

ENGLISH LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY THE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN SOLVING THEIR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

ELLI MARLIANA¹⁾, MARLISA²⁾

STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa

ellilzh1981@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the learning strategies used by students majoring in English Education in Overcoming Learning at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa. The purpose of this study was to determine the strategies applied and the difficulties faced by fourth semester students majoring in English education. This research is qualitative research. Researchers used two instruments to obtain the required data, namely: observation and interviews. Based on the data obtained from the second instrument used, the following findings were obtained. First, in the process of learning English, students with high predicate also experience learning difficulties (the most dominant learning difficulty faced when learning English were the limitation of vocabulary, differences in speakers' accent, grammar, and pronunciation respectively). Second, successful students use not only single learning strategies but they use mixed learning strategies including memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

Kata kunci: *learning strategies, learning difficulties.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berfokus pada strategi pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dalam mengatasi kesulitan belajar di STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui strategi yang diterapkan dan kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa semester empat di jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan (1) kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris di STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, dan (2) Strategi yang digunakan mahasiswa jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dalam mengatasi kesulitan belajar di STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif. Peneliti menggunakan dua instrument untuk memperoleh data yang dibutuhkan yaitu: observasi dan wawancara. Berdasarkan data yang diperoleh dari kedua instrumen yang digunakan, diperoleh hasil temuan sebagai berikut: (1) dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, siswa yang berpredikat tinggi juga mengalami kesulitan belajar. Kesulitan yang paling dominan dihadapi ketika belajar bahasa Inggris yang pertama adalah keterbatasan kosakata, perbedaan aksen penutur, tata bahasa dan yang terakhir adalah pengucapan. (2) Siswa yang berhasil tidak hanya menggunakan strategi pembelajaran tunggal tetapi mereka menggunakan strategi pembelajaran campuran termasuk memori, kognitif, kompensasi, metakognitif, afektif dan strategi sosial.

Kata kunci: *strategi belajar, kesulitan belajar.*

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the international languages around the world. In some countries, such as The United States, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Ireland, English is the first language used (Kusuma, 2018). However, in Indonesia, English holds a status as a foreign language. This language is not used informally and formally, for example, as a language of instruction in education sector, as everyday language in community and government sector; this condition refers to English used as a foreign language (Rintaningrum, 2015).

Since there has been a rapid development of science and technology, in which this language is used in it, people should prepare themselves to master English (speaking, writing, listening and reading skills). Putri (2018) believes that these skills would ease people to find a job, communicate and absorb a new insight. Realizing the importance of English, Indonesian government places English as a compulsory subject from high school to tertiary level around Indonesia. Although English has been taught from high school as a compulsory subject to tertiary level

as a general compulsory subject, learning English is still not easy. This is in line with the idea of Sari and Lestari (2019) who argue that English is still difficult to learn even it is an international language that has been studied in the world of education. The current researcher believes that there might be some reasons for this situation. First, the language learners must memorize not only great amounts of vocabulary, but also memorize the grammar rules. Second, the difference between the native language and the new language in terms of how they are pronounced. The last reason could be the English curriculum in Indonesia.

Mastering English means mastering the whole skills namely reading, speaking, listening and writing. Supina (2018) believes that basic English skills that should be mastered are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The thing that should be considered by the language learners is strategies used to understand it because each person has a different level of understanding. In general, every student has a different character, method, and understanding as in the concept of multiple intelligence (Megawati, 2016).

Formulation of the Problems

This study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the difficulties encountered by students in English education department at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa?
2. What are the strategies used by the Students in English Education Department in Solving Their Learning Difficulties at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa?

Research Aims and Significance

The aims of the study were as follow:

1. To know the difficulties encountered by the students in English education department at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa
2. To analyze the strategies used by the Students in English education department in solving their learning difficulties at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa.

The results of this study are expected to give some benefits:

1. Teachers or educator
Teachers or lecturers can better know what difficulties students face when learning English. They can even implement various learning strategies and provide teaching materials that suit the needs of students. They may practice the concept and understanding related to learning strategy for understanding the learners better.
2. Students
Learners or students can understand kinds of learning strategies in learning English in order to accelerate and enhance their comprehension. Student may practice the concept for understanding learning English to get satisfaction result.
3. Other researchers
It is as input or comparison of different type of learning strategies in learning English as a foreign language. Other researchers may or choose variety of strategies to learn and develop, explore, criticize, and examine other aspects related to the kinds of learning strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the problem that have been formulated in this research the researchers used qualitative method. Qualitative method is used to obtain in-depth data so that the research results are more meaningful. Research and data collection are carried out in natural conditions, because the researcher does not affect the object of research. Moleong (2007) define qualitative method is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the observed research object. The techniques used in the data collection in this research are observation and interview. The observation data can be in the form of a description of attitudes, behavior, actions, and overall, in the form of interactions between humans. An interview is an activity carried out between two or more people consisting of a interviewer and a resource person. In this research, the researchers used three techniques to analyze. Miles and Huberman (1994) mention flow analysis models as one of qualitative descriptive data analysis method. The researchers divided flow analysis models into three low activities which used by the current researcher in this research. Those analysis components are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Learning Difficulties and Learning Strategy, Types Difficulties in Learning Learning, Classification of Learning Strategies.

Definition of Learning Difficulties

Each language learner might not have the same experience as they encounter difficulties in learning process. The difficulties in learning process could hinder the learners in achieving satisfying academic score. According to Andika (2009, p.12), learning difficulties are a condition in the teaching and learning process where there are certain obstacles that result in low learning outcomes achieved by students. This is in line with Ayu and Viora (2017, p, 1131) who define difficulty as a condition in the learning process which is characterized by certain obstacles to achieving learning goals. It should be noted that recognizing the learners' difficulties is a must as it would help the teachers in finding out the causes of these difficulties. Once the difficulties and the causes are known, possible solutions could be then offered.

Difficulties in Language Learning

It is undoubtable that teaching English as a foreign language is difficult. There are many areas/aspects and language skills in which target language learners encounter difficulties in learning English. Khan (2011) found several learning difficulties confront by students in language learning. The following are some of them:

1. **Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the first and the foremost aspect of the target language in which the learners face difficult. In Khan's research, Some Saudi learners' difficulties in discriminating the sounds of English words. In Indonesia, one among several familiar problems face by English language learners is pronunciation (Sholeh and Muhaji, 2015).

2. **Grammar**

Grammar is important, especially in the process of using language both in written and spoken form. English learning will be more effective when students understand. In Khan's research, students experienced difficulties in grammar such as doubling of subject, articles, double prepositions and tenses. Therefore, grammar will help learners to understand the meaning of the sentence. In addition, grammar will learners get the point of the others means can be form of utterances or paragraphs (Ameliani, 2019).

3. **Vocabulary**

According to Surmanov and Azimova (2020), state knowledge of vocabulary is considered an important tool for second language learners, because when they have limited vocabulary, it could hinder these students to succeed in communication.

Definition of learning strategy

Conscious thoughts and actions taken by students to achieve learning objectives called learning strategies (Chamot, 2004). Meanwhile, Learning strategies are conscious actions taken by students to achieve goals in the learning process (Fauzia, 2018).

From the explanation above, it can be summarized that the language learning strategy is the way a student achieves goals in learning process and leaning strategies is all action like step, behavior, method, thought used by language learner to master a language.

Classification of learning strategies

There are several previous researchers who classify learning strategies in several parts. These researchers have different opinion on classifying it. The following discussion discusses about different beliefs of learning strategies classification. Among others are:

O'malley and Chamot (1990) divide learning strategies into three types, Meta cognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies.

1. **Metacognitive strategy**

This strategy consists of the learning process, planning lessons, monitoring understanding or production as it progresses and self-evaluating after learning activities are completed.

2. **Cognitive strategy**

This strategy involves direct learning process about the learning material itself and have limited specific learning task. The example of this strategy is repetition and making conclusion.

3. **Socio-Affective strategy**

This strategy is presented in "self-talk" focus on how to regulate emotional, behavioral and evaluate learning themselves, in the learning process.

Meanwhile Oxford (1989) classified language learning strategies into metacognitive, affective, social, memory, cognitive, and compensatory strategies.

1. **Metacognitive Strategy**
Metacognitive strategy allows learners to control their cognitive to activate the learning process. This strategy consists of students' learning, organizing and planning students' learning.
2. **Affective Strategy**
Affective strategy helps students to manage their emotions, motivations, and attitudes towards the learning process. This strategy consists of lowering emotional stress, and encouraging themselves.
3. **Social Strategy**
This strategy facilitates language learning through interaction with other people.
4. **Memory strategy**
Memory strategy involves mental processes for storing new information in memory. This strategy has categories such as grouping, imagery, and structured review to get information into memory and to recall it when needed.
5. **Cognitive Strategy**
This strategy is a conscious way of processing the target language. It involves practicing naturalistically, analyzing contrastively, and summarizing.
6. **Compensation Strategy**
Compensation strategy supports learners to use language in speaking like guessing meanings intelligently and using synonyms or other production tricks when the precise expression is unknown.

Learning difficulties encountered by the students in English education department at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa

Through the interview and observations stage, the researchers investigated the difficulties encountered by students in English education department, and the strategies applied by the students. Based on the result of findings, the difficulties describe as follows:

a. Vocabulary

Limited vocabulary is one of the factors in mastering English. This difficulty is the dominant trend faced by students when learning English. This is based on the results of interviews where students experienced limited vocabulary when they want to elaborate the ideas. This finding is in line with the results that have been found by researchers during observation activities. These students seem silent for a moment when speaking English. Indeed, they look quite nervous when speaking, and there are also students who look silent but have difficulty in vocabulary. According to Alqahtani (2015) state that Mastery of vocabulary is needed to express idea, and important role in language skills. Vocabulary is a noteworthy thing to be mastered by language learners.

b. Native Speakers' Accents

Based on interview and observation activity, this is the second trend of difficulties faced by students when learning English, especially in listening class where students sometimes found it difficult to understand the essence of the conversations made by the speaker. This is because speakers who use English have different accents, British and American. Furthermore, the speaker sometimes speaks fast and it made the students difficult to catch what the speaker said. This is evidenced when several students who were participants in this study repeated several times the audio in English to be able to know or understand what the speaker said. According to Goh (1999) in Meilinda and Yuliah (2019) the speaker's accent is very crucial in understanding listening. Unfamiliar accents will make it difficult for learners to understand the conversation.

c. Grammar

Based on the results of interview, grammar is the third trend in learning difficulties to mastering English. There are two students have difficulties in grammar. It cannot be denied that students have difficulty when using grammar in learning English. Grammar is one of the important aspects in English that students should consider when use English. This sometimes makes students feel confused because they have to memorize many structures.

Based on the results of observations, there were two students who received assignments from the lecturer which related to the structure or grammar the researcher saw that the students look confused and like frowning. In some situations, students repeat the previous words. This is supported by Abdu and Nagaratnam (2011) Students usually get confused when they want to make sentence grammatically.

d. Pronunciation

Based on the findings, pronunciation is the last position in the difficulty of learning English. In this case, there was only one participant who had difficulty in pronunciation. In addition, based on the results of interviews, students felt confused whether the pronunciation of the words spoken was correct or not. This is supported by the observation that students seem hesitant and there is a vocabulary that is mispronounced like “famous” when speaking English. Differences in sound pronunciation result in frequent mistakes in pronouncing consonants and vowels using pronunciation in Indonesian. This is a difficulty that is often faced by students when they have difficulty in pronunciation (Sholeh and Muhaji, 2015).

From some of the problems encounter by students when learning English, it can be concluded that students who are not seen or judged to have difficulties in learning do not necessarily face real difficulties. In addition, there are some similarities and differences in learning difficulties faced by students and learning strategies applied by student.

Strategies used by the Students in English Education Department in Solving Their Learning Difficulties at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa

There are some strategies applied by 4th semester students of class A and B of the English education department to overcome learning difficulties encountered. Notwithstanding students having high predicate in the class, they simply encounter difficulties in learning English. The positive point is they have certain strategies to overcome obstacles in learning English. Students applied 6 strategies to be able to overcome learning difficulties. The first strategy is metacognitive. This strategy involves the aspect of planning, monitoring and evaluating in language learning strategies. The second strategy is affective in which the students try to lowering emotional stress, and encouraging themselves. The third strategy is social which is working together between students and their peers or with other people to achieve learning goals. The fourth strategy is memory; this strategy applied by students by utilizing previous knowledge and learning experiences. The fifth strategy is cognitive; this strategy can take the form of various activities, one of which is practicing using the target language you want to master. The last strategy is companion; this strategy commonly used to overcome the limitations, for example with body movement, and choosing a topic about themself because they try to avoid difficult topics.

The findings in this research are similar to the result found by Khan (2011) where the language learners find difficulties in areas of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. In this study also found other difficulties such as difficulties in native speakers’ accents. In terms of strategies, the participants in this research applied strategies that are applied in Oxford (1989) research. This expert classifies language learning strategies into metacognitive, affective, social, memory, cognitive, and compensatory strategies. The students in English education department of STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa applied almost all the learning strategies to solve their difficulties in learning English.

CLOSING

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and findings in the previous chapter, it can be summarized that in the process of learning English, even students with high predicate still have learning difficulties. Four dominant learning difficulties faced by the students in learning English is vocabulary, differences native speakers’ accents, grammar and pronunciation. Additionally, the successful students do not only used single learning strategy but they used mixed learning strategies namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategy. Indeed, cognitive strategy becomes the learning strategy which tends to be dominantly used by successful students in English Education Department at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, followed by social strategy, affective, metacognitive, memory and compensation strategy based on frequency of usage. Therefore, it can be assumed that language learning strategy is one of the requirements of every student to become success in language learning. To enhance students’ learning strategy, they are required to practice more. Moreover, students also need to acknowledge their learning strategy to make the learning process effective.

Recomendation

The result of this research can be used by others as the references for using strategies in language learning. Since the subject of this research was categorized as good in language learning, other students can apply the strategies which have been described from the result before. In applying strategies, there is no guaranteed to follow

the steps for every situation. It depends on students' flexibility in the way their learning activities. For the further researcher that will conduct at the same field, they can develop this research and use it as the reference.

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