Strategies of Language Learning among Tourism College Students in Bali

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to discover the learning strategies used by more successful and less successful language learners at a tourism college. This mixed-method research combined quantitative data from the questionnaire with qualitative narration obtained from a semi-structured interview. Thirty students were asked to fill in the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (Oxford 1990). The next step was the interview, whose questions were based on their SILL results; it scrutinized the explanation of the low or high rate that they had given. The result showed that metacognitive strategies were the most prevalent among students in both groups. On the other side, the least used strategies for more successful learners were those of memory, whereas the less successful ones most rarely used compensation strategies. The interview revealed that the more successful participants improve their English by watching movies or reading books. The other strategies were taking notes and using new words in conversation, as well as making guesses on new words, and writing in a diary. Language learners could refer to those strategies to accelerate their learning progress. Teachers should also be aware of the diverse strategies and inform the students about the other alternative strategies that might suit their weaknesses, strengths, or learning style. It is also very helpful to provide an environment where students could explore different strategies, either by making access to native speakers available or by assigning diary writing and portfolio.

Keywords: language, learning, strategies, successful, hospitality

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

English is one of the most important languages in the world. Today, English is used as the main international communication language, and therefore learned globally by people in various sectors to meet their various needs of human communication. The spread of the language

shows that knowledge of English in the modern world is almost mandatory. In the business world, the importance is even greater. Fluency in English will allow us to apply for positions in foreign companies and expand or open our own business abroad. In the hospitality industry, English also plays an important role. As the language is currently widely accepted internationally, knowledge of English is indispensable for those who work in tourism and hotels, not only for daily work but also for career promotion.

The benefits of English as a basic background have played an important role in hospitality, especially English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In tourism, English is used as a means of communication and it is the most commonly used language in the hospitality industry globally (Blue & Harun, 2003). By learning English in different contexts, especially by working in the tourism industry, students need to focus and learn more English about the hotel field. Sometimes, students learn English just to get better results. Not just for academic advancement, students study English to achieve future job opportunities, become experts in several fields, or improve their reputation.

Research on language learning strategies has soared, notably since the 1970s, when these strategies played a major role in language learning. Many researchers focus on how learners handle new information and different types of information. Strategies are used to understand, learn, or remember information in a second language or foreign language learning area. Many researchers and experts have identified language learning strategies from different perspectives. According to Wenden & Rubin (1987) language learning strategies can be acknowledged in terms of language learning behaviors, such as learning and adjusting meanings of a second or foreign language, cognitive theory, such as learners' strategic knowledge of language learning, and emotions, such as motivations, attitudes, etc., of learners. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) have dedicatedly studied the use of learning strategies by ESL learners in the United States. The United States of America. Based on their research, language learning strategies were divided into three main categories, metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-emotional, dealing with learners' learning plans, reflecting on the learning process, tracking their understanding of production, and evaluating their learning outcomes. Next, Rubin et al., (1975) define language learning strategies as behaviors, steps, or techniques that language learners apply to facilitate language learning.

One of the most widely used instruments to investigate language learning strategy is the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). SILL is a

tool to self-evaluate the frequency of a learner's language learning strategies, which includes cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of language learning strategies. The 50 items on the instrument are divided into six categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. A learner should self-rate each item on a 5-point scale questionnaire, to measure the frequency and preference of her/his language learning strategies. SILL has been utilized in several prior research in higher education, such as that of (Alfian, 2018; Kamil et al., 2017).

The SILL posses popularity among teachers. learners and researchers due to its understandable design, and user-friendliness. Without certain software or statistic analysis, researchers can obtain data on the calculation of investigated learning strategies (Amerstorfer, 2018). However, despite its superiority, this instrument is not without criticism. Mizumoto (2018) affirms that the frequency of certain strategies cannot predict language learning success. He further argues that Language Learning Strategies, with their dynamic, contextually situated, and personalized nature, can be better studied through qualitative research methods. Therefore it will be practical to combine the self-rating based questionnaire with the interview to gain an in-depth view of the tourist guides' language learning strategy.

Some studies have explored Language Learning Strategies (LLS) in various contexts. Dawadi (2017) found that among the six categories of LLS, the metacognitive types were the most frequently used by 370 Nepalese students, a finding that was echoed by Chanderan & Hashim (2022). In an online learning setting, compensation strategies, such as making guesses, and using gestures or alternative phrases, dominate the learning (Anuar & Muhammad, 2021). Concerning vocabulary mastery, Kocaman et al (2018) discovered that memory strategies, the ones related to remembering words or phrases, exceeded other strategies. There is a correlation between a student's language aptitude and her/his preference for learning strategies. The participants who scored high on the aptitude test believe that explicit learning is necessary, but implicit learning is more effective (Zólyomi, 2021).

1.2. Research questions

This study is conducted to discover the learning strategies used by more successful and less successful language learners at the hospitality college. The research questions are outlined as follows 1) what categories of strategies are mostly used by more successful and less successful language learners? 2) how do the more successful language learners employ strategies to enhance their learning?

1.3. Significance of the study

The research provides insight into the comparison between two groups of language learners' strategies. Language learners or language teachers can reflect on this research to construct more impactful planning, monitoring, and evaluation of language learning.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This mixed-method research combined quantitative data from the questionnaire with qualitative narration obtained from a semi-structured interview. In single research, the mixed-method involves collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative data with qualitative data, in a natural and practical approach (Sadan, 2014).

2.2. Samples/Participants

Two hundred and thirty students were tested with a TOEIC-like as the test for the institute's entrance examination. Out of those numbers, fifteen highest-rank students and the fifteen lowest-rank counterparts were then asked to fill in the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (Oxford 1990) questionnaire.

2.3. Instruments

The Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL), an instrument which consists of fifty questions, was utilized to assess the participants' frequency of using various language learning strategies in this research. There are fifty items on a five-point Likert scale: 'Strongly Disagree,' Disagree,' Neutral, 'Agree, 'Strongly Agree. The reason this research utilize SILL is its understandable and straightforward design, and user-friendliness for both L2 learners and teachers. The data collected from this questionnaire were then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data obtained from this questionnaire functioned as the foundation for the interview. It also drew the participants' attention to the topic and raised their awareness of the strategies they used. They were told that the SILL was not to test their proficiency, and there was no right or wrong answer.

The next step was the interview, whose questions were based on their SILL results. It scrutinized the explanation of the low or high rate that they had given. Statements on the SILL questionnaire where the participants stated "Strongly Agree" were explored during the interview. This step also inquired about what motivation drove their learning, what techniques they employed to improve their language skills, and what hindrances they faced during the learning journey. This focus will give insight into how successful language learners manage their learning, which might also inspire other learners to follow their paths.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire was analyzed with the descriptive statistic, to discover the frequency of each strategy, comparing those used by successful with those by unsuccessful students. Transcripts from the interview were read to explore deeper the strategies used by the participants. From the analysis emerged the pattern and themes that were noted down, compared with other research, and explained with the theories.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows 15 successful students' responses to language learning strategies. As shown in the chart, the category with the highest frequency is metacognitive, followed by social strategies. The two least employed strategies were memory and affective.

Table 1. Language Learning Strategies of more successful students

Strategy	Mean	SD	Rank
Metacognitive	4.2	0.4	1
Social	4.0	0.3	2
Cognitive	3.9	0.3	3
Compensation	3.7	0.4	4
Affective	3.6	0.7	5
Memory	3.3	0.5	6

Table 2 shows 15 less successful students' responses to language learning strategies. Similarly, metacognitive and social were the two most prevalent categories. On contrary, the less-successful students most rarely use compensation strategies. It seems that those students find difficulties in making up words, making guesses, or paraphrasing, which requires vocabulary and grammatical competence.

Table 2. Language Learning Strategies of less successful students

Strategy	Mean	SD	Rank
Metacognitive	3.7	0.6	1
Social	3.5	0.2	2
Memory	3.2	0.5	3

Cognitive	3.1	0.4	4
Affective	3.1	0.9	5
Compensation	2.9	0.7	6

The finding demonstrates that metacognitive and social strategies are the two most prevalent strategies employed by the language learners in tourism college in Bali. This finding echo that of Ang et al. (2017); Dawadi (2017) Kocaman et al. (2018); Bin-Hady et al., (2020) and Chanderan & Hashim (2022), who discovered the dominance of metacognitive strategy in English. In the tourism field, this finding is also supported by Phaiboonnugulkij (2018) that high proficiency students employed metacognitive strategy.

From educators' point of view, this could be a valuable reference for language teaching. Teachers could enhance the students' learning through metacognitive aspects such as activating prior knowledge, a reflection of what is and what is not known, and modeling of learning strategies by the teacher (Haukås et al., 2018). Teachers could also introduce activities such as discussion or debate to help students reflect on their learning.

The tables displayed above have displayed the Language Learning strategies used by successful and unsuccessful tourism students, but a narrative report is a necessary complement to the quantitative finding. Participants with the highest score were interviewed, based on their answers to the questionnaire. That is, statements, where they score high, were scrutinized, to dig deeper into how they orchestrate the strategies.

When it comes to improving vocabulary, C, another participant, reported that he occasionally found new words when watching movies or reading books, and decided to use those words in the next conversations. For example, he found that *kudos* means praise. "Next time, when I want to congratulate someone, I will use that word", he added. Participant P had made use of his phone to take notes on new English words, to be reviewed and rehearsed later. The participant also made an extensive effort to improve his vocabulary. When finding new words during reading, he tried to guess what the words meant. He then checked the vocabulary to confirm, hoping that his guess was accurate. The learner's strategy doubles those of the participants in Anuar & Mokhtar (2021) that L2 learners tend to make an educated guess when reading or listening. The guessing strategy was also apparent in Alasmari (2020) finding that the participant in his research guessed that the word "valid" means "credible". It seems that making guesses is the most prevalent compensation strategy.

Regarding the English writing aspect, participant G converse in English text with whomever he knew could speak English. He also regularly wrote in his diary and found that it was easier to elaborate on his feeling and thought in English. Studies have proven that diary writing is an effective tool that not only develops writing skill but also a learner's self-regulation and autonomy (Beseghi, 2021; Yüce, 2020).

One participant, P, had since high school mainly used English for communication. The school he studied at when he was 16 had a strict rule on the use of English; those using language other than English are fined 50.000 rupiahs. He, therefore, had no choice other than speaking in English to teachers, staff, and other students. Besides this rule, P has a strong willingness to work at a hotel abroad. This confirms Koeswiryono & Koerniawaty (2021) that motivation is an essential element to success in language learning.

He frequently gathered with English native speakers, where he can best practice speaking. He would listen more attentively when his speaking partners spoke with accents unfamiliar to him. "With the British accent, sometimes I have to ask them to repeat. They would speak slower, and that helps me". G did sometimes fail to pick up the right word to express what he meant. He would therefore paraphrase his sentence, trying to use other words to explain his intention.

Overall, the participant elaborated that despite the English subject each semester, there should be an abundance of extra time dedicated to mastering new vocabularies and practicing speaking. This finding is consistent with that of Noprival et al. (2019) that informal learning is an important accelerator for increasing multilinguability; a learner "cannot depend on a formal institutional study". Another significant factor for language learning is motivation. The participants stated that their willingness to work abroad and to mingle with English native speakers had driven them to keep learning, which resonates with Hanyeq (2018) who found that integrative and instrumental motivation are significant lead to foreign language mastery.

This study attempted to utilize in-depth interviews to complement the prior research on Language Learning Strategies that were merely based on questionnaires. However, only thirty participants were given the questionnaire in this study. Further research might involve more participants to obtain more representative results. Moreover, the current research has only explored the strategy group in general. Therefore, a more specific investigation on each strategy group, be it metacognitive, social, affective, compensation, cognitive, or memory strategies.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Conclusion

The study investigated the language learning strategies employed by more successful and less successful language learners. It gave insight on how more proficient students utilized different approaches to enrich their vocabulary, pronunciation, and other language aspects. The result showed that metacognitive strategies were the most prevalent among students in both groups. On the other side, the least used strategies for more successful learners were that of memory, whereas the less successful ones most rarely used compensation strategies.

The interview revealed that one of the more successful learners improved his English by watching movies or reading books. Whenever he found new words or phrases, he took notes and type them, and tried to use them in his next conversation. Another participant often tried to guess what new words would mean. He then checked the vocabulary to confirm his guess. He would hold a conversation in English whenever he met English speakers. The next participant wrote her feelings and thoughts in a diary, in English. She also had a regular gathering with English speakers, when she would listen attentively to the native speakers' spoken language.

4.2. Suggestions

Language learners could refer to this research to accelerate their learning progress. They should be aware that mere classroom learning is not sufficient to achieve proficiency; additional independent practice is necessary. Learners should also possess motivation that consistently drives their learning.

Teachers should also be aware of the diverse strategies their students might use in language learning. They should also inform the students about other alternative strategies that might suit their weaknesses, strengths or learning style. It is also very helpful to provide an environment where students could explore different strategies, either by making access to native speakers available or by assigning diary writing and portfolio.

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