meaning in the productive skills (speaking and writing). In other words, they are able to use various ways to say their intended meaning while having communication with others. If they find any difficulties in finding the appropriate terms or words, they tend to paraphrase them into such a way that enable the recipients get the intended meaning clearly. This is in line with what has been revealed by Tim (2013) that the higher the students’ English proficiency, the more frequent they use compensation strategies in learning the target language.

Moreover, as the second high-used language learning strategy by the participants, meta-cognitive strategies enable learners to plan what they are going to learn, select ways to learn, and monitor learning. The preference of using meta-cognitive strategies by high achiever students in the present study has supported previous research results which postulate that the use of meta-cognitive strategies have successfully helped students with higher English proficiency orchestrate various strategies when performing tasks which then enable them to evaluate the process and their strategic use of their language learning (Anderson, 2000).

Next, affective and memory strategies are the ones which are classified into medium-used language learning strategies out of the six types of language learning strategies. It means that the participants do not use those two strategies as frequently as the other four types of strategies. This result is in line with Yuan et al. (2018) who explain that students use less strategies which involve memory and emotional in their learning activities. Moreover, the result of the present study has strengthened survey done by Jiang (2000) and Lin & Lu (2005) that foreign students used less memory and affective strategies when learning foreign language(s).
CONCLUSION

This present study has shed light on the use of various language learning strategies done by successful students majoring in hotel management in leaning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesian context. The participants have used six kinds of language learning strategies in learning English. However, compensation, meta-cognitive, social and cognitive strategies are those which are used more frequently (high use language learning strategies) compared to affective and memory strategies (medium use language learning strategies). Moreover, compensation strategies have become the most widely used strategies because the participants are able to use various ways to say their intended meaning while having communication with others to avoid any communication breakdown.

Suggestion
In relation to the present study, some limitations of this study are noted. First, since this study only focuses on the use of language learning strategies by students majoring in hotel management, future researchers are suggested to investigate further how non-English department students use their EFL learning strategies in their working-related context (ESP context: English for Specific Purposes). Also, studies dealing with comparison of how high achiever students and low achiever ones dealing with their language learning strategies in different grades and levels of education are still needed to be done to contribute more to the body of knowledge related to TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language).

REFERENCES

Ambrosi-Randic, Neala & Kostic-Bobanovic, Moira. (2008). English as a Foreign Language Learning Strategies Used by Croatian Learners. ANNALES, 18(1), 89-96.
Anderson, N.J. (2000). Cognitive psychology and its implications (5th Ed.) New York: Freeman, W. H.
Bessai, N.A. (2018). Using Oxford’s Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) to Assess the Strategy Use of a Group of First and Third Year EFL Algerian University Students. American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS), 42(1).
Brown, D. H. 2001. Teaching by Principles: An interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
Brown, H. D. (2003). Teaching by principles: an interactive approach to language pedagogy. Second Edition. New York: Longman Inc.
Green, J.M. & Oxford, R.L. (1995). A Closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. TESOL Quarterly, 29, 261-297.
Gu, Y. (2002). Gender, academic major, and vocabulary learning strategies of Chinese EFL learners. RELC Journal, 33(1), 35-54.
Jiang, Xin. (2000). A preliminary study on Chinese as a second language learning strategies. Language Teaching and Research, 1(1), 61-68.
Johnson, K. & Johnson, H. (eds). 1999. Encyclopedia Dictionary of Applied Linguistics. Oxford: Blackwell publishers Ltd.
Lan, R & Oxford, R. (2003). Language learning strategy profiles of elementary school students in Taiwan. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 41(4), 339-379.
Nunan, D. 1999. *Second Language Teaching and Learning.* Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
Lin, Ke, & Lu, Xia. (2005). An analysis of Chinese learning strategies for Vietnamese students. *Journal of Chinese Language Institute, Jinan University,* (4), 19-24.
O’Malley, J. M. & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Oxford, R.L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
Rendic, N.A & Bobanovic, M.K. (2008). English as a Foreign Language Learning Strategies Used by Croation Learners. *ANNALES,* 18(1), 89-96.
Saville-Troike, M.(2006). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition.* Cambridge: University Press.
Su, M.M. (2005). A Study of EFL Technological and Vocational College Students’ Language Learning Strategies and their Self-Perceived English Proficiency. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching,* 2(1), 44-56.
Tim, K.C.H. (2013). A Study On Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) Of University Students in Hong Kong. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics,* 11(2), 1-42.
Tomoana, R. (2012). *Sharing Successful Teaching and Learning Strategies for Māori, Pacific, and Youth learners.* Whitireia, New Zealand: An Ako Aotearoa Publication.
Wharton, G. (2008). Language Learning Strategy Use of Bilingual Foreign Language Learners in Singapore. *Language Learning,* 50(2), 203-243.
Yuan, Y., Liu, R., and Yuan, Y. (2018). A Study on Chinese Learning Strategies of International School Students in China. *Science Journal of Education,* 6(6), 123-128.