STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AMONG THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the strategies used by successful English language learners of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of University of Palangka Raya in improving speaking skill. This research employed the modified Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionaires designed by Oxford (1990) and classroom observation to obtain data from 3 successful students of the fourth semester students studying at the English Department. The analysis of the data revealed that students used a high level (M=3.55) of language learning strategies to improve their English speaking skill. Among the learning strategies, metacognitive strategies (M=4.09) appeared to be the most frequently used strategies by the three students to improve their English speaking skill, followed correspondingly by compensation strategies (M=3.75), cognitive strategies (M=3.74), affective strategies (M=3.33), social strategies (M=3.06), and memory strategies (M=2.92). This finding showed that high motivation, level of language proficiency, and learning style have strong relationship with the use of students' language learning strategy. The result also suggests that various of teaching strategies in the classrooms should be considered by the language teachers since the students have different preferences to learn. Highlighting the importance of learners' metacognitive strategies is also recommended without ignoring out the other strategies.

Key Words: language learning strategies, improving, speaking skill

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a human activity carried from childhood to the end of life. People make decision as to whether or not someone has learned something based on the observed changes in what the learner can say and do. It can be concluded that someone has acquired a new understanding if the learner are now able to explain something which previously he could not explain. Furthermore, it can be stated that someone has learned a new skill if the learner can do something which he was previously unable to do.

Language learning is an active process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. Students learn language as they use it to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, establish relationships with family members and friends. Positive learning experiences in language-rich environments enable students to have a desire to extend their knowledge, skills, interests and strategies.

In this age of globalization, English has increasingly become the most crucial medium in every domain of communication, both in local and global contexts. As a result, there is a demand for speakers who can use English effectively in every country.

English is called the international language and is also the second language of many countries in the world. In Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language, for it is a language studied in an environment where English is not the primary means for daily communication and the language use is restricted. Although English as a foreign language is quite difficult to learn, it does not reduce people's interest in learning it.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four skills that have to be mastered by students when learning English. Not only as the product of learning a language, speaking skill is also an important tool of interaction between

language learner and lecturer in the classroom. Speaking ability enable students to explore ideas and concepts as well as to understand and organize their experiences and knowledge. Furthermore, people use oral language to learn, solve problems, and reach goals. To become discerning lifelong learners, students at all grades need to develop fluency and confidence in their oral language abilities. However, speaking English as foreign language has often been viewed as the most challenging skill. Accordingly, it makes speaking skill to be more demanding among listening, reading and writing skill.

In the syllabus of the English Education Study Program of University of Palangka Raya, speaking subjects were taught for 3 credits. Speaking courses were taught based on its stages namely Speaking 1, Speaking 2, and Speaking 3. Each level of courses had its own challenges. In speaking 1, students were required to be able to master English language skills

verbally at lower intermediate level which included participating in short conversation, asking and answering questions, getting into, through, and out of a simple survival situation, transferring current learned material to new situations/contexts. In Speaking 2, students were required to be able to master English language skills verbally at upper intermediate level which included narrating, describing in present, past and future time, fully participating in casual conservations, giving instructions, simple reports, dealing with complications in such situations as one might encounter in living in the target culture: complaints, emergency situations, taking one's way out of trouble and making simple comparisons. At the last stage, students were required to be able to master English language skills verbally at advanced level which included hypothesizing, supporting opinions, persuading describing in detail, and narrating in detail with precision.

In English Education Study Program of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of University of Palangka Raya, English becomes the main medium of communication in the process of teaching and learning. However, based on the researcher's experience when conducting practice teaching in the seventh semester students, it was found that the students had different levels of English competence especially in speaking ability. Although the researcher taught ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) when conducting practice teaching, most activities in the classroom were group discussions and presentations. To this condition, it was clear that some students were very active and confident when doing class discussion while the rest was passive.

To have sufficient English speaking skill to successfully communicate using the language is not easy for most learners. Attempts to help learners in this matter have been developed by teachers and researchers. Oxford as cited in Rachmawati (2013:124) stated that interest has been shifting from what learners learn or the outcome for the language learning to how learners gain the language or referring to process orientation. Language Learning Strategies (LLS) become part of this shifting interest since these strategies are an aspect in the learning process. Likewise, as cited in Hajhashemi (2013:418), Gardner's research which related to English language proficiency in term of foreign language use prediction of adult learners found that the important variance which affects on learners' abilities is language learning strategy.

In addition, as cited in Pathomchaiwat (2013:1157), Naiman et al. noted that "good" language learners appeared to use a larger number and range of strategies than "poor" language learners, the implications of understanding strategy use have seemed increasingly important while Carroll which was also cited in Pathomchaiwat

(2013:1157) quoted that the important factor for language success is language learning strategies. If the learners use appropriate strategies, even the poor would succeed in learning language. As the result, language learning strategies should be considered to be one of the factors which affect the students' language achievement.

In accordance with the relationship between language learning strategies and the students' level of success in improving their speaking skills, the researcher was interested in conducting a research about strategies of successful English language learners among the university students in improving speaking skill.

Research in language learning strategies has been done by researchers in education field. Even though this research had the same purpose with the previous research, it had some differences in its research design, subject and instruments. However, the researcher would correlate

this research findings to the result of the previous research.

II. METHOD

This research used a case study research design. Mitchell as cited in Rhee (2004) defined a case study as a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles. According to Sturman as cited in Rebolj (2013:31), a case study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon. Therefore, a case study is a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis. Yin (2014) added that one should use a case study strategy because he or she deliberately wants to study contextual conditions.

Therefore, a case study was employed to enable deeper investigation and description of learning strategies used by the successful students of English

Education Study Program in improving speaking skill. Factors affecting the use of language learning strategies implemented by the successful students of English Education Study Program of University of Palangka Raya in improving their speaking ability was also investigated. This case study was based on qualitative evidence.

There were three parts of social situation that would be presented. They were the place where the research was conducted, the actor of the research and the activities to be carried out in this research. In relation to the research objective, this research would carry out the investigation which took place in English Education Study Program, University of Palangka Raya. In this research, the researcher selected three successful students as the subject of this research since this research proposed to conduct a case study about language learning strategy. It meant this research would provide a deep and detail explanation related to the students' use of

language learning strategy. To this condition, the researcher selected the successful students based on their highest grade point average at the third semester. Furthermore, the researcher also considered their other academic achievements outside the classroom related to speaking skill such as debate competition, speech competition, story telling contest and so on. The subject of this research was going to report or describe about what language learning strategy that was used and what factors affecting the use of language learning strategies in improving speaking skill through Strategy Inventory for Language Learning administered by the researcher and the classroom observation.

In order to get the sufficient data needed for the research, the researcher will develop the instruments which are observation of speaking activities and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and classroom observation. The result of classroom observation would be

compared with the result of SILL. The SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) – version 7.0, which will be used in this research – is comprised of 50 items (Oxford 1990: 293-300). However, the researcher will develop the SILL in accordance with the data needed. Each item describes a language learning strategy and learners are asked to respond to the SILL items by indicating how often they employ these strategies by selecting one response out of five Likert scale options. The SILL classifies language learning strategies into 6 parts; each part comprises strategies with similar function. Moreover, in order to gather any extra English LLS on speaking from the three successful students, one additional open-ended question will be added to the end of the SILL. Since its development, the SILL has been used to assess the learning strategy use of more than 10000 learners world-wide and has been translated so far into a large number of languages such as Arabic, Chinese, French,

German, Greek Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Ukrainian and in Greek (Oxford 1996).

To have more clear description on what the researcher would do in conducting the research study on the spot, the researcher figured out as seen in the following:
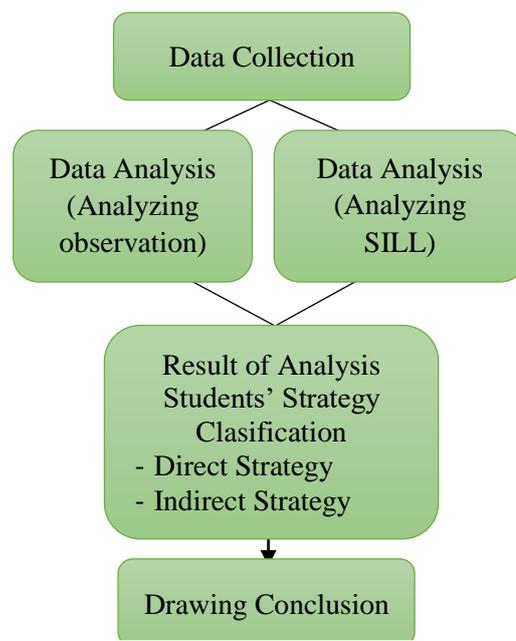

Figure 1. Research Framework

III. RESULT

On Monday, 13 May 2019 the researcher went to English campus in order to select the research subject based on the

students GPA at the third semester and the other academic achievements related to speaking skill. As a result, the researcher found the 3 most successful among the 41 students as the subject of this research. Secondly, the researcher came to English campus again on Monday, 20 May 2019 to observe the students' learning activities. It appeared that the three successful students used some learning strategies in the classroom.

1) **Result of the Overall Strategy Use Analysis**

After doing classroom observation, the researcher distributed the SILL and analyzed the students' response toward the SILL. The data about mean for the overall strategy use was illustrated through the following table:

Table 1. Mean for the overall strategy use

Number of Students	3
Lowest Scale	2
Highest Scale	5
Mean of S1	3.58
Mean of S2	3.50
Mean of S3	3.58
Mean for Overall Strategy Use	3.55

Based on the SILL that has been collected, the researcher entered each of the scales according to the student code into the analysis table that was already available. After that, each score was summed up and averaged.

2) **Result of the Six Strategy Classifications Analysis**

The data about mean for the six strategy classifications was illustrated through the following table:

Table 2. Mean for the six strategy classifications

Strategy Category	Mean	Description	Rank
Memory strategies	2.92	Moderate use level	6
Cognitive strategies	3.74	High use level	3
Compensation strategies	3.75	High use level	2
Metacognitive strategies	4.09	High use level	1
Affective strategies	3.33	Moderate use level	4
Social strategies	3.06	Moderate use level	5

Furthermore, Table 2 showed that among the learning strategies, metacognitive strategies (M=4.09) appeared to be the most frequently used strategies by the 3 students to improve their English speaking skill, followed by compensation strategies (M=3.75), cognitive strategies (M=3.74), affective strategies (M=3.33), social strategies (M=3.06), and memory strategies (M=2.92). The following was the data display in the form of a bar diagram.

3) Result of the Additional Strategy Use by the Students

Eventually, the final item (item 35) of the English learning SILL was designed as an open-ended question for the purpose of soliciting students' additional learning strategies which were not included on the English learning SILL. The three successful students provided the personal strategy use. Table 3 reported the answer of item 35.

Table 3. Students' response to the 35th item of the SILL

Code	Additional Strategy Description
S1	[(1)] I develop my social environment with having many friends on social media who are native speakers. So, it will improve my speaking skill and it's also one of the effective ways. [(2)] I love watching movies with English subtitle. Therefore, I'm able to know the correct pronunciation of several words. Classification: (1) Social (2) Cognitive
S2	There are two strategies that I usually use to enhance my speaking proficiency. First, by [(1)] talking to myself, it means saying my thoughts out loud or narrating my actions. For example, if I think I want to buy coffee, I say out loud what is on my mind and say it in English " I want to buy coffee" instead of narrating my action using my native language "aku mau beli kopi". In my opinion, it is one of the effective ways to practice my speaking proficiency. Moreover, talking to my self is also a low-pressure way to practice, since no one will hear my mistakes when I make it during my practice. Another strategy that I use to enhance my speaking proficiency is [(2)] read aloud. When I have nobody to talk to, I usually use reading out loud to practice my speaking skill. By reading aloud, I have an opportunity to focus on pronunciation and how native speaking form a sentence correctly which is two of the important aspects of speaking. The materials that I usually use for reading aloud are novel or video transcript. In short, these two ways, talking to my self and reading aloud, really help me to enhance my speaking skill. Classification: (1) Affective (2) Cognitive
S3	For enhancing my speaking proficiency, there are two strategies that I use. The first one is [(1)]asking for the feedback from my friends or my lecturer regarding my speaking. The second one is [(2)]practicing to pronounce the new English expression I hear from the English songs that I repeatedly listen to. Classification: (1) Metacognitive (2) Cognitive

From the data in the table above, it could be seen that each student had 2 additional strategies and the most additional strategy written by students included into

cognitive strategy. S1 reported that there were two ways that he used to improve his speaking skills. The first strategy was social strategy because the students involved other people, especially native speakers, through social media to interact with. The second strategy was cognitive strategy because the student learned to know the correct pronunciation through the English subtitle. However, this strategy was similar to the strategy item no 10 in SILL.

On the other hand, S2 also added 2 strategies that included into affective and cognitive strategy. Talk to herself which was the first strategy had similarities with the strategy item no 26 in SILL. S2 also stated that talking to herself was a low-pressure way to practice, since no one would hear her mistakes when speaking. Therefore it could be concluded that her first strategy wes affective strategy. The second strategy, however, had similarities with the strategy item no 7 on SILL because reading aloud activities carried out

by S2 students were in order to practice pronunciation in English.

Finally, S3 used metacognitive and cognitive strategies to improve her speaking. The first strategy that she used was included in metacognitive strategy because asking for the feedback from her friends or her lecturers was part of the effort to evaluate the results of her learning. In this case, this strategy was similar to the strategy item no 24. Whereas, the second strategy was similar to the strategy item no 7 in SILL because S3 tried to practice pronunciation in English through songs.

4) Result of the Similarities and Differences of the Students' trategy Analysis

Based on the analysis of students' response toward SILL, the researcher found that there were some similarities and differences among the three successful students. The data about the similarities and differences of the students' strategy was illustrated through the following table:

Table 4. The similarities and differences of the students' strategy

Students' Code	Similarities
S1 and S2	1. S1 and S2 stated that they always think about their progress in learning English 2. S1 and S2 stated that they almost never use rhymes to remember new English words. 3. S1 and S2 stated that they almost never give theirself a reward or treat when they do well in English.
	Differences 1. S1 reported that he always use gestures when he can' t think of a word during a conversation in English while S2 almost never do that strategy. 2. S1 stated that he almost never make up new words if he does not know the right ones in English while S2 always does that strategy.
S1 and S3	**Similarities** 1. S1 and S3 stated that they always use the English words they know in different ways. 2. S1 and S3 stated that they always pay attention when someone is speaking English. 3. S1 and S3 stated that they always encourage theirself to speak English even when they are afraid of making a mistake. 4. S1 and S3 stated that they almost never make up new words if they do not know the right ones in English.
S2 and S3	**Similarities** 1. S1 and S3 stated that they always watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English. 2. S1 and S3 stated that they almost never write down their feelings in a language learning diary.
	Differences 1. S2 stated that she always make up new words if she does not know the right ones

	in English while S3 stated that she almost never does that strategy.
S1, S2 and S3	**Similarities** 1. S1, S2 and S3 stated that they always use a word or phrase that means the same thing if they cannot think of an English word. 2. S1, S2 and S3 stated that they almost never ask for help from English speakers. 3. S1, S2 and S3 stated that they almost never ask English speakers to correct them when they talk.

IV.   DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the three successful students were familiar with language learning strategies and this might imply them being active strategic users. Metacognitive strategy (M=4.09) appeared to be the most frequently used strategies to improve their English speaking skill. After metacognitive strategy, the second most frequently used strategy was compensation strategy (M=3.75). Cognitive strategy ranked third (M=3.74). The fourth strategy from the top was the affective strategy (M=3.33). Social strategy (M=3.06) and memory strategy (M=2.92) were the least language learning strategies reported by the students. It other words, the

students' response indicated that the students tended to apply strategies when learning English. It also meant that learning strategies played an important role in their learning English, and they were aware of using them in the process of learning English.

The students in this research indicated a low level of preference for socio-affective and memory strategies. As a result, the highest score occured in metacognitive strategies and the second highest score occured in the compensation language learning strategies. This result was in line with Buainain's finding of language learning strategies learners in Arab (2010) and Rachmawati's (2013) research in Indonesia with metacognitive strategy ranked the highest.

Although the mean of the metacognitive strategies was not far beyond other preferences, the fact that students prefered to use metacognitive skills more to help them acquire English. Metacognitive

strategies such as paying attention when someone was speaking English, thinking about their English learning progress, and trying to notice their English mistakes then use that information to help them do better could give a great impact to the students' speaking progress. In terms of two-way communication, the basic activities that occur were speaking and listening. Everyone who speak English could have a different background, therefore, students needed to listen carefully to the pronunciation, vocabulary used and look at the gesture as well. In connection with that matter, feedback was crucial important in communication process. Feedback supported the communication process and paved the way for generating new ideas. It could be stated that feedback was included in one of the learning evaluation processes that helped students to notice and correct their mistakes.

With regard to the second most frequently strategy among the options

namely compensation strategy, students helped themself by using gesture or pause word, guessing from the context when listening, using synonyms to relieve speaking.

The third most frequent strategy used by the participants in this study was cognitive strategy. This strategies involved deliberate manipulation of language such as watching English TV shows, trying to talk like native speaker, practicing pronunciation and using word in different way enabled the learner to improve learning. However, cognitive strategies were usually found to be the most popular strategies used by language learners such as in previous research by Alhaysony (2017). This argument corroborated the finding of this research.

Affective strategies were reported to be the fourth most frequently strategies used by the students in this research. The students reported that they encouraged themself and lowered their anxiety with

well preparation especially for the public speaking activities.

Social strategies respectively then was the second least frequent strategies used by the students in this research. Concerning social strategies, however, some strategies were reported to be helpful enough for students. In language learning process, the successful students usually asked their classmates to correct their language produce. The student also provided additional strategy related to social strategy which not mentioned in the SILL items, such as chatting with foreign friends via social media in the internet.

Finally, memory strategy was the least frequent strategies used by the students in this research. When the students found a new vocabulary, they tried to find out the meaning and the way to pronunce it through the dictionary and then used the word in a sentence as often as possible so they could remember it. However, it still

demonstrated that the students hardly learn a language by memorizing it.

Furthermore, this current research found a strong relationship between the students' proficiency level and learning style with their language learning strategies. Regarding motivation, the findings of this study were in line with previous studies.

High motivation was the strongest reason for the three students to use more learning strategies and used them more frequently. Motivation could be many things such as great desire to master English and a support by family. To get good learning results, support by parents was also needed apart from the existence of perseverance and hard work of each individual because the family was the first and foremost education for children, besides children spent more time at home than at school. In addition, the desire to get a good job abroad, earn more money, have an extensive networking, or unusual experience could also motivate students to

study the language harder. The unique fact was that when conducting observation the researcher found that the three students were very active in speaking English in the class both in starting each conversation and responding it. But when interviewed, one of the students admitted that she prefered to use Indonesian or Banjar language when speaking outside the classroom. This phenomenon showed that someone's motivation or purpose in speaking also determined their strategy use. When in class students felt that they had to use English so that they could practice their speaking skill, besides that there were also lecturers who assessed their speaking performance. In contrast, students prefered to use Indonesian outside the learning environment because it was easier and more practical.

Besides that, according to the result of SILL and interview, a high level of proficiency made the students tend to be more use metacognitive and cognitive

strategies rather than memory strategies. Lastly, students' learning style preferences influenced the type of LLS they used. Students with infrequently used social strategies meant like to learn individually more than in group. However, this did not mean that the students could not interact or work together with other people. In certain situations they even like to discuss something and work together.

V. CONCLUSION

The use of metacognitive strategies (M=4.09) appeared to be the most frequently used strategies to improve their English speaking skill, followed by compensation strategies (M=3.75), cognitive strategies (M=3.74), affective strategies (M=3.33), social strategies (M=3.06), and memory strategies (M=2.92). The interview result indicated that the variety and range of LLS used by the three successful students. S1 and S2 had reported that metacognitive strategies was the most frequently strategies used by them

while S3 had metacognitive and cognitive strategies at first rank. Furthermore, S1 and S3 had memory strategies as the least strategy used by them while S2 ranked social strategies as the least strategy used. Lastly, this current research found a strong relationship between the students' motivation, proficiency level and learning style with their language learning strategies use.

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