



An Investigative Analysis of English Learning Strategy of a Successful Bilingual Learner

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Abstrak

This study investigated the issue of learning strategy applied by a student in Bilingual program in Mathematics and Science Faculty, the State University of Makassar. It would focus on the strategy that is applied by the successful student in bilingual program. In fact, the existence of bilingual program actually has raised some worries for some people. The successful of bilingual program has been debatable because this was the first bilingual program in the State University of Makassar, which was established and run in Mathematics and Science Faculty. Many people have wondered about the successful of bilingual program in delivering teaching process by two languages instruction, in which the content as well as the language form are presented mostly in English. Therefore, the researcher was intrigued to focus her study on the successful learner who was able to show good performance in English as well as the subject matter, which is mathematics.

This study scrutinized strategies applied by the successful student in learning English by using deep interview and questionnaires. There were two questionnaires used in this research namely inventory of language learning strategies by good language learner (GLL) by Rubin and inventory of language learning strategies (SILL) by Oxford. These instruments helped the researcher to investigate which strategies mostly applied by the student. In addition, the interview was employed to explore other factors that might have affected or supported the student's learning.

The finding shows that the successful learner at bilingual program of FMIPA UNM tends to use a variety of learning strategies in their learning. Although it cannot be said that one strategy is better than the other strategies, yet, it is true that the varied strategies the students use, the better performance they could gain.

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PENDAHULUAN

Nowadays English has become more and more important throughout the world. English as an international language has an important role in humans' life, which is as a tool of communication. All people should have learnt English specially to compete in this globalization era. Surprisingly, more and more people seem to attend English course to improve their English. Lots of people are trying to learn English in various ways whether join the English meeting or enroll in English course. This is also one reason why the number of English courses in Makassar has increased rapidly. Of course, this is to accommodate students or people need of English. However, there are number of students who have

attended English course from elementary school until university yet, they tend to fail in acquiring sufficient proficiency in English. Therefore, a question such as what the best way of learning is commonly raised. According to Said (2011), this very common question would rather imply that the students who are asking it realize that they have to recognize the learning strategy that is appropriate for them. This phenomenon should make people aware of the importance of conducting an investigation on language learning strategy. In addition, Haryanto in Said (2001) added that in learning English, there are only a few students who can acquire or master the proficiency of English as a second language in Indonesia. This phenomenon makes challenge to the experts about the language learning strategy influencing the successful language learners so that they can master English quickly instead of the unsuccessful language learners.

Recently, there have been a number of researchers focusing on language learning strategy. The research is not only done by the foreign researcher but also in Indonesian context, there were some researchers conducted the research on learning strategy. One of the studies was conducted by Indonesian researcher, Husain, in 2003. She states that English learning strategies used by Indonesian learners' English include "fostering autonomous learning using interdependent approach based on the students' learning style and learning strategies to increase their vocabulary".

The researchers seek to explain globally how students learn, and approach the target language and how the students improve their language skill in formal and non-formal situation. The researchers on second language learning have focused on describing the strategies used by the successful second language learners and factors affecting the choices of the strategies.

Extensive research that goes must deeper into language learning strategies have been carried out by a number of researcher within an overall model language learners based on cognitive psychology. Learning strategies, as the complex term, have been introduced and defined by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) as the special ways of processing information that enhances comprehension, learning, or retention of the information. The use of appropriate learning strategy allows the learners to make more responsibility for their own learning by enhancing learners' autonomous, independence, and self-directed.

The issue of learning strategy is intriguing the researcher's curiosity to find out the answers of basic research problem dealing with what the strategies applied by the student who has good performance in English or in another word, strategy applied by good language learner.

Based on the previous statements, the researcher was inspired to carry out this research under title **"An Investigative Analysis of English Learning Strategy of Successful Bilingual Learner"**.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The scope of the research is restricted to the type of learning strategy, which was mostly applied by the Successful students in Bilingual Program at Mathematics and Science Faculty, State University of Makassar.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Referring to the background above, the researcher has formulated research questions as follows:

"Which strategies are mostly used by the successful learner in bilingual class program at FMIPA UNM?"

PARTICIPANT

The participant of this study was the student from bilingual class who has the highest score in English and has good performance not only in the class but also in his interaction with his friends. It referred to indirect observation of the researcher on the sample and the confession of this participant himself to the researcher. The participant qualifications for this research was also supported by most of the lecturers as they mentioned that this participant is a good student and indeed has a good achievement. Therefore, the researcher selected him as the participant in this study and it was considered that he had represented the good learner of English in bilingual program of FMIPA UNM.

SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

The results of this research is expected to give a contribution not only as input for teachers and students in Bilingual Class to improve students' English proficiency but also for learners of English and people who are interested in English teaching and learning process. The research findings could also be a starting point for further investigation with the same area of interest.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher collected information from different sources, using different methods including interviews, observations, document analysis and questionnaires. The interview is the principal method for gathering information, as "it is one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others". Interviews are a reliable way of assessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and construction of reality. Since there are three kinds of interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Hancock, 2002), in this study the researcher used semi-structured interview. *Semi structured interviews* (sometimes referred to as focused interviews) involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. The nature of open-ended question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to elaborate the question even further. In a semi structured interview the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee. In this case, the researcher asked the interviewee about the strategy based on the questionnaires but interviewee was not only mentioned the number which indicated the frequency but the interviewer let him to give comment or reason on it. By this, the interviewer then developed the questions that still related to the case. Observation, which meant by the researcher here, is indirect observation on the object that becomes the sample in this study (the successful student). It involves his interaction with friends and his performance in campus for several months since the researcher was volunteering in the office of Bilingual program, which now is called ICP FMIPA UNM, and worked there as an administrative staff. The document analysis was taken from the English record of the student during lecturing and the result of questionnaires; SILL by Oxford and GLL by Rubin. All the sources then collected and analyzed by using qualitative and quantitative method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Previous related findings

Some researchers have conducted the research on language learning strategies as follows:

Said (2001) conducted the research under entitled the correlation between the students' learning strategy of SMU Negeri 1 Bulukumba and their English achievement. The population of the research was the second year students of SMU Negeri 1 Bulukumba. The finding of the research is that there was a significant correlation between the students' learning strategy and their English achievement. He also found out that most of students

(60%) of SMU Negeri 1 Bulukumba apply resourcing and note taking strategy in learning English.

Husain (2003) focused her study on how to deal with students' different learning styles and different learning strategies to increase their vocabulary independently. She took sample in the Faculty of Language and Literature in the State University of Makassar, precisely students on the English Department. The result of her study revealed that intensity of strategies that was used by the students of English Department of Language and Literature Faculty, the State University of Makassar varied from one strategy to the others. The highest or the most popular strategy was metacognitive strategy.

Haryanto as cited in Weda (2008) also conducted a research to observe the leaning process leading to the success in learning as a foreign language. The participant was a senior high school student who was identified as a good learner of English. The study was focused on observing the critical incidents occurring in English learning processes. The finding showed that some critical incidents pertaining to the learning processes experienced by the participant. The description of the cases indicated that there were eight factors influencing the student learning and one of them is learning strategy.

Weda (2008) focused his research on learning strategy employed by students at SMA Negeri 9 Makassar majoring in social science. The result showed that most of students apply social strategies as the highest usage and followed by metacognitive strategies. Compensation strategy was the least usage. He, then, suggested to the further researcher to investigate the learning strategies employed by students majoring in Natural science class. It was assumed that the major of the students might influence the type of learning strategies used.

Based on the previous findings above, the researcher concludes that research on language learning strategy is essential in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Learning strategies enable students to facilitate, storage, and retrieve information. Most of the research above was conducted on non-bilingual students. All findings mostly revealed that learning strategies played important rule in the learning process. With this in mind, the researcher would seek the learning strategies applied by successful students in the bilingual program. The researcher found bilingual program interesting as it used two languages in their learning process. Moreover, there have been some issues regarding the successfulness of this program. This study would seek information how could this student be able to acquire English as well the subject matter very well proven by his academic record and English test.

2. Bilingual education

Bilingual education as cited in Bilingual education (n.d.) is "a broad term that refers to the presence of two languages in instructional setting". In Indonesia, bilingual program is delivered using Bahasa Indonesia and English as a medium of instruction. It is been said that bilingual education has been offered throughout the world. Although the implementation of the bilingual approach might be different from one country to another, the ultimate goal is the same, which is to become proficient in two languages as well the subject matter or content material.

Characteristics of good bilingual program in Bilingual education (n.d.) are as follows:

- a. High expectations for students and clear programmatic goals.
- b. A curriculum that is comparable to the material covered in the English-only classroom.
- c. Instruction through the native language for subject matter.
- d. An English-language development component.
- e. Multicultural instruction that recognizes and incorporates students' home cultures.
- f. Administrative and instructional staff, and community support for the program.
- g. Appropriately trained personnel.

- h. Adequate resources and linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate materials.
- i. Frequent and appropriate monitoring of student performance.
- j. Parental and family involvement

Referring to these characteristics, all bilingual programs regardless the approach and the target language, the school should provide good environment and support not only within the school but also outside the school such as the parents or family. Each party should play the role to maintain the conduciveness and effectiveness of the program.

3. Definition of language learning strategy

Students can learn a second language in many different ways, for example, some of them may create mental picture of words, write sentence to practice new grammar rule, and guess the meaning of a conversation from the gestures of the speakers, while others may seek help from other person by asking questions, or decide in advance what to pay attention to and how to relate new material to what they have already learned. In this case, the techniques, approaches, or tactics that the learners use are classified as learning strategies (Ramirez, 1995: 157). These strategies enable the students to develop competence, store and remember new information and skill.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) the successful language learners use a variety of learning strategies to reach their learning goals whereas the unsuccessful language learners have a smaller repertoire of strategies. This statement is also confirmed by Ramirez (1995:158) conveying that the successful language learners tend to apply a greater variety of strategies more frequently and more appropriately for task completion, whereas the unsuccessful learners tend to use fewer strategies, which are often inappropriate for successful task completion. The way of researcher defines language learning strategy varies from one to another.

Nunan (1991: 168) defines learning strategy as the mental processes which learner employ to learn and use the target language.

Brown (1987: 79) states that learning strategy refers to the specific method of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. Learning strategy can be conceptualized as "battle plan" that might be vary from moment to moment, or day to day, or year to year. He further said that learning strategy refers to attack that we make on a given problem. It relates to input to processing, storage, and retrieval. A number of researcher advice the students on how to use second language strategy, as well as suggestion to the teachers on the use of classroom activities to enhance learning among the unsuccessful students.

Ramirez (1995) simply defines learning strategies when he says "the technique, approaches, or tactics that learners use are classified as learning strategies". He does not further specify what such concept as techniques, approaches, and tactics refers to, while Chatom and Kupper in Husain (2003), maintains that these strategies enable students to develop competence in the target language through the use of various techniques to help them comprehend, store, and remember new information and skill.

While Chamot in Wenden and Rubin (1987) states that learning strategies are technique, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and context area information.

Another idea from Streven in Weda (2008) says that learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information.

Based on some definitions above, it can be concluded that learning strategies are the particular techniques, which are used by the students to facilitate them in acquiring, storing, and retrieving the information. The strategies enable the students to develop their competence in learning process of target language. The students who frequently apply the technique in the classroom and in the other places (outside the room) will learn and comprehend the second language easily and enjoyable.

4. Types of Learning Strategy

Oxford and Crookall in Weda (2008) synthesize and significantly expanded earlier list of language learning strategies, resulting in comprehensive list of six broad strategy groups and 62 strategy items:

- a) Metacognitive strategies
Involving learners in the management of their learning, planning schedule for learning, controlling mistakes and evaluating progress.
- b) Affective strategies
It is associated with learner's attention and effort to control psychological barriers such as feeling shame of using English, afraid of making mistakes, and nervous.
- c) Social strategies
It is associated with learners' learning behavior characteristically requiring involvement of other people either peer friends as co-learners or teacher/English speakers as reference.
- d) Memory strategies
It consists of learning activities associating with vocabulary retention.
- e) Cognitive strategies
It relies heavily on the involvement of human brain. Learning activities of this category are addressed to brain functioning in processing input stimuli in order to make meaningful and comprehensible.
- f) Compensation strategies
It is concerned with the way to cope with communication problems while one is involving in English conversation with others.

The first three strategy groups (metacognitive, affective and social) concern with general management of learning, and the last three (memory, cognitive, and compensation) directly involve the new language in various ways. Cultural and ethnic, background, personality, sex, language learning purpose, and other factor affect the degree to which learners use any single strategy, but all six categories of strategies are important to successful language learning (Oxford and Crookall in Weda, 2008).

Types of learning strategy among high school students have been examined by Ramirez in Said (2001). He found that there are eight strategies mostly used by successful students in learning second language namely:

- a) Asking for clarification
- b) Using inferencing skills or deductive reasoning
- c) Creating opportunities for practice
- d) Memorizing
- e) Using vocabulary learning technique
- f) Employing available linguistic and contextual cues
- g) Being able to self-monitor performance
- h) Practicing

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To determine learning strategies applied by students in bilingual class in terms of strategy applied by the successful student, there two kinds of learning strategies were given to students. Those strategies are Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford and seven strategies employed by successful/good language learner (GLL) introduced by Rubin (1975). The result of the inventories, which indicated how frequently the student used learning strategies, was amazing. The result of SILL Oxford shown that the student tends to use all strategies since the score of each strategy is almost the same. Even though the metacognitive strategy was shown as the most frequent strategy but the five others strategy was also high in frequency and their range were not significantly different. This result is actually in line with the previous research conducted by Husain (2003) how found out that metacognitive strategy was the most favorite one. It means that when the student are able to monitor their own learning, responsible and know what to do to improve his English, the result of learning could be more effective. It shows that when students apply metacognitive strategy, he/she will gain intrinsic motivation to learn English because they don't get any pressure from others. In addition, the result of learning English has been boosted due to the fact the student varies the strategies he used to achieve the optimum result.

The result of GLL cannot answer the question "which one is the most" since the result shown that no one of the seven strategies has the highest score. All strategies used in high frequency. It means that the successful student used all the strategies variously.

The result of interview supported the result of questionnaires, especially about the motivation of the student in learning English. Beside this student has a high motivation (internal factor) to learn English; he also got good external factors such as the family, friends and facilities. In home, this student can practice his English with a member in his family. It means that the student not only learn English when he was in campus or not only through lecturing but also from outside the classroom. This student has a lot of meeting club. He often did chatting with foreigner and he admitted that from this chatting, his vocabulary and his speaking were significantly improved.

All the result above met the theory introduced by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) that said the successful of language learners use a variety of learning strategies to reach their learning goals whereas the unsuccessful language learners have a smaller repertoire of strategies. This statement is also confirmed by Ramirez (1995:158) conveying that the successful language learners tend to apply a greater variety of strategies more frequently and more appropriately for task completion, whereas the unsuccessful learners tend to use fewer strategies, which are often inappropriate for successful task completion.

CONCLUSION

1. The successful learner tends to use a variety of learning strategies. Although it cannot be said that one strategy is better than the other strategies, indeed, the more vary strategies the students employed, the better performance they can make and the better result they can achieve..
2. Bilingual program has been run effectively in the faculty of Mathematics and Science, State University of Makassar considering the fact that the student can be proficient in two languages and at the same time, attain a good performance in the subject matter, which is Mathematics.
3. To get optimum result in teaching and learning process, the teachers need to know the learning strategies that work best for students to facilitate their learning. In addition, the students need to vary the strategies used in the learning process so that the retention of information can be enhanced.

SUGGESTION

Learning strategy is only one of many variables that might influence the successful of the second language acquisition. The other variables, which are not explored, are IQ, aptitude, interest, motivation, etc. Therefore, it is suggested to explore more about other variables in relation to this study.

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