An Analysis On Language Learning Strategies Used By Successful Language Learners In Speaking
(A Narrative Inquiry on Three English Department Students)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aimed to investigate the learning strategies employed by proficient language learners in the context of speaking skills. It also delved into the challenges these learners encountered and the strategies they employed to overcome them. The study enlisted three fifth-semester students from the English Education Department at a university in Surakarta as participants. Employing a qualitative approach, specifically narrative inquiry, the research collected data through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The researcher observed each participant's speaking class three times, meticulously documenting their strategies and challenges. The findings revealed that successful language learners' use of specific learning strategies significantly enhanced their language acquisition process. Additionally, the participants encountered various obstacles in their English learning journey yet demonstrated an impressive ability to effectively address these challenges, thus shedding light on the resilience and adaptability of successful language learners. This study contributes valuable insights for educators and learners striving to excel in language acquisition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The discourse surrounding language learning strategies has been ongoing for several decades, particularly within the realms of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Bachtiar & Rizky Pratiwi, 2023; Ida Siti Hamidah, Melinda Roza, 2020). This conversation has been active since the 1960s, marking the inception of research into language learning strategies. Notably, the field was significantly influenced by developments in cognitive psychology, as noted by Williams and Burden (1997), highlighting the intersection of psychology and language acquisition.

Brown (2007) emphasized that certain learners exhibit success irrespective of teaching methods, underscoring the importance of recognizing individual variations in language learning.

Oxford (1990) defines learning strategies as actions taken by students to enhance their own learning, a crucial aspect of language acquisition for fostering communicative competence.

Brown (2000) extends this definition, characterizing strategies as specific approaches or plans for problem-solving and goal achievement. Rubin (1975) categorizes strategies as processes directly or indirectly contributing to language learning, while Chamot and O'Malley (1987) describe them as techniques, approaches, and actions facilitating the learning and teaching process.

All language learners, whether consciously or subconsciously, employ language learning strategies when processing new information and completing tasks in the language classroom. These strategies are utilized both inside and outside the classroom, reflecting the learners' commitment to their goals.

Oxford's (1990) classification distinguishes direct and indirect strategies, further divided into six groups. Direct strategies encompass memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, aiding information storage and retrieval, organization, inference, and overcoming knowledge gaps. Indirect strategies encompass metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, involving goal-setting, emotional control, and interpersonal interactions.

In this study, Oxford's classification will be adopted, aligning with Ellis's observation that students often set their standards as high as those of native speakers, potentially leading to anxiety and hindrances in the learning process. Speaking, as one of the four essential language skills, necessitates careful instruction, especially for EFL learners. Speaking entails an interactive process of meaning construction, involving the production, reception, and processing of information (Flores, 1999). According to Bailey (2000), it is a process of interaction aimed at meaning-building. Welty (1976) identifies five key aspects of speaking skills: Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension.

Successful language learners exhibit well-honed strategies, demonstrating independence from the teacher and the ability to process and internalize information (Bachtiar, 2022b). Motivation, risk-taking, ample practice opportunities, learner-centered activities, and a positive attitude emerge as pivotal factors influencing successful language learning (Oxford, 1990). Based on the background of this study, the aim of this study is to analyze of what kind of learning strategies that are used or used by the successful language learners and the problems that the three students faced during learning process also how they solve the problems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review presents theoretical foundation that discusses language learning strategies, successful language learners, and some previous studies relating to successful language learners' learning strategies.

2.1. The Nature of Language Learning Strategies

In recent decades, there has been extensive discussion regarding language learning strategies in ESL and EFL contexts, dating back to the 1960s. Research in this area was notably influenced by developments in cognitive psychology. Brown (2007) observed that some learners tend to succeed regardless of teaching methods, emphasizing the importance of individual differences in language learning.

Language learning strategies, as defined by Oxford (1990), are actions taken by students to enhance their own learning, facilitating active and self-directed engagement critical for developing communicative competence. These strategies encompass specific methods for problem-solving, goal

achievement, and information control, as described by Brown (2000) and Rubin (1975). Chamot and O'Malley (1987) describe them as actions that support the learning and teaching process.

Stern (1992) further notes that learning strategies depend on learners' assumptions and can be broadly seen as intentional directions and techniques used to achieve goals in various activities. Language learners, whether consciously or unconsciously, employ these strategies when processing information, both inside and outside the classroom, to achieve their language learning goals. In essence, these strategies represent learners' efforts to effectively learn a language, especially in second or foreign language contexts.

2.2. Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Researchers have employed their own observations to characterize language learning strategies, using four theories for classification. Rubin (1987) proposed three types of strategies employed by learners, which directly or indirectly contribute to language acquisition. These strategies, as per Rubin (1987), fall into three categories: Learning Strategies, Communication Strategies, and Social Strategies. Among Learning Strategies, two main types stand out, those directly shaping the learner's language development: Cognitive Learning Strategies and Metacognitive Learning Strategies.

Cognitive learning strategies involve steps for learning and problem-solving that require the direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin (1987) identified six key strategies within this category that aid language learning: Verification, Guessing, Deductive Reasoning, Practice, Memorization, and Monitoring.

In contrast, metacognitive learning strategies are used for overseeing, regulating, or self-directing language learning. An example of this strategy is planning, setting goals, and self-management. Communication strategies come into play during conversations, helping learners understand or clarify the speaker's intentions, while social strategies are employed in activities that expose learners to language and provide opportunities for practice.

Oxford (1990) categorized language learning strategies into two main categories: direct and indirect, each further divided into six groups. Direct strategies encompass memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, which assist learners in storing information, making sense of their learning, and overcoming knowledge gaps to maintain communication. Indirect strategies consist of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, aiding learners in regulating their learning, addressing emotional needs, and increasing interaction in the target language.

In contrast, O'Malley et al. (1985) categorized language learning strategies into three subcategories: Metacognitive Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, and Socio-affective Strategies. Stern (1992) identified five main language learning strategies: Management and Planning Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Communicative-Experiential Strategies, Interpersonal Strategies, and Affective Strategies. These encompass planning for self-directed learning, techniques for effective communication, and emotional management. Overall, successful language learners employ various strategies from these categories, as indicated by experts in the field.

Language learning strategies can be summarized into three main categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies involve learners' actions in planning, organizing, and evaluating their learning process. Cognitive strategies aid learners in tasks like notetaking and inference, while social/affective strategies pertain to interactions and emotional control during learning.

This study adopts Oxford's (1990) classification, which is widely recognized for its comprehensiveness. Oxford's framework distinguishes between direct and indirect strategies.

Direct strategies encompass memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, which help with tasks like information retrieval and overcoming knowledge gaps, especially in speaking. Indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, which involve coordinating learning, managing emotions, and engaging in social interactions.

2.3. Language Learning Strategy

Speaking English can be challenging for many students, even those who excel in their studies, especially in Indonesia where it's a foreign language (Bachtiar, 2022a). Speaking is a fundamental means of communication, whether in monologues or dialogues, and it plays a crucial role in human life. It's an essential skill for students of English Education in Indonesia, and successful language learners often employ learning strategies, influenced by their backgrounds, experiences, and individual traits.

While speaking is a natural part of daily life, people often forget how they acquired this skill until they have to learn a foreign language. Many experts have classified language learning strategies for speaking. Huang and Naerssen (in Griffiths, 2008) divided these strategies into three classes: formal practices, functional practices, and monitoring. Anderson (in Henkel, 2005) proposed four language learning strategies for speaking, with one involving not fixating on grammar or pronunciation.

Oxford (1990), known for a comprehensive classification of learning strategies, divided language learning strategies for speaking into two main groups: direct and indirect. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies consist of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. In this study, Oxford's classification is utilized, as it's considered one of the most comprehensive, with slight adjustments tailored to the specific needs of speaking skills.

2.4. Speaking Skill

Speaking is a fundamental means of communication and a vital skill, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia. It involves not just articulating words but also understanding and processing information in various contexts, including both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. According to Byrne (1984) speaking is oral communication. It is a two-way process between speaker and listener and involve productive and receptive skill of understanding, It is also defined as the ability to articulate sound or some words to express, state, and convey ideas from one person to the other person through the oral form ((Hermawar et al., 2021). Nunan (1991:41) stated that speaking is the same as oral interaction which are conventional ways of presenting information,expressing our ideas, and thought in our mind.

Speaking can be challenging for foreign language learners as it requires not only linguistic elements like pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary but also fluency and comprehension. Pronunciation involves clear articulation, rhythm, intonation, and body language (Syafriani et al., 2023). Grammar is necessary for constructing accurate sentences, while vocabulary ensures effective communication. Fluency relates to expressing thoughts freely and accurately, while comprehension is about understanding spoken discourse.

In summary, speaking involves a dynamic process between speakers and listeners, where information is presented, ideas are expressed, and thoughts are conveyed. It encompasses productive and receptive listening and understanding skills. Effective speaking requires attention to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension to facilitate clear and meaningful communication.

2.5. Successful Language Learners

The study of effective language learners can be traced back to Rubin (1975), who identified several characteristics of good language learners, including their willingness to make accurate guesses, strong motivation to communicate and learn through communication, lack of inhibition in making mistakes, readiness to focus on language patterns, consistent practice, self-monitoring of their own and others' speech, and attention to meaning.

Griffiths (2008) expanded on this by highlighting that successful language learners possess various characteristics related to age, motivation, learning style, learning strategy, metacognition, beliefs, autonomy, gender, culture, and aptitude. These traits also have connections with different language skills, vocabulary, grammar, functions, pronunciation, teaching methods, strategy instruction, error correction, and tasks.

Thompson (1985), as cited in Brown (2001), offered additional attributes of successful language learners, such as their ability to take charge of their learning, organize language information effectively, experiment creatively with language elements, create opportunities for language practice, handle uncertainty without becoming flustered, employ memory strategies, turn errors into learning opportunities, use linguistic knowledge (including knowledge of their first language) to learn a second language, rely on contextual cues for comprehension, make intelligent guesses, learn language chunks and routines for effective communication, adopt various styles of speech and writing, and adapt their language use according to formality levels in different situations.

In summary, successful language learners demonstrate a range of strategies and qualities, including independence from the teacher, motivation, risk-taking, ample practice opportunities, and learner-centered activities. These attributes, encompassing attitudes, skills, and strategies, play a crucial role in determining one's ability to master a language ((Ida Siti Hamidah, Melinda Roza, 2020)Oxford, 1990). Rubin's (1978) indicators are used as a benchmark for successful language learners in this thesis. Despite facing obstacles during their language learning journey, successful language learners use their strategies to overcome these challenges due to their exceptional qualifications in language acquisition (Bachtiar & Nirmala, 2023).

2.6. Related Studies

Numerous studies have delved into Language Learning Strategies (LLS) and the characteristics of Successful Language Learners. These studies include Thu's (2009) investigation into two individuals who had learned English in the U.S. for over a decade. These successful learners utilized learning strategies and incorporated their own theories and experiences into their learning. They attributed their fluency to living in a natural English-speaking environment.

Matin (2014) focused on four successful language learners, both in and out of the classroom, examining the impact of their learning strategies on academic achievement. The research found that learners employed various strategies, contributing to their academic success. The study suggested that teachers consider students' language learning strategies when delivering course material, although it didn't address the challenges faced by the learners.

Yusuf (2012) explored the language learning strategies of two Indonesian learners studying abroad. These learners were considered successful, yet they encountered difficulties due to differences between English and Indonesian sentence structures. Ardiansyah (2015) analyzed the strategies employed by both successful and unsuccessful language learners in a speaking class. The study identified the strategies used by both groups but focused solely on the obstacles faced by the

unsuccessful learners. Tanjung (2018) investigated the learning strategies employed by English Education students, revealing that metacognitive, social, and compensation strategies were the most frequently used. However, these students combined both direct and indirect strategies.

These studies varied in terms of participant numbers and settings. While some emphasized the advantages of learning in a natural environment, others demonstrated that fluency could be achieved through formal education and online resources (Dewi et al., 2022). However, none of these studies addressed the specific challenges faced by learners on their path to fluency. This research seeks to explore the language learning strategies used by successful English Education students, particularly in speaking, and how they overcome obstacles encountered during the learning process.

3.   METHOD

This section should cover rich information on how the study is undertaken, what kind of research approach is employed, and how research participants are selected. This will allow the potential readers to critically assess your study's overall validity and reliability. In brief, the methodology part seeks to answer two key questions, namely: how were the data collected or generated, and how were the data analysed?

1.1 Narrative Inquiry

Research design is a crucial aspect of any study, serving as a methodological framework to systematically address research problems (Labaree, 2009). It ensures the collection of objective evidence to answer research questions. In this qualitative research, the focus is on interviews to gather narratives about the strategies and solutions respondents employ in learning to speak English.

Narrative inquiry is a subset of qualitative research that centers on storytelling and personal experiences (Creswell, 2012). It involves describing individuals' lives, collecting and sharing their stories, and examining their experiences. In this study, oral narrative inquiry is employed, using participant interviews as the primary data source.

Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014) classify narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning into five categories, with this research falling into the "studies of multiple narratives" and "biographical case studies" categories. Three participants were interviewed, and their narratives were analyzed and presented as biographical case studies. Creswell's (2012) research process involves recording individuals' experiences, understanding their context, and analyzing and reframing their stories.

1.1.1   Source of Data

Data, in the context of research, refers to unorganized and raw information collected by researchers from the phenomenon under study. Qualitative data is commonly gathered through various means such as interviews, observations, events, and questionnaires. A valuable data source is individuals or groups who have experienced or are experiencing a particular phenomenon and can provide insightful reflections. For this study, data was collected through interview transcripts, audio recordings, field notes, and documents.

The data in this research pertains to language learning strategies employed by successful EFL learners in speaking. The sources of data used in this study include: **Events, Respondents, and Documents.** Events are occurrences within the observed setting, in this case, the teaching and learning process in a speaking class at the English Education

Department of Universitas Sebelas Maret during the academic year 2019/2020. Information about students' learning strategies was gleaned through classroom observations.

The study's participants were students selected with the assistance of lecturers and peers who were familiar with the respondents. The researcher obtained consent from three willing participants who met the research's qualifications. The data was collected through information provided by these informants during interviews. To protect their identities, the participants were assigned pseudonyms: Najwa, Rosa, and Nur.

Documents consist of secondary data, specifically materials that describe the academic progress of the three participants in their English language learning journey. The documents used in this research include observation field notes and interview field notes with the students.

1.1.2   Techniques of Data Collection

In the process of data collection, the researcher employed four distinct techniques: **observation, interviews, questionnaires,** and **the maintenance of fieldnotes.**

Observation, as Baker (2006) notes, serves as a valuable method for gathering data by closely examining events or behaviors within their natural environment. This technique is dual-pronged, functioning both as a research method and as a means of data collection (Powell & Connaway, 2004). Within the context of this study, the researcher observed three students who were categorized as successful language learners, scrutinizing their interactions and behaviors in the classroom environment.

The primary objective of conducting interviews, according to Kvale (1996), is to grasp the underlying meaning of the statements made by interviewees. Interviews serve as a particularly effective tool for unearthing the narratives behind participants' experiences (McNamara, 1999). In this study, the researcher conducted interviews with students, inquiring about their strategies for learning to speak English and their approaches to resolving challenges encountered during the language learning process, especially in the domain of speaking. These interviews were meticulously recorded using a smartphone and subsequently transcribed.

The questionnaire was employed as a means of collecting data pertaining to students' learning strategies when acquiring spoken English skills. Purposive sampling was used to distribute the questionnaire, allowing the researcher to target specific students. This questionnaire solicited information from students regarding their strategies for learning spoken English.

Fieldnotes, as defined by Labaree (2009), encompass notes generated by the researcher during qualitative fieldwork. These notes serve to record and recall observed behaviors, activities, events, and other aspects of the investigation. Widely recommended in qualitative research, fieldnotes are essential for documenting pertinent contextual details (Philippi, 2018). In this study, fieldnotes were employed to capture and preserve a record of various observations made by the researcher during or after their investigation of the specific language learning phenomenon studied.

4.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the three participants, considered successful language learners, consistently employed language learning strategies in their daily lives to enhance their

speaking skills. These strategies also aided them in addressing various challenges encountered during the teaching and learning process. Data collection for this study involved classroom observations by the researcher, questionnaires, and interviews with the participants.

Rosa, one of the observed successful learners, displayed consistent preparedness and discipline in her classroom activities. Despite her calm demeanor, she confidently engaged in English conversations, actively participated, and readily responded to the lecturer's inquiries. Rosa applied both direct and indirect learning strategies, with structured reviewing being a notable memory strategy. She also incorporated new vocabulary into daily conversations to reinforce her grasp of these terms. Rosa was less inclined to use social strategies and did not frequently seek correction or collaborate with native speakers. Her confidence in public speaking likely contributed to her self-sufficiency in this area.

Nur, another successful learner, actively participated in class discussions and showed no hesitation in speaking English. Her preferred learning strategies included memory strategies, whereas she seldom employed formal practicing with sounds and translation. She also leaned toward direct strategies and did not frequently use compensation strategies like seeking help or relying on cognates. While Nur was comfortable with public speaking, she faced challenges related to expressing her feelings in English and did not adhere to a strict learning schedule.

Najwa, the third successful learner, consistently sat in the front row, listened attentively to peers' presentations, and was frequently sought out by classmates for assistance. She applied a wide array of direct and indirect learning strategies, often unconsciously, as these strategies had become habitual. While Najwa excelled in public speaking, she confronted challenges related to consistent practice. She overcame these challenges by pushing herself to practice regularly and not underestimating the effort required.

In summary, successful language learners, such as Rosa, Nur, and Najwa, employ language learning strategies, often without conscious awareness. These strategies play a crucial role in their language acquisition journey and enable them to overcome various obstacles encountered during the learning process. Their experiences and problem-solving approaches serve as inspiration for those facing challenges in learning English.

4. CONCLUSION

In examining the success of language learners, Oxford's (1990) influential work sheds light on the significance of employing strategies, particularly in the realm of speaking proficiency. Oxford's framework emphasizes that successful language learners are indeed utilizing strategies in their learning processes, aligning with the findings from the present study. The research participants, identified as successful language learners, unknowingly incorporated strategies into their language acquisition journeys. The nuances in their strategy preferences, as revealed in their varied use of memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, underscore the complex nature of successful language learning.

Oxford's insights serve as a theoretical underpinning, affirming that strategic application plays a pivotal role in achieving proficiency, with individual learners demonstrating diverse preferences and approaches in their quest for linguistic success. The research findings and discussions reveal both differences and similarities among the respondents in their application of language learning strategies.

Rosa demonstrated a higher preference for indirect strategies over direct ones, with a focus on metacognitive and affective strategies. In her direct strategy choices, she favored memory and cognitive strategies. In contrast, Nur's use of direct and indirect strategies was nearly balanced, with a stronger inclination toward direct strategies, particularly memory strategies. In her indirect strategy

selection, she leaned more toward social strategies. Najwa also utilized both types of strategies, with a slight preference for indirect strategies, particularly affective and social strategies. Memory strategies were prominent in her direct strategy preferences. Overall, the three respondents primarily relied on memory strategies in their language learning processes.

In conclusion, all three participants, identified as successful language learners, applied language learning strategies unconsciously. Despite their success, they exhibited variations in their favored strategies and the problems they encountered during their learning journeys. While they shared a preference for memory strategies, they differed in their approaches to addressing challenges. Regarding the second research question regarding the problems faced by these successful language learners and their problem-solving strategies, it is evident that they encountered diverse challenges and devised unique solutions. Despite being categorized as successful language learners, they exhibited individual strategies and problem-solving methods. The research findings underscore the importance of a deeper understanding of language learning strategies, as the participants were unaware that their applied techniques constituted language learning strategies. Effective use of these strategies relies on learners' comprehensive knowledge of them.

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