Analysis of English Learning Strategies Performed by Successful EFL Learners in Non-English Department

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Abstract: The objectives of this research were to know and describe English learning strategies that are used by successful EFL learners in non-English departments at the University of Mataram and the factors driving them. This is a descriptive qualitative study using purposive sampling. The samples were 5 Engineering students and 5 Economics students with TOEFL scores of 457 to 560. The data was collected through the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire version 7.0 and semi-interview. The result of the study reveals that successful EFL learners in Engineering and Economics implement all learning strategies at two different levels. The learners use compensation, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies at a high level, then memory, social, and affective strategies at a medium level. This research found that each learning strategy that the learners performed is intertwined. The naturalistic factors that contribute to driving the appropriation and implementation of those strategies are their English proficiency, learning style, and motivation. While there is no significant influence from gender identity found in this research.

Keywords: English learning strategies, successful EFL learners, SILL

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization requires everyone to be able to communicate using English. Even though English is learned by EFL learners for about more 12 years in formal education, a lot of students are still struggling. Junaidi (2020) believes that there are multiple contributing factors to this, including the aspects of teachers, facilities, policies, and certainly, students. A study conducted by Abrar et al. (2018) found that most challenges faced by EFL learners in Indonesia are language barriers such as lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and psychological factors related to anxiety, attitude, and learning motivation.

Unfortunately, learners in Indonesia mostly count on how English is taught in the classroom, where those problems above exist. The conditions create a gap in knowledge among the students in a classroom since each student has a different English background, knowledge, and needs (Gan et al., 2004). Therefore, if learners are only fixated on learning in the classroom, they won't achieve maximum or satisfying learning outcomes. The learners' participation in class is not enough to assure them to be successful English learners. The students need their English learning strategies to gain better learning achievement (Habók et al., 2022).

Many research found that choosing the right learning strategy can have a big impact on learning output. Students who have used specific strategies will report higher levels of language achievement (Setiyadi and Sukirlan, 2016). In a classroom setting during the learning process, some classroom tasks or activities are much easier for some students than for others (Kunasaraphan, 2015). Learning strategies can help learners to improve their motivation, and confidence, and learn independently in and out of the classroom (Melvina et al., 2020). Seeing the impact of the learning strategy that the learners employed depending on the condition and needs of the learners, it can be assumed that learning strategies are one of the pivotal factors causing differences in learning achievement.

The University of Mataram obligate for every student to submit the result of the TOEFL test that should pass at least 400 for the exact major and 450 for the social and humanities major. Due to the existing demands, the students have to learn more by themselves because EFL learners in non-English departments only have two to four hours a week for English lessons in class and only in the first year of college. However, there are some students in non-English departments that achieve the standard more easily than the others. They can achieve the standard even higher in the first test taken, different from most students who need three times even more. Because of the conditions, it's necessary to investigate how these successful learners learn. This study is conducted to expose what kind of learning strategies they performed and also looks at the factors that drive appropriation and implementation of those strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a descriptive-qualitative study. The samples were 10 learners, 5 Engineering and 5 Economics who were selected through purposive sampling. Engineering students were chosen as the representatives of the STEM major, and Economics students as the representatives of the social humanities major. The data collected through questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire adopted the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0; a questionnaire developed by Oxford (1990). The data from questionnaire was calculated to find the mean score and identified using LLS level by Oxford; high, medium, and low. The semi-structured interview conducted to obtain about learners' motivation, target, experiences, conditions, environments, and learners' feelings during the English learning processes they have done. All data was analyzed using Miles et al. (2014) model.

The data were sorted, organized, and classified based on the data needed which are the learning strategies used and the factors influence. After that, the data were displayed using table and narratively. Finally, drawing the conclusions involves making logical connections between the analyzed data and the research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The table below is overall English Language Learning Strategies Used by Engineering and Economics Students.

Table 1. The level of use of English learning strategies by engineering and economics students

No	LLS	Mean	Rank
1	Memory	3.28	4
2	Cognitive	3.47	3
3	Compensation	3.68	1
4	Metacognitive	3.55	2
5	Affective	3	6
6	Social	3.25	5

Compensation strategy is the most preferable for Engineering and Economics students. Two language learning strategies were used at a high level, the compensation strategy with a mean score is 3.68 (usually used), and the metacognitive strategy with a mean score of 3.55 (usually used). The next are language learning strategies that were in medium level, those are cognitive strategy with 3.47 (sometimes used), memory strategy with 3.28 (sometimes used), social strategy with 3.25 (sometimes used), and Affective strategy with 3 (sometimes used). The implementations of those strategies are influenced by the level of English proficiency, motivation, and learning style.

"Nowadays, if you are looking for good work, you need good English skills. So I must have good English skills to get work and scholarships abroad." –S2.M-

"I caught English more quickly when I studied intensively at a course with a tutor and other friends. When I'm alone in my free time, I often read journals and watch films and podcasts in English."-S5.M-

Learning strategies implemented by successful EFL learners in non-English departments
Compensation strategies

The compensation strategy is the direct strategies that help the learners to enrich their English knowledge and improve their abilities either in the classroom or natural environment settings. During the activities of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, the learners usually use some ways and actions to overcome their difficulties. They usually guess the meaning of unfamiliar words during reading and listening activities. This strategy is also very helpful to make time effective and efficient when working on reading and listening tests.

The learners reveal that they usually guess the meaning based on the sentence context. They tend to underline the words and check the meaning at the end of their activities. The learners agree that it helps them to memorize it well. When these predictions are produced the ideas flow quickly into long-term memory. Thus, their comprehension results, and the reading goes smoothly. This condition is in line with the grand theory from Oxford (1990) that guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by guessing intelligently through linguistic and non-linguistic clues as explained further by Hapsarani (2022).

The learners also highly implemented compensation strategies during speaking, either in classroom activities or casual conversation. This research found that the learners usually use gestures, phrases or coning words, and synonyms. As in Karbalaei and Negin (2014), the learners use mime or gesture, coining words, using a circumlocution or synonym, but in this research case, switching to the mother tongue is not found. Further, in line with Peker and Erdemir (2021), the learners implemented coining a word. One of learner describes *'cobek'* as a 'traditional food crusher'.

Those conditions above show that successful EFL learners in the Engineering and Economics highly implemented all items in compensation strategies except making up the words by switching to the mother tongue in order to help them complete English tasks and overcome their lack. By doing those activities they revealed that they noticed their weakness, got new insight, and felt more enjoy with English language as their target language to learn.

Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies are related to the way the learners control their learning. As in Raoofi et al. (2014) about learners' awareness and management, we can see the connection with compensation strategies. If compensation is the direct strategy used by the learners to overcome their lack of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English, metacognitive is an indirect strategy to improve their English knowledge and abilities. The learners usually notice their English mistakes and use that information to help them do better. The learners already mentioned they will underline or memorize the unfamiliar words that they found and check them after finishing their learning activities. This condition is the implementation of monitoring or identifying the problems that they face as in Yan (2018) by checking on their comprehension and production as they use the language.

Learners highly accustomed to setting their goals, finding as many ways as possible to use English, and making learning schedules. This is the implementation of a learning plan. As mentioned earlier in this study, the samples are learners who successfully achieved up to their passing grade score of TOEFL in their faculty. Therefore, it means their goal in general is achieving a TOEFL score of more than 450. In order to achieve the goals, the learners have set their own way of learning English.

The learners have their own learning management to fulfill what they need and achieve their learning goals. Start from planning, managing the time of learning, mentoring, and evaluation. The moment when the learners evaluate themselves, they are trying to solve the problem.

The successful EFL learners know their lacks and problems, they look for solutions. They take many actions to improve their English skills and knowledge. Such as taking an extra course, exploring learning videos, trying to get used to long and academic texts using AI, and of course, asking for help. Dumford et al. (2016) support those self-regulating

behaviors contribute to learners' learning outcomes and success in college.

In seeking opportunities to interact with English, the learners in Engineering and Economics have a little bit of difference. The learners in Engineering tend to be less looking people to talk in English. This might have happened because their major that really hectic, so they tended to interact only with their closest circle. It is the same case with looking for opportunities to read English text. The result also found that Engineering students are not as usual as Economics students in evaluating their progress in learning English.

Cognitive strategies

This strategy is a direct strategy that contains a conscious way to comprehend and perform English. Oxford (1990) mentions this strategy done through practicing by repeating and initiating sounds, writing system, recognizing and using patterns, recombining, and practicing naturalistically. The learners usually say or write English words and practice the sounds of English. The learners get high input of English from videos, shows, movies, and the newest popular platform podcast.

They admit that those media and platforms give them a lot of insight, such as patterns of expression, pronunciation, and using English words based on context. From the input and insight that they get the learners usually try to talk like native English speakers. During reading activities, the learners usually skim the method and tend to go back and read carefully to find detailed information. In this study case, the learners are not word-for-word oriented. This condition is in line with their English proficiency. The higher the level of English proficiency, the more learners will no longer translate word-for-word. So the learners usually more pay attention to the English patterns and context. The last result shows that the learners both in Engineering and Economics sometimes make summaries of information that they've got. This might happen because they only make summaries for certain English topics, not for all information.

Memory strategies

Memory strategy is a direct strategy that is used when they have to memorize new words and expressions. When the learners learn new things they tend to think of the relationship with knowledge that they already have. Such as the type of the word (verb, adjective, noun, etc.), function (when and where the word is used), and connecting the word to other words that have similar or dissimilar meanings. Next, the learners continue to process the word by use it in making sentences.

This activity helps the learner directly use the new information in a suitable context. Those two activities are called mental linkages as mentioned by Oxford (1990) and Elfi (2016). The other learners reveal that connecting the sound and make image or picture of new English words are helping them to memorize and remember the words easier. The activities directly make the learners repeat the new words in their own memory and make a connection to something already known. Further, one of the learners stated that she has done those activities and also often remembers the information's location on the page.

Learners usually review English lessons. This is the implementation of reviewing activity in memory strategies. This activity is done by reading and reviewing the materials at different time intervals. During the process of learning this activity is the most commonly used by students, especially for English test. The data also show that the learners sometimes used physical acts and lowly used rhymes and flashcards to help them. This is the influence of their level of English proficiency. They are also university students which means those kinds of activities are no longer relevant for them. That's why memory strategies are implemented lower than compensation and cognitive strategies in the category of direct strategies.

Social strategies

The highest activity used by the learners is asking their interlocutor to slow down and repeat the sentences if it is not understandable. As in result found that all the learners have their own circle, partner, and also obligation from their major to communicate using English, they have the privilege to do that activity. However, not all learners are using English in their daily with high intensity. It depends on the learner's necessities, circle type, and daily situations and conditions.

Two learners reveal that they must communicate in English and they have social circles which are created by the same interest. Both of them actively follow English competitions and activities, such as debate competitions and student exchange. It makes the two learners employ high intensity in their daily lives rather than the others that mostly are same as the majority of students in university. They are using English in their daily activity but not intense. They have lecturers, tutors in English courses, friends, and relatives to ask questions, correct their English, and asking help.

Affective strategies

The strategies related to learners' management of emotions, motivation, and attitude towards the learning process. Only two activities are usually used by the learners, those are relaxing and encouraging themselves when they are feeling afraid of using English and making mistakes. Regarding Oxford (1990) theory, the learners implemented the three activities categorized. In lowering anxiety, the results found that the learners try to relax using several acts, such as breathing calmly, holding something, shaking their legs, and praying.

The learners try to control their emotion by sometimes discussing their feelings with someone close, which is their mother or friend. They seldom and rarely write their feelings in learning English. Then, to encourage themselves the learners are taking risks wisely and making positive statements rather than rewarding themselves. As sample 1 said "…. Just go with it." The learners mostly are the type of person with good self-confidence levels. Since they only feel nervous or anxious in certain conditions, as a result, affective strategy becomes the lowest strategy implemented by the learners.

Factors driving the appropriation and implementation of those strategies

The result has already shown that the learners implemented all the English learning strategies at different levels. In the case of successful EFL learners at Engineering

and Economics students at the University of Mataram, they highly implemented compensation, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies. According to Rianto (2020), in the EFL context, learners with higher English proficiency used more learning strategies. It is the first factor that directly influences learners' English learning strategies.

English proficiency of the learners in this study is categorized as intermediate and upper intermediate level. The level of their English proficiency becomes the strong factor that drives them to highly implemented compensation strategy. Due to their ability and knowledge, they are capable of coning the words, using synonyms, and guessing the word's meaning based on context. The result is relevant to a study that conducted by Abdul-Ghafour and Alrefaee (2019) and Charoento (2016) which found students with higher English skills mostly implemented metacognitive, compensatory, and cognitive strategies. It's different from Rianto (2020) that found social strategies are the most dominant. This difference might happen because of the learner's environment and learning style.

The participants in this study show that they tend to spend their time alone for intensive learning, especially during test preparation. They prefer to gain more English input through course classes, textbooks, videos, films, and podcasts rather than interact with society around them. The learners interact using English in their daily but not with a high intensity to enrich their knowledge alone. Since it's found that the metacognitive strategy is one of the most highly implemented, the learners can be categorized as introverted learners.

Another factor that drives the appropriation and implementation of those strategies is motivation. Yu et al. (2022) mention that motivation has a role in achieving academic goals. EFL learners in this study are learners who successfully achieve higher TOEFL scores than their friends and pass the standard in their major or faculty. They can pass the standard because they have motivation higher than the standard itself. The learners have their own goals not only for graduation requirements but also for future career-oriented. The learners answer that their target goals are to get good job opportunities and scholarships abroad. Even in the first place, some students spend effort because of their major demands, but as time passes they set higher goals. So this makes them learn more and spend more effort than the other students, and as a result, they successfully pass the standard even higher.

CONCLUSION

The study found that successful EFL learners in Engineering and Economics implement all learning strategies at two different levels. The learners instinctively use compensation, metacognitive, and cognitive strategies at a high level, then memory, social, and affective strategies at a medium level. This research also found that each learning strategy that the learners performed is intertwined. They noticed their lack and problems in learning English and then used step-by-step activities that covered the theory of Oxford (1990). Furthermore, the naturalistic factors that contribute to driving the appropriation and implementation of those strategies are learners' English proficiency, learning style, and motivation. In further research, researchers should observe the

differences in activities in each category of English learning strategies carried out by students in each department.

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