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"I can rise up from my adversity": Situational language learning strategies

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Deriving from the postulation that learning strategies are shaped from a learning situation, which is inseparable from its socio-cultural context. A paradigm has shifted language learning strategies (LLSs) studies in the new perspective of situational-based research. Using a narrative approach, this study examined one female pre-service teacher of an English education major in occupying strategies to fulfill the learning needs. To meet with the data, semi-structured interviews were carried out for the participant through a series of interconnected questions. The results marked that the use of learning strategies varied in a distinct learning situation, including the strategies to achieve the learning goal as well as to encounter the obstacles in English learning. Thus, this study has emphasized the feasibility of LLSs in context. Suggestions were also presented at the end of this paper.

Keywords: language learning strategies, situational approach, student's strategies

INTRODUCTION

Attention to language learning strategies (LLSs) has been geared because these occupy a prominent role in English as a second and foreign language education (ESL and EFL). Also, trends in this field have already bloomed into phases from time to time. Before all else, Rubin (1975) published seven characteristics owned by successful language learners, which became a spearhead of LLSs studies. Henceforth, Oxford (1992) Leaver et al. (2009) elaborated this field into the analysis of strategy use and the categorization of LLSs. Afterward, LLS theories were developed in training of strategy-based instruction (Coskun, 2010; Mistar et al., 2016; Nguyen and Gu, 2013; Rahimi, 2012; Weston, 2015). Until the past few years, research documenting this area has been enacted in English education among myriad teachers and researchers from various countries (Bai and Guo, 2019; Chon and Shin, 2019; Robinson et al., 2016; Teng and Zhang, 2019).

Conceiving the dynamism of LLS is noteworthy to promote the students' awareness on the strategies preferences, so teachers must be able to assist students with strategy instruction in the process of learning. Dao (2020) elucidated that students who were performed in interaction strategy instruction showed favorable engagement in the peer interaction. This strategy concerned with boosting the students' awareness on interaction strategy, construing the strategy, practicing the strategy, self-evaluating the strategy and continuity. Previously, Machili et al. (2020) examined strategy instruction (SI) on the integrated writing through video and intended SI for one semester in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. The result highlighted that SI impacted positively to the students' integrated performance through mediated-video.

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From the aforementioned-view, it unveiled that LLSs studies should be carried out based on a learning situational approach by means of studying the subject of research intensely instead of employing a quantitative approach. This shift of paradigm contends that little attention on LLSs studies is undertaken in a more situational context, especially in Indonesia. The contextual approach is considered most appropriate in this current era of language learning because it focuses on the student's cognitive interaction with the environment that influences the use of the strategy itself. As an impact, the previous LLS approaches are ignored and recently shed some light on using strategy according to the context, experience, and function (Han, 2015; Pazooki et al., 2018).

This present study was designed to construe how an Indonesian EFL student upheld learning by employing strategies to meet with the needs. The participant was chosen based on the assumption that she was a strategic student after rising up from adversity in English learning. She is currently attending an English education major in the fourth semester and experiencing an interesting story to study since she left campus in the early second semester. The underlying reason for her deferral was the inability to follow the process of English learning that thoroughly underrated her mental to continue study. For her, English was a problematic and high demanding task. However, she eventually returned to college with more positive attitudes and minds. This situation is in accordance with a research held by Clark and Lappin (2013) & Révész et al. (2017), they asserted that language learning is a complex process for EFL student's behavior so that the implementation of strategies based on the situation is recommended for them. Thereby, this present study is worth-conducting Fekri (2016); Rubin (1975).

METHODS

This study engaged a narrative approach, which focused on the efforts of one female pre-service teacher in employing strategies to fulfill the learning needs. The open-ended interviews were done to the participant by means of eliciting narratives with regard to the context of her EFL learning in a complex situation. It was carried out intentionally once a week for an hour from January to March in 2020. To acquire the communicative and informative data, Bahasa Indonesia was used during interview process. The questionnaire was also designed by the researcher to obtain information that was appropriate to the context of study. The interviews were embarked with these sample questions: 1) After coming back to college from taking the deferral period, is there any different objective in studying English major? 2) Would you please tell me the differences? 3) Do you meet problems in learning English with this changing situation? 4) Do the problems hinder your motivation to learn and reach the objective of your study? 5) What do the strategies work well to cope with the English learning problems? Could you please narrate in particular the problem and the strate-

gies respectively?. The results of the interviews were then transcribed and translated into English.

In addition, the narrative analysis was applied by the following series of procedure: (1) listening to the talking interview data, (2) transcribing and classifying the talking data, (3) translating and interpreting the talking data, and (4) (re)checking the data interpretation with the subject of research in order to search out verification (Pazooki et al., 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings illustrated how an Indonesian student applied strategies to fulfill her EFL learning needs. During the English learning process, the use of strategies varied in a different learning situation, and it has emerged in two sets of a theme: student's learning goal in changing situations and strategies to encounter the obstacles in English learning.

Student's learning goal in a changing situation

Learning goal before the deferral period

At the beginning of the study at college, the participant narrated the goal of learning, which was passing exams as well as expecting high scores at the time when she undertook the quizzes in English learning. Passing exams turned out to be necessary as a goal of her study at the English education major, and it affected the language learning process in the classroom, such as focused on following the teacher's instruction and completing assignments. She occupied memorizing vocabulary and structure of English, memorizing the text before talking, completing structure exercises, and fulfilling blank answers on reading passage. It is depicted in the interview:

"When I learned English in the classroom, my lecturers gave me and my friends many practical materials. Everyday, I practiced reading, writing, speaking, and listening. To have good scores, I must do grammar exercise twice a week, read texts and answer questions, memorize pattern and text before present it in the class. Then, once in a month, my lecturers administered quizzes or exams. So, **I must learn English so hard to pass my exams.**"

Then, she continued telling:

"When I learned English in the classroom, my lecturers gave me and my friends many practical materials. Everyday, I practiced reading, writing, speaking, and listening. To have good scores, I must do grammar exercise twice a week, read texts and answer questions, memorize pattern and text before

present it in the class. Then, once in a month, my lecturers administered quizzes or exams. So, **I must learn English so hard to pass my exams.**"

Learning goal after the deferral period

At the end of semester one, the situation changed rapidly since she obtained low scores on writing and grammar course. Then, this situation has definitely wrecked her motivation to study further. Shortly after, she decided to take a semester off from college.

Followed by six months after her deferral period, the learning goals shifted along with the changing of current condition and environment. She reported an English learning for distinct reasons such as pursuing a scholarship abroad and being a professional English teacher. They were chased to prepare self-fulfillment on her field.

"I never forget the time when I got low scores on writing and grammar course in my academic report. I felt that I failed on passing my exams including my English learning. Besides, I had no friends to share with in the classroom, they just cared for themselves and I left behind. At the end of semester one, I felt upset and told to my mom that I wanted to take a semester off."

Then:

"In early of semester three, I returned campus with a new hope. I wanted to continue my study in English-speaking country so that I can be a good English teacher in the future. I thought that studying English for passing exams is not enough because it directed me to be a score-oriented student. **Therefore, I must reset my goals and focus on the process.**"

The problems and the applied strategies

Problem and strategy 1

Attending college came to be challenging for the participated student since she passed a gender segregation model at the Islamic boarding school, which was different from the situation of her present study at college. The definite impact of this situation was over anxiety across English learning in the classroom. Subsequently, she tended to be unconfident and less contribution to English learning practice. To solve the obstacle, she embarked by practicing English conversation frequently with several international students who existed at college, which was likely to be cognitively oriented. She thought that international

students did not concern with fluency, but they focused on the meaning of communication rather than correcting grammar and pronunciation.

"In the early semester, I still unable to adapt to the classroom environment because when I was in the senior school, between male and female students were separated each other. **This situation made me nervous in following the new learning situation.** Even more, when I found out that many of my classmates had better abilities, I increasingly felt left behind, even though it was still semester one. Fortunately, I found the way to solve my own problem in the third semester, after coming back here to campus and **it was by always getting communication with several of international students at college.** Being able to talk with them reduced my anxiety that I used to feel at class because they really paid more attention to my talks than my grammar. They also didn't teach how to use vocabulary, but they produced more vocabularies to be imitated"

Problem and strategy 2

In a foreign language setting, it is reasonable that students are tricky to find people to communicate with non-native speakers. As a result, the problem aroused was a lack of opportunities to interact with friends at college, which automatically affected the reduced section of academic discussion.

"Even though I study in English department, **I felt that it's hard for me to invite friends to speak English.** They were shy and felt a hesitation to practice English inside and outside the classroom. Sometimes, I need to discuss with them about my problem, especially in grammar and writing. Yet, their responses are not well. **This condition encourages me to be more independent** by exercising grammar and writing through internet sources because I don't want to limit myself to learn English like the previous semester."

Problem and strategy 3

Furthermore, the problem on the writing course was described more detail by the student participant:

"Specifically, I have problem in composing the argumentative essay. It is the most complex subjects for me because the knowledge of grammar is implemented in the writing task. To deal with challenge, **I used to**

plan what I am going to study about grammar, because when **I learn grammar consistently**, I will write my argumentative text better. Writing argumentative essay doesn't only discuss grammar, more than that matter, I should be able to write paragraph composing introduction, body, counterargument, and conclusion. And the most difficult part is making the counterargument paragraph. I preferred to write from the easiest topic of argumentative essay. After that, **I asked my international friends to correct my work** in order to get feedback to write my argumentative text better. I did the activities repeatedly, so **I could know my weaknesses** in writing argumentative essay."

Student's learning goal in a changing situation

The student's narration informed the use of strategies to pass exams by learning repeated practice, which drove her to be a cognitively oriented student.

"...I must learn English so hard to pass my exams..."

"...I often use my feeling to choose the correct answer..."

Such activities are believed in improving the students' understanding and more self-consciousness of knowledge (Qian and Sun, 2019). Thereunto, cognitive strategies applied by the student also provided opportunities to organize information and memories more critically and complexly (Ferdinand et al., 2019). In a similar context, the repeated practices assisted a student to be acquainted with the rules of knowledge, understood of how to practice with the knowledge itself, improved the written production, and decreased the use of L1 (Amiryousefi, 2016; Azkarai and del Pilar García Mayo, 2017). Moreover, the aim of passing the exams in language learning encouraged a student to emerge test-taking strategies, mainly **test-wiseness strategy**. This strategy is used to complete the test **without going through the knowledge of linguistic form and the cognitive process**. Also, on certain occasions, test-wiseness accommodates the student's academic success when she tackles the problem of cognitive knowledge. Pazooki et al. (2018) unfolded that promoting students with test-wiseness contributed positively to the students' listening skill.

In fact, pressure on the result of exams has already shifted cognitive orientation to be metacognitively oriented. The student participant limited the strategies into setting up the learning objectives and counting heavily on the process.

"... Therefore, I must reset my goals and focus on process."

Without an objective, learning is not strategic (Gu, 2012). This notion endorses Bai and Guo (2019) research; they administered how metacognitive strategies were employed by six Chinese doctoral students and it uncovered that metacognitive strategies played a significant role in the completion of students' doctoral degrees in Australian universities. It was because those strategies developed the learning efficiency and facilitated the improvement of their competence. Thereupon, a student's confession reflected a metacognitive knowledge that automatically encouraged her metacognitive strategies. This knowledge enabled a student to use appropriate strategies in language learning and influenced the goal orientation in academic achievement (Pazooki et al., 2018), both integrative and experimental orientation (Dörnyei, 2003). This was confirmed by Dörnyei (2003), Movahed (2014); Vandergrift (2005); they demonstrated that students' integrative orientation to complete academic tasks has a positive correlation with their metacognitive strategy.

The problems and the applied strategies

At this early stage, students are aware of their shortcomings in learning and try to foster initiative in the learning process that shaped character into an independent learner (Kusey, 2010), especially in the communication aspect. It was analyzed from the narration that student who participated in this study tried to apply cooperative learning strategies frequently by interacting and discussing with native speakers and it certainly encouraged her to work together, initiated the active talks in an educational environment, and developed her vocabulary mastery in English learning (Fekri, 2016). Of course, this practice also involves the cognitive strategy of student through activities that are carried out repeatedly.

"... This situation made me nervous in following the new learning situation..."

"...it was by always getting communication with several of international students at college..."

"...I felt that it's hard for me to invite friends to speak English..."

"...This condition encourages me to be more independent..."

Secondly, the student's strategies were deemed in context by connecting the strategies and the current learning situation. Fitting the strategies with the student's learning preferences, including the use of strategies to solve the learning problems, were suitable for effective learning (Dawson, 2019), and it characterized a good language learner (Wahyudi, 2014). Such characters were postulated by Hakan et al. (2015), they argued that taking a chance on the strategies implementation facilitated students to be responsible for their learning.

"...I have problem in composing the argumentative essay..."

"...I used to plan what I am going to study..."

"...I learn grammar consistently..."
 "...I asked my international friends to correct my work..."
 "...so I could know my weaknesses..."

The above-mentioned highlighted how the student participant accounted for varying strategies to cope with the complexity of the writing task. In this learning context, she tended to apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies through disciplined process orientation.

The implementation of grammar knowledge, which tends to be cognitively used, on writing tasks accommodates students to better writing, such as selecting the correct form and tense-aspect in the narrative (Comajoan, 2019). Teng (2019) also postulated that metacognition strategies have correlated positively with the students' EFL writing. The strategies comprised declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. From the explanation, it can be inferred that the student's excellent control of learning facilitated the appropriate learning strategies, and then the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in EFL learning assisted the student's competence to improve writing.

CONCLUSION

The findings have underlined how the use of strategies varied in changing learning situation and accounted for the appropriate strategies to face the learning problems which were undertaken to fulfill the English learning needs. For example, in a test-oriented, student tended to apply cognitive strategy to

assist knowledge in an academic test as well as a test-wiseness strategy to use knowledge without going through the linguistic structure and cognitive development. At another stage, to deal with the challenge, the student applied cooperative strategies to put into practice English in daily communication. Further, metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating were exercised frequently to shape a good writing argumentative essay. At the same time, she implemented grammar knowledge as a part of the cognitive process to complete the essay.

Then, the application of strategy training in EFL classroom is highly recommended for EFL teachers because it is teachable (Griffiths, 2015) and will equip the student's ability with the learning need. Thus, students can use the strategies appropriately based on the shift of learning orientation. In addition, cooperative learning must be greater integrated into the social work curriculum because EFL setting needs the students to demonstrate English learning rather than study a theory. Foreclosing, the future researchers are able to execute the similar study by implementing strategies to the larger group of participants. This aims at investigating the impact of strategy training to the participants' certain skills. A mixed-method approach is recommended to elicit more comprehensive and objective data.

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