

The profile of Sport Science Students' Language Learning Strategies

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Abstract

Agar memperoleh hasil yang maksimal dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, para mahasiswa Ilmu Keolahragaan harus dapat memaksimalkan Strategi Belajar Bahasa (Language learning strategies) sesuai dengan karakter masing-masing. Strategi merupakan langkah-langkah yang diambil oleh pelajar untuk mengontrol dan meningkatkan kualitas belajar bahasanya agar dapat meningkatkan kompetensi kebahasaan. Penelitian ini menyajikan informasi tentang strategi belajar mahasiswa semester 1 yang memprogram mata kuliah Bahasa Inggris dengan menggunakan instrument kuesioner SILL versi 7.0.

Keywords: language learning, SILL

Introduction

English is one of important subjects in college for Sport Science Students. They need to learn English because it is one of the tools to increase their ability. There are many materials related to sport which are exposed in English, the latest news, and many things. Acquiring English enables them to get many information about sport. In a particular situation, their ability to communicate in English is also needed when they become athletes and join competition around the world. They have to be able to communicate with foreign athletes, coaches, and sport practitioners.

In addition, English mastery is one of the demands lately. There are many companies which require their employees to have highly functional language skills to be able to perform their business efficiently. Many jobs require the applicants to be fluent in English. Thus, it is important that Sport Science Students learn English as a foreign language more quickly and efficiently.

In order to be successful in language learning, the students need to take responsibility for their own learning (Rubin & Thompson, 1982: 20). The term learner autonomy has emerged from this assumption. One of the ways to enhance learner autonomy is through the

use of language learning strategies (LLS). Language learning strategies (LLS) is seen as an effective and workable component of the language learning process because it accounts individual differences that influence language learning process.

Language learning strategies are steps taken by second and foreign language learners to control and improve their own language learning (Oxford, 1994: 8). Strategies are especially important because they are tools for developing language competence and achieving language learning. These are related to aspects of learning and use of information, as well as to the changed nature of learning when learning is enhanced by strategies. It reflects the intent of the learner and the specific actions a learner can take.

Through extensive review of the literature, Oxford developed a language learning strategy scheme that is not only the most appreciated and used so far (Gürsoy, 2010: 166), but also comprehensive and practical (Brown, 2007: 131). Oxford developed one of the most widely accepted classification taxonomies in the language learning area. The categories are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The profile of the students' language learning strategies will be described in detail below.

Methodology

This is a descriptive study which intends to describe language learning strategies which are used by Sport Science Students. They were 1st semester students who enrolled English 1 in academic year of 2012/2013. There were approximately 152 students as the population of the study who received the questionnaire. The subjects who answered all of the statements in the questionnaire completely were taken as the sample. Thus, there were 104 students. The instrument which was used in this study is Oxford's (1990) 50-items the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 which is the version for speakers of other languages learning English. It is a self-scoring survey which contains

statements to which learners respond on a 5-point Likert scale to report how often they use each strategy. The higher number indicated a more frequent use of the strategy concerned. A mean score in the range above 3.5 on all SILL items is considered to reflect high use of a given strategy, 2.5 to 3.4 indicates medium use, and below 2.4 shows low use of a strategy.

Discussion

The finding showed that the students used a number of learning strategies in English learning. In other words, they did not rely on single strategy. This finding is in line with what Chamot and Kupper say that language learners tend to use strategies that work simultaneously dependent on the requirements of language task (1989: 14). To accomplish certain task, they employ more strategies simultaneously. However, the students had some preference in the use of learning strategies, which can be seen from the degree of frequencies of the employed strategies. The means of the six categories of learning strategies employed by the students are shown in the Table, in a rank order.

The rank order of Learning Strategies Usage

Category	Lowest	Highest	Mean	SD
Affective	1.7	4.7	3.29	.63
Metacognitive	1.3	4.7	3.28	.69
Compensation	1.3	4.8	2.95	.66
Cognitive	1.4	4.4	2.77	.54
Social	1.3	4.3	2.72	.66
Memory	1.2	4.0	2.63	.58
Overall Learning Strategies	1.5	4.0	2.92	.48

The Table shows that the most frequently used strategy is Affective, followed by Metacognitive, Compensation, Cognitive, Social, and Memory Strategy as the least-used.

The mean score of each strategy only falls in the medium use level, none of them belongs to high level as the mean do not show score more than 3.50. As the result, the mean of overall strategies is 2.92, meaning that the students used strategies as a whole at a medium use level. It means that the students apply almost all categories in relatively the same frequencies. The highest mean is only 3.29, lies on affective category, and still belongs to medium range.

Each category will be described as follows:

1. Memory Strategies

Memory strategies are specific devices (mnemonics) used by learners to make mental linkages that will allow new information, most often vocabulary, to enter and remain in long-term memory. Oxford (1990: 39) stated that though some teachers think vocabulary is easy, language learners have a serious problem remembering the large amounts of vocabulary necessary to achieve fluency. She further stated that memory strategies help language learners to cope with this difficulty. They enable learners to store verbal material and then retrieve it when needed for communication. In addition, the memory strategy of structured reviewing helps move information from the “fact level” to the “skill level”, where knowledge is more procedural and automatic. When information has reached the skill level, it is more easily retrieved and less easily lost after a period of disuse.

Examples of memory strategies are to make associations with what has already been learned, to draw pictures to help remember new words, and to repeatedly pronounce or write new words in order to remember them. Although memory strategies could easily be viewed as cognitive strategies, their purpose is limited to memorization and involves mostly surface processing. Memory strategies include four groups; creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing actions (Oxford, 1990: 38-39).

Memory Strategies' Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.2	2.4	46	44%
Medium	2.6	3.4	52	50%
High	3.7	4.0	6	6%
Total			104	100%

As the Table reveals, memory strategies were the least used by the students. Forty-four percent of the participant is reported as low user of memory strategies, with only 6% as high; and the rest, 50% is reported as medium. In this study, some of the strategies which were used more frequently by the students included; thinking of the relationship between what they already know and new things they learn in English (34.6%), using new English words in a sentence so they can remember them (34.7%), and reviewing English lessons (31.7%).

Memory strategy was the least used strategy among the students in this study. One reason for this finding might have been that some of the types of memory strategies on the SILL may not have been considered appropriate for adult learners, in this case the participants in this study. For example, physically acting out new English words or making up rhymes, may be strategies preferred by young learners.

Yet, it is rather surprising since large number of the students agreed that the most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary and grammar which used to involved memorization. The findings showed that they tend to use a limited inventory of memory strategies.

2. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies help learners process and use the language for learning or for accomplishing a task involving the language, e.g., watch TV in English and listen to radio/CDs in English. Compared with memory strategies, the purpose of cognitive strategies is not simply memorization but instead deeper processing and use of the language. These strategies are varied, ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. With all their variety, cognitive strategies have a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner (Oxford, 1990: 43).

Cognitive Strategies Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.4	2.4	25	24%
Medium	2.5	3.4	73	70%
High	3.6	4.4	6	6%
Total			104	100%

As seen in the Table, there is only 6% of students which is reported as high, 70% is medium, and 24% is low. Some of the popular cognitive strategies used by the students were; saying or writing new English words several times (39.5%), practicing the sounds of English (56.7%), watching English language television shows spoken in English or going to movies spoken in English (57.7%), and looking for words in their own languages that are similar to new words in English (41.4%).

This strategy involved repeating, analyzing, reasoning, and summarizing information. The majority of the students reported that they practice the sounds of

English and watch English language television shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English. This is actually as implementation toward their beliefs on learning and communication strategies. Their willingness to practice English outside the classroom was done in such a way.

Oxford (1990: 43) emphasized that cognitive strategies are typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners and essential in learning a new language because these strategies not only require and but also allow for direct and immediate manipulation or use of input. However, cognitive strategies were only the fourth preferred strategies for the students. Even though they seek the opportunities to practice using English, they do not immediately use all of the strategies. They likely tend to avoid strategies which are experienced in their many years of formal language learning at the class, such as reading text books in English, writing reports in English, summarizing, and finding patterns.

3. Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. Compensation strategies are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and vocabulary when language learners are listening, reading, speaking, or writing. This strategy helps learners avoid being stuck in inability to perform a certain task due to limited knowledge by doing a particular thing as compensation. Compensation occurs not just in understanding the new language but also in producing it. Compensation strategies allow learners to produce spoken or written expressions in the new language without complete knowledge (e.g., if a learner does not know a certain word, s/he will use the description of the word or synonym) (Oxford, 1990: 47-48).

Compensation Strategies' Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.3	2.3	21	20%
Medium	2.5	3.3	58	56%
High	3.5	4.8	25	24%
Total			104	100%

Regarding compensation strategies, 24% of the students is high user, 56% is medium, and 20% is low. Some of the compensatory strategies which were frequently used are; trying to understand unfamiliar English words by making guesses (68.2%) and making up new words if they do not know the right ones in English (37.5%).

The majority of students preferred to make guesses and make up new words if they cannot find the right ones in English. The preference of these types of strategies may indicate their lack of language competence and knowledge to process information. The fact that these strategies were in the third position revealed that many language learners were reported to use this strategy frequently. This may indicate their necessity to cope with various interactional situations in their English class and suggest that many language learners seem to feel comfortable about balancing their limited knowledge of a target language, for example, by making guesses. It reflects their effort to make up their limited knowledge of English in such a way in order to be able to participate in the learning activities.

4. Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive means beyond, beside, or with the cognitive. Metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learner to coordinate their own learning process. Metacognitive strategies are essential for successful language learning in order to regain the learners' focus which are often overwhelmed by many new things such as unfamiliar vocabulary, confusing rules, different writing systems, and etc. By the conscious use of metacognitive strategies, learners can arrange and plan their language learning in an efficient, effective way (Oxford, 1990: 136).

Metacognitive Strategies' Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.3	2.4	9	8.7%
Medium	2.6	3.4	56	53.8%
High	3.6	4.7	39	37.5%
Total			104	100%

Concerning metacognitive strategies, it shows that more than half of the students (53.8%) is medium user of metacognitive strategy, more than one-third (37.5%) is high user, and the rest (8.7%) is low user. Specifically, they responded that they try to find as many ways as they can to use their English (48.1%), notice their English mistakes and use that information to help them do better (71.1%), pay attention when someone is speaking English (68.3%), try to find out how to be a better learner of English (71.2%), look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English (48%).

Metacognitive Strategy is the second most preferred strategy for the students. Metacognitive Strategy provides a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process. It includes the planning, organizing, evaluation, and monitoring of one's own language learning (Oxford, 1990: 136). Many students reported that they notice their English mistakes and use that information to help them do better, pay attention when someone is speaking English, and try to find out how to be a better learner of English.

The strategies are considered important strategies for language learners, where they do not have much exposure to be easily pick up the target language unconsciously. Through the conscious attention to language learning process, they can manage their own learning.

5. Affective strategies

Affective strategies help the learner deal with his or her own emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values while (or about) learning English. The affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure. Good language learners are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning. Negative feelings can stunt progress, even for the rare learner who fully understands all the technical aspects of how to learn a new language. On the other hand, positive emotions and attitudes can make language learning far more effective and enjoyable. Examples of such strategies are try to relax when feeling anxious about learning and reward oneself for succeeding.

Affective Strategies' Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.7	2.3	7	7%
Medium	2.5	3.3	50	48%
High	3.5	4.7	47	45%
Total			104	100%

It involves awareness of emotions and in ability to regulate feelings and anxieties that may occur during language learning. Example of this includes being aware of their tension or nervousness when using or studying English, trying to be relax whenever they feel afraid of using English, rewarding or treating themselves when doing well in English, and encouraging themselves to speak English even when they feel afraid of making a mistake.

The Table reports that a large number of students (45%) is high user, 48% is medium, and 7% is low. Specifically, the students responded that they try to relax whenever they feel afraid of using English (61.6%), encourage themselves to speak English even when they feel afraid of making a mistake (64.5%), give themselves a reward or treat when they do well in English (53.8%), notice if they are tense or nervous when they are studying or using English (49.1%). The high usage of the strategy by the students placed this strategy as the most preferred strategy.

6. Social strategies

Social strategies refer to how learners interact with other people in the context of learning languages and related culture. This strategy helps learner learn the target

language and culture through interaction with others. Social strategies include, among others, ask someone to speak slowly, practice with others and show interest in learning about the culture of English-speaking countries.

Social Strategies' Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.3	2.3	31	29.8%
Medium	2.5	3.3	56	53.8%
High	3.5	4.3	17	16.4%
Total			104	100%

In the case of social strategies, there is only 16.4% students which reported as high user, 53.8% as medium, and the rest 29.8% as low user. The strategy which is frequently used is, they ask the other person to slow down or say it again if they do not understand something in English (63.5%).

The students reported social strategies as the second least-used strategies. Social strategies which tend to involve interactive learning with native speakers or other people such as practicing English with native English speakers, asking for help from English speakers, learning about the culture of English speakers; needs the opportunities to practice English with native speakers in everyday life. Such environment is not available for the participants in this current study. The learning contexts usually offer few or no opportunities to practice English with native speakers.

The Overall SILL Profile

The Overall SILL Profile

Profile	Lowest	Highest	Total	
			Number of students	%
Low	1.5	2.4	17	16%
Medium	2.5	3.4	75	72%
High	3.5	4.0	12	12%
Total			104	100%

Based on their overall mean scores and frequency of strategy which is used, 16% had fairly low use; 72% reported as medium; and only 12% reported as high.

Conclusion

The students used a number of learning strategies in English learning. Out of the six strategy categories, affective and metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used categories for the students, while the memory strategy was the least preferred. The most frequent use of affective strategy may imply that they have efforts to try to relax even though they are uncertain about their English. Metacognitive strategies as the second-most used means that the students have ability to regulate their own learning. Meanwhile, the least frequent use of memory strategy could be due to the learners' avoidance or low awareness of the strategy.

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