

Learning Strategies Used by Good EFL Adult Learners: a Case Study on University Students in Pare-Pare

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out the good EFL adult learners learning strategies in acquiring the foreign language and how the learning strategies affect the learners achievement at Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare. The method used in this research was qualitative method. The instrument were an interview and audio recorder. The participant of the research were the graduate students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare within the age of 25-65 as one of the criteria of adult learners. The result of the research showed that the learning strategies applied by the learner were direct and indirect strategy. Direct strategy covered memory related strategy, cognitive strategy and compensatory strategy while metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and social strategy were included in indirect strategy.

Keywords: Good EFL adult learner, Learning strategy, Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Adult learners are unique learner in educational concept. They are considered different compare to other learners in common. These learners are more guided, easily determine the appropriate subject to learn, and active more by giving lots of questions and sharing ideas. The concept of adult might be considered from various aspects such as religious aspect, psychological aspect, and age. Religious aspect described the adult period start from the first nocturnal orgasm, wet dream or menstruation and psychological aspect covered one's ability to think, enhance the motivation and ways of thinking. However, these aspects are difficult to be measured but UNESCO and other international organization have stated in numbers of manuscripts that adult period is the age within 25-65 years old.

Since the adult learners have been considered as developed and unique, various learning strategies then applied in order to acquire the language. This research is aimed to find out the good EFL adult learners learning strategies in acquiring the foreign language and how

the learning strategies affect the learners achievement at Muhammadiyah University of Parepare. The research findings may be used in learning process for all learner in various age and to enrich the concept of learning strategy.

RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative is applied in this research. It is used to analyze the phenomena by questioning directly to the subject of information based on the theory or ideas. Creswell (2002). In data analysis, the researchers applied analytical model process suggested by Atmowardoyo (2010). The analytical model is designed systematically comprising steps to follow such: collecting data, analyzing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusion. The participants of the research are the graduate students of Muhammadiyah University of Parepare within the age of 25-65 years old as qualification of adult learner and were chosen through purposive sampling.

This research aimed to find out the good EFL adult learners learning strategies in acquiring the foreign language and how the learning strategies affect the learners achievement. The main instruments of this research were observation, interview guide and audio recorder. The observation process covered the direct view of students learning process in and out of classroom. The main researchers has spent 2 years living with the participants. At campus, he also sought some supporting information from the learners' colleague, classmates and lecturers.

FINDINGS

1. Learning Strategies Used

Learning strategy is the steps to follow to analyze, understand and review the material in teaching and learning process in order to reach one's goal. Based on the interview, the researchers found the strategy applied by the learners, such as:

Taking notes

Taking note is applied in order to help the students remember or recall the important thing in learning process. Taking notes indicated that the learners already have awareness to make good utterance or writing.

Question: Other student develop themselves to think strategically by giving analysis and reason, analyze the material deeply, taking notes to remember important facts, summarizing the information to have clear point of view. Do you apply this strategy to acquire the foreign language?

Student 1: *I use taking notes to remember important facts. I use this in writing and speaking. Before I speak or present something, I did taking notes to make a point what should I present in front of others and of course for another skill like writing, I did it to note the important thing before I start to write . Note taking also help me to study about grammar. little note to help you remember the pattern. Once you'll need it, but after deeply understand you wont need it anymore*

Student 2: *usually in studying writing and studying grammar. In writing, I'm taking notes before preparting my material, it helps me to arrange the idea that I will write. For the grammar, sometimes when I forget about the pattern of something, i open my little notes I wrote few days earlier to help me memorize again.*

The process of note taking also gives a beneficial effect for the learner. The learners may have a short way to understand something based on the note they took and they will be easy to memorize again when they review the material. In making the notes, the students will pay attention more to the explanation, and the learner also must choose the related information to put in memory to be retrieved in the future

Identify learning goals

Identifying the learning goal is also one of the most important aspect of learning. It worked to guide the learner to decide the appropriate way in learning such as chose the best learning strategy.

Question: Most people prepare everything before learning something such as: learning goals and needs, collecting and display the material, organize the study space and schedule. Do you apply the same thing?

Student 1: *Sure, the previous interview I explained the reason I continue my study there in Kediri because I want to study abroad. One the requirement also is joining the interview using two languages. English and Arabic. So I came to kediri to learn about english specially for speaking. The main point and the main goal is to join the interview test. It is very important to know what we are going to reach before learning. In order to practice my english before joining the interview test, I join community called ASSET assosiation of south east sulawesi students, so almost every week we have weekly meeting and in the meeting all the member should speak in english so thats why we can improve our english*

Student 2: *Yes, You have to know your own goal first. Just like when I write my book. I would like to be a famous person and sharing my mind with others, so I have to know the step to have clear explanation. Such as know the idea first, finding support information, then arrange the things that should be put in the first, second and later. For speaking, I always collecting data first and analyze it before sharing it to others. at least I dont give*

an unclear statement. When it come to the time of learning I in every spare time I memorize a lot. i set this time to force myself to have more vocabulary. Whenever I have a time, I'll memorize a new vocabulary or review the vocabulary of the previous days

By setting the goal to be a good EFL learner, the learner then prepared various ways to reach their own goal. setting goal is not only work in general ways, but in specific as well. For example, the extraction of the second learner. the implementation of setting the goal help him to write the book as another achievement of implementing the cognitive strategy. By putting everything in correct step, then the ideas presented clearly

Memorizing words

This strategy involves the steps work with the brain such as imagination, sound or rhymes, pictures, the exact picture of the word itself or the meaning of the word, combination between sound and images. Furthermore, this strategy is very useful to memorize vocabulary.

Question: In learning process, the learners keep the lesson or specific thing in brain by applying some ways, how do you deal with it?

Student 1: *In order to practice my speaking, listening is one of the most important things. So every single day I listen, every single morning I listen, every single afternoon I listen and every single night I listen. What we listen is all the conversation, all the news in our handphone. So it can help me to feel, to imagine the way the communicate and the accent whether it is american accent or british accent so I can divide it and practice. about vocabulary about vocabulary, **the common one is memorizing certain word**, for example there are several paper consist of several word about 20 or 25 and we memorize it both english and translation but it did not work well.*

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Student 2: *About vocabulary, Since I was in junior high school, I **always memorize at least 100 words in a day**. I stick on the wall, in my room, everywhere and I did it until now.*

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Memorizing is one of the ways to keep the things in memory, however the learner used various of ways to maximize this strategy. By sticking word on the wall, the learner hope can view the word easily and help him to memorize. The word itself design as unique as he can in certain shape in order help him recall the word by remember the unique shape.

Participating in Social Interactions

Environment played important role the development of the learners. Having interactions with others might give new learning experiences. The learner then applied the social

concept as their strategy to acquire the foreign language and had others to maximize the learning.

Question: In learning process, sometimes we need others to help us, such as clarifying the confusing point, asking question with others to get verification, or having friends to chat with either the native or others. do you apply this strategy in acquiring the foreign language?

Student 1: *Of course, I did the same thing in the learning process. I still remember when we have to present the material, **I asked my friend to help** design the way to explain the material in order to avoid the unclear point. But when it comes to me, I record it and asking my friend to clarify this by discussing or probably debating. First, I try to solve by myself but if I get confused, then I'll need another one to help me.*

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Student 2: *Actually, **I'm the one who always learn with anybody who can speak English**, beside that, actually my english improve when I worked at some company including makassar and balikpapan, so many foreigners there, automatically we have to speak english there everyday and everytime. For the writing, I remember I gave it to three different person. Some corrections I get from them. If i get confusing with some idea, I consult with my friend in jogjakarta, he is a professional in his major, he has written more than 100 books*

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From the extract above it can be seen that the learners need others for help. It is very important to socialize with others as its considered that no one can have perfect explanation. The help might come from anywhere, but in the classroom environment, the closest friends and the lecturer is above all. Furthermore, it is one of the human characteristics which always need others. The benefit of applying this method are simply to gain more ideas and correction. In the learning producing the utterance or written form, correcting is the most important. The learners then asked for help to others in order to avoid the misunderstanding in presenting the ideas.

Guessing the word meaning

As the foreign language learners, the confusing word might be the problem in acquiring the language. The learners then applied the strategy to guess the meaning of the word which help them analyze the context. Through the application of this strategy, the learners then prepare themselves to cover the area of weakness before presenting oral and in written form or analyze the material.

Question: In learning process, the students often face a confusing word which probably in speaking or in written form. How do you solve this problem?

Student 1: *Open the dictionary I think is the first if I dont know the meaning, but if I dont have any dictionary, I'll ask my friend. Another one is when I read an articles or anything and I dont know the word sometimes I **guess** it by understanding the context. It is also one of the rules by aj hoge. Because in reading we dont have to understand the whole word but find the keyword..*

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Student 2: *I **guess it**, because if I read, it published in (unclear voice) there are many unfamiliar words we find in the text. For example, you not familiar with the word "gauge" it is unfamiliar because it is engineering words so I try to guess it. Gauge. So, it is must be related to the measure, ukuran and my guess is correct. I read it based on the context of the sentence.*

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The learners' first option was open the dictionary like the average learners did, however, the availability of the dictionary might not always exist. Guessing was the best option for them to know the context of every kind of situations such as reading and speaking. By understanding the whole concept of the material, the confusing word then became easy. Through the application of this strategy, the learners then able to enhance themselves to learn the new material which has one level higher than before.

Adopting other's Strategy

The new learning strategy found by the learner was adopted strategy. It was identified when the students apply the strategy which given from someone else. This strategy must be helpful, easier and work for the students. generally, this strategy lead the students to reach their goal by providing the step to be applied in acquiring the language.

Question: How do you acquire the learning strategy you have applied in acquiring the foreign language?

Student 1: *I **find one of the great strategies what we call the seven rules by AJ Hoge and the seven rules by AJ Hoge inspired me at the time**, in six months only we can improve our English. Seven rules of AJHoge actually, the point is, he **tries** to change the people mind when the first study about English. I still remember one of the rules said learn something with your ears not your eyes. So when the first time I learn about English no need to study about writing textbook. No need to study about grammar book, it is very bored.*

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Student 2: *Every single learning strategy I apply I learnt by myself.*

This new type of learning strategy was then found by the researchers. The learner applied the strategy when he studied in Kediri. Later, the strategy helps him to acquire the foreign language because it provides the easy step to follow and touch every aspect of English.

2. Learners achievement

Another aspect the researchers focused on was the learners' achievement. Through the application of the strategy. The table presented as follows:

Question: How the learning strategies you applied affect your achievement out of university context?

Student 1: *Its very good question, **well I get good TOEFL score**, it is because the strategy I applied. Like I say, when I learn about English the first instruction is learn with your ear not your eyes. It means listening, listening and listening. In TOEFL we have listening practice so it is quite easy for me. Another also help me such as grammar, as soon as you know the context it is easy for you. Because I feel comfort with the strategy so I open and English Course which adopted the same environment in kediri. I earn good financial because of it.*

Student 2: *I have expected this question. You know ~~M~~ Buyung about my part time job? I'm a book writer. So every strategy I apply in learning also the same in the way I write my book. Such as planning, organising and correcting. It is the way for me to share my ideas. As I told you before to be a writer you may have two goal. To be famous or to be rich. You can guess it yun. In learning strategy because I always memorize a lot and practice like crazy, my TOEFL score is fine. So it is affect my achievement a lot.*

The extract above shows the result of the interview to get the information of the effect of the learning strategies applied by good EFL adult learner toward the learners' achievement. The data shows that both learners have a good benefit from the strategy they applied. The researchers may conclude that the strategy they applied works to acquire the foreign language.

Another benefit that the good EFL adult learner have is financial benefit. The data shows that the first learner earn good financial by opening English course and adopt the strategy he applied in his learning process. The second learner also earn a good financial from writing a book. All the strategy he implemented is taken from the strategy he applied in learning to acquire the foreign language.

DISCUSSION

This research ~~focused~~ focuses on the application of learning strategy by good EFL learners in acquiring the foreign language and how the learning strategy affect the learners' achievement. Types of learning strategies are proposed by Oxford (2003) stated there are six learning strategies that introduced and divided into two, namely direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies consist of memory related strategy, cognitive strategy

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and compensatory strategy. Indirect learning strategies consist of metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and social strategy.

Based on the extraction which ~~s~~ analyzed in the findings, the researchers found that the learners applied five strategies from the six strategies that introduced by Oxford (2003). The strategies are, memory related strategy, cognitive strategy, compensatory strategy, and social strategy. The learner did not apply the affective strategy to acquire the foreign language, however the researchers found one new strategy named adopted strategy.

Adopted strategy is given from someone else and applied by the learner in learning process which help them reach their own goal. This strategy may contain some method which lead the students to apply the strategies in particular step. The strategy is useful if the strategy relates to the foreign language task which learn by the learner, the strategy is suitable with the learners' learning style preference to one degree or another, the student engage the strategy effectively and links it with another relevant strategies. Strategies that accomplish the condition make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective, and more open to new situation.

The application of taking notes gave a beneficial effect for the learners. Little note helped the learners to memorize and recall the past lesson and prepare a better future explanation and presentation. VandStoep & pintrich (2008) stated that any information should be transferred from sensory memory to working memory as well as long term memory which work with taking little notes. Little notes simply a media for the learners to remember and recall the information they have learnt.

The learners' reason to take notes also can affect the way they made. If they only take notes to remember the important fact, they may directly write what the lecturer said without making his own word or just make it simple. However, if the learner decided to making notes in order to prepare for the examination or test, the learner might be more specific such as note all the possible questions, and review all the notes as a basic to answer the question later on.

The second learning strategy applied by the learners was identifying learning goals. Marzano et al (2001) simply described learning goal aimed to setting the learning direction. It drew a line to take for the learner to fulfill their needs. Schunk (2009) stated that the learners' motivation and higher academic achievement simply lead from setting their goal. By setting the goal to be a good EFL learner, the learner then prepared various ways to reach their own goal. setting goal is not only work in general ways, but in specific as well. For example, the extraction of the second learner. the implementation of setting the goal help him to write the book as another achievement of implementing the cognitive strategy. By putting everything in correct step, then the ideas presented clearly.

Hattie (2007) stated that when the learners already have a clear purpose, they will minimize his weakness, enrich his understanding and skill to reach his goal.

The third finding of this research is memorizing strategy which is a part of direct strategy. It is often used to enhance the learners' vocabulary or recognize the structure of the sentence. Memorizing involves recognizing of voice, sounds, pictures or shapes of the words itself. Cotteral & Rainders (2004) stated that one of the most important aspects of learning is memorizing. It can be done by listen, practice and focus directly to the sound without ignoring the morphological terms. Duong (2003) stated that it is better for the students to remember the things as much as they could and naturally save it in memory with natural expression.

The fourth finding of this research is social interaction as part of indirect strategy. It simply means the students strategy to involves other in learning process. The help might come from anywhere, but in the classroom environment, the closest friends and the lecturer is above all. Furthermore, it is one of the human characteristics which always need others. The benefit of applying this method are simply to gain more ideas and correction. In the learning producing the utterance or written form, correcting is the most important. The learners then ask for help to others in order to avoid the misunderstanding in presenting the ideas.

The fifth finding is guessing. Oxford (2003) Students has ability to guess the word academically, the good language learner will find how the word related to certain concept to understand the real meaning. They will accumulate, save, understand the word in effective way. Through this strategy, the learner overcome the limitation in speaking and writing. It helps to concept the oral material that going to be presented and prepare the idea to be written in written form". The oxford statement simply means the learner ability to guess the meaning of the word based on the concept or gesture. In learning and producing the foreign language, the vocabulary is the most important. It became the basic need in to communicate, sharing idea or practice. however, the common problem for the foreign language learner is vocabulary mastery. When the learner came to the various environment, one word may have a different meaning in different concept. The correct word must be used in the correct purpose in order to avoid the misconception

The new type of learning strategy found by the researchers during the interview of the good EFL adult learners is adopted strategy. it can be identified when the students apply the strategy which given from someone else. This strategy must be helpful, easier and work for the students. generally, this strategy led the students to reach their goal by providing the step to be applied in acquiring the language. The strategy was given by the tutor when he was in Kediri. The strategy itself contain seven steps to be followed and give chance to master English in six months only. Those seven steps must be followed

one by one. Another benefit from this strategy is it touch every aspect of English. Later then the learners feel inspired and applied the strategy.

The benefit of the application all of this strategy was educational and beneficial. in educational aspect, the learner found no problem in acquiring the language toward the application of the strategy. They also have a good TOEFL score. Another one is financial benefit. The first learner then opened an English course and applied the strategy he learnt to teach his students. The second learner then became a book writer and earn good money from the book he sold.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions in the preceding chapter, the researchers concluded that:

1. There are some learning strategies applied by the good EFL Adult learner in postgraduate of Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare. The learner used five types of learning strategies based on theory of Oxford (2003) namely cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, memory related strategy, social strategy and compensatory strategy. The learner did not apply the affective strategy. furthermore the researchers found the new type of learning strategy named adopted strategy. Adopted strategy can be identified when the students apply the strategy which given from someone else. This strategy must be helpful, easier and work for the students. generally, this strategy lead the students to reach their goal by providing the step to be applied in acquiring the language. This strategy is well guided and give a good opportunity for the laerner to be able to produce the English as a foreing language in short perion of time.
2. The learning strategy affects the learners' achievement. Both learners have a good TOEFL score among their classmates. Furthermore, based on the application of the learning strategies by the learners, the benefit can be seen when both of the leaners earn some money. The first learner strated an English course and apply the strategy he adopted and applied in teaching and learning process. The second learner had a good financial and social status due to his effort in writing a book.

SUGGESTIONS

Considering the result of this research, the researchers offers some suggestion as follows:

1. This research is still far away from the perfectness, the critic and suggestion from the people who may concern is really needed so this study can approach the standard point.

2. In acquiring the foreign language, different learner may have a different learning strategies. Therefore, the researchers suggest to find the suitable strategy which help the learner to acquire the language in short period of time.
3. The strategy which chosen and applied by the learner is better if its give a good achievement not only to reach a goal to acquire the foreign language but also give another financial benefit.
4. For the next researcher, the study on learning strategies applied by good EFL adult learner in different content and setting. Furthermore, the researchers recommends to observe about the learning strategies that used by the learner in EFL classrom from different gender and have more respondent to give more new findings.

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