

## **LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES APPLIED BY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SKILLS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this research is to describe language learning strategies used by skillfull students to improve english skills:Speaking ,Writing, Reading and Listening. This reseacrh used descriptive qualitative method. The participant of this research were the skillfull students who got A in English skill subject.It consist of: 3 student (speech and debate class), 9students( paper/Thesis Writing class), 20 students(Extensive Reading class), 11 students (listening comprehension II class). This research used Purposive Random sampling technique. The instrumentation of this research were questionnaire and interview. The were some result of thi research: First, speaking skill. Based on the result of questionnaire it was found that students used six types of language learning strategy: cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, memory-related strategy, compensation strategy, affective strategy and social strategy and based on interview, there were some learning strategies used by the students such as practice speaking outside the classroom,repeat the dialoge from native speaker, guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations, lowering anxiety by practice with friends. Second, Writing Skill. Based on the result of questionnaire, the most frequently used by skillful students was cognitive strategies and followed by compensation strategies , affective strategies, metacognitive strategies , social strategies , and at least strategy used by skillful students was memory strategies .Furthermore, factors influence the choice of language learning strategies were associating, placing new words into a context, translating, summarizing, selecting topic, using synonym, planning for language task, self-evaluation, discussing feeling with friends, asking for correction. Third, Reading Skill. Based on questionnaire,there were metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, and evaluation), cognitive strategies (summarizing, imagery, audiotory representation, making inference, using resources, note-taking, and elaborating of prior knowledge) social strategies (cooperating, clarifying, and self-talk). Factors influencing the choice of language learning strategy were motivation, age and gender, learning style, situation of the classroom, and belief on language learning.Fourth, Listening skill, There were some learning strategie used: affective strategies (feelings), compensatory strategies (guessing from the context), memory-related strategies (choosing position), social strategies (asking for help, social norms), cognitive strategies (note taking, practice), and metacognitive strategies (learning style, learning needs, planning, monitoring mistakes, evaluation).*

**Keyword:** *Language learning strategies, English skill*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The place of English as foreign language subject in Indonesian educational system prove wholehearted of the government encourage everyone should master in English. Due to the importance of English, a learners should be more concerned about how to develop their

English Skills in order to master English. In some level educations the knowledge of learning English has been broadening. For example In University level, the study of learning English is not only studying the general principles of English skills (Speaking, Writing, Reading and Listening) but also the students have to learn the specific knowledge of those skills through many kinds of English Skills subject.

As stated in curriculum design in English Department of Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin University Solok, learning English skills includes some subjects such as, the students have to learn *Speaking I, Speaking II, Speech and Debating* Subject in mastering Speaking skill. In Writing skill, the students should master *Writing I, writing II and Paper/ Thesis Writing* subject. Next, the students have to learn some Reading subjects like *Reading I, Reading II and Extensive Reading*. The last one in order to mastering Listening skill the students have to concerned with *Listening Comprehension I and Listening comprehension II* subject. Those are compulsory subject for the students to take the English skills subject.

However, based on Preliminary research most of English Department students have problems on Speaking. There are some causes that makes the students difficult to communicate in English such as the environment does not support the students to speak English frequently. Since the students do not want to be rejected by the people around them, so they use their native language in daily conversation. That makes the students unable to communicate in English fluently outside the class. The next cause is problem with grammar.. Most students are very easy to get confused with English grammar, while grammar is very needed to form a right sentence. Realizing that the grammar students have is very weak, so they feel embarrassed they want to produce English sentences orally.

The second one is writing subject. English language learner have limited vocabulary. Therefore students end up repeating the same word. This hinders creativity. Vocabulary is often a challenge, particularly when it comes to verb variations and understanding which tense should be used in various situations. English has one of the biggest vocabularies of all languages, and it can be very confusing for students to master. Using vocabulary inaccurately is incredibly noticeable to anyone who's first language is English, though it doesn't often change the meaning of the text, it does weaken it. The next problem is about first language interference. First language help learners when it has elements in common with Second language but hinders in learning process when both language systems differ (Cook, 2001). Another problems which students face is the organization of paragraph development. The information which is well organized is easier to remember and understand. As stated by Grab and Kaplan (1996), rhetoric includes the study of cohesion, coherence, macro structure of

text, logical arrangement of information and story structure. To improve written expression, those factors are needed to be identified which affect student's skill in writing.

Related to writing skill, the same case also happen in reading Subject. In order to master reading comprehension, the students should concerned :First, a student must be able to decode the words on the page. Second, the student needs to hold the information in working memory long enough for the information to be more extensively processed. Third, the student must have adequate vocabulary, grammar and syntactical skills to organize and interpret the written message efficiently. Fourth, students needs to access higher order thinking skills to process the written message and go beyond the surface layer of the text and infer possible meaning. This consideration influence the English students achievement in Reading skill at UMMY. Based on the result of Extensive reading class, it was found only 2 students have high score in reading. It can be stated that students' sbility in Reading skill still need to be improved.

The last one is Listening subject. However in listening Comprehension class only a few number of students who got A. Most of them have difficulty in listening such as they have difficulties in making prediction what the speaker talk about, recognizing main points, the long listening text is supposed to be an obstacle to students in listening.

Based on the phenomena above, it can be stated that Every students have their own ability in learning English skills. Language learning strategies is a term referring to the processes and actions that are consciously deployed by language learners to help them to learn or use a language more effectively. It means that, learning strategies are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning. They are numerous concious actions and thoughts that learners use in order to reach goals of learning. Based on several notions described by the experts, it is clear that laerning strategy is related to the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. As stated by Wong and Nunan (2011) more effective learners see language as a tool for communicating rather than as a subject on the curriculum to be mastered for the purposes of examination success. It can help students to develop language competence, as reflected in the learner's skills in listening, speaking, reading, or writing the L2 or Foreign Languane.

Oxford (1990: 37) divided language learning strategy into two groups. They are direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are language learning strategy that directly affects the destination language. Direct strategies have three categories. First, memory strategies include creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action.

Second, cognitive strategies include practicing, receiving and sending message, analyzing and reasoning, creating structure for input and output. Third, compensation strategies include guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

Next, indirect strategies consist of three categories. First, metacognitive strategies include centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, evaluating your learning. Second, affective strategies include lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, taking your emotional temperature. Third, social strategies include asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. Learning a language thus affects other people, and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process.

Moreover, Brown and Palincsar in O'Malley (1990: 8) explain that language learning strategies divided into three classifications. First, Metacognitive strategies affect thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluation after the learning activity has been completed. Second, Cognitive strategies are more directly related to individual learning tasks and entail direct manipulation or transformation of the learning materials. Third, social/ affective *strategies* are cooperative learning, which involves peer interaction to achieve a common goal in learning, and asking questions for clarification.

In connected with the learners factor, good language learners have different characteristics from those unsuccessful ones. The same case happen for language learners or the students at Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin University. In fact, some of them are more successfull in learning English Skills. The data of documentary study of the students' grade in English Skill subject can be seen in the following table:

NO	English Skills	Subject	skillful Students	Number of students
1.	Speaking	Speaking I	7	47
		Speaking II	8	39
		Speech and Debating	3	35
2.	Writing	Writing I	14	41
		Writing II	9	40
		Paper/Thesis Writing	9	33
3.	Reading	Reading I	2	47
		Reading II	8	39
		Extensive Reading	20	34
4	Listening	Listening Comp I	14	41
		Listening Comp II	11	40

The data shows that the comparison of the students who are skillful and the number of students in learning English subject is significant. The writer assumes that the skillful students ( the students who got A) seem to apply certain strategies in learning the four English Language skills. Some people think that the difference between a good student and a bad student is just a matter of aptitude. While it may be true in some cases, generally, the difference can actually be attributed to learning strategies. With effective learning strategies, students can learn faster and easier Concerning with the problems above the writer analyzed the language Learning Strategies applied by skillfull students of English Department of Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin to improve their English skills ( Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Reading).

## METHOD

The design of the research was descriptive qualitative research. In this research, researcher used Random purposive sampling. The informants of this research were the skillful students (the students got A): Speech and Debating class (3 students), Paper/ Thesis Writing class (9 students), *Extensive Reading class (20 students)*, *Listening Comprehension II (11 students)*. The classes were choosen because these classes are the last class in English Skill subject and the students have already learnt all of the English skill subject. The informant is English Department students of Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin University Solok. The instrument of this research were; Interview and questionnaire. In collecting the data, the researcher give mix questionnaire to the informant. The mix questionnaire was analyzed and then researcher collected the data from interview. The researcher recorded and transcribed the interview.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### A. Speaking Skill

##### 1.Questionnaire

*Table 1. Numbering for Questionnaire*

NO	Strategy	Number of Question
1	Cognitive Strategy	1,2,3,4,5
2	Metacognitive Strategy	6,7,8,9,10
3	Memory-Related Strategy	11,12,13,14,15
4	Compensation Strategy	16,17,18,19,20
5	Affective Strategy	21,22,23,24,30
6	Social Strategy	25,26,27,28,29

The result was percentage as shown in the following table:

*Table 2. Percentage of Questionnaire*

NO	Always (A)		Usually (U)		Sometimes (S)		Rarely (R)		Never (N)		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	2	67%	0	-	0	-	1	33%	0	0%	3
2	1	33%	2	67%	0	-	0	-	0	-	3
3	0	-	2	67%	0	-	0	-	1	33%	3
4	0	-	0	-	3	100%	0	-	0	-	3
5	2	67%	0	-	0	-	0	-	1	33%	3
6	0	-	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	3
7	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	0	-	3
8	0	-	2	67%	0	-	1	33%	0	-	3
9	0	-	1	33%	2	67%	0	-	0	-	3
10	2	67%	0	-	0	-	0	-	1	33%	3
11	0	-	0	-	2	67%	1	33%	0	-	3
12	2	67%	0	-	0	-	1	33%	0	-	3
13	0	-	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	3
14	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	0	-	1	33,3%	3
15	2	67%	1	33%	0	-	0	-	0	-	3
16	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	3
17	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	3
18	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	0	-	3
19	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	3
20	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	3
21	0	-	0	-	2	67%	0	-	1	33,3%	3
22	0	-	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	3
23	2	67%	1	33,3%	0	-	0	-	0	-	3
24	3	100%	0	-	0	33%	0	-	0	-	3

25	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	3
26	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	3
27	0	-	2	67%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	3
28	1	33%	0	-	0	-	2	67%	0	-	3
29	3	100%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	3
30	1	33,3%	1	33,3%	0	-	1	33,3%	0	-	3

Based on the table, it was found that 1) the result of the questionnaire is that students generally use six types of language learning strategy, cognitive strategy 72%, metacognitive strategy 69%, memory-related strategy 71%, compensation strategy 69%, affective strategy 72% and social strategy 73%. The most dominant use is social strategy, but other strategies are not much different percentage level than social strategy

## 2. Interview

Based on interview, it could be identified that practice is important toward their speaking skill. Beside that, practice not just in the classroom but also outside classroom, wherever they are. From the result of interview, the researcher got all of them use cognitive strategy but slightly in different ranges. Another factors that influence the selection of language learning strategies having good plan, having good preparation and always have self confident while speaking.

## B. Writing Skill

### 1.Questionnaire.

#### 1.1 Memory Strategies

*Table. 3 Memory strategies used by skillful students*

Questions	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total
	N	%	n	%	N	%	N	%	n	%	
1	6	67	0	-	3	33	0	-	0	-	9
2	3	33	3	33	3	33	0	-	0	-	9
3	0	-	4	44	4	44	1	11	0	-	9
4	1	11	1	11	1	11	4	44	2	22	9
5	0	-	0	-	1	11	4	44	4	44	
Total	10		8		12		9		6		
	50		32		36		18		6		142

											63%
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## 1.2 Cognitive Strategies

*Table 4. Cognitive strategies used by skillful students*

Questions	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total
	N	%	N	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	
6	4	44	2	22	1	11	1	11	1	11	9
7	2	22	6	67	1	11	0	-	0	-	9
8	2	22	4	44	2	22	1	11	0	-	9
9	3	33	3	33	3	33	0	-	0	-	9
10	2	22	4	44	2	22	1	11	0	-	9
Total	13		19		9		3		1		
	65		76		27		6		1		175
											78%

## 1.3 Compensation Strategies

*Table 5. Compensation strategies used by skillful students*

Questions	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total
	N	%	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	
11	1	11	6	67	0	-	2	22	0	-	9
12	3	33	6	67	0	-	0	-	0	-	9
13	1	11	5	56	3	33	0	-	0	-	9
14	3	33	2	22	3	33	1	11	0	-	9
15	1	11	4	44	4	44	0	-	0	-	9
Total	9		23		10		3		0		
	45		92		30		6		0		173
											77%

## 2. Interview

Based on the result of interview , it was found that there are some factors influence the choice of language learning strategies that skillful students applied to improve their writing skill. They were associating, placing new word into a context, translating, summarizing, selecting topic, using synonym, planning for a language task, self-evaluation, discussing feeling with friends, and asking for correction.

## C. Reading Skill

### 1. Questionnaire

*Table 6: The result of the questionnaire's percentage*



<b>Q</b>	<b>Strategy category</b>	<b>Always</b>		<b>Usually</b>		<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Seldom</b>		<b>Never</b>		<b>Total</b>
		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	

1	Meta	11	55%	9	45%	0	-	0	-	0	-	20
2	Meta	6	30%	11	55%	3	15%	0	-	0	-	20
3	Meta	10	50%	5	25%	5	25%	0	-	0	-	20
4	Meta	3	15%	6	30%	10	50%	1	5%	0	-	20
5	Meta	1	5%	7	35%	7	35%	5	25%	0	-	20
6	Meta	5	25%	10	50%	5	25%	0	-	0	-	20
7	Meta	9	45%	6	30%	4	20%	1	5%	0	-	20
8	Meta	1	5%	7	35%	10	50%	1	5%	1	5%	20
9	Cog	3	15%	8	40%	8	40%	1	5%	0	-	20
10	Cog	5	15%	9	45%	6	30%	0	-	0	-	20
11	Cog	2	10%	13	65%	4	20%	1	5%	0	-	20
12	Cog	5	25%	7	35%	8	40%	0	-	0	-	20
13	Cog	4	20%	9	45%	6	30%	1	5%	0	-	20
14	Cog	5	25%	8	40%	5	25%	2	10%	0	-	20
15	Cog	6	30%	7	35%	7	35%	0	-	0	-	20
16	Cog	3	15%	6	30%	8	40%	3	15%	0	-	20
17	Cog	3	15%	8	40%	9	45%	0	-	0	-	20
18	Cog	4	20%	8	40%	8	40%	0	-	0	-	20
19	Cog	5	25%	9	45%	6	30%	0	-	0	-	20
20	Cog	6	30%	11	55%	3	15%	0	-	0	-	20
21	Cog	2	10%	7	35%	10	50%	1	5%	0	-	20
22	Cog	7	35%	9	45%	3	15%	1	5%	0	-	20
23	SosAff	5	25%	14	70%	1	5%	0	-	0	-	20
24	SosAff	10	50%	8	40%	1	5%	1	5%	0	-	20
25	SosAff	6	30%	12	60%	1	5%	1	5%	0	-	20
26	SosAff	5	25%	7	35%	8	40%	0	-	0	-	20
27	SosAff	2	10%	11	55%	6	30%	1	5%	0	-	20
28	SosAff	2	10%	13	65%	5	25%	0	-	0	-	20
29	SosAff	6	30%	3	15%	7	35%	4	20%	0	-	20
30	SosAff	8	40%	9	45%	2	10%	1	5%	0	-	20

## 2. Interview

The researcher also collected the data through doing interview. The interview is about factors influence the choice of language learning strategies that the skillful students applied to improve their reading skill. There were five factors influence the choice of language learning strategies that skillful students applied to improve their reading skill based on interview; First, students learn target languages for different motivation, reasons, and purposes and this could have an influence on their choice of learning strategies another factor were age and gender, learning style, classroom situation, belief on language learning.

#### 4. Listening Skill.

##### a.Questionnaire.

*Table 7: The result of the questionnaire's percentage*

Quest ions	Always		Usually		Sometime s		Seldom		Never		Tota l
	N	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	N	%	
1	5	45,5%	6	54,5 %	0	-	0	-	0	-	11
2	2	18,2%	6	54,5 %	3	27,3 %	0	-	0	-	11
3	6	54,5%	3	27,3 %	1	9,1%	1	9,1%	0	-	11
4	1	9,1%	0	-	7	63,6 %	3	27,3%	0	-	11
5	0	-	3	27,3 %	6	54,5 %	2	18,2%	0	-	11
6	7	63,6%	3	27,3 %	0	-	1	9,1%	0	-	11
7	2	18,2%	4	36,4 %	4	36,4 %	1	9,1%	0	-	11
8	3	27,3%	6	54,5 %	2	18,2 %	0	-	0	-	11
9	3	27,3%	5	45,5 %	3	27,3 %	0	-	0	-	11
10	2	18,2%	4	36,4 %	4	36,4 %	1	9,1%	0	-	11
11	3	27,3%	6	54,5 %	2	18,2 %	0	-	0	-	11
12	5	45,5%	4	36,4 %	2	18,2 %	0	-	0	-	11
13	2	18,2%	6	54,5 %	2	18,2 %	1	9,1%	0	-	11
14	2	18,2%	7	63,6 %	2	18,2 %	0	-	0	-	11
15	2	18,2%	5	45,5	3	27,3	1	9,1%	0	-	11

				%		%					
16	2	18,2%	6	54,5%	3	27,3%	0	-	0	-	11
17	5	54,5%	5	36,6%	1	9,1%	0	-	0	-	11
18	4	36,4%	6	54,5%	1	9,1%	0	-	0	-	11
19	7	63,6%	0	-	2	18,2%	2	18,2%	0	-	11
20	1	9,1%	6	54,5%	3	27,3%	1	9,1%	0	-	11
21	5	45,5%	3	27,3%	3	27,3%	0	-	0	-	11
22	1	9,1%	3	27,3%	7	63,6%	0	-	0	-	11
23	2	18,2%	6	54,5%	3	27,3%	0	-	0	-	11
24	1	9,1%	6	54,5%	4	36,4%	0	-	0	-	11
25	4	36,4%	3	27,3%	4	36,4%	0	-	0	-	11
26	0	-	0	-	5	45,5%	4	36,4%	2	18,2%	11
27	6	63,6%	4	27,3%	0	-	0	-	1	9,1%	11
28	3	27,3%	4	36,4%	2	18,2%	2	18,2%	0	-	11
29	8	72,7%	1	9,1%	2	18,2%	0	-	0	-	11
30	5	45,5%	2	18,2%	4	36,4%	0	-	0	-	11

## 2. Interview

Based on the result of interview with informants , it could be concluded that having good learning style could improve the skillful student in listening skill such as: Having good facilities in listening, good preparation, students can do many preparation and planning before the learning process such as wake up early, reading the material before coming to classroom, searching on internet. The best arrangement for their listening activities made students success in listening monitoring and evaluating. In conclusion students used affective strategy, This strategies include identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self.

The last, Lee (2010:7) pointed out that language learning strategies are applied by language students to acquire and to use information which are they get. Language learning

strategies help students to improve their understanding learning and getting the language. Because of that, the strategies in learning language are important to get success in learning language.

## **Discussion**

The belief that language learning strategies are teachable and that learners can benefit from coaching in learning strategies underlies much of the research in the field. One study which researched the effects of teaching cognitive and metacognitive strategies on reading comprehension in the classroom was conducted by Tanga nd Moore (1992). They concluded that , while cognitive strategy instruction (title discussion, pre-teaching vocabulary) improved comprehension scored,the performance gains were not maintained upon the withdrawal of the treatment. Metacognitive strategy instruction, on the other hand. Involving the teaching of self- monitoring strategies, appeared to lead the improvements in comprehension ability which were maintained beyond the end of treatment. This finding accords with that of O'Melley et all (1985) who discovered that higher level students are more able than lower level students to exercise metacognitive control over their learning.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The researcher investigated skillful students at the fourth year of English department by giving questionnaire and interview. The researcher interviewed each informant personally and documented the interview by recording the voice. Based on the description and the analysis of the data above, there were many kinds of language learning strategies. All types of these language learning strategies used by skillful students to improve their English skill. The most language learning strategy used is the cognitive and communicated processes that the students use to acquire a language by their own ways. Common strategy include memorizing, repeating, inferencing, and predicting. Strategy is very important each students has number of possible ways to solve particular problem in a language. Therefore, it can be concluded that the language learning strategy is the foundation of every learner to become an ultimate success in language learning. To enhancing students' learning strategy, it required to practice more about how to use the learning strategy it self . Moreover students also need to acknowledge their learning strategy so the learning process may be affective. It can help them in understanding and using the language and it is the way of students how to acquire a language based on their own behaviour or their hobbies.

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