Investigating Language Learning Strategies Used by English Language

Education Department Student

A Skripsi

Submitted to Language Education Faculty as a partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the

degree of

Sarjana Pendidikan

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2020

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Abstract

Language learning strategies is a specific action taken by learners to improve their language learning process. The use of language learning strategies can be varied based on a lot of factors, such as gender. This research aims at investigating the most frequently used language learning by the English Language Education Department students and the differences between the strategies employed by male and female students. This study utilized quantitative approach as a research design. Data were collected the data from 164 participants of English Language Department students batch 2019 of a private university in Yogyakarta. In addition, the researcher used The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning proposed by Oxford in 1990 to gather the data. The result revealed that the most frequently used language learning strategy by the students was indirect strategies (M=2.57), with metacognitive strategies (M=2.94) as the most used in sub-categories. Moreover, there was no statistical significance between male and female students in the use of LLS (t=0.141). Yet, still there are different tendency of male and female in the use of LLS. Male students mostly used direct strategies (M=2.59) based on the main category, and metacognitive (M=2.94) strategies based on the sub-categories. While female students highly performed indirect strategies (M=2.55) based on the main category, and metacognitive strategies (M=2.94) based on the sub-categories.

Keywords: language learning strategies, gender differences, learning strategies, improving English.

Background of the study

Learning English takes a lot of efforts and times. Brown (2007) stated that learning a second or foreign language is a long and complex process because learners are required to cover all the aspects of a new language such as the structure and culture of the target language. Especially for the students in Indonesia where English is considered as a foreign language (Rini, 2014). Yet, most of students in almost every non-English speaking country are struggled in learning English itself. Mohammed (2018) stated that there some difficulties that the students face when learning English such as learning grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation and accent, and their environment. That incapability was portrayed on the students who had errors in grammar, lack in vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and the students who rarely practicing English. They do not know what language learning strategies are and how to apply.

Some experts have studied language learning strategies since 1990's. Oxford (1990) stated that learning strategy as an action used by the learner in order to create their learning becomes more efficient and easier to adapt in different circumstances. According to, O'Malley and Chamot (1990), language learning strategies are the ways or tools used by the learners to remember and organize samples of the language target. It means that learning strategy is an approach chosen by the learners in order to make themselves easier to obtain a new knowledge or information. Unfortunately, according to Nurani (2015), English Education Department students in one private university on Yogyakarta have some difficulties when they want to speak, write, listen, and read. The other problem is that they do not know what language strategies that they use to apply. According to the researcher's previous experience, many students in English education department may find it difficult to identify their learning strategies to begin with. They

also have the problems to decide what strategies they belong with. They do not know what strategies that suit on them since their knowledge on language learning strategies (LLS) are low.

Some factors like age, culture, and personality traits also might affect their preferences on LLS. Both male and female students have some difficulties in learning English from speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills. Some evidences are shown by their inability to produce a good pronunciation, having sufficient vocabularies, giving response, and others. Yet, there are some differences on their excuses on learning English and the ways they learn English. Male and female students also performed different approach on their language learning process. Nevertheless, the role of gender in LLS also quite being underestimated and neglected in research for a long period of time (Michońska-Stadnik, 2014).

Thus, helping them to identify and provide such information will help them to improve their language learning process. This also contributes to the research regarding the differences in LLS based on gender differences. LLS have two main strategies and each strategy has three categories. They are direct strategies which consists of cognitive strategy, memory strategy, compensation strategy, and indirect strategies are comprised of metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and social strategy. Students might use them to learn a particular skill which needs a particular learning strategy. Thus, learning strategies should be known by the students so they will be able to match a proper strategy with the skill that they learn. Therefore, this study aims to describe what language learning strategies among the students in English Language Education Department students used the most and to explain the differences of language learning strategies used by male and female students.

Methodology

This study utilized quantitative approach. The reason why the researcher chose quantitative approach as the research method was because quantitative approach collects the data from a large number of people using instruments with pre-set questions and responses. Cresswell (2012) stated the more the number of the respondents, the more valid of the result. The researcher collected data from large number of respondents and analysed trends or tendency from the aims of this research. Another reason the researcher used quantitative as the approach in this study because the data of this study can be in form of members and used statistical analysis (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018).

The researcher conducted this research in an English Language Education Department (ELED) in a private university of Yogyakarta. ELED students in a private university of Yogyakarta were the population in this research. ELED students learn English intensively so it might differ their language learning strategies compares to other departments. The target population of this research were from students from batch 2019 with the total number of 190 students. According to Cohen , Manion, & Morrison (2011), if the total population are 190 students, the minimum sample size are 150 students. The minimum sample size of this study was based on the table of confidence level 95% for education level with confidence interval 4% (Cohen et al., 2011). In total, the researcher gathered 164 students as a sample in this research. The researcher used cluster sampling technique to gather the sample.

This research used questionnaire as the instrument of data collection method. In this study, the researcher used the structured questionnaire (close-ended) proposed by Cohen et al. (2011) as the types of the questionnaire because the researcher wanted the respondents to choose

one answer in every questionnaire item. this research, The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire (Oxford, 1990) used to investigate students' learning strategies. In total the SILL questionnaire has 50 items with 2 main categories of direct and indirect strategies.

The researcher used descriptive statistic to analyse the data from the respondents. According to Cohen et al. (2011), descriptive statistic presented exactly what the data describe, so that the researcher can analyse and interpret what these descriptions means in a study. In this study, the researcher analysed the data by using SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Science). The researcher used descriptive statistic to answer the first research question. In order to answer the second question, the researcher used inferential statistics. Inferential statistics provides the possibility for the researcher to make inferences about the wider population (Cohen et al., 2011). One of the methods in inferential statistics that used in this research was t-test because the researcher tried to discover whether there were statistically significant differences between male and female towards the use of LLS. Before the t-test was conducted, the researcher used the assumption test which were normality and homogeneity test.

Finding and Discussion

In this part, the researcher provides findings and discussions based on the data that was taken from the respondents which analysed by SPSS. The first result is the most-frequently used language learning strategies used by the students. The second result is the differences between male and female in the use of language learning strategies.

The Most-frequently Used Language Learning Strategies by English Language

Education Department's Students

In conclusion, the most used language learning strategies from the students of ELED in

one private university of Yogyakarta was Indirect strategies (M=2.57), with metacognitive

strategies (M=2.94) as the most used in sub-categories. Therefore, the students mostly used

Indirect strategies to learn English compares to the direct strategies. Students preferred to

cantering, arranging, planning, and evaluating the learning process from managing the time for

studying, setting the focus or the goal of the learning, and prioritizing the learning materials.

From direct strategies (M=2.53), the most used sub-categories were compensation strategies

(2.65) where the students guessed through the context where they learn English.

This conclusion has some similarities and differences with the research from Ho and Ng

(2016) and Hong (2009). Both of these studies shared the same result of the highest used of sub-

strategies which was metacognitive strategies as well as this study. It implies that students

English speaking country are more-likely used metacognitive strategies to improve their English.

The research from Ho and Ng (2016) agreed that indirect strategies has the highest mean of the

use of LLS (M=3.22) compare to the direct strategies (M=3.14). Yet, the margin of the mean was

not so significant which is similar to this study. Meanwhile, the research from Ho (2009) shared

different result where direct strategies has higher mean (M=2.93) compared to indirect strategies

(M.=2.62). From this, it can be concluded that there are some similarities and differences in non-

English speaking countries towards the use of LLS. The differences of the result might be

affected by the student's background, personality, age, and the gender itself.

The Differences of Language Learning Strategies Based on Gender Differences

There is no statistically significant difference between male and female students' in the use of language learning strategies. Thus, students' gender may not cause the students' language learning strategies, meaning that students' gender may not be the factors influencing the use of language learning strategies. But still there are different tendency between male and female in the use of LLS. Male students performed LLS slightly higher than female students, yet it does not necessarily mean male students are more frequent in the use of LLS compares to female students since the margin of mean is very close (0.067).

This statement also supports the result of t-test which there is no statistical significance between male and female in the use of LLS. This result is in line with the result from Hong (2009) where he found no significance in the use of overall LLS based on gender differences. While Ho and Ng (2016) found that there was statistical significance in their t-test of male and female in the use of LLS with female perform higher use of LLS with margin of the means was 0.08. It means that the research from of different countries might affect the result of the overall use of LLS based on gender differences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, The major topic of this research focus on the theory of language learning strategies, with the purposes of this research were to investigate the most-frequent used language learning strategies by the students and to find out what are the differences between male and female in the use of language learning strategies in ELED of one private university in Yogyakarta. Based on the results and discussion above, it can be stated that the most frequently used language learning strategy by the students is indirect strategies (M=2.57 "Often Category")

, with metacognitive (M=2.94 "Often Category") strategies as the most used in sub-categories followed by compensation strategies (M=2.65 "Often Category"), cognitive strategies (M=2.50 "Often Category"), memory strategies (M=2.43) "Rare Category", affective strategies (M=2.43 "Rare Category"), and social strategies (M=2.33 "Rare Category").

In the differences between male and female in the use of language learning strategy, there are no statistical significance between male and female students in the use of LLS (ρ=0.658, ρ>0.05). Yet, still there are different tendency of male and female in the use of LLS. Male students mostly used direct strategies (M=2.594 "Often Category") based on the main category compares to indirect strategies (M=2.589 "Often Category"), and metacognitive strategies (M=2.94 "Often Category") based on the sub-categories. While female students highly performed indirect strategies (M=2.55 "Often Category") based on the main category compares to direct strategies (M=2.50 "Often Category"), and metacognitive strategies (M=2.94 "Often Category") based on the sub-categories.

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