LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY LEARNERS IN LEARNING SPEAKING
(A Descriptive Study in an Exemplary Class in one of Senior High Schools in Cimahi)

Yuli Rachmawati*

rachmawatiyuli@ymail.com

*Graduated in December 2012 from English Education Study Program of Indonesia University of Education

Abstract: This study is a descriptive study investigating learners' language learning strategies (LLS) in learning speaking and the different strategies used by the high and low achievers of the class. The study used a descriptive method. Since the data for the study are both in the form of words and numbers, a mixed method design has been employed. To collect the data, a modified questionnaire of SILL, score recording, and interviews are used. The findings show that compensation strategies (M=3,48) are the most frequently used strategies employed by all learners. Meanwhile differences in the strategies used by the high and low achievers in speaking are found in terms of the frequency of use, strategy category, and varieties of strategy.

Introduction

In the practice of teaching and learning English, speaking is one of the fundamental skills to be developed as the function of language is to communicate. Among other skills, speaking has a critical function as a key for communication (Florez, 1999). Consequently, developing English speaking skills is indispensable for all learners to be able to effectively communicate in the language.

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. 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 (Oxford, 1990). Language learning strategies (LLS) become part of this shifting interest since these strategies are an aspect in the learning process (Dornyei, 2005; Takac, 2008).

LLS are a crucial aspect to consider because these strategies are essential for developing communicative competence that is needed in speaking (Oxford, 1990). They are also a way to establish conscious learning as a tool in obtaining better proficiency, especially in speaking (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002, Dornyei, 2005).

Different strategies used by learners reflect learners' variation in terms of gender, level of proficiency, learner's belief etc. (Dornyei, 2005). The choice as well as the way of combining and sequencing LLS can be different for each individual. However, there must be some powerful strategies to use because as Savile (2006) stated not all strategies are equal. There are some strategies that are more effective than the others. Thus the current study finds which strategies are used by successful learners or the high achievers, as they show that their learning is effective.

The present study was conducted in one senior high school in Cimahi containing 32 learners in an exemplary class of twelfth grade. The research questions are:

1. What LLS are employed by learners in an exemplary class of twelfth grade in one of senior high schools in Cimahi in learning speaking?
2. What are the differences of the LLS used by the high achievers and the low achievers of the class?

Literature Review

Oxford (1990) defines LLS as specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations. Experts have identified LLS into various classifications. Some of them divide these classifications broader or narrower than the others. The following table presents three classifications of language learning strategies proposed by different experts.

Yuli Rachmawati
Language Learning Strategies Used by Learners in Learning Speaking (A Descriptive Study in an Exemplary Class in
One of Senior High Schools in Cimahi)

Table 1 Experts' classification of language learning strategies

Oxford (1990)	Dornyei (2005)	O'Malley and Chamot (1990)
Memory strategies	Cognitive strategies	Cognitive strategies
Cognitive strategies		
Compensation strategies	-	-
Metacognitive strategies	Metacognitive strategies	Metacognitive strategies
Affective strategies	Affective strategies	Social/affective strategies
Social Strategies	Social strategies	

As it can be seen from the table above, among these variations, Oxford (1990) offers a more comprehensive, systematic and detailed system of LLS. She classifies these strategies into six different categories.

Firstly, memory strategies are strategies that help learners to learn and retrieve new information (Oxford, 1990). Secondly, cognitive strategies are strategies that involve the manipulation or transformation of the learning materials/input (Oxford, 1990). The example of this kind of strategy is repetition, summarizing, using images, etc. (Dornyei 2005). Thirdly, compensation strategies allow learners to use the language despite their large limitations in knowledge, like inadequacy of grammar and vocabulary (Oxford, 1990).

Next, metacognitive strategies are strategies that aim at analyzing, monitoring, evaluating, planning, and organizing the learning process (Dornyei, 2005). Then affective strategies involve one's engaging in taking control of the emotional (affective) conditions and experiences (Dornyei, 2005). The last, social strategies are strategies thatbinvolve interpersonal behaviors to increase the amount of L2 communication (Dornyei, 2005).

Methodology

A descriptive method is employed in the current study. Fraenkel and Walen (2006) suggest this method describes situations as completely and carefully as possible. Looking at the collected data, this study also employs a mixed method,

quantitative and qualitative design. It is a research design that collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Cresswel, 2010).

The quantitative data were obtained through questionnaire and score recording, while the qualitative data were collected from interview. The questionnaire was a modified Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990).

To differentiate the high and low achievers in speaking, a score recording of learners' English speaking scores was obtained from the English teacher. After selecting the high and low achievers, interview was conducted.

To analyze the collected data, parallel mixed analysis was used to analyze both types of data. Teddlie & Tashakkori (Onwuegbuzie and Combs, 2010) state this analysis involves two separate processes, in which a quantitative analysis was used for the quantitative data and a qualitative analysis was used for the qualitative data.

The quantitative analysis involves statistical analysis. The questionnaire result was analyzed by counting the average score, while the score recording was analyzed by sequencing the score from the highest to the lowest score. Meanwhile, the qualitative analysis involves analyzing and synthesizing the obtained information (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

Data Presentation and Discussion

- **LLS used by the learners**

Based on the analyzed data, the present study found that all six LLS classified by Oxford (1990) had been used by the learners at different rate. The table below illustrates this finding.

Yuli Rachmawati
Language Learning Strategies Used by Learners in Learning Speaking (A Descriptive Study in an Exemplary Class in
One of Senior High Schools in Cimahi)

Table 1 The all learners' strategy usage by six strategy category

Strategy Category	Average (M)	SD
Memory	2,64 (med)	0,55
Cognitive	3,11 (med)	0,45
Compensation	3,48 (high)	0,55
Metacognitive	3,38 (med)	0,57
Affective	2,64 (med)	0,57
Social	2,98 (med)	0,67

From the table, it is apparent that compensation strategies are the most frequently used strategies (M=3,48). It supports Huang's finding (2009) which showed that in improving learners' speaking skills, compensation strategies were mostly used.

The nature of compensation strategies makes them suitable to be used in learning speaking. It is because as Oxford (1990) points out that these strategies allow learners to use the language despite learners' limitations in knowledge like inadequacy of grammar and vocabularies. These strategies then, help the users to use all they have to overcome limitations to make the listeners receive the message they want to deliver.

The second most frequently used strategies employed by the learners were metacognitive strategies (M=3,38). This result differs from what Oxford (1990) found in several studies in the past. He found that metacognitive strategies were used limitedly and less frequently. The present study, however, found that metacognitive strategies were used significantly. In recent years, metacognitive strategies have been used significantly by learners. This finding is supported by Cabaysa and Baetiong (2010) as well as Carson and Longhini (Cohen 2010), showing that metacognitive strategies were used more often by high school learners to improve their English speaking skills.

The third and the fourth frequently used strategies were cognitive strategies (M=3,11). and social strategies (M=2,98). In terms of the usage among the six categories of strategies, these both types of strategy were in the middle of strategy usage, not to be the most frequently used strategies or the least used ones.

At last, the least frequently used strategies employed by the learners were memory along with affective strategies (M=2,64). It showed that in learning speaking, senior high school learners who, in fact, have experienced learning speaking for some years, go beyond memorizing in their learning. Out of six levels of learning proposed by Bloom (1956), memorizing is the first level of learning. Thus, these learners investigated were not in the first level of learning. They had been able to move beyond the basic levels of memorization of vocabulary and grammar (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006 as cited in Eslami, 2008). Meanwhile, Oxford (1990) states that the less frequently used memory strategies might be due to the fact that they simply do not use these strategies or are unaware of how often they employ the strategies.

Similar to memory strategies, affective strategies were also the least frequently used ones. Though these strategies are very helpful for learners with difficulties (Oxford, 1990), the recent study shows that these strategies were not optimally used.

- **Differences in LLS used by the high and low achievers**

Based on the analyzed data, there are several differences found in terms of frequency of strategy, strategy category, and variety of strategy used by the high and the low achievers.

The analyzed data found that the high achievers used LLS (M=3,61) more frequently than the low achievers (M=3,05). This finding shows that the high achievers used harder attempt than other learners. It supports Green and Oxford (1995) who pointed out that learners having better performance in English are likely to use higher frequency of strategies. Griffith's finding (2003) also indicated that the more learners used all the strategies, the more progress they made in their language proficiency. In other words the high achievers employed the strategies more frequently than the low achievers.

Concerning the choice tendency of the strategy used, the high achievers tended to use social strategies (M=3,85). Differently, the low achievers dominantly employed metacognitive strategies (M=3,30). This finding supports

Oxford (1990) and Dornyei (2005) who stated that the choice of the LLS is influenced by learners' level of proficiency.

The high achievers also demonstrated more various strategy used than their counterpart. They used more various strategies to memorize vocabularies, relearn materials from school, practice their knowledge and skills in speaking and take care of emotional feelings and problems. Again, this finding shows that the high achievers used harder attempt than the low achievers in learning speaking.

Conclusions

To conclude, the learners investigated dominantly used compensation strategies in learning speaking. It showed that they need strategies to overcome their limitation in speaking. Among all, the high achievers generally did greater attempt than the low achievers, particularly in terms of frequency of strategy, strategy category, and variety of strategy used.

References

Cabaysa, Carissa C. and Baetiong, Lourdes R. (2010) "Language Learning Strategies of Students at Different Levels of Speaking Proficiency". *Education Quarterly*. 68, (1), 16-35 [July,7th 2012]

Chamot, Anna U., Barnhardt, S., El-Dinary, P.B., and Robbins, J. (1999). *The Learning Strategies Handbook.* New York: Longman

Creswell, John W. (2010). *Educational Research.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Dornyei, Zoltan. (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner. Individual differences in Second Language Acquisition.* New Jersey: Mahwah.

Eslami, Zohreh and Al-Buainain, Haifa. (2008). *Language Learning Strategy Use by Arabic Speaking Pre-service Teachers Learning English through Content Areas.* Paper presented in TESOL Arabia on March 2008. Available at: faculty.qu.edu.qa/drhaifa/Qatar%20PEPP%20students%20lang%20lg%20st rategies%20March%2008%20TESOL%20Arabia.ppt. (June 12th 2012)

Griffiths, Carol. (2004). *Language Learning Strategies: Theory and Research.* Occasional Paper No. 1 in New Zaeland

Huang, Yu-Fang Yvonne. (2009). *The Relationship Between College Students' Learning Strategies and Their English Speaking Proficiency. Tesis pada Department of Applied English.* [Online], Available at: http://www.sid.ir/en/VEWSSID/J_pdf/13112011640406.pdf [July 7th 2012]

Oxford, Rebecca L. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teachers Should Know. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers*

Saville, Muriel and Troike (2006). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Takac, Višnja Pavicic. (2008).*Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Foreign Language Acquisition.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.