



The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies used by Vocational Students and Level of Proficiency

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Abstract*

The vocational college students instructed by the teacher to use self-directed learning in learning English outside classroom or during the internship. Due to the requirement of graduation which they should pass the TOEFL test after the internship. The self-directed learning is exercised by managing students' Language Learning Strategies (LLS) which known could improve language proficiency. Hereby, this study identifies: (1) the language learning strategy used by vocational college learners based on high and low proficient, (2) the relationship between language learning strategy and English proficiency of high proficient, (3) the relationship between language learning strategy and English proficiency of high proficient. The participant of this study is 52 students of Politeknik Kota Malang which willing to complete the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) and done the TOEFL test. This study employed correlational research design to identify the relationship between variables which is multiple regression analysis employed in this study. There are six strategies of language learning strategies by Oxford (1990) as the independent variables (predictors) and English proficiency (criterion) as the dependent variable. The result showed that Although, language learning strategy cannot simultaneously predict the English proficiency of high proficient and low proficient, compensation strategy reported as high frequently used by high proficient learners. While metacognitive strategies reported used by low proficient learners.

1. Introduction

The English subject formally learned at the primary level was no longer compulsory in 2014 which resulted in the decrease of the proportion of English subject to be learned at school. In addition, the proportion of learning English for the students at the tertiary level was only two or three times per week. The limited time of learning English in classroom requires learners to learn by themselves outside classroom setting. Therefore, learners should be aware of their responsibility to maximize their English learning from their own efforts. A good learner was found to apply strategy within proactive and creative efforts in improving their own learning (Dornyei, 2015).

English learning in the university experience paradigm from teacher centered learning to students centered learning. Sabilah et al (2018) state that the instruction which *follow the childs' lead* and giving *respond* give more chance to the students to comprehend the materials rather than using classical techniques. Therefore, the teacher should lead learners to build self-directed learning. Self-directed learning itself reflects learners' ability or skill to be initiative in setting their own learning goals and arranging the English learning (Min and Pey, 2010). It is important for the teacher to guide learners to exercise the self-directed learning. The tool used by learners in practicing the self-directed learning is language learning strategy (Min and Pey, 2010).

Furthermore, language learning strategies implemented and applied by the teacher for students can give an impact to the effectiveness of teaching and learning a language in class and obtain learners' achievement in English proficiency. Saliu (2013) also stated that the teacher should be aware to the learner's needs in the English course. Therefore, there should be a harmony between the learner strategy in learning a language with the instruction and content or materials from the teacher. Based on research by Lestari et al (2017) cognitive and affective factors in learning language in this case is speaking, affecting the method of ASRI (Aims, Sequence, Role play and Interaction) in communication which could improve the students ability. However, Dabaghi and Akvan, (2014) that the process of building the language learning's material and the material development should be started with an investigation about the learner's language learning strategies and make the learning more learner-centered.

The present study is situated in one of the vocational colleges in Indonesia, namely Malang State Polytechnics or popularly known as Politeknik Kota Malang (POLTEKOM). One of its visions is to produce graduates with competence in English as an instrument to compete in the global world. From the curriculum of POLTEKOM, the English course is compulsory from the first to four semesters. The English materials focus on TOEFL and TOEIC materials, and supplementary applicative materials in English focus on technical English related to certain study program being taught.

Therefore, students are required to complete certain TOEFL or TOEIC equivalent test every semester from the first to the fourth semesters. The teacher leads learners to build self-directed learning. Self-directed learning itself reflects learners' ability or skill to be initiative in setting their own learning goals and arranging the English learning (Min and Pey, 2010). After that, the students should take internship or industrial work training (Praktek Kerja Industri /PRAKERIN) in two semesters. Meanwhile, the students consistently learn the English subject outside the classroom since after the PRAKERIN they should pass the TOEFL test as the requirement before they graduate. Hereby, the students should continuously and independently maintain learning English language on their own space in the last two semesters throughout PRAKERIN. Thus, in this case is important to practically use the self-directed learning which Language Learning Strategy (LLS) as the main tool in maintaining the language learning (Min and Pey, 2010).

Based on that background of the study, the researchers are intended to found (1) the language learning strategy used by vocational college learners based on high and low proficient, (2) the relationship between language learning strategy and English proficiency of high proficient, (3) the relationship between language learning strategy and English proficiency of low proficient.

2. Research Methods

In this regards, this study in nature employed a quantitative approach as the deductive research aimed to test the hypothesis or hypotheses. Based on Ary et al (2006), quantitative is the measurement of the numerical data used to test the hypothesis in systematic ways. The quantitative research classifies the research based on the purpose in which this study investigates the relationship between two or more variables and determined whether or not there is correlation between variables, therefore, correlational research design employed in this research. In more detail, the LLS variables overall consist of more than two variables: 1) memory strategies, 2) cognitive strategies, 3) compensation strategies, 4) metacognitive strategies, 5) affective strategies, 6) social strategies. Meanwhile, dependent variable is only English proficiency.

The population of this study was sixth semester students consisting 154 students from Diploma three programs: telecommunication engineering, informatics engineering, and mechatronics engineering in Malang State Polytechnics (Politeknik Kota Malang/POLTEKOM). Meanwhile, there were some criteria to be included in this study, such as sixth semester students who completed the English course, the students who voluntarily participated in this study by completing SILL questionnaire, and those who have done the TOEFL test. Thus, the total of participants (sample) in this study who met the criteria as set out above were 52 students.

There were two instruments in this research consisted of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 by Oxford (1990), and TOEFL test. In more details, SILL was used to measure the strategies used by learner, and TOEFL test was to measure L2 proficiency. In this research the items of Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) instruments were valid since there were no items deleted and the significant of all the items were under 0.05 and the reliability of the SILL was Cronbach's Alpha was .96. This demonstrated that the instrument used in this study had high reliability and the results of this study can be trusted and reliable. The TOEFL test was assumed to be reliable as it has been widely used as instrument in other previous studies.

The data collection of the main study was conducted during the middle of July until early August 2019. The researcher contacted the lecturers to arrange the schedule. The arrangements were made for three things: asking permission for an agreement purpose to fill the questionnaire, explaining about the purpose of the survey, and giving the due date to accomplish the questionnaires. In the middle of August until the early October 2019 the researcher collected the TOEFL score and continued to the next step of the research, that is conducting the data analysis.

The procedures of analysis are descriptive statistic and inferential statistic. In descriptive statistics, the researcher categorizes the LLS used by the learners based on the EFL proficiency. Furthermore, in inferential statistic, the researcher examines the correlation between variables being investigated. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed and measured with multiple regression analysis. The researcher identified the result of multiple regression analysis through measurements. First, the researcher examined Coefficient Correlation (R) as the indexes of the association of independent variables with dependent variable, and the square multiple regressions (R^2) was seen as the indicator of how well the dependent variable was determined by independent variable (s). Second, the researcher measured the simultaneous correlation (F) of LLS to English proficiency to answer the research hypotheses. Third, the researcher measured the partial (t) to see the partial effect of every LLS's to English proficiency.

3. Discussions

Based on general picture of descriptive statistics of LLS profile across participants, this study was focused more details in LLS profile by high proficient learners and also low proficient

learners. The high proficient learners were defined in this study for the participants who got the TOEFL score between 378 and 460. The TOEFL score in this category when referring to the CEFR is included in B1 category. The total number of the participants with high proficiency was 22 out of 52 participants.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for The LLS use by high proficient learners

Category of language learning strategies	Rank	Mean	SD
Compensation strategies (Com)	1	3.56	0.68
Metacognitive strategies (Mc)	2	3.46	0.70
Social strategies (S)	3	3.37	0.79
Cognitive strategies (Cog)	4	3.35	0.49
Affective strategies(A)	5	3.25	0.82
Memory strategies (M)	6	3.15	0.60

Based on the table 1, there were six kinds of LLS use employed by learners with high English proficiency. Generally, the third most LLS used by the high proficient learners were compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies and social strategies. Cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and memory strategies were the least used strategies in this context. As stated in chapter two, the compensation strategy is classified in direct strategy while metacognitive strategies and social strategies are included in indirect strategy. In this situation, high proficient learners used compensation strategies by guessing the linguistics clues and switching into second language mother tongue with gesture or using synonymy. Meanwhile, the use of metacognitive strategies reflected the tendency for these learners to overview the known material of language, plan the language task and evaluate their own learning. The last, high proficient learners used metacognitive strategies in which they were cooperated with other learners and having tendency to understand the cultural background of the language.

On the other sides, the use of LLS based on the result of SILL questionnaire by low proficient learners was also of interest. Low proficient learners in this study referred to the participants who got the TOEFL score under 377. The TOEFL score within this range according to the CEFR is included into A2 category (n=30).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for The LLS use by low proficient learners

Category of language learning strategies	Rank	Mean	SD
Metacognitive strategies (Mc)	1	3.28	0.82
Memory strategies (M)	2	3.23	0.72
Affective strategies(A)	3	3.21	0.89
Cognitive strategies (Cog)	4	3.20	0.59
Social strategies (S)	5	3.15	0.86
Compensation strategies (Com)	6	3.11	0.75

Table 2 reports the condition of LLS employed by low proficient learners. I more details, the first three rank of LLS dominantly used were metacognitive strategies, memory strategies and affective strategies. Meanwhile, cognitive strategies, social strategies, and compensation strategies were among the three least strategies being used by these learners. As stated in chapter two, memory strategy is classified to be direct strategy, while metacognitive and affective strategy are clustered in indirect strategy. It could be assumed that low proficient learners dominantly used memory strategies by representing the words into sound, image, keyword or

mapping and using gesture to remember the words or phrases. On the other sides, the metacognitive strategies reflect the fact that these types of learners are good at planning and evaluating their own learning. The last is the affective strategies covering the tendency to lowering their own anxiety by relaxation and discussing their own feeling. Another tendency is using positive statement as reward to their selves and taking risk wisely by checking the list of learning.

Table 3
**The ANOVA Test Result of Multiple Regression Analysis
Between LLS and English Proficiency of High Proficient Learners**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5679.751	6	946.625	1.050	.433^c
	Residual	13527.204	15	901.814		
	Total	19206.955	21			

b. Predictors: (Constant), social, compensatory, metacognitive, memory, cognitive, affective

The table 3 shows the distribution of $p_{\text{value}} = 0.433 > 0.05$ in which this leads to the acceptance of null hypothesis. This study found that there was no significant predictive value of LLS on English proficiency for high proficient learners. In other words, LLS cannot be used simultaneously to predict the TOEFL score of high proficient learners.

Table 4
**The ANOVA Test Result of Multiple Regression Analysis
Between LLS and English Proficiency of Low Proficient Learners**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3758.103	6	626.351	.853	.543^b
	Residual	16887.763	23	734.251		
	Total	20645.867	29			

a. Dependent Variable: TOEFL

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social, Compensation, Memory, Cognitive, Affective, Metacognitive

From the Table 4 shows the distribution of $p_{\text{value}} = 0.543 > 0.05$ in which this leads to the acceptance of null hypothesis. This study revealed that there was no significant correlation between LLS the English proficiency of low proficient learners. In other words, LLS cannot be used simultaneously to predict the TOEFL score of low proficient learners.

The result showed that LLS was not significantly correlated with English proficiency by high proficient learners. However, based on the categorization of strategies used by an Indonesian EFL learner showed that the first strategy dominantly used by students with high proficiency is compensation strategies. This is in line with research by Alfian (2018) that the middle proficient level learners tended to use compensation. However, the present research is on contradictory to research by Rismayana (2017) that compensation strategies were the least strategies used. Moreover, this present study is in contrast with research by Dai (2016) that the highly strategy used by high proficient learners is memory strategy where the students use the traditional LLS method such as reciting vocabulary and grammar.

The last result of this research is that LLS was not significantly correlated with English proficiency by low proficient learners. This is in line with research by Shabankareh and

Hadizadeh (2011) observing that low proficiency level was not affected by the language learning strategies. The first strategy used by students with low proficiency is metacognitive strategies. The finding of this study is also in contrast with a research by Rismayana (2017) involving English department students with TOEFL score in the range 377-459 in which they mainly used metacognitive strategies. In this present study, students with score ranging from 377 to 459 are defined as high proficiency. Furthermore, the result of categorization showed that affective strategies is third strategies used by low proficient learners in this present study. This is in line with the study by Alfian (2018) the learners with low proficiency supported their learning by lowering anxiety and keeping themselves aware of their emotional temperature. Another result of categorization of LLS showed that the last strategy used by learners with low proficiency in this present study is compensation strategies. This is in-line with Zhou and Intaraprasert (2015) compensation strategy also became the last strategy used by learner with low proficiency.

Furthermore, the metacognitive strategy is the second strategy used by students with high proficiency in which Rismayana (2017) and Zhou and Intaraprasert (2015) stated as metacognitive strategy to be the most frequently used strategy by learners with high proficiency. However, the learners with low proficiency also used these metacognitive strategies as found in this study and Alfian's (2018) study demonstrating that the metacognitive strategy is strategy used by the learners with both high proficiency and low proficiency levels.

Above all, LLS was evident to be not significantly correlated with English proficiency across and between proficiency levels. Moreover, the LLS showed the small percentage to be the predictor of English proficiency in which the students have not been aware in the use of LLS in their learning development. However, the use of all language learning strategies based on SILL questionnaire is in the high level in which they have tendency to employ various language learning strategies in their English learning. Hereby, the result also showed that strategy mostly used by high achievers is compensation strategies and the strategy mostly used by learners with low proficiency is metacognitive strategies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the strategy which has relationship with English proficiency and mostly used by the learners with high proficiency is compensation strategies. This strategy needs to be brought into EFL classroom for the sake of English development.

4. Novelities

The research about LLS and English proficiency are also conducted by some researchers in Indonesia. For example, Alfian (2018) examined the LLS used by EFL teacher education's students of Islamic University Indonesia based on three levels of Grade Point Average (GPA). Rustam, Hamra and Weda (2015) examined LLS used by students of merchant marine study polytechnics Makassar by dividing students into two groups: successful and unsuccessful students. The result showed that the successful students mostly used metacognitive and compensation strategies.

Moreover, Nasihah & Cahyono (2017) examined the correlation between LLS and writing achievement, motivation and writing achievement, LLS, motivation and writing achievement for the students of high school level in Malang. The data were analyzed using regression analysis. The result showed that LLS contributed to the increase of student's writing achievement. Hayati (2015) investigated the relationship between the beliefs, LLS and English achievement for management department student of STIENAS. The data were analyzed using multivariate correlation and Pearson's product moment to determine the correlation between SILL and the English scores.

Rismayana (2017) examined LLS used by students of English major in UNM, particularly in the categorization of proficiency based on TOEFL and the correlation between LLS and proficiency levels. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Rachmawaty et. al (2018) examined LLS used by English Department students of Universitas Mulawarman and its relationship with English proficiency. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

Research in LLS and English proficiency has been widely examined in context of Indonesia only do several studies focused in examining the relationship between LLS and the English proficiency; research by Hayati (2015), Rismayana (2017) and Rachmawaty et. al (2018). Therefore, this present study is intended to add the deeper investigation about the relationship between six LLS and different achievers (high achievers and low achievers). Previous studies have not looked at the LLS profile and its relationship to L2 proficiency levels.

The various participants of this study is filling the gap of majors or study from other researchers in Indonesia. Dai (2016) investigated the Tianjin Sino-German Vocational Technical Collage China. Hao & Nai (2015) investigate the learners from Tzu Chi College of Technology. Meanwhile, Rismayana (2017) and Rachmawaty et. al (2018) examined English department's student, and Hayati (2015) investigated the management department student of STIENAS Samarinda. Therefore, the present study investigated LLS and English proficiency for vocational college students.

5. Conclusion

This present study revealed that the most dominantly used strategies by high proficient learners are compensation strategies, followed by metacognitive strategies and social strategies. On the other sides, the most frequently used strategies by the low proficient learners are metacognitive strategies, followed by memory strategies and affective strategies.

Furthermore, LLS cannot also simultaneously predict English proficiency of high proficient learners, and similarly LLS cannot simultaneously predict English proficiency of low proficient learners. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of all language learning strategies cannot be used simultaneously to predict the learner's English proficiency.

Hereby, it is essential for high proficient learners to employ compensation strategy in which the learners guess the meaning when the learners do not understand the meaning. The high proficient learner also employs social strategies in which the learner interacts with peers or others to develop their English. It can be conclude that, the learners the high proficient learners have tendency to use those strategies rather than employing metacognitive strategies in which it generally needs much time in terms of planning, identifying and evaluating their own learning.

Based on the result of the questionnaire, it is evident that all the learners of high proficiency and low proficiency tend to used strategies directly and indirectly. Thus, it is important for the English instructors to educate the learner to employ language learning strategies since the learners will be able to face the difficulties and maintaining their own learning either inside or outside the classroom. Independent learning is the main key issue in LLS study.

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