Independent Vocabulary Learning Features and Strategies of Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract
Shifting the independent learning style becomes nowadays trend. Regarding to its positive impact, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang (MMISIUM), has encouraged students to join language training in Ma'had Ali (MA) Sunan Ampel on-Campus Halls of Residence. Then, this study is (1) to identify the features of independent learning strategies used by the Indonesian EFL learners at MA, and (2) to identify the learning strategies as the characteristic manner to approach any learning task and figuring out the strategies selected to approach the vocabulary learning tasks. This case study aims at exploring the the Indonesian EFL learners' strategies occurred in foreign language learning contexts. The data were gathered through interview, observation, and field notes. The findings showed that the independent learners (a) employ individually rather than in groups learning, (b) control their learning by keeping themselves focused in learning process, (c) use memorization and guessing, and (d) are willing to accomplish the tasks in certain amount of time. On the vocabulary performance task, the students use different strategies for memorizing the list of vocabulary.
Keywords: learning, learning feature, learning strategies

1. Introduction
The idea of promoting independent learning, including language learning in Indonesian educational setting, has become very important today. Wenden (1991) cites that a key idea in education today is helping students to become life-long learners, that are able to think and learn without teachers to tell them what to do, think and learn. As learners become independence, they make more decisions for themselves, including whether or not to use the task developed by the teachers. Thus, Gardner (1997:7) states that independent learning tasks can take place in the classroom, outside the classroom, or in a self-access-center, a dedicated facility with materials banks for independent language study.

Learner independence is characterized by unbiased problem solving and the capacity development done through collaboration with more capable friends (Vygotsky, 1978). Benson (2001) summed up the significance of Vygotsky's theory in analyzing learner independence by stating the importance of social interaction and collaboration. This means that the use of alternative learning environments are not trainer-targeted and it inspires scholar collaboration and interaction. For that reason, it also demands social interaction and inner cognitive interaction.

Studying the use of the language learning strategy is bound to the idea of promoting independence. A study of independent learning strategy with 386 students at the tertiary level at three universities in Malang done by Mistar (2002) had concluded that there was a link between learning strategies and learner autonomy. Suharmanto (2003) encourages the teachers to promote independence. From the same point of view, Benson (2001) states that the pursuit of learner independence requires the focus on strategy for learner independence. Referring to the positive impacts, MMISIUM, one of the state tertiary Islamic education institutions in Indonesia, has encouraged students to join language training in MA on-Campus Halls of Residence. According to MMISIUM academic book, one of the goals of MA is creating a conducive language environment to develop Arabic and English skills. Hence, it is important to (1) to identify the features of independent learning strategies used by the Indonesian EFL learners at MA, (2) to identify the learning strategies ascribed as the characteristic manner to approach any learning task and figuring out the strategies selected to approach the vocabulary learning tasks.

2. Independent Learning and Learning Strategies
Independent learning according to Dickinson (1993) requires as a situation where learner is solely responsible for all decisions regarding his content of learning. It also means freedom to control the content and processes of his own learning (Benson, 2001: 25). In this case, independent learners study entirely on their own by applying a set of skills representing self-directed learning. In addition, it also cover understanding what is being taught. Students should also be able to formulate their own learning objectives and able to formulate future plans. They are also required to be able to select and make use of appropriate learning strategies. Some suggested strategies are metacognitive, social, and affective. As the last element, being able to self-assess, or monitor their own learning should become an emphasis. These strategies include reflecting on, giving self-directions, and developing learner skills

Oxford (1990: 8) states that language learning strategies are required to improve learner's progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving and using the target language. Despite the different definition, there are a

number of basic characteristics in the generally accepted view of LLS. Lessard-Clouston (1997:5) identifies such learners with the ability to enhance language learning and competence, as reflected in their listening, speaking, reading, or writing skilss. It also involves information and memory skills (vocabulary knowledge, grammar rules, etc.)

3. Methods

This case study aims at exploring the Indonesian EFL learners' strategies occurred in foreign language learning contexts. There were 24 students in the class, most of them were female. However, for the purpose of the study the researcher selected three students to be interviewed. The data were simultaneously gathered by means of the interview, observation, and field notes.

Data analysis procedures involved vocabulary performance task and interviews with the respondents and teacher. Data analysis for the vocabulary performance task was based on one of the coding categories suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998:175). The data for this study are collected from various sources: the English instructors themselves (subjects) and other people directly related to them (informants).

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 Features of Indonesian Independent EFL Learners

The features of Indonesian EFL independent learners at MA are described as follows: Respondent I (IM) is a 19 year old male student who was at present undergoing his undergraduate program in the Department of Informatics Faculty of Science and Technology; he was in the second semester when this study was conducted. This TOEFL equivalent score reaches 550, his GPA is 3.70. He had an experience of staying in California for about nine months in 2006.

Respondent 2 (ZN) is a 19 year old male student from English Letters of the Faculty of Humanities. Having always been interested in Middle Eastern History, culture in general and English in particular, he decided that the more he heard English the more he taught it was beautiful and more eager to learn it. With 560 TOEFL equivalent score and a GPA of 3.5, he successfully integrates his hobby to watch movies for learning the language. He has no experience staying abroad, but his persistence to collect new expressions and words from the films he watches has enabled him to enrich the vocabulary storage in his mind. He shows good qualities of speaking and reading comprehension.

Respondent 3 (ER) is a 18 years old female undergraduate student majoring in chemistry department faculty of Science and Technology. She is interested in studying English for several reasons. For her university requirements, she wanted a foreign language component different from English which she studied in high school. She thinks that learning English has changed her perspective on learning a foreign language. She can speak three languages, namely Japanese, German and English.

The data of this study revealed features of independent learners identified by Dickinson (1993:330-31) and on what Benson (2001) labeled control over learning management. The respondents were asked during the second interview to comment on their choice of learning strategies. On metacognitive strategies the respondents said their attention when studying English depended a lot on their mood. It covered how much homework they had, how determined they were to study, as well as on the time (e.g., the day before an assignment was due) and location (e.g., home, the library, Self Access Center, and MA). IM said, "I do sometimes have trouble with attention. My mind wanders at home. I'll put it this way. When I haven't studied English for a day or two, I sit down and really get into it. But sometimes, I get overwhelmed." The respondents also mentioned that their attention level fluctuated depending on how busy they were and whether they were doing a homework assignment. In addition, ER said, "It goes up and down. It depends on my mood. Sometimes, I'll be very focused on the task and other days I can't give it full attention." (interview 15/6/2009). ZN further added, "I'm usually focused on homework assignments because of the dline and I'm usually very attentive when it comes to the due date of assignment." (interview 15/6/2009)

All respondents said that they usually checked for errors by referring to textbooks and the instructor. They did not verify their answers when they felt confident enough. They also stated that they were more careful on tests and usually reviewed their answers extensively. On timed task, learners are more careful in performing their skill (Indah, 2014).

Those result indicates social methodologies which incorporate asking inquiries (for elucidation alternately correction), coordinating with others (to confirm understanding), association for having discussions, communication with the teacher (initiating discussions for more suggestions), and it includes empathizing for others (changing one's mentality at a different culture). The respondents accounted that they might ask inquiries. ER explained why she was sometimes hesitant to ask questions. She said "I generally don't ask questions in class. I don't have too much curiosity about the background of what I'm learning. I generally take that and accept it." (interview 15/6/2009)

The participants occasionally initiated conversations in English with each other in class. One of the three

respondents said that he did initiate such interactions, whereas two said they did not. Outside of class, those interactions consisted of greetings and very basic conversations due to the fact that the students were still in the first year. In some instances, however, the participants tried to have longer dialogues. In her first interview ER clarified, "We tried to drill our conversation. We don't know how we did, but we had fun trying to do it on our own. In Shobagul Lughoh (English Day) we're actually trying to communicate using the language." (interview 15/6/2009)

In addition, in line with the empathy with others, two of the respondents expressed empathy toward the English culture as a result of studying the language. ER wrote, "I've always had more awareness of the English culture than the average person in my class. It has helped a lot because when you learn the language, you learn a lot about culture. It's all intertwined." ZN added, "Through studying English, I have developed cultural understanding, especially religion and ways of life."(interview 16/6/2009)

Concerning affective strategies, all the respondents in this study, however, stated that their level of anxiety was not high and that they generally felt comfortable when speaking to the instructor in English. They tried to do their best not making any errors in speaking or writing. In this regard, IM said, "For the most part, I know that I'm not going to be judged or looked down upon if I get something wrong. I do like to be corrected so that I know what I'm doing wrong." (interview 15/6/2009).

In line with the encouraging oneself, three respondents reported that they did not think about ways to encourage themselves such as making positive statements or writing notes to themselves. One respondent, IM, said that to encourage himself he usually bragged to his friends about his success and rewarded himself with dinner and a movie. As for the instructor's part, he often complimented the students equally and rewarded them with extra points. Compliments are considered effective to foster EFL learner's motivation (Indah, 2017).

In addition, during the course of the researcher's observations, the respondents pictured independent language learning strategies, as follows: (1) IM tended to be well-motivated to learn vocabulary; have good progress in English; able to express feeling in English which make him feeling successful; enjoy learning English more than before; have a genuine desire to learn English; independently organize study plan; responsible for his schedule and participate in debate forum; and to learn independently using media. (2) ZN believed to be able to step back from what he did and reflected upon it in order to make decisions about what he needed to do next; alert to change in an adaptable, resourceful, and opportunistic way; methodical and disciplined; logical and analytical; curious, open, and motivated; confident and have a positive self-concept; independent and self-sufficient; and more social and interactive with other students. ZN preferred learning strategy by combination of self-learn and self-taught. (3) ER was flexible; interdependent though classmates and depend on each other to make the learning experience more rewarding and successful; persistent and responsible; creative in language learning; interested in improving English skills; not talking much in class; and learning on his own.

Further, all the respondents said they reflected on their learning; they contemplated the way they learned and the teaching methods used with them especially when they did not understand something and when they had homework. IM elaborated by saying, "last semester I took a class where the instructor's handling class wasn't conducive to the environment. So it made the learning activities very difficult and I was very unmotivated in that class as a result." (interview 15/6/2009)

In addition, one respondent, ER, had a good understanding of her abilities, enabling her to improve herself. She said, "I feel that because I'm strong in any kind of class activities, I know where I'm weak, too. So I tell myself where to pick up." The teacher's decision-making also had an influence on the learners' way of thinking about the class. ZN wrote in his journal, "I thought the tutor was too hard or was making too big a deal out of something. Sometimes I thought the tutor should do a better job of letting us know earlier when we need to do something." (interview 15/6/2009)

In general, all the respondents gave themselves mental directions and guidance when studying English to motivate themselves, remain organized, and stay focused on their learning goals. They thought about what to do next as IM said, "When I have a plan or an assignment due, I like a twenty-four hour period in which I have to do. It helps me plan out my time." IM added, "the only example I can do is learning individually. I map out what I need to write in this paper and then I go find sources and build upon that throughout the paper." (interview 15/6/2009).

Previously, in creating learners skills, those respondents accepted that they were required to sharpen their language-learning abilities (familiarity for the English script, reading, writing, speaking, also listening). They also need to learn cross cultural undestanding, and aptitudes incorporated patience, diligence, and taking dependent upon a challenge. Similarly as to utilizing their abilities with attempt with figure out an additional outside language, those respondents said that they might instead concentrate on English during those minute. Two respondents gave fascinating perspectives for this purpose.. First, ZN said, "Now I understand English better because I always use words for communication with friends." IM added, "I think it'll be interesting to write words but hard. It's hard to keep all the language straight in my head." (interview 15/6/2009).

4.2. Selected Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Indonesian EFL Learners

There are some key findings. First, there are a number of vocabulary learning strategies emplyed. Second, the student showed the significance of vocabulary learning in their English learning experience. Third, prior English learning and students' proficiency levels seemed to play a significant major role in their effective use of vocabulary learning strategies. Overall, all three respondents felt positive about vocabulary performance task learning experience compared to their experiences in the regular class.

The results also indicated the variety and range of learning strategies used by the three respondents while performing the vocabulary task, namely (1) understanding the meaning of words using first language and using pictures, (2) sounding out words, (3) emphasizing the words: repeated spelling, and writing, underlining, (4) association of the words: using imagery, associations, story-making, sequencing, and location of words, (5) analyzing the words: dividing up words, (6) metacognitive aspects: self-testing, using a spiral pattern, overviewing, skipping difficult words.

Finally, the most interesting strategy used by the participant is "remembering the location on the page". This strategy assists them for guessing task. Gu (2003) suggests that a model of person, task, context, and strategies is first proposed on the importance of task-dependent guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, rote rehearsal strategies, and encoding strategies.

Regarding the results obtained from instructors' responses, different approaches are used, for instance: developing guessing strategy, using flashcards, using pictures and illustrations, doing word games and puzzles, and using different texts to enrich learners' vocabulary (Kashani & Shafiee, 2015). Vocabulary is a regular part of the instruction that enhances vocabulary acquisition. It would be more useful if the learners encode the new word together with the context which means remembering the word together with the surrounding sentence. Or, the learners should create a sentence using the new word and thus put it back into context (Sanaoui, 1995). Further, Folse (2004) points out that vocabulary acquisition also requires to be done systematically. In this case, students' first language also plays role to learn the meaning of basic words, review and reinforcement.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study raise several implications for the development of theory about language learning strategy use by adult EFL learners in Indonesia. The first implication refers to the rich repertoire of strategies used by the Indonesian EFL learners. The findings of this current study provide evidence to corroborate what was found in Chamot and El-Dinary's (1999) investigation of children in foreign language immersion programs. Both young learners and adult learners apply all six categories of strategies, including memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

The next implication refers to the employment of research instruments for identifying and measuring students' use of language learning strategies. Many studies apply structured or semi-structured interviews (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Gunning, 1997; Kung, 2004). The current study adopted the concept and practice of triangulation utilizing three instrumentation: a questionnaire (Oxford 's SILL, 1990), a semi-structured interview (with 3 respondents), and a vocabulary performance task. With data coming from three different resources, the researcher was able to compare, analyze, synthesize, and cross-examine the results in order to present an in-depth profile of Indonesian EFL learners' language learning strategy use.

The discoveries bring a few suggestions with guidelines act for educators particularly language teachers. It may be significant to conceptualize the relationship between students' dialect taking in methodology use and their preference to English supporting their vocabulary acquisition. As formerly discussed, EFL learners at diverse ages requires different type of learning method including language learning games aiming at vocabulary acquisition. In addition, according to Shen (2002), activities for making notes, using word-lists, dictionaries, flashcards, games, mnemonics, word-analysis and the like can be very useful. They directly draw learners' attention to the words which need to be consolidated.

Teachers need to start systematic instructions on teaching vocabulary so that they can equip their students with strategies to cope with the challenges in vocabulary learning. Although using word lists to build up vocabulary size and achieve a short-term purpose is positive (Nation, 1982), it doesn't mean that teachers have to teach words in isolation. Oxford and Crookall (1990) further suggest some techniques such as (a) de-contextualising: word lists, flashcards, and dictionary use; (b) semi contextualising: word grouping, association, visual imagery, aural imaginary, keyword, physical response, physical sensation, and semantic mapping; (c) fully contextualising: reading, listening, speaking and writing; and (d) adaptable: structured reviewing. Such a model provides a continuum of vocabulary learning strategies from least context-based to fully context-based.

Teachers need to approach vocabulary teaching by first teaching EFL learners how to use dictionary as a tool. Dictionary using skills give positive effects on students' vocabulary size and their general English proficiency (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Ta'amneh, 2015). Instructors can be a model for the students and capitalize on practicing this approach in the classroom either as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Vocabulary assignment also needs to be given to the students so that they can learn to be become independent

and skillful users of dictionaries.

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