The High Achievers' Learning Strategies And Experiences In Learning English

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Abstrak. This study aims to explore the language learning strategy and language learning experience by the high achiever students in the English Department of UNM. The study employed interview, observation, and questionnaire using blended technique, online and offline. There are 3 respondents from English education students contribute to this study. The results suggest that the students used direct and indirect strategies interchangeably with emphasized on the indirect one. All respondents are exposed to English since early ages. Since then, they actively involved in **English competition and English society.**

Kata Kunci: Learning Strategy, Learning Experience, High Achiever Students

INTRODUCTION

Learning a new language is not easy for some people, but for others, they can actually learn and use the language successfully. This can be seen in language classes in general where there are students who are able to show progress in learning a new language but not a few students who still have difficulty in learning the language. Difficulties in learning a new language can be caused by various factors, one of which is most likely due to the application of certain learning methods or strategies that are not in accordance with the student's profile. This difference in the application of learning strategies then affects the students' ability to understand the teaching materials they are studying.

The application of appropriate learning strategies contributes to the success of language learners (Oxford, 1990, O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Even some research results show that students who have high abilities implement many language learning strategies, whereas students who have low abilities only use one or two types of learning strategies. This is most likely due to the ability to organize and manage the time of each individual student. This is in line with what Nunan (1999) stated that it is important for students to have knowledge of learning strategies, this is because the greater the awareness students have about what they are doing, especially being aware of what is the basis of language learning, it will more learning that can be obtained by students.

In addition to the strategies used, the language learning experience is also one of the factors considered to have contributed to the success of a language learner in mastering a particular language. This language learning experience can be seen broadly or specifically because a person's learning experience can be constructed

using many factors. Culture, environment, and way of learning contribute to determining one's success in learning a language. Brown (1994) suggests that when students use certain strategies in language learning or are able to practice independent learning, it will be more effective to help them learn the target language. However, from several studies on the experience of learning foreign languages, especially English, these studies only focus on the strategies or methods used by language learners without looking at the cultural context, environment or other social aspects as well as psychological aspects such as motivation and self-confidence of students.

The emergence of language learning strategies proposed by several experts such as Rubin (1987), Stern (1987) to more complete ones in describing learning strategies that can be used by students in learning such as O'Malley & Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Dornyei (2005) then stimulated the emergence of an understanding of students being able to learn independently without always expecting help from the teacher. This is also stated by Cook (2008) which states that teachers must encourage students to develop independence inside and outside the classroom

There have been many experts who have defined what exactly is the meaning of language learning strategies. Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more independent, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. Nunan (1999) argues that strategy is a mental and communicative procedure that students use to learn and use language. Underlying every learning task there is at least one strategy. However, in most classrooms, learners are unaware of the strategies underlying the learning tasks in which they are involved. Experts have identified language learning strategies into various classifications. Some of them divide this classification more broadly or more narrowly than others.

Some experts classify learning strategies into several classifications. Stern (1992) classifies language learning strategies into five categories. There are management and planning, cognitive, communicative-experiential, interpersonal, and affective strategies. In addition, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) combined three components in the language learning strategy model such as metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective. While this study uses the type of Oxford learning strategy. The Oxford (1990) model, as Brown (1994) considers it, is one of the most useful manuals of learner strategy training currently available because its taxonomy that distinguishes between direct and indirect strategies is comprehensive and practical. The Oxford model (1990) consists of two main strategies, namely direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategy is a strategy that directly involves the target language. Direct strategies are further divided into three categories consisting of memory-related strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensatory strategies. While the indirect strategy is a strategy that supports and manages language learning without involving the target language directly which is also categorized into three categories, namely metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

The experience of learning a language, especially a foreign language, in this case English, is closely related to language learning strategies. In the process of learning a foreign language, students as students certainly apply various types of language learning strategies considering the language, they are learning is a new language that they rarely get outside the school environment. Students' language learning experience can also be influenced by extrinsic elements and intrinsic elements. Extrinsic elements such as students' language learning environment, duration of language learning they have used, or individuals who play a role in their language learning process while intrinsic elements can be related to how motivation, self-confidence, and psychological aspects help the development of foreign language skills. student.

In this study, the researchers intend to further investigate the language learning strategies applied by outstanding students and how their language learning experience is primarily in learning English. Are there certain language learning strategies or methods that they use in learning English so that they can get a high GPA and how has their language learning experience been so far? Based on the background that has been described, the researchers formulated the following research questions namely what language learning strategies used by the high achiever students in the English Department are and how the language learning experiences of the high achiever students in the English Department are. As a result of the research questions, the aims of this research are to provide information about what language learning strategies are used by the high achiever students in the English Department and to provide information about how the language learning experiences of the high achiever students in the English Department are.

The findings of this study tend to be useful theoretically and practically for the field of foreign language teaching. Theoretically, the findings of this study are expected to broaden the knowledge of lecturers or teachers, education practitioners, students and other stakeholders in the field of education regarding language learning strategies and language learning experiences by students with high GPAs. In practice, this study contributes greatly to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. This helps lecturers and students to understand and use these findings to improve the teaching and learning process in the classroom. By knowing how language learning strategies and language learning experiences are carried out by students with high GPAs, it will provide an overview for educators to apply teaching methods that are relevant to student learning strategies and for students themselves, this can be tips in learning languages by reflecting on language learning strategies used by the students who have high GPA and how their learning experiences are.

METHODOLOGY

This research can be categorized as qualitative research. According to **Gay et al. (2012)** qualitative research is research that is structured in order to dig deeper to get a deep understanding of what actually happened, why this is so, and how research

subjects perceive themselves in their own context. In order to gain a detailed understanding, qualitative researchers must carry out in-depth research that is ongoing and in a context that allows them to uncover a person's personal understanding of which even the research subjects themselves are not aware. This research tends to combine two types of qualitative research, namely case study research and historical research. The main purpose of this research is to find out how the language learning strategies and learning experiences of the high achiever students in the English Department, Faculty of Language and Letters, Makassar State University.

The data sources for this study were 3 students majoring in English, Faculty of Language and Letters, Universitas Negeri Makassar. Respondents were taken purposively from the third-year students of the English Language Education study program considering they have maintained their GPA for 4 semesters. Student 1 as the first respondent has 3.98 GPA, Student 2 as the second respondent has 3.97 GPA, and Student 3 as the third respondent has 3.95 GPA. The three of them are the top three students on the list for the class of 2019.

In collecting data, the researchers use interview, SILL questionnaire, observation, and review documents. The research instruments were conducted using blended method via online and offline. For the online, the researchers used some online platform namely Google Meet, Google Form, and WhatsApp. For the offline, the researchers use recording application in a cellphone to record the interview. The role of the researchers in this study is important because they act as observers and interviewers of this study to collect valid data. The qualitative data are analyzed based on the steps by Miles & Huberman, i.e. data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

1. Language Learning Strategies

The result of language learning strategy used by the high achiever students as the respondents of this study were obtained by direct interview analysis, written interview analysis, SILL questionnaire results, observation analysis, and review documents. For the interview some questions have been formulated to acquire information about the strategy that the respondents use in learning English such as how they study English, how they study for the exam, how they complete the assignment, how they use technology in learning English, how they interact in English, and what strategy they apply in learning English. Each result analysis from the respondents will be described in line:

Table 1. Interview Extracts of Student 1

Interview Extracts	Learning Strategy
I learn English mostly by listening to song, watching YouTube videos, and I'm very interested in western culture, the people from western, so they are actually the reason why I keep accessing this language in daily life.	Cognitive Strategy
I'm also an introvert I barely talk to people so I spend most of the time alone watching videos, watching movies not really a movie actually, I barely watch movie because it is too long so I watch videos, interview of people that I like, and songs I seriously learn a lot from songs even when the song has a bad grammar even when they are making mistakes in their songs … I learn from it too. They give me many things from song, music.	Cognitive Strategy
I think, I have this big motivation, I love western people, I learn from my mistake. I once put Tenses in my bedroom, I put all the Tenses there It didn't work for me, so I learn Tenses by myself, I mean in a daily basis when I have conversation with people or when I see lyric. It's easier than just memorizing tenses.	Metacognitive Strategy
I have this perfectionist personality. I strongly adhere to the quote that "All roads lead to Rome". I do my best with minimal time which is probably the reason I can get my grades so far.	Metacognitive Strategy
When I listen to music, I'm studying. I like listen to music 24 hours a day if I want to, so like … I'm not even realizing that I'm studying. It's not like I'm forcing myself to study formally sitting down in front of laptop and a book and read that and then I'm gonna forget about it later. No, I'm not doing that. I'm just doing something that kind of motivate me.	Cognitive Strategy
I access YouTube Music and Spotify all day, listening to some songs mostly western songs.	Cognitive Strategy
I really love English. I am very comfortable using it. I always look for people to talk with in English because not all my friends are comfortable with it. I think I can express myself better in English. Especially feelings that is why switching language happen when I am in emotional state.	Cognitive Strategy
I am the volunteer for asking the questions when everyone is confusing but too shy to ask	Social Strategy
I am aware of my mistake a lot of times and I don't like it. I am not afraid but I know I need to fix it.	Affective Strategy

The information on Table 1 shows that Student 1 strategy in language learning are diverse such as cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, social strategy, and affective strategy. The table also shows that the strategy which is mostly applied by Student 1 is dominated by cognitive strategy. It is also proven by the other analysis on SILL questionnaire results (see Table 5) and classroom observation where she applied several strategies in learning English, she is also having a high motivation in learning English by actively involved in classroom discussion or in QnA session on each meeting.

Table 2. Interview Extracts of Student 2

Interview Extracts	*Learning Strategy*
So, I think I'm a kind a of person who really like to learn from visual and audio, Mam. I will like to learn something from the visual and audio, so I prefer to watch some videos especially on YouTube there are a YouTube channel maybe you already know it the TedTalk that I like to learn from. When I want to study grammar no when I mean learn about vocabulary, I listen to the speaker and I found difficult words I will write it in my book and I will find the meaning later and I think it is very effective for us I think there is no excuse for us in not learning English because there are a lot of media that we can use to develop to learn English.	Cognitive Strategy
I think it must be everyday reading some article or reading some post in social media. If I want to post something or comment a status, I always try to post something in English. Just to get it as habit. Sometimes I record myself or I just speak in front of the mirror, talking by myself in front of the mirror so I do it quite often to learn English.	Metacognitive Strategy
To complete my assignment, for me I always try to complete my assignment as soon as possible because we never know what will happen in the next day maybe I will get busier I will do it with the time I have so I'll try to finish it as soon as possible because of the deadline.	Metacognitive Strategy
I like to talk with My Mom in English. Me and Mom sometimes talk in English at home just for our practice our English. My Mom always says practice makes perfect so we make English as our habit.	Metacognitive Strategy
It is quite often for me to repeat my English material at home.	Memory Strategy
Learning from mistakes and keep practicing using methods that can improve my language skills.	Metacognitive Strategy
I ask my lecturer or my friends to clarify something that is still unclear.	Social Strategy
It is quite often for me to guess the meaning of the word that I don't understand in communication.	Compensation Strategy

Based on the interview extracts displayed on the Table 2, Student 2 strategy in language learning can be are varied and it is predominated by metacognitive strategy. It is also proven by the other analysis on SILL questionnaire results in Table 5 where she indirectly chose metacognitive strategy as the most applied strategy in her learning process. Furthermore, the result of her classroom observation also shows that

she is actively involved in the classroom discussion as what her interview extracts display where she states that she asks her lecturer when she find something is unclear.

Table 3. Interview Extracts of Student 3

Interview Extracts	Learning Strategy
I always want to write down all the materials even my friends just for example collect all the ppts from the lecturers and saving it to laptop or their devices, but I try to write it down in paper I think that If I just see it in laptop… When I write it, I could remember it for a long time…	Memory Strategy
I will try to learn more and give and take a time in front of book to recall the material, I will try to improve my English…	Metacognitive Strategy
I should really arrange my daily activities. At night from 7 till 9, I have to complete this study if not I should write it in the morning. I should actually prepare some time to complete the assignment maybe other people complete it if they have time but I would like to give my time, how to say that "Doing the assignment when you have time, but I always try to give my time for doing the assignment.	Metacognitive Strategy
For exam, as I said before that I usually write the material so I think I have studied in that time so when the examination or the final session is coming is not really hard to learn all the material because I have written it down so I still have the information or the knowledge in my mind so it's not really difficult to recall the materials…	Memory Strategy
As I said before, I just watch YouTube or go to the library to read good book that relevant to our study…	Metacognitive Strategy
When I'm going to library to find linguistics book but there is no book in English in library. All are in the Indonesian language. It is actually good that oh this is how linguistic in Bahasa Indonesia but comparing to English it also has difference.	Cognitive Strategy
I think learn from book is very good for me for my type not from phone or laptop. I will print it out if I have to read an article, but I think for the translation it will be easier to write it down than to remember.	Metacognitive Strategy
Maybe the first thing is sharing or discuss it with D or A or some friends in class B or may be with senior. I will ask "have you ever given an assignment like this?" Yeah, discussion is the best way to complete a difficult assignment.	Social Strategy
I guess in a long conversation sometimes there some words that I don't understand. If I don't know the words that I would like to say, I would try to make a sentence or I would try to explain what I want to say with another way/words. Sometimes, I would use gesture to explain them.	Compensation Strategy

The information on Table 3 shows that Student 3 strategy in language learning are mixed and the dominant strategy is metacognitive strategy. It is also proven by the other analysis on SILL questionnaire results where she uses metacognitive strategy the most though it is line in line with compensation strategy. The classroom observation shows that she is one of the students that is really active in every meeting.

Table 4. SILL results of the respondents

Strategies	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Student 1	2.67	**4.14**	3.83	4	3.67	3.83
Student 2	3.78	3.86	2.83	**4.67**	3.83	3.67
Student 3	3.55	3.64	3.83	**3.89**	3.67	3.17
Mean Score	3.33	**3.88**	3.5	**4.19**	3.72	3.56

The result of SILL questionnaire shows in Table 4 represents the supporting result of the data found from the interview which shows that metacognitive strategy and cognitive strategy were the two most dominant strategies used by the high achiever students. Table 5 show the SILL profile that shows the description of each mean score where metacognitive strategy is the most used strategy by Student 2 and Student 3 while Student 1 emphasizes her strategy on cognitive strategy, but her result for metacognitive strategy is the second in line.

Furthermore, the SILL results shows that cognitive strategy gets to the second line, following by affective strategy, social strategy, compensation strategy, and memory strategy. Memory strategy placed as the less used strategy by the high achiever students on this study since Student 1 thought that she is not really using it. This information is clearly stated on her interview which has been displayed on Table1.

Tabel 5. SILL profile of result

Category	Description	Mean
High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Often used	3.5 to 4.4
Average	Usually used	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Commonly not used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

2. Language Learning Experiences

The result of language learning experiences from the high achiever students as the respondents of this study gathered by direct interview analysis and written interview analysis. The answer toward the questions about their first encounter with English, their experience joining an English competition, their perception about English, and …. Are being displayed on Table 6.

Table 6. Language Learning Experience

Learning Experience	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Learning from technology	When I was a kid, my brother has PlayStation and we play there is this game called harvest	When I got my first phone my father borrowed it and he told me to change it	-

	moon wonderful life there is a conversation between one character and another and I literally translate them all everything they say. I was very confused at that time. I really want to know what they are talking about; I really want to know about how to play it, so I translated everything they said from the beginning to the end which is very, very thin if done at that time because only by using a Nokia cell phone that google it must be typed one by one.	into English when I was in elementary school my father borrow my phone and he showed that my phone setting is not in English he will ask me to change it because he said that you should practice it from now.	
Learning English from early age (elementary school)	I began to learn English since I was in Elementary school. I did not really like English at first, I was just curious.	I learned English for the first time when I was in the 4th grade of elementary school. At first, I thought that learning English was a very difficult thing to do. However, it turned out that I could break the statement and know that English was a pleasant and an interesting thing.	Since when I study English, I first start when I was in Elementary school
Joined in English Competition	I joined Hasanuddin British Parliamentary 2019 (regional) and I break to the grand final novice (beginners) but	I ever joined an English competition when I was in high school back in 2016. It was an English competition held by	Yes. It's a speech competition and storytelling.

	my partner left me so I couldn't make it. In 2020, I joined HBP 2020 again but this time it is national, there was even Indian people there. I made it to semifinalist after facing and fight over points with Universitas Indonesia, AMIKOM Yogyakarta, PENS Surabaya, UNTAD, Telkom University etc.	the student council. It is called ESCAPE (English Smudama Camp for Education) there were several fields that are contested such as Debate, Speech, News casting, Spelling bee, Storytelling, Ambassador, etc. At that time, I took part in the debate and ambassador competition. I think that it was a great experience for me.	
Study during the pandemic outbreak	I did some stuff during pandemic like I still exploring English and sometimes I watch English videos about grammar because I needed that in Grammar class. I joined some debate competitions back in 2020, and this year I am still an active member of debate community (KOMBAT UNM). I also found some native speaker this year to talk with so I learn from them sometimes.	The things that I often do to improve my English skills during the COVID-19 pandemic are: 1. Watching western movies & YouTube videos 2. Reading aloud books/articles with English texts 3. Listening to podcast/English audio 4. Using social media	During this Covid-19 pandemic, I study and improve my English skills by attending and following the whole presentation in the online classes. Sometimes, I used to watch YouTube about English speeches and many more, and read articles.
Teacher as their role model	I think I do have one, the one I had when I was in Elementary School because he is smart and	Yes, I do. One of the lecturers who become my role model is Ma'am AA.	Yes. My teacher in junior high school is one of my role models until now.

friendly. He can teach amazingly and motivated us.	She becomes my role model because she is very organized, disciplined, and used an effective way when she delivered the material. I am impressed with the way she lectured the class. During offline classes, she used interesting and varied ways that made me enjoy the learning process. Likewise, during online classes, she used an effective way of delivering material and interacting well with the class.	Because she is really creative and innovative in her class. She always trying a new thing in her class. And she always smiled and support her students. Even she is very discipline, but we knew that she loved her students.

B. Discussion

The result of this study shows that indirect and direct strategies are applied by the students interchangeably. Among all the strategy, metacognitive strategy has been used predominantly by the high achiever students this also in line with Ghiasvand (2010), Al-Buainain, (2010), Salikin, et.al (2017) where metacognitive strategies were applied by most of the students. Specifically, Salikin, et.al (2017) also find that memory strategy is the less used strategy for the high achiever. This similarity might be happened because both the respondents are from English Department. Metacognitive strategy which focuses on the times English learning take part on the students' daily life, self-evaluation that the students do in the process of mastering English, and they also set goals to improve their ability in English. Some of them directly plan it, but some of them indirectly planned.

The learning experience of the students are mostly the same. They encounter English since their early ages (elementary school), they begin learning English by using technology such as game and the using of handphone, they also challenge themselves by joining in English competition, and they have their teachers as a specific figure who reinforce them to be a role model. These findings also share several similarities with the findings of Lim (2002) Wirza (2018). Nguyen & Terry (2017) also mentioned about

the students has positive attribute toward English which is also happened in this research.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion on the previous part. It can be concluded that:

1. All the learning strategies suggested by Oxford (1987) are being used by the high-achiever students. The dominant strategy used by the high achievers in this study are metacognitive strategy and cognitive strategy.

2. The students encounter or exposed to English since early age (around 8-10 years old). Visual and audio resources are the predominant sources for them in English learning such as watching YouTube videos and film, reading books, articles, song lyrics in English, or listening to English podcasts and English songs. They have positive attitude toward English and they also challenge their English ability by joining in English competition.

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