

# AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES USED BY HIGH PROFICIENCY LEARNERS AT *HAND FORTUNA CENTER*

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to find out the affective strategies used by high proficiency learners at *Hand Fortuna Center*, Kupang. The theory applied was the theory of Affective Strategies by Oxford (1990) as a main theory and Oxford (2011) as a supporting theory. The source of data was the result of the questionnaires and the transcripts of interview that have been conducted with the ten high proficiency students at *Hand Fortuna Center*. The findings showed that the learners mostly used the first and the second part of affective strategies, namely “*lowering your anxiety*” and “*encouraging yourself*”. There are three sub-strategies in each part such as using “*progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation*”, “*using music*”, and “*using laughter*” (*lowering your anxiety*) and “*making positive statements*”, “*taking risks wisely*”, and “*rewarding yourself*” (*encouraging yourself*). The third part of affective strategies, “*taking your emotional temperature*”, was the least frequently used by the learners. It is possible that the learners might not be familiar with the strategies such as “*using a checklist*” or “*writing a language learning diary*”.

**Keywords:** Language learning strategies, and affective strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

The factor that can be very important to the learners to be successful in learning a language is the learning strategies that they used in learning a second language and foreign language (Graham, 1997). “The good language learner could be identified by looking at special strategies used by students who were successful in their second language learning”, (Rubin, 1975, cited in Breen, 2014, p. 29). Motivation, positive attitudes and beliefs, and supportive emotions are the aspects of “affective strategies” that very crucial for learners in learning a new language (Oxford, 2011). Affective strategies are very important especially to those who do not have a support or a motivation from their teacher or class (White, 1995 as cited in Oxford, 2011). These strategies also can be applied for the unsuccessful learners who have a problem in learning language especially with their emotions, anxiety or depression, or culture shock (Oxford, 2011). By using those strategies, learners can avoid the negative factors such as low L2 motivation, poor attitudes, language anxiety, anger, and frustration (Oxford, 2011).

This study is done to find out the affective strategies used by high proficiency learners at *Hand Fortuna Center*, Kupang and what the students believe after using the affective strategies. To analyze the affective strategies used by the high proficiency learners, the writer used the theory from Oxford (1990) as the main theory about language learning strategies and the theory from Oxford (2011) as the supporting theory. There are three main parts of affective strategies. Those are “*lowering your anxiety*”, “*encouraging yourself*”, and “*taking your emotional temperature*”. In the three main parts of affective strategies, there are 10 sub-strategies in all namely “*using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation*”, “*using music*”, “*using laughter*”, “*making positive statements*”, “*taking risk wisely*”, “*rewarding yourself*”, “*listening to your body*”, “*using a checklist*”, “*writing a language learning diary*”, and “*discussing your feelings with someone else*”. Basically, affective strategies in this book are related to emotion, attitudes, and motivation.

The reason why the writer chose the high proficiency learners was because of the strong relationship between high proficiency learners and the use of learning strategies. The study which has been conducted by Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012) about the relationship between language learning strategies and the proficiency levels showed that the high proficient learners use more learning strategies more frequently than the low proficient learners. In this present study, high proficiency learners are the students who have a good grade ( $\geq B$ ) for speaking, pronunciation, writing, listening, and vocabulary at *Hand Fortuna Center*. To get the information about affective strategies used by them, the writer conducted ten interviews to get the more detailed information.

Firstly, the writer gave the questionnaire by Oxford (1990) about language learning strategies, especially about the affective strategies.

Affective strategies are divided into three main parts. In each group, there are 3-4 sub-strategies. The first one is "*lowering your anxiety*". Learners often experience the anxiety in speaking the new language (Oxford, 1990). Learner can use "*progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation*" in order to reduce their anxiety. "*Using progressive relaxation*" is the technique to reduce the tension by doing the relaxation of the muscle groups in the body (Oxford, 1990). "*Deep breathing*" means to take a deep breath not just from the lungs but also from the diaphragm. By doing deep breathing, it brings calmness (Oxford, 1990). "*Meditation*" means "focusing on a mental image or sound to center one's thought, and it, too, helps reduce the anxiety that often dogs language learners" (Oxford 1990 p.164). By doing these techniques, it will help learners to learn more peacefully and more efficiently (Oxford, 1990). The second part is "*using music*", which is used to calm learners and put them in a positive mood to learn a language (Oxford, 1990). She further mentioned that learners can listen to their favorite music for 10 minutes to calm them down and put them in a positive mood before learning a language. The third is "*using laughter*", which is used to eliminate boredom by adding humor (Oxford, 2011). It means "*using laughter*" brings the benefit for a learner in order to reduce their anxiety (Oxford, 1990). Learners can use laughter by reading a humorous book, listening jokes, watching a funny movie, and so on (Oxford, 1990). Learner can use humor to generate their motivation in learning a language (Oxford, 2011). Oxford (2011) also stated that relaxing, listening to music, and exercising are a part of affective strategies.

The second strategy is "*encouraging yourself*". This strategy means how the learners encourage themselves to be motivated that come inside them (Oxford, 1990). Learner can use three strategies which are "*making positive statements*", "*taking risk wisely*", and "*rewarding yourself*" in order to encourage themselves in learning a language. The first is "*making positive statements*" which is employed to increase learner's confidence in learning a new language (Oxford, 1990). Learner can do this technique like saying or writing a positive statement like "*I really did a good job this time!*" (Oxford, 1990). Learner can make a plan for self-reward (Oxford, 2011). The second is "*taking risks wisely*". It means learners take a reasonable risk in learning new language even they make mistakes or have difficulties (Oxford 1990). Oxford (2011) also stated that learner can do this to themselves by making a positive self-talk. The third is "*rewarding yourself*", which means the reward comes from themselves (Oxford 1990). Learner can do the reward for themselves for a good performance in language learning. They can also make a plan for self-reward which so-called self-consequating (Oxford, 2011). For example, "Hildegard rewards herself for good work by watching a favorite TV show" (Oxford, 1990).

The third strategy is "*taking your emotional temperature*". This strategy means learner's self-assessment toward their feelings, motivations, and attitudes in learning a new language (Oxford, 1990). There are four strategies, such as "*listening to your body*", "*using a checklist*", "*writing a language learning diary*", and "*discussing your feelings with someone else*". The first is "*listening to your body*". It means paying attention to what the body says or the signals of the body (Oxford 1990). Positive feelings and negative feelings bring different effects for the body. The positive feelings are happiness, interest, calmness, and pleasure whereas the negative ones are tension, worry, fear, and anger. Learner needs to know the signal of their body to make self-understanding in order to control their feelings (Oxford, 1990). For example, "Pardee a learner of German, has a headache, realizes that it is coming from tension about performing in German, and determines that he will relax a bit more every day" (Oxford, 1990 p. 167). The second is "*using a checklist*". The purpose is to help the learner to discover their feelings, attitudes, and motivations in learning a new language (Oxford, 1990). Learners can make a checklist every day or every few days to assess their feelings and attitudes in learning a new language. For example, "Lisellote uses a checklist each night to note her changing attitudes about her intensive Chinese course, her teacher, and her own progress in learning Chinese" (Oxford, 1990 p. 167). The third is "*writing a language learning diary*". It helps the learner to describe their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions about learning new language process on the diary or journal (Oxford, 1990). The fourth is "*discussing your feelings with someone else*". Learning a new language is not easy (Oxford, 1990). Therefore, this strategy is very important for the learner to talk with other people such as friend, parents, relative, or teacher to express their feelings in learning a new language.

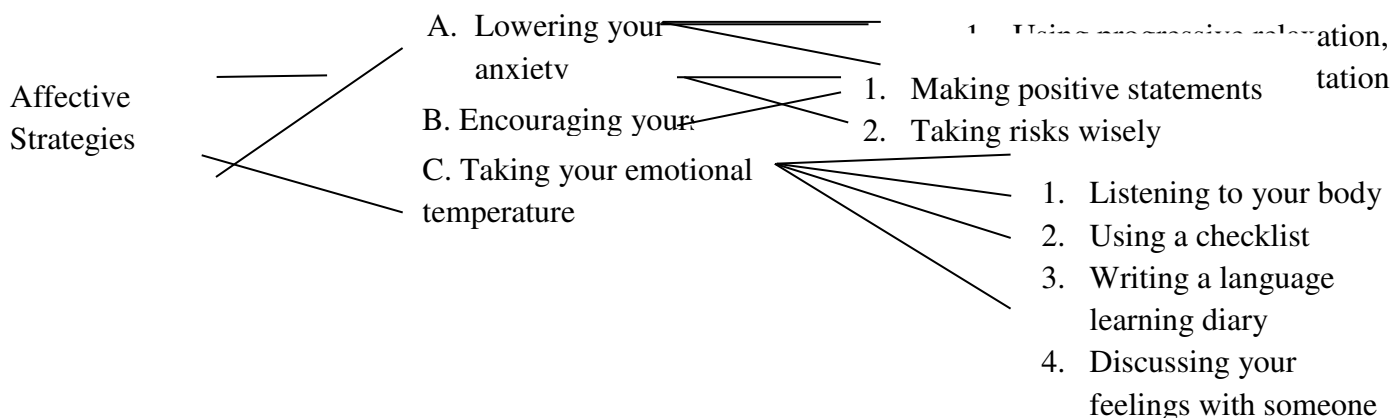


Diagram of the Affective Strategies to Be Applied to the Four Language Skills”  
(Oxford, 1990, p.163)

## METHODS

This study is a qualitative approach because this study explored the attitude, behavior, and experiences and the study also used interview to get the in-depth opinion (Dawson, 2007). The key instrument of this study was the researcher, who collected the data and analyzed the data based on the theories. The writer distributed questionnaires from SILL (Oxford, 1990) to the respondents and followed by an interview with each of them. The questionnaires serve as warm-up activities before the interview. The questions for the structured interview were the elaboration of all parts of the affective strategies by Oxford (1990). The source of data of this study was the result of the questionnaires and the transcript of the interview.

The questionnaire consisted of questions reflecting six language learning strategies. Since the writer focuses on affective strategies, the writer only took part E, which is “affective strategies”. The questionnaires were given to the students to know what kind of affective strategies that the learners used and the frequency of the used of its strategies. There were 6 questions of affective strategies. Students wrote 1 to 5 that was appropriate with the way they learning the language. Number 1 to 5 means “never or almost never true of me”, “usually not true of me”, “somewhat true of me”, “usually true of me”, “always or almost true of me”.

The writer applied several steps in collecting the data. First of all, the writer called the head of *Hand Fortuna Center* to ask for her permission to do the research. The writer came to *Hand Fortuna Center* to do the observation in two advanced classes. There are 5 classes of advanced level and each class consists of ±12 students. The writer selected 10 respondents from the five classes by having two students in each class with the highest test scores. The writer used high proficiency learners, represented by the learners who have a good grade ( $\geq B$ ) for speaking, pronunciation, writing, listening, and vocabulary. First, they had to fill the questionnaire of SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) about affective strategies. As for the interview, most students requested that they wanted to write down the answer like keywords instead of answering it directly. So, they would have more time to think and not feel awkward to answer the question. After writing their answers, the writer began the interview and recorded them. Only two students answered the question directly without writing down their answers. The length of interview time was 25 to 35 minutes. The writer used English to interview the students. After finishing the interview, the writer made the interview transcripts.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In general, the findings showed that all ten learners used affective strategies in many different ways based on what they believe. In the first part of affective strategies, “*lowering your anxiety*”, most learners used “*progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation*”, “*using music*”, and “*using laughter*” to lower their anxiety. They believed that by using the first main part

of “*lowering your anxiety*”, they got relaxed and it could reduce their anxiety to perform well using English.

#### **Student D**

D<sub>1</sub>: Yes, I do. I use progressive relaxation. I just do some motions like blink my eyes, or shake a pen that I hold in my hand. I do that to get relax and to perform well (D<sub>2</sub>).

D<sub>3</sub>: In front of class. For example like when mam Nana or uncle Tono asked me to deliver speech (D<sub>4</sub>).

D<sub>5</sub>: Always at the beginning of the conversation and speech.

D<sub>6</sub>: I get more relax.

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#### **Student C**

C<sub>1</sub>: Yes, I do. I use deep breathing.

C<sub>2</sub>: To decrease my anxiety and relax myself.

C<sub>3</sub>: Most of the time at the class.

C<sub>4</sub>: When it almost my time to perform.

C<sub>5</sub>: Every time I have to perform in public or in class.

C<sub>6</sub>: I feel much better.

The second part of affective strategies is “*encouraging yourself*”. This part consists of three sub-strategies. Mostly learners used the first and the second sub-strategies which are “*making positive statements*” and “*taking risks wisely*” to encourage themselves in learning English. By using the second part sub-strategies of affective strategies, they believed that if they used those techniques they would be confident and motivated to learn a new language.

#### **Student A**

A: For me making a mistake is a part of learning. So, I usually say to myself “Don’t be afraid to make a mistake” (A<sub>19</sub>). Why? Because it motivates me (A<sub>20</sub>). I say it by whispering inside my heart. Sometimes, I also stand in front of the mirror and say it in front of the mirror (A<sub>21</sub>). ... and I feel like getting a new spirit after saying that wise word (A<sub>24</sub>).

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#### **Student F**

F<sub>22</sub>: Yes, but sometimes.

F<sub>23</sub>: When my teacher asked us in the classroom what did the story tell us about, and I just answered it with my opinion even though the other friends did not agree with me.

F<sub>24</sub>: I do that because I want to share my opinion and of course to practice English.

F<sub>25</sub>: I always do that in my classroom.

F<sub>26</sub>: I will do that when my teacher asks the question especially in Bahasa Indonesia class and English class.

F<sub>27</sub>: I always try to answer the question from my teacher.

F<sub>28</sub>: I feel a little bit shy but I proud of myself.

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#### **Student J**

J<sub>45</sub>: Yes, sometimes.

J<sub>46</sub>: I just want to share my thoughts.

J<sub>47</sub>: Sometimes I talk about my presentation.

J<sub>48</sub>: Okay. So I talk about my nervousness when I presented in front of the class.

J<sub>49</sub>: With my friends.

J<sub>50</sub>: I do that in school and Course.

J<sub>51</sub>: When I learned something big and fun.

J<sub>52</sub>: I do that sometimes.

J<sub>53</sub>: I feel happy because I can share to my friends about what I’ve got or what I felt in class.

The third part of affective strategies is “*taking your emotional temperature*”. This part consists of four sub-strategies. Most learners used the first and the fourth sub-strategy which are “*listening to your body*” and “*discussing your feelings with someone else*”. By using “*listening to*

*your body*” and “*discussing your feeling with someone else*”, they believed it would help them to get motivation to learn English.

#### **Student C**

C<sub>35</sub>: I do deep breathing, say some positive things, and I pray.

C<sub>36</sub>: Just to calm myself down.

C<sub>37</sub>: I do that anywhere.

C<sub>38</sub>: Before performing.

C<sub>39</sub>: I always do that.

C<sub>40</sub>: I feel good and I feel relieved.

The sub-strategies of “*using a checklist*” and “*writing a language learning diary*” were the least frequent strategies used by the learners. Only few learners believed that by writing a diary they could share their experience in learning a new language and also they could practice English. The rest believed that writing a language learning diary will not be useful for them. The writer found out that all the learners did not use a checklist because they did not know the function of a checklist.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research was conducted to know the kind of affective strategies used by high proficiency learners at *Hand Fortuna Center* and what students believe after using these strategies. This study has shown that the high proficiency learners at *Hand Fortuna Center* used the affective strategies in many different ways. Some interesting findings are about those who did not use “*taking risks wisely*” and it is possible that it could be related to the culture of Asian students who tend to be quiet and passive in learning. Another interesting finding is about “*writing a language learning diary*”. Some respondents thought diary could make them better while others felt that diary made them look like a girl and so did a tomboy female student. Nobody used “*using a checklist*” because most of them thought that it was not important and they had never thought about this strategy. It was indicated that checklist might not be familiar or popular to the learners.

In general, the findings indicated that using affective strategies helps learners to lower their anxiety in learning English, encourage themselves to be motivated in learning English, and also help them to control their emotion in learning a language. The writer concluded that in learning a new language, affective strategies is very important for learners to make them motivated, have positive attitudes and emotions in learning English. It is very important to guide students in the classroom to become successful in learning a new language. The teacher can encourage the low proficiency learners in the classroom to use the strategies to make them motivated and more proficient in learning a new language. Second, learners also can use affective strategies more effective like try to use the other sub-strategy like checklist and diary. It is also can be used for high proficiency learners to try to use affective strategy to become successful in learning a new language.

The writer hopes that further study on affective strategies can be conducted to get a better result. Other researchers can use other types of the interview like a semi-structured interview to get more specific answers. Therefore, the question will not only be limited to the list of question, but the researcher can ask further questions if needed. Besides, it is better for the researcher to use bilingual to do the interview with the respondents. This way, the researcher can explain if the respondent does not understand the question and the respondents can feel more relaxed and open when answering the questions.

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