

GLLs Revisited: Language Learning Strategies Employed by Good Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The study aimed at describing the characteristics of good Indonesian EFL learners, finding learning strategies employed by good Indonesian EFL learners, and describing how the good Indonesian EFL learners plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. The researcher employed descriptive qualitative research by using in-depth interviews, observations and document examinations as techniques of data collection. The collected data were analyzed by using Miles and Huberman's model consisting of three steps: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. The research findings showed, there are at least seven characteristics of Indonesian good EFL learners: (1) coming from ordinary families and diverse family backgrounds, (2) having high motivation and positive attitude, (3) having extrovert, sociable, confident and goal oriented personality traits and diverse language aptitude, (4) having good intellectual competence (smart), (5) being able to take charge of their own learning by taking various learning actions (creative), (6) being actively participate and not afraid of making mistakes and, (7) having willingness or ability to personalize the language. The findings also showed that the participants employed various strategies in their language learning such as cognitive, metacognitive, social, memory, compensation and affective strategies. In addition, all of the participants planned, monitored and evaluated their learning. Their plans include setting goals and targets, preparing for English lessons and exam, and seeking opportunities to learn and use the language. They monitored their learning by checking their academic reports, consulting with teacher, and taking English proficiency tests. One of the participants also had parents monitoring and evaluation. In evaluation, they checked their academic records, compared the records with others, and made better plan for future learning.

Keywords: good language learners (GLLs), characteristics, learning strategies.

1. Introduction

English as a foreign language in Indonesia has become a compulsory subject at schools. It is taught from elementary to university levels. Unfortunately, there are many researches which uncover the failure of English learning in secondary and tertiary levels. The findings of those researches suggest the fact that most of Indonesian school leavers are unable to use English appropriately inside and outside the classroom. Another evidence is the low grade average in English at the state university entrance examination (Nur in Weda, 2010).

Despite the fact that many students are less successful in learning English after years, there are some students who perform sophisticated results with the same period of time in learning. Why some students are very successful at learning, while others always seem to struggle is a question that many language teachers are still concerned with. William & Burden (1997:144) argued that the only way to answer such question is by investigating language learning strategies. It is also supported by Green and Oxford (1995: 265) who said that active use of strategies helps learners attain higher proficiency in their language learning.

Many studies on language learning strategies arrived at the identification of good language learners, since many researches confirmed the effective use of language learning strategies by the good language learners. Since 1970s, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate good language learners and the relationship between strategies applied and success in language learning. Rubin (1975) for instance, constructed a list of typical strategies of good language learners, who according to her observations they are willing and able to (1) use clues in order to guess meaning, (2) use a variety of techniques in order to communicate or learn from communication, (3) manage inhibitions, (4) attend to form, (5) practice the language they are trying to learn, (6) monitor their own and others' speech and (7) attend to meaning.

Lots of researches have been carried out to find out learning strategies employed by good language learners in various cultural backgrounds and contexts, since Oxford (1990a) argued that cultural background is an important factor that influences learners' choice of strategies. With respect to Indonesian context, some studies have been conducted to examine students' favored strategies as well as the relationship between students' use of strategies with their language proficiency. Unfortunately, to the best of researcher's knowledge there are still limited qualitative researches on good EFL learners. There is also very limited numbers of research, which try to reveal the characteristics of Indonesian good language learner.

In relation to the background above, this study attempts to present a profile of good English as foreign language (EFL) learners in Indonesian context by exploring their learning strategies and characteristics. Based on the background above, the researcher formulated the research questions as follows:

1. What characteristics do the good Indonesian EFL learners have in common?
2. What learning strategies do the good Indonesian EFL learners use in their learning English?
3. How do good Indonesian EFL learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning?

2. Literature Review

2. a. Learning strategies

Learning strategies have been defined by several researchers. Rubin (1975:43), one of the earliest researchers in the field, provided a broad definition of learning strategies as “the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge”. Later, Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) more specifically defined learning strategies as “any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.” O’Malley and Chamot (1990) looked at language learning from a cognitive perspective and viewed language learning strategies as “the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information (1990b:1)”.

Oxford (1990b) defined learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing second or foreign language skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. This definition is further expanded to include “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990b:8). Oxford (1990b) maintained that useful strategies should meet some conditions, such as: (1) It relates well to the second language tasks at hand. (2) It fits students’ learning style preference to one degree or another. (3) Students employ strategy effectively and link it with other relevant strategies.

The two most commonly cited taxonomies are probably those of O’Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990). O’Malley and Chamot (1990) classified learning strategy into three categories. Those are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Brown (in O’Malley and Chamot, 1990) argued that metacognitive strategies are higher order executive skills. Metacognitive strategies are applied to a variety of learning tasks. They include selective attention, planning, monitoring and evaluating. Cognitive strategies on the other hand, operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning. These strategies can be subsumed under the eight grouping, those are rehearsal, organization, inferencing, summarizing, deduction, imagery or using visual image, transfer and elaboration process. Social/affective strategies represent a broad grouping that involves either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect. These strategies are divided into three groups: cooperating, questioning for clarification and, self-talk.

Oxford (1990b) categorizes learning strategies in more detailed and comprehensive classification. According to Oxford’s system (1990b:17), learning strategies can be divided into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are those behaviors or thoughts that directly involve the use of the target language, which directly facilitates language learning. Direct strategies are divided into three subcategories: Memory, Cognitive and Compensation Strategies.

Memory Strategies are “techniques specifically tailored to help the learner store new information in memory and retrieve it later”. They are particularly said to be useful in vocabulary learning as the most sizable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language (Oxford, 1990b). Memory strategies are divided into four set of techniques, those are: creating linkage, applying image, reviewing, and employing actions. Cognitive strategies are defined as “skills that involve manipulation and transformation of the language in some direct way” (Oxford and Crookall, 1989: 404). These strategies include reasoning, analysis, note taking, functional practices in naturalistic settings, and formal practice with structures and sounds. Cognitive strategies enable learners to comprehend and produce the language. Cognitive strategies fall on three sets, those are receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning and creating structures for input and output. Compensation strategies are used to compensate learner’s limitation of the target language. They help learners to use the language for comprehension and production despite of their inadequate knowledge. These strategies include guessing from the context in listening and reading, using synonym and ‘talking around’ the missing words; and strictly in speaking using gestures or pauses to words (Oxford: 1990b).

Indirect Strategies are those strategies that support and manage language learning without directly involving in the target language. They consists of three subcategories, those are: Metacognitive, Affective, and Social Strategies. Metacognitive Strategies are defined as “behaviors used for centring, arranging, planning, and evaluating one’s learning. These ‘beyond the cognitive’ strategies are used to provide ‘executive control over the learning process’ ” (Oxford and Crookall, 1989: 404). Metacognitive strategies help learners to plan, manage and evaluate their own learning process. Oxford and Crookall (1989: 404) define affective strategies as “techniques like self-reinforcement and positive self-talk which help learners gain better control over their emotions, attitudes and motivations related to the language learning”. Affective strategies help learners take control over affective factors influencing language learning such as anxiety, attitude, motivation, self esteem and self confidence.

These strategies consist of three set, namely anxiety reduction, self encouragement and emotional self awareness. Social strategies on the other hand, enable language learners to learn from others by making use of strategies such as asking questions, cooperating, and empathizing with others.

2.b. Good language learners

Good language learners have received much attentions from researchers. Since the pioneering study entitled *What the "Good language learner" can teach us* by Rubin (1975), there have been a number of studies conducted on successful language learning. Most of those Studies reveal some characteristics shared by good language learners. In an earlier study, Rubin (1975) found seven strategies associated with good language learners. In her further research Rubin with Thompson (1982) found fourteen characteristics for good language learners.

Wenden (1990) found nine characteristic of good language learners: (1) Good language learners find a style of learning that suits them. They are self aware, means they know themselves. (2) Good language learners are actively involved in the language learning process. They take responsibility for their own learning. Besides regular language classes, they create opportunities to use the language. They know practice is very important. They are willing to take risks, to appear foolish if necessary. (3) Good language learners try to figure out how the language works. They try to come to grips with the language as a system. They pay attention to form and look for patterns. They develop good techniques for improving their pronunciation, learning grammar and vocabulary. They welcome mistakes as a way of learning more about the language, (4) Good language learners know that language is used to communicate. They pay attention to meaning. They have good techniques to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the early stages of their language learning they do not worry about making mistakes. They speak and try to become fluent. They look for opportunities to speak with native speakers, (5) Good language learners are like good detectives. They are always looking for clues that will help them understand how the language works. They make guesses and ask people to correct them if they are wrong. They compare what they say with what others say. They keep a record of what they have learned and think about it. they monitor themselves, (6) Good language learners learn to think in the language, (7) Good language learners realize that language learning is not easy. They try to overcome their feelings of frustration and their lack of confidence. They are able to come to terms with the affective demands of language learning, that means they can manage their emotions. They are realistic in their setting of study goals. (8) Good language learners are also good culture learners aware of the very close relationship between language and culture. (9) Good language learners have a long term commitment to language learning. They are realistic in realizing that it takes time and practice.

There were very limited researches that tried to reveal and discuss the characteristics of Indonesian good EFL learners. So far, the researcher found two Indonesian researchers who tried to find good Indonesian EFL learners characteristic. The first was Sadtono (1996) conducted a research with two Indonesian good language learners. By using qualitative method, the research found three main characteristics of the learners: having high motivation, being active and being independent in their learning. Yanto (2011) who conducted a research on five good language learners who studied in Australia. By using qualitative method the research found three most important characteristics of good language learners, those are : (1) Good EFL learners are taking charge of their own learning and find their own way to learn, (2) Good EFL learners are creative developing a feel of the language and,(3) Good EFL learners make mistakes work for them not against them.

3. Research Method

This study was categorized as qualitative research applying case study approach. The site where this case study was conducted is State University of Makassar. Three English graduate program students participated in this research. They have a good performance at four language skills which are assessed through pre-interview, writing archival documents and objective English standardized test scores namely TOEFL and (or) IELTS. Their TOEFL test scores are above 550 and their IELTS band score are 6 and above.

Primary sources of data were collected through individual in depth-interviews. The interviews with the participants were conducted four times. The first part of interview focused on the participant's personal and family backgrounds, attitude, motivation, aptitude and their perceptions of their personality. The second part of interviews inquired about the strategies the participants employed in learning specific language elements: pronunciations, vocabulary and grammar. In the third part of interviews, the participants were asked about their strategies in learning specific language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the last part of interviews, the participants were asked to perform four language tasks: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The participants were the main informants in this research. Besides, the information was gathered from other informants. There were 12 other informants in this research, which consisted of participants' parents, teachers, lecturers, and friends. The researcher used Indonesian language in conducting the interviews with those informants. The interviews with the teachers and lecturers was purposed to find information about participants'

language performance, personality, their participations during the learning process and to validate or cross check the information given by the participants. Meanwhile, the interviews with the participants' parents were needed to explore the familial background of the participants, and other information about the participants such as their personality traits, learning habits, intelligence and learning achievements. In addition, interviews with participants' friends was aiming at finding out the participants' learning performance in the classroom. Interviews with those informants were conducted once respectively.

The secondary sources of data were observations and document examinations. The observations were conducted to find the family background of the participants and the ways they plan, organize and do English learning tasks. Therefore, observations were conducted in the participants' house. In addition, observations were also carried out when the participants were requested to perform four language tasks.

Document examinations were purposed to obtain information about participants' achievements in English and participants' strategies in learning English. This information was needed as a part of exploration participants' background and past learning experiences. The information from the document examinations was used to formulate questions in relation to participants' activities in learning English. In this case, the researcher examined various types of records or documents such as participants' English learning notes, participants' report or academic records, participants' English proficiency test results such as TOEFL and IELTS and other English certificates, which were considered relevant to this study.

4. Findings and discussion

4.a. The characteristics of the participants

The descriptions of the findings about the characteristics of good Indonesian EFL learners were divided into six sub categories: (a) family background, (b) attitude and motivation, (c) aptitude and personality, (d) intelligence, (e) learning actions, (f) a willingness to participate and make mistakes, (g) a willingness or ability to personalize the language. Pseudonyms were used for privacy reasons: Kira (the first participant), Rana (the second participant), and Randy (the third participant).

a. Family background

The three participants of this research belong to 23-26 age groups. Two of them are female and one is male. All of them come from graduate English education program and have been learned English in formal institution for around fourteen years. All of the participants came from ordinary families. None of the participants indicated that she or he came from rich family. Kira has a single parent, and her mother reported that she paid family living by herself since Kira in junior high school by working as kindergarten and private teacher. Rana's parent reported the same. Her mother said that she has been a single parent since Rana six years old. She took care of her six children by herself. She worked as an elementary school teacher. As for Randy, she has complete parents but he also reported that his father is a farmer and mother is housewife. The result of interview suggested that he was also come from an ordinary family. In fact, all participants achieved good results in their learning.

However, from the result of interviews and observations, their parents had different ways in educating and guiding them. One of the participants (Kira) believed that her parents had a very great role in her success in language learning. Her mother also reported her intensive involvement toward Kira's learning. The finding indicate that Kira's parents involvement give influential contribution to her learning achievement. Gardner (1991) stated that parental encouragement have a positive influence on motivation. It was proved by Kira's educational attainments. She was academically the most successful students among the other participants. She got the highest score in TOEFL and IELTS. She graduated from English undergraduate program with 'cum laude' remark and was the second best graduate at that time. She also got a scholarship of students exchange program. In addition, she was also awarded 'high achiever' scholarship for English graduate program. Parents' involvements and encouragements had helped her in managing her learning and maintaining sustainable motivation.

b. Attitude and motivation

All of the participants had a positive attitude and high motivation to learn English because they expressed strong liking for or interested in it. However, they also reported that they experienced a kind of 'shifts' in their attitude and motivation. Therefore, this section explains the kinds of shift that they experienced in their attitude and motivation.

1) Positive attitude

Kira was the only participant who have never felt negative attitude toward English learning. She reported that she started to like English because she like to watch an English movie called 'Barbie' when she was in elementary school and she tried to find the soundtrack song and the lyric of that movie. Her liking in English was then supported with the facilities given by her parents, such as English cassettes and story books. Her parents also took her to English course where she found interesting teachers in the course that made the positive attitude grew to be high motivation to learn. Kira never felt negative attitude toward English, since she always

found good environments and competent teachers to learn. When she found that her first grade teacher in junior high school was not attractive, she felt that her teacher in English course was very interesting that make her more interested in English.

2) Positive to negative attitude.

Rana on the other hand, had a shift of attitude from positive to negative attitude. She started to like English because her sister often spoke English at home by giving simple instructions to her. Her sister was an English student that always practiced her English at home that make Rana wanted to be like her. Rana then, found negative attitude to learn English when she was in junior high school because the teacher's techniques in teaching were not interesting. The positive attitude turned to be negative once she found incompetent teacher when she was in the first grade of junior high school. Fortunately, in the second grade she met a devoted and competent teacher and got the positive attitude back.

3) Negative to positive attitude

It is also worth noted that Randy started with a negative attitude but then change to like the language due to the positive reinforcements during the learning process. He reported that his liking in English started when he was in senior high school. In Junior high school, he did not like English because he had not found a special thing about English including the teachers. He even got low score in final examination. Fortunately, he met a very attractive teacher when he was in senior high school who always gave positive reinforcements that turn the attitude to be positive. The kind of positive reinforcement included praise, trust, encouragement and interesting teaching methods of the teacher. These reinforcements also made him motivated to learn English seriously.

4) Motivation from teacher (classroom motivation)

With regard to the motivation in learning English, all of the participants have high motivation to learn English. However, the motivations were sometimes changed in line with the level of learning. They all agreed that they start to be motivated to learn English seriously because of their English teachers. Kira reported that her English teacher in the course firstly raised the motivation to learn. In the second grade of her junior high school, she found an attractive teacher who made her keep learning in the course. She said that she took English course because she wanted to please her English teacher at school by answering all of the questions given by the teacher. When being asked why she liked the teacher, she said that the teacher always gave praise and encouragement to learn. Besides that, the teacher also knitted good relationship with the students. In teaching, the teacher also used many ways to make learning more enjoyable to the students. He used game, drama and role-plays in teaching English.

Similarly, Rana started being motivated to learn English because of her sister who always practiced her English at home. She liked to see her sister speak English and wanted to do the same. Her sister was just like her first teacher who introduced her with the language. She stated further that she started learning English formally, when she was in Junior high school since English is a compulsory subject at school. In the second grade, she was motivated to learn seriously because of her attractive teacher. She confirmed that the way teacher taught made her improve the progress in learning English.

Randy also found motivation to learn English from his teacher when he was in senior high school. He said that his favorite teacher was a good instructor and close to the students. He (the teacher) motivated his students to learn by supporting and preparing them to participate in English competitions. The teacher also avoided giving negative comments during the learning process. Besides, he also had lively ways in bringing his lessons, such as using English songs and other authentic and contextual learning materials. Besides, the teacher also founded an English meeting club at school to facilitate his students to learn English and take part in English competitions. In Gardner's recent construct of motivation, motivation from teacher is categorized as classroom motivation.

5) Integrative motivation

All of participants confirmed their integrative motivation. Kira reported a change in motivation from classroom motivation to integrative motivation when she was in university. She was motivated to keep learning English because she wanted to go abroad, she likes English culture and wants to know the people. She said that in university she got cross cultural understanding subjects where she learnt much about English cultures that raised her motivation to go abroad. She also further claimed that her parents' encouragements by providing advices and facilities had boosted her internal motivation to learn English. She admitted that her parents had a great role in her success in learning language by maintaining her motivation to learn. In Baily's (1986) framework of motivation, this kind of motivation is categorized as integrative extrinsic motivation, an integrative motivation that emerges because of others' suggestion or supports.

Rana on the other hand, reported her integrative motivation since in senior high school. She found herself being interested in English songs, movies, and novels because she loves English. She wanted to know the culture of the native from those sources. Besides, in university she was also motivated to study abroad to learn the culture and language from the native people.

Randy reported that when he was in senior high school he thought that English is a prestigious language because English is an international language and regarded as a difficult subject at school. Therefore, people who

know the language look prestigious than others, hence it also motivated him to learn English seriously.

6) Instrumental motivation.

Rana and Randy found instrumental motivation when they took English major in university. Rana further explained that she took English education major because of her mother's and sister's suggestion. They argued that by taking English major in university she would easily find jobs or earn money. She admitted that she was not interested to learn English in university since English was not too difficult for her and it could be learnt informally from books or courses. She was interested to take Psychology but finally she followed her family's suggestion to take English major for professionalism reasons. Similarly, Randy reported that he took English major because of his parents' suggestion. His parents said that he had been good in English that would be easy for him to be successful with it (to find jobs). This kind of motivation reported by the two participants is categorized as instrument motivation is Gardner's framework and instrument extrinsic motivation in Bailey's framework of motivation.

Attitude and motivation have been identified for many times as the important factor influencing language learning. Many researchers have found strong relationships between the two. Attitude has an effect on how students react to learning tasks. Positive attitude tends to raise high motivation in learning. In converse, negative attitude indicated unwillingness and hence, decrease or eliminate motivation to study or to do tasks. Gardner (1979) views attitudes as the "learner's attitude toward the learning situation. While Ellis (1994) and Freeman & Long (1991) proposed a number of different attitudes, such as learner's attitude toward second/foreign language, second/foreign language learning and target language speaking people. The three participants had three kinds of attitudes of Ellis's framework. Gardner (1985) defined second or language motivation as "the extent to which an individual works and strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". Following Gardner's motivation framework, participants of this research have the combination of both integrative and instrumental motivation and also have a shift between those of two kind motivations.

Those findings supported some of the previous researches which agreed that both integrative and instrument motivation are important and both can lead success in learning the language. It is also concord with Gardner further construct of motivation, which distinguishes between language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation. Language learning motivation means motivation to learn the language. Meanwhile, classroom learning motivation refers to the motivation in the classroom situation that will be influenced by a host of factors such as the teacher, the classroom atmosphere, the course content, materials and facilities and personal characteristics of the students (Gardner, 1991). Shulman (1986) said that the task of the teacher is to maximize the motivation. Further, he expressed that students' learning is facilitated most effectively when students are motivated, and that motivation can be enhanced through the creation of a positive affective climate.

c. Aptitude and personality

Participants had a diverse aptitude and some common distinguished personality traits. Two of them reported that they had a language aptitude that made them easier to learn the language, while one of them said that she did not have such aptitude to learn the language. She believed that her efforts leading her to be successful in learning the language. Rana elaborated further that she was easy to understand grammar or structure and reading texts by guessing from the context. Randy explained that he was a good listener and a good imitator. He found, it was easy to understand teachers' explanation and then he could practice or imitate it. It is also interesting to note that Kira who thinks that she did not have an aptitude to learn language points out, effort was more important than aptitude for language learning. She explained further that her success in language learning was determined by her motivation to learn, facilities provided by her parents and efforts she took.

However, this finding about aptitude has limitations since the researcher did not use language aptitude test to assess participants' aptitude accurately. Inevitably, the finding also suggests that motivation and efforts were other predictors of success in language learning. Without language aptitude, it is possible for students to be successful in language learning.

As for personality, the finding suggested some similarities on participants' personality traits. However, it still can be detected many differences in some of their personality traits. The common features of their personality were extrovert, active, high self confidence, sociable and goal oriented. Some of those characteristics were also reported by some researches on good language learners.

d. Intelligence

Based on the document examinations and interviews with participants themselves and the informants, it was found that all participants have good achievement in general subjects since they were in senior high school. They were always in top five of the class rank and seat in high achiever classes or schools. It was also found that all participants are intellectually bright. Intelligence refers to an ability or a brain capacity in understanding and reasoning the incoming information during the learning process. Carrol (1962) and Gardner (1997) argued that

intelligence plays a role in language learning and acquisition because it influences the extent to which students understand the instructions and intentions of the teacher.

e. Learning actions

Supporting the previous findings, good learners in this research took various learning actions. It indicated that they are able to take charge of their own learning. Even though, they had different learning actions as an extra effort to improve their English they could find their own ways in learning that make them more enjoyable and successful. They were creative in finding and creating learning environments that suit their need and learning style. The following are four learning actions taken by the participants:

1) English course

Kira took an English course since she was in junior high school and it lasted for five years when she got an advance level. She was motivated to learn in the English course because she found that it was interesting and enjoyable. Besides, she also got supports from parents. Kira believed that English course is one of an effective ways to improve her English. In converse, two of participants reported that they never take an English course instead they took other learning actions such as joining English meeting clubs and English competition.

2) English meeting clubs

All participants confirmed that joining English meeting clubs is one of the ways to enhance their English proficiency. Kira reported that in addition of the English course, she also actively attended an English meeting club once a week when she was in senior high school. In university, when she did not learn in the English course anymore, she formed an English meeting club in her classroom and she also had a group work which holds the meeting outside the classroom. Besides, she, together with her friends, often went to Fort Rotterdam to search for opportunities to speak with tourists.

Rana reported the same. In university, she also founded an English meeting club in her class and outside the class to improve her speaking skill. She had limited time to study in courses; therefore, she created her own way to learn English with her friends by founding English meeting clubs.

As for Randy, besides learning English formally at school, he also actively involved in an English meeting club in his school. This meeting club was conducted four times a week with two or three hours per meeting. In the meeting club, he had more time to practice English and got English exposure from the teacher and friends. He stated that this meeting club potentially helped him in improving his English.

3) English competitions

All participants reported that they actively participated in English competitions such as English debate, story telling, writing and quizzes. Kira for several times represented her school to take a part in English debate, English speech contest and English quizzes when she was in senior high school. Rana also actively participated in writing and speech competition when she was in senior high school. Similarly, Randy was very active in joining various competitions. He often took part in English debate competition, English speech contest, story telling, and English broad casting from senior high school until university. He was a good debater, when he was in university (S1 degree) he joined with university debate organization and often represented his university in debate competition nationally and internationally. He said that from debate competitions he learnt and improved his skill in listening, organizing ideas and speaking. He was fully aware of her learning style from which he took learning actions that suit the style.

4) Learning by teaching English to others

Rana reported that teaching was also one of learning actions she took to learn English. She started to teach English since she was in the second semester of university. She also said that by teaching, she could improve her knowledge and proficiency in English because she needed to study to prepare English learning materials before teaching.

Good Indonesian EFL learners in this research took various learning actions as an extra effort to facilitate their language learning. It indicated that they are able to take charge of their own learning. They realized that language classroom is not enough for them to learn the language; therefore, they put efforts to speed up their proficiency. From their interviews, it was apparent that they went the extra mile to accomplish their success in language learning. This finding is concord with Rubin (1975), who stated that the good language learner is not inhibited and has a strong drive to communicate. The findings also support Yanto's (2011) research that good language learners take charge of their own learning. The finding also supported Rubin's with Thompson's (1982) research on the characteristics of the good language learners. They found that GLLs find their own and take charge of their meaning.

f. A willingness to actively participate and make mistakes

All of participants in this research had a very high self confident. They actively participated in class discussions and English competitions. They had never afraid of making mistakes. They realized that mistakes would help them improve their ability in learning the language. Kira for instance, based on the information from some

informants was very active. She always asked or answered teachers or lecturer questions. She was never afraid that her friend would laugh at her if she was wrong. She also actively participated in any events or tasks given by the teachers. She reported that she just thought that mistakes are funny, she never felt ashamed of her teacher or friends' correction.

Similarly reported, Rana was also an active student who always participated in the class activities and discussions. She also had very high self confidence that make her not afraid of making mistakes. The result of interviews with her classmates and his lecturers confirmed the same. Her lecturer said that she was very enthusiastic in learning; she would work hard to get something, she also active in searching information about learning and eager to crosscheck information given by lecturer. Her classmates reported that she always participated in class even with the most 'threatening lecturer'. She often asked questions and answered questions during the learning process in the classroom. Randy was the same. He was very active students. He always participated in any English discussions inside or outside the classroom. He also always asked questions or answer teachers' questions. He was a very confident student and he had never thought to afraid of making mistakes. He realized his weaknesses in reading, (because he did not like reading a lot) therefore, he compensated it by actively involving himself in talks and discussions with his friends. He also compensated his weaknesses by activate himself in any competitions. An interview with his teacher also confirmed that he was very active student and had high self confidence.

Generally, students who actively participate do better and make faster progress. Students who are typically shy or passive in their learning away from doing pair and group works will find ways not to participate in class discussions, they tend to improve slower progress. This is connected with their fear of making mistakes or of taking risks. Therefore, participants' active participation in learning and their willingness to make mistakes help them to improve their English.

This finding is concord with some of the previous researches. Sandee Thompson (2005) found that good language learners have a willingness to actively participate and to make mistakes and take risks. In addition, it also supported Rubin's (1975) characteristics of good language learners.

g. A willingness or ability to personalize the language

Based on the analysis of interviews and document examinations, the participants always tried to make their learning process as personal and meaningful to themselves. They related language learning with their own personal lives and experiences. Kira used English to write in her personal blog and to write personal feeling in her books. She shared her feeling by writing her feeling in English.

Rana used English as a language to write in her diary. She started keeping her diary when she was in senior high school since then she always wrote any events and feelings by using English, she also stated that English was a language to speak the secret things with her sister. In addition, she also reported that she often used English as a language to talk to herself. She further stated that she used monologues or self talks to imprint her personal feelings such as happiness, sadness or anger. She also confirmed that the monologue helped her in increasing her English specially in speaking. Randy, on the other hand, used English to write status in his twitter or face book. He said that when he found new vocabulary, he usually used the vocabulary to write status in his social network accounts. He explained, by using the vocabulary in context that relates to her life make him easier to remember the lexical and contextual meaning of the words.

It indicated that all participants made personal involvement in the language learning. "Personal involvement is one very effective way of enhancing motivation" (griffin and Keohane, 200:1). This finding offers something new in the literature of good Indonesian EFL learners' characteristics but it supported the research findings of the characteristics of good language learners of Vietnamese as a foreign language conducted by Le Ho in 2011.

From the explanation of those six seven sub categories above, it can be concluded, there are seven characteristics of good Indonesian EFL learners found in this research: (1) coming from ordinary families with diverse family backgrounds, (2) having high motivation and positive attitude, (3) having extrovert, sociable, confident and goal oriented personality traits and diverse language aptitude, (4) having good intellectual competence (smart), (5) being able to take charge their own learning by taking various learning actions (creative), (6) actively participate and not afraid of making mistakes and, (7) having willingness or ability to personalize the language.

4.b. Learning strategies

a. Language elements

1) Pronunciations

The participants most often cognitive strategies in learning pronunciation. One of the participants (Kira) said that imitating and paying attention to native speakers' pronunciation was effective to acquire native like pronunciation. They also centered their attention on how words pronounced. They practiced pronunciation

naturalistically while they were watching movies or TV serials and listening to songs or radio programs. Using phonetic spelling and checking dictionaries (electronic and online dictionaries included) for phonetic symbols or auditory clues were also strategies mentioned by Rana and Randy.

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Cognitive	Repeating - Repeating teachers', friends' and native speakers' pronunciation Imitating - Imitating native speaker Practicing formally/naturalistically - Learning from lecturer (phonology subject) - watching TV/movies - listening to English songs
	Metacognitive	Paying attention - paying attention to how words are pronounced
Rana	Cognitive	Practicing formally / naturalistically - learning / listening to teachers (English subject) - watching English movies - Listening to English songs Using resources to receive messages - checking dictionary
Randy	Cognitive	Using resources to receive messages - checking dictionary

2) Vocabulary

The participants used various strategies in learning vocabulary. Kira reported that she learnt vocabulary by memorize words from dictionary, memorize words from teachers, watch movies, read yahoo comments and write in context or sentences. She also reported that she usually opened the dictionary when she found new vocabulary.

Rana learnt vocabulary by looking dictionary when find new words, keeping vocabulary file in her computer, using it to write in her diary , writing new vocabulary on the wall. She also stated that when she found new words when reading, she would make guesses before consulting to the dictionary.

Randy had almost the same strategies in learning vocabulary. He reported in the interviews that he learnt vocabulary by opening or consulting the dictionary, using to write status in social networks and use it to speak. He also said that he usually guessed the new words that he found in the texts before consulting the dictionary. Referring to the oxford's classification the strategies can be classified as illustrated in the following table.

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Memory	Memorizing - Memorize new words from teachers and dictionary
	Cognitive	Practicing formally/naturalistically - watching movies - Write in context or sentences Using resources to receive messages - checking dictionary
	Compensation	Guessing intelligently - guess from context
Rana	Cognitive	Practicing formally / naturalistically - Read English materials (novels, magazines) - watching English movies - learning from the exposures of instructions from her sister Placing new words into context - Write in a diary Using resources to receive messages - checking dictionary Using mechanical techniques - Writing on the wall - Keep vocabulary files
	Compensation	Guessing intelligently - guess from context
Randy	Cognitive	Practicing formally / naturalistically - watching English movies - listening to English songs - reading proverbs / words from pictures Using resources to receive messages - checking dictionary

3) Grammar.

From the result of interview, it was found that participants in this research learn grammar by using various strategies. Kira learnt grammar by applying in sentences, consulting with teacher, doing grammar exercises, and finding and analyzing the pattern from English texts. Rana learnt grammar from grammar book by reading and analyzing it, learned from English lecturers/teachers. She added that she sometimes acquired or 'picked up' grammar by reading English texts/materials. Randy reported that he learnt grammar by doing grammar exercises and reading from grammar book. He also stated that at schools he learnt grammar through his teacher who asked him to do grammar exercises. Below is the table that shows the strategies by using Oxford's learning strategies framework.

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Cognitive	Reasoning deductively - doing grammar exercises - finding and analyzing the pattern from English texts.
	Social	Asking Questions - consulting (asking) to teacher
Rana	Cognitive	Reasoning deductively - studying grammar from the grammar book - analyzing the pattern in the grammar book Practicing formally / naturalistically - learning from teachers - picking up (acquiring) grammar from English texts/ readings
Randy	Cognitive	Reasoning deductively - studying grammar from the grammar book - doing grammar exercises

b. Four language skills

1) Listening and Speaking

As for listening and speaking, all participants reported that they tended to seek opportunities to practice speaking and listening. They improve listening skill by listen a loud to listening materials and listen to English songs. Kira reported that she trained her listening skill through listening materials, while Rana and Randy confirmed that they learnt and improved the skill by listening to English songs and English listening materials.

In speaking, Kira said that she learnt and improved her speaking skills through practices with friends and teachers in an English course and in English meeting club. Rana improved her speaking skill through monologue (self talk), practices in English club and practices at home with her sister. Randy learnt and trained his speaking skills through practices in English debate competitions, in English meeting club and practices speak English with his friends. In addition, he reported he also improved his speaking through practices with tourists (foreigners) and discussions in his English class. The following are the tables that illustrate the participants' strategies by using Oxford's learning strategies framework.

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - Listening to English listening materials (cassettes)
Rana	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - Listening to English listening materials (cassettes) - Listening to English songs
Randy	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - Listening to English listening materials (cassettes) - Listening to English songs and movies

Table 4. Strategies in listening

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Metacognitive	Seeking opportunities to practices - Joining an English meeting club
	Cognitive	Practicing formally / naturalistically - Practice with peers and teachers in the English course
Rana	Metacognitive	Seeking opportunities to practices - forming an English meeting club
	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - practicing with family (sister) - monologue (self talk)
Randy	Metacognitive	Seeking opportunities to practices - joining an English meeting club - joining English debate competitions
	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - practicing with friends - having discussions

Table 5. Strategies in speaking

2) Reading & writing

Again for strategies for reading and writing, participants stated that they often used formal and naturalistic practices such as write in diary, write in blog, write status in social network accounts (facebook and twitter) and write lessons (note taking) by using English. From the interview, they also indicated that writing tasks from lecturers also help them in improving their writing skills. For reading, the participants confirmed variety of reading sources to practice and train their reading skill. Kira said that she often read online news and article, and her textbooks. While Rana confirmed that, she improved her reading by read various reading sources such as English articles, magazines, and novels. Randy admitted that he did not like read a kind of ‘heavy’ reading materials such as novels or magazines, as he recognized himself an auditory learner. However, he tried to compensate it by reading short online news in the internet. He often searched hot news and sport topics. The tables below summarize the participants’ strategies in reading and writing.

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Cognitive	Practicing formally / naturalistically - writing in personal blog - writing for English tasks - taking notes in English
Rana	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - writing in a diary - taking notes in English
Randy	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - writing status in facebook/twitter - writing English tasks

Table 6. Strategies in learning writing

Participants	Strategy groups	Specific strategies
Kira	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - reading online news and articles - reading English textbooks
Rana	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - reading English articles, novels and magazines
Randy	Cognitive	Practicing naturalistically - reading online short news

Table 7. Strategies in learning reading

c. Language t

From overall strategies, the most frequent learning strategies used by participants in learning language elements and language skills are cognitive strategies. Besides, they also employed metacognitive, compensation, social, and memory strategies. It confirmed many previous findings that most of good or successful learners used cognitive and metacognitive strategies more often. This result is consistent with some of the findings of

Takauchi's (2003) study on language learning strategies of Japanese good language learners that found some strategies preferred in the Japanese foreign language context, such as metacognitive strategies related to maximizing input and the opportunities to use a foreign language, and cognitive strategies for practicing, such as imitating, shadowing and pattern-practicing. However, the participants in this research used wider range of cognitive strategies. The finding also supported the finding of Chuo & Yen (2007) who carried out a research on good language learners in Taiwanese EFL context. The study found that the good language learners constantly engaged in formal practicing, especially repeating and imitating, as a sub strategies of cognitive strategies. Moreover, they also creating an input-rich environment (metacognitive), and actively sought opportunities to practice naturalistically mostly through pleasure or fun activities (cognitive strategies).

c. Language tasks

The result from interviews and an observation when being requested to perform language tasks such as listening, speaking, reading and writing the participants tend to plan for the tasks, a manifestation of metacognitive strategy use. Collecting relevant information, brainstorming ideas, making outline or concepts were steps the participants mentioned before performing writing and speaking tasks. Kira reported that she sometimes needed to memorize the text she made before presenting the speaking task. All the participants also indicated to make revision before presenting writing tasks.

As for performing a listening task, strategies such as note taking the important points and previewing comprehension questions were mentioned by participants. Getting main ideas or selective attention and guessing from the context also often used by all the participants. Meanwhile, in performing a reading task, the strategies such as searching for the main ideas (skimming) and searching for specific details interest to them (scanning) were used. Besides, previewing comprehension questions was also mentioned and done by all participants.

Listening task		Reading task	
Strategy group	Specific strategy	Strategy group	Specific strategy
Cognitive	Taking notes	Cognitive	Getting the idea quickly
	Getting the ideas quickly		- Previewing questions
	- Previewing questions		- Getting main ideas
	- Getting main ideas (selective attention)		- Searching for specific details
Compensation	Guessing intelligently		
	- Guessing from the context		

Table 8. Strategies in performing listening and reading tasks.

Speaking task		Writing task	
Strategy group	Specific strategy	Strategy group	Specific strategy
Metacognitive	Planning for task	Metacognitive	Planning for task
	- Collecting relevant information		- Collecting relevant information
	- Brainstorming for ideas		- Brainstorming for ideas
	- Drafting		- Making outline
			- Drafting
Memory (Kira)	Memorizing		Self Monitoring
	- Memorize the text before presenting		- Revising for content, organization and accuracy
	Lowering anxiety		
	- Preparing well		
Affective	Taking risks wisely		
	- Not worried about the mistakes		

Table 9. Strategies in performing speaking and writing tasks.

In some cases, this finding confirmed the previous research on good language learners in EFL Taiwanese context carried out by Chuo and Yen (2007). The research found that good language learners in EFL Taiwanese context employed metacognitive, cognitive, compensation and memory strategies in coping with

language tasks.

4.c. The ways to plan, monitor and evaluate learning.

The participants reported different ways to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning.

a. Planning

Kira mentioned that she usually prepared for English lessons and set her goal or target in learning and prepared for exams by summarizing. She planned what to achieve in learning for example when she was in senior high school, her goal was to get free admission test to university. In university or S1 degree, her goal was get scholarship to go abroad, so she planned English learning and English proficiency tests. She also said that to reach the target she took an extra effort to learn and practice the language. She together with her classmates formed and managed an English club in her class; she also had a group work outside the classroom to discuss her lessons.

Rana mentioned that she planed her learning by setting goal and creating or seeking opportunities to learn and practice the language by forming English speaking clubs, listening to English listening materials and reading various English articles. The same as Kira, she also founded an English club in her classroom, this club required the members to have discussions in English. When she failed to maintain the group, she formed another group with her close friends outside classroom with the same purposes and rules.

Setting goal was also reported by Randy to plan his learning, but he admitted that he was not always consistent in setting the goal or the target. More often, he preferred to learn or do something unintentionally. He liked to “flow with the wind”. He also searched for opportunities to learn and practice the language by following English competitions.

Below is the table that shows participants’ ways to plan their learning.

Kira	Rana	Randy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting goals/targets - Preparing for lessons - Preparing for exams - Searching opportunities to practice and learn the language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting goals/targets - Searching opportunities to practice and learn the language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting goals/targets (not consistent) - Searching opportunities to practice and learn the language

Table 10. participants’ ways to plan learning

b. Monitoring

To monitor her learning Kira checked her report or academic transcripts to know her progress in learning. Parent monitoring was also reported by this participant. Her mother monitored her learning by regularly checking her report or academic transcripts and then she (the mother) consulted with Kira’s teacher in the course when Kira got low scores. She also asked the teacher to give additional lesson for ‘fail’ subjects.

In monitoring her learning, Rana tried to find many ways to learn or practice the language. She said that she tried to read various English sources to monitor her learning. The extensive reading enriched her with language information that enables her to detect her progress in learning.

On the other hand, Randy monitored his learning by taking English tests such as TOEFL or IELTS to measure his learning progress. He also reported that he always paid attention on his weak side and mistakes to make it better. The following table is the summary of participants’ way to monitor their learning.

Kira	Rana	Randy
Self monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checking reports/transcripts Parents monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulting with teachers 	Self monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read various English texts/sources 	Self monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checking reports/transcripts - Taking English test proficiencies

Table 11. Participants’ ways to monitor learning

c. Evaluating

In evaluation besides self evaluation, Kira also got evaluation from mother. She evaluated her learning by comparing his academic records with her classmates. Her mother usually evaluated her learning by giving support and suggestion for better learning in the future. Rana usually checked thoroughly her academic transcript or report and test result and then arranged batter plan for the weak / low scores. Different from Kira, this participant never got evaluation or monitoring from her parents. Randy evaluating his learning the same as Rana, he usually looked at his report or transcript. By looking the transcript, he could detect his strengths and weaknesses, and then tried to improve the weaknesses. Below is the table that shows participant’s ways to evaluate their learning.

Kira	Rana	Randy
Self evaluation - Comparing scores / reports with classmates - Plan better learning for weak scores Parents evaluation - Suggestions/advice for better learning	Self evaluation - Checking academic reports/transcripts - Plan better learning for weak / low scores	Self evaluation - Checking academic reports/transcripts - Plan better learning for weak / low scores

Table 12. participants' ways to evaluate their learning.

Kira had some different ways in planning, monitoring and evaluating her learning. What makes this participant different from the other participants was that she got much attention from her parents in learning. Her mother always monitored and evaluated her learning. As a result, she accomplished an outstanding academic achievements compared to other students and other participants in this research.

Researches showed that supportive and attentive parenting practices positively affect academic achievement (Eamon, 2005). In addition, high parents' aspirations have been associated with increasing students' interest in education (Majoribank, 2005). These statements are concord with the finding of this research that parents' involvements positively affect student's academic achievements. Generally, students who receive good attentions from their parents are more motivated to learn, since parents are respective and inspiring figures for them. Parental involvement has been linked to positive achievement on academic achievements. In this research, parental involvements were received by Kira.

Planning, monitoring and evaluating are part of metacognition, a term introduced by Anderson (2002). Metacognition is divided into five primary and intersection components: (1) preparing and planning for learning, (2) selecting and using strategies, (3) monitoring learning, (4) orchestrating strategies, and (4) evaluating learning. Metacognition results in critical but healthy reflection and evaluation of thinking that may result in making specific changes in how learning is managed, and in the strategies chosen for this purpose (Anderson, 2002).

Conclusion and suggestions

Based on the findings and discussion, the researcher puts forward conclusion as follows:

1. The characteristics of good Indonesian EFL learners are: (1) coming from ordinary families and diverse family backgrounds, (2) having high motivation and positive attitude, (3) having extrovert, sociable, confident and goal oriented personality traits and diverse language aptitude, (4) having good intellectual competence (smart), (5) being able to take charge their own learning by taking various learning actions (creative), (6) being actively participate and not afraid of making mistakes and, (7) having willingness or ability to personalize the language.
2. Good Indonesian EFL learners employed various strategies in their language learning such as cognitive, metacognitive, social, memory, compensation and affective strategies.
3. Good Indonesian EFL learners planned their learning by setting goals and targets, preparing for English lessons and exam, and seeking opportunities to learn and use the language. They monitor their learning by checking their academic reports, consult with teacher, and taking English proficiency test. One of Ranas also had parents monitoring and evaluation. They evaluated their learning by checking their academic records, comparing the records with others, and making better plan for future learning.

A. Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher gives some suggestions as follows:

1. For students, it is suggested to utilize various strategies that would possibly make learning more effective and to take learning actions that fit their interest such as English meeting club and English competitions. It is also advisable for students to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning for better learning achievements.
2. For teachers, authentic materials such as English songs, English movies, and text messages, can be integrated into pedagogical activities to provide more opportunity for language acquisition. English teachers' role is very influential in raising and maintaining motivation of good language learners in this study. Therefore, it is advisable for English teachers to make language learning interesting and enjoyable for students by employing the more communicative approach in learning. In addition, teachers' rapport with students and teachers' positive comments are also important to attract students' motivation to learn English. Therefore, it is also advisable for teachers to maintain good rapport with students and give positive comments during the learning process.
3. It is suggested for the next researchers to conduct deeper researches about the characteristics and learning strategies of good Indonesian EFL learners with greater number of participants and from variety of

educational backgrounds.

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