

## **Practicum teachers' perceptions and instructional practices of EFL learning strategies**

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**Abstract:** In the practice of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), it is inevitable that EFL teachers do not provide students with learning opportunities. To tackle the aforementioned issue, teachers need to bring EFL learning strategies and teach their students how to use them. Unfortunately, studies about language learning strategies (LLS) involving EFL teachers, very specifically practicum teachers, are still under-researched. To fill this gap, this present study employing a multiple case study examines the practicum teachers' perceptions of EFL learning strategies and how they taught the strategies in their English classrooms. Three participantstaking their teaching practicum program in two different Junior High Schools were involved in this research.The data were collected through SILL questionnaires, semi-structured interview, and classroom observations. The results demonstrated that teaching practices of EFL learning strategies were influenced by the perceptions of the strategies. Cognitive (practicing and repeating), memory (applying images, reviewing, and employing action), and metacognitive strategies (planning/arranging the learning) were more frequently used by the practicum teachers and shared with their students. Nonetheless, the teaching practices of EFL learning strategies lack explicit strategy intervention, as there were no any explanation about the purpose of language taks and selected strategy evaluation.

**Keywords:** EFL learning strategies; practicum teachers; perceptions of EFL learning strategies; instructional practices.

### **Introduction**

In the case of English language teaching in Indonesian context, a lot of English teachers seem to be unsuccessful in giving students more learning opportunities, because the learning paradigm is still seen as knowledge-transferring activities (Lengkanawati, 2017). Consequently, the level of English proficiency of Indonesian learners is at stake. Another problem is that the students lose their voices and remain passive during learning process (Gao, 2013, cited in Jiang, 2016, Lengkanawati, 2017).

To tackle the problem, it is very essential that EFL teachers must condition the learning and teaching, bring strategies of language learning into the classroom, and teach the students how to

use the strategies (Chamot, 2009, cited in Chamorro and Paz, 2017).

Unfavorably, LLS studies involving EFL teachers, especially practicum teachers, are still under-researched (Peacock, 2001). Therefore, it is essential to undertake this recent study, because EFL practicum teachers understand the feeling of EFL learning very well and can reflect their prior experience of applying their learning strategies more clearly.This recent study adopted Oxford's (1990) LLS taxonomies, because the strategy taxonomy is extensively used as a reliable measure of assessing the perceptions of language learning strategies in the world (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002, Rao, 2012).Oxford (1990) has grouped 62 language learning strategies into two major classes, namely direct and indirect

strategies. Within direct strategies, memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies give direct impact on students' language proficiency enhancement. While, indirect strategies which are subdivided into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, improve the students' language ability without directly involving the target language.

Furthermore, this study puts an emphasis on EFL teaching and learning at Junior High School or teaching English to young learners (TEYL). Regarding this, Nunan (2011, p.2) declares that "the term of young learner covers a chronological age span: from 3 years of age to 15". The main reason why this case is worth-studying is due to the importance of promoting learning responsibility and learning motivation in the early level of education.

This present study was a qualitative research using a multiple case study method. This research involved three English students taking four-month-teaching-practicum program under the supervision of school teachers and teacher educators at two different Junior High Schools in Bandung. The practicum teachers participated voluntarily in this study. The two teacher candidates taught grade 7 and the rest taught eighth-graders. The three practicum teachers were coded as PT1 to PT3. In conjunction with this, PT1 and PT2 were female, and PT3 was male.

This research was undertaken through three main procedures. The first step was to identify the three practicum teachers' perceptions of EFL learning strategies by handing out Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. The following is the details of strategy classification and the items signifying the learning strategies.

## Methodology

*Table 1. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Items*

No	Strategy Classification	Items
1.	Memory Strategy	1-9
2.	Cognitive Strategy	10-23
3.	Compensation Strategy	24-29
4.	Metacognitive Strategy	30-38
5.	Affective Strategy	39-44
6.	Social Strategy	45-50

SILL questionnaire is extensively used as a reliable measure of assessing the frequency of language learning strategy use in the world (Green and Oxford, 1995). The level of validity and reliability of SILL questionnaire is reported high in many studies: reliability score (.87 - .96) and validity score (.95) (Oxford and Burry, 1993, cited in Rao, 2012). The data obtained from SILL questionnaire were calculated based on the system of three-point Likert scale: 1 (never used), 2 (usually used), 3 (always used). The Likert scale system would help the participants from confusion and fatigue. Thereafter, the data were visualized into figures, and elaborated from each category of the SILL questionnaire.

Another instrument used was semi-structured interview. The formulation of questions for interview was based on relevant literature and

Oxford's (1990) LLS categorization. The questions were piloted with some parties similar to the actual participants of this study, and were consulted with the experts about the appropriateness of the questions. Afterwards, the results were utilized to triangulate the data from SILL questionnaire and classroom observation.

Thirdly, classroom observation was undertaken to examine how practicum teachers shared EFL learning strategies with their students. In line with this, the observation put an emphasis on strategy instruction, modelling of strategy use, evaluation of the preferred strategies. All of the participants were observed respectively over a period of 3 weeks. The observation was video-taped, transcribed, coded, and analyzed by using Oxford's (1990) language learning strategy taxonomy.

## Findings and discussion

The study demonstrated that instructional practices of EFL learning strategies by the three practicum teachers portrayed their own perceptions of the strategies. In conjunction with the practices of language learning strategies, the teachers, particularly practicum teachers (PT), are stated to reflect the ways they learn English, and what they observe and experience in their previous English learning (When Su, 2003, cited in Liu and Chen, 2014, p.3, Farelland Lim, 2005, Othman and Kiely, 2016, p. 54-55).

Moreover, the results also found that cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies were most frequently introduced and implemented by the practicum teachers.

### Cognitive Strategies

Based on the three practicum teachers' responses to SILL questionnaire, cognitive strategies were applied more frequently to improve their productive and receptive English skills.

Within cognitive strategies, practicing (talking like native English speakers, practicing the sounds of English, remembering the words several times), receiving and sending messages (listening to English songs, watching movies spoken in English and English language TV shows, and reading English texts), and creating structure for input and output (making a list of new English vocabularies, summarizing ideas from reading and listening activities) were identified from both the results of SILL questionnaire and the classroom observation.

Moreover, the most used device of cognitive strategies by the three participants was analyzing and reasoning strategies (avoiding word-for-word translation, making up new words that have similar meaning, trying to find patterns in English).

For more details, the implementation of cognitive strategies by all practicum teachers in their classroom was elaborated in figure 1.

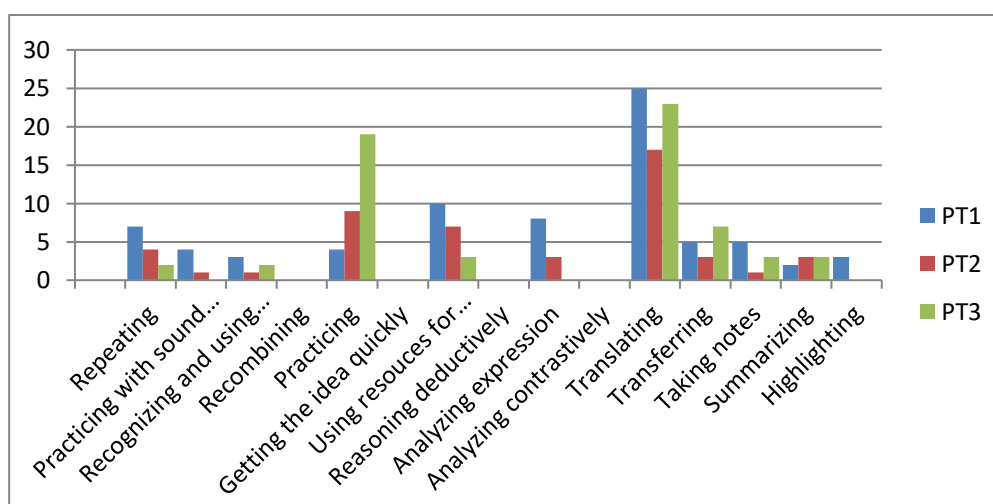


Figure 1 Details of Cognitive Strategies applied by Practicum Teachers

From the aforementioned data, translating and practicing were shared more frequently in their classroom practices. All the practicum teachers seemed to use translating strategy when they

found the students confused about the instructions given. In the same vein, the practices of translating strategies provided the students with opportunities to find the meaning of English words and to enrich the synonymous meaning of the words as exemplified in excerpt 1.

<b>Excerpt 1</b>	
<b>Teaching Practices</b>	<b>Direct Strategies</b>
	<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>
PT2 : Hmm, banyak yang nanya yah.. Di nomor 2. There is one bed with bedding in the bedroom. Itutuhkasurnyaadaspreinya. Jadi, tempattidurnyaitumemakai spre.	Translating

(Cited from PT2 observation transcription of meeting 3)

Next, most practicum teachers regularly taught rote learning, a memorization technique based on repetition, and pronunciation practices at the same time, as illustrated in excerpt 2 - excerpt 4.

<b>Excerpt 2</b>	
<b>Teaching Practices</b>	<b>Direct Strategies</b>
	<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>
PT1 : Repeat after me. Next to the refrigerator, there is a cabinet.	Repeating
Ss : Next to the refrigerator, there is a cabinet.	
PT1 : On the cabinet, there is an oven.	
Ss : On the cabinet, there is an oven.	

(Cited from PT1 observation transcription of meeting 1)

<b>Excerpt 3</b>	
<b>Teaching Practices</b>	<b>Direct Strategies</b>
	<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>
PT2 : Ok, repeat after me. A lamp.	Repeating
Ss : A lamp.	
PT2 : A shelf.	
Ss : A shelf.	
PT2 : A car.	
Ss : A car.	

(Cited from PT2 observation transcription of meeting 2)

<b>Excerpt 4</b>	
<b>Teaching Practices</b>	<b>Direct Strategies</b>
	<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>
PT3 : Please, read it from left to right. Ok? Are you ready?	Repeating
Ss : Yes.	
PT3 : A rice bowl.	
Ss : A rice bowl.	
PT3 : A lunch box.	
Ss : A lunch box.	

(Cited from PT3 observation transcription of meeting 1)

These pronunciation practices were intended to avoid a fossilized problem of pronunciation.

The practicum teachers also often assigned their students to find patterns in English.

The sample of the strategy use to be pointed out here is only from PT1's classroom practices (excerpt 5).

Excerpt 5		
Teaching Practices		Direct Strategies
		Cognitive Strategies
PT1	: Tadi, Jamil bilanggini... There are one pan.	Analyzing expression
	Is it correct?	
Ss	: No.	
PT1	: Harusnyagimana?	
Ss	: There is.	
PT1	: Good. Kenapapake there is?	
Ss	: Karena bendanyasatu.	

(Cited from PT1 observation transcription of meeting 1)

Regarding this, the three practicum teachers commonly introduced the strategy of finding pattern to understand basic English grammars.

### Memory Strategies

Moreover, memory strategies appeared as the second more frequently-used strategies. This finding does not correspond with the previous result in the study by Hong-Nam and Leavell (2007) using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which demonstrated undergraduate students in Korea reported low use of memory strategies in English classroom.

There are various memory strategies devices being identified as presented in the figure 6, like thinking of relationships between what they already knew and new things they learned in English, applying the vocabularies in a sentence, and associating the sound of English words and images or pictures of the words.

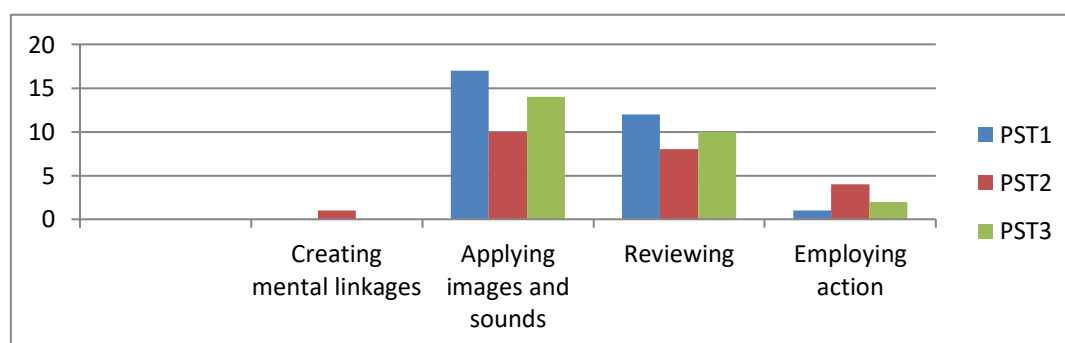


Figure 2 The Use of Memory Strategies by Practicum Teachers

From the column chart above, parts of memory strategies which seemed to be introduced more frequently by the student teachers were applying images and reviewing strategies. Generally, all of the teachers provided images as a means of

helping students memorize the new English vocabularies very well. The example can be seen in excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6		
Teaching Practices		Direct Strategies
		Memory Strategies
PT2	: Now, let's see these (holding some pictures in her hand). These are the things in the bedroom.	Applying images

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	Guess what it is.
	(The teacher shows a picture to the students)
Ss	: Bed.
PT2	: No.
S8	: Blanket.
PT2	: Blanket. Good.
	(The teacher shows the next picture)
	How about this?
Ss	: Bed.
PT2	: I also have this (raising one picture)
Ss	: Bolster..

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(Cited from PT2 observation transcription of meeting 3)

In this regard, the teachers believe the use of images in teaching vocabularies not only could help the students remember the words, but also could facilitate them to retrieve the words easily.

exploring the English words which were already learned in the beginning and at the end of the lesson. Unlike PT1 and PT2, PT 3 had different way in teaching reviewing strategies, as shown in excerpt 7.

Within reviewing strategies, PT1 and PT2 shared something in common, like exploring and re-

Excerpt 7		
Teaching Practices		Direct Strategies
		Memory Strategies
PT3	: Next, skin and build (showing the next slide).	Applying images
	Black and white skin apa?	
Ss	: Kulit hitam dan putih.	
PT3	: Good. Now, build. Ada skinny.	
	Apa itu skinny?	
Ss	: Langsing.	
PT3	: Next ada obese/fat, overweight.	
	Ok, ada yang maubapakkasih tau.	
	Kalau di Amerika itugaboleh bilang obese atau fat, karena kata — kata itu offensive atautidak sopan. Jadilebihsopankalau menggunakan kata overweight.	
	Next, stocky apa?	Reviewing
Ss	: ....	
PT3	: Dengerin, stocky ituorangnya pendektapibadannya gede/bagus.	
	Muscular (well-built) sama thin apa?	
Ss	: Berotot sama kurus.	
PT3	: Ok. Tadi skinny ituapa?	
Ss	: Langsing.	
PT3	: Overweight atau fat?	
Ss	: Gendut.	

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PT3 : Stocky?  
Ss :Pendek tapi badannya bagus.

(Cited from PT3 observation transcription of meeting 2)

Based on the data above, reviewing strategy implemented by PT3 included screening English vocabularies and images representing the words respectively, giving a brief explanation about them, and asking the students to retell those words perfectly.

Moreover, all the practicum teachers also assigned tasks involving physical movement in

vocabulary-grammar learning, like whispering words, doing touch and go activity, running dictation, etc. These approaches support the outcomes which report that grammar and vocabulary are better shared through dynamic classroom activities: miming, total physical response, and visual aids at the beginning and end of each meeting (Chamorro and Paz, 2017).

### Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies came after cognitive and memory strategies. Within metacognitive strategies, paying attention to other learners, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring and self-evaluating (notice their English

mistakes and use that information to help them do better) were indicated in this study.

The teaching practices of metacognitive strategies can be depicted in the figure 3.

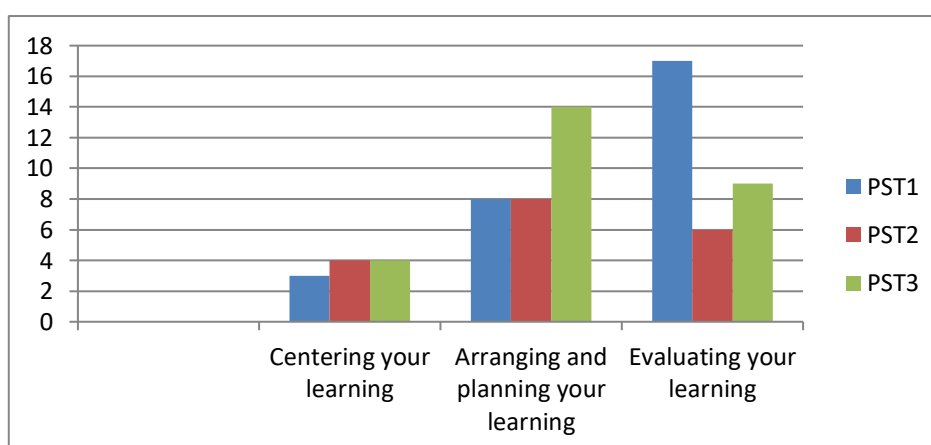


Figure 3 The Use of Metacognitive Strategies by Practicum Teachers

In line with this, the three student teachers shared the similar approaches in evaluating the students' learning. For example, while the students were assigned to present their own works in front of class, the teachers encouraged them to check the outcomes of others' language performance emphasizing on pronunciation, content development, language rules, strategy

use, and ability to perform the task at hand all together.

In addition, arranging and planning the learning strategy as parts of metacognitive strategies appeared more than 5 times in the three practicum teachers' English classrooms. One of the details is presented in excerpt 8.

### Excerpt 8

Teaching Practice		Indirect Strategies
		Metacognitive Strategies
PT2	: Nantidibuattabel yah, pokoknya tulisdulubenda – bendanya yang ada di gambar.	Arranging and planning your learning
S22	: Bolehdifotobu?	
PT2	: Iyanantigambarnyaadikasihin. Jadi, bikintabel, benda –	

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bendanya apasaja, tulis juga  
jumlahnya, and then make a sentence like  
this. Yah?

Ss : Yes.

PT2 : Sepertitadi (teacher is distributing  
the printed-out pictures to the  
students).

Oh iya, nantidikasihduakertasya.

Yang satukertas yang ada

gambarnya, satunyalagibuatbikin

tabel, sama bikinkalimatnya.

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(Cited from PT2 observation transcription of meeting 1)

Based on the data above, the practicum teachers usually generated a plan for the parts and elucidated language functions to be used in doing the tasks, in order to remind their students to preview very diligently the organizing highly suggested to conduct classroom action research, as the current teaching practices of EFL learning strategies did not give explicit strategy intervention. For example, the three

language knowledge or concept of an anticipated learning task.

Nonetheless, this study leaves some gaps for further study. The following research is. practicum teachers did not explain the purpose of language tasks and evaluate the effectiveness of the preffered strategies to complete the tasks

## **Conclusion and suggestions**

This study investigated practicum teachers' perceptions of EFL learning strategies and how they taught the strategies in their English classroom. The study revealed that the perceptions of EFL learning strategies influence the instructional practices.

EFL learning strategies are taught implicitly through language tasks. For example, the teachers provide their students with opportunities to memorize English vocabularies by applying visual (the use of flashcards or

images) and physical activities (running dictation, whispering words, doing touch and go games) or asking the students to remember and mention the words repeatedly.

Meanwhile, it is highly suggested for further study to involve more participants (up to 7 participants, if possible), in order to acquire more findings and to provide a more comprehensive framework regarding how toteach EFL by integrating strategies into the classroom.

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