The Favored Language Learning Strategies of Islamic University EFL Learners

Alfian*

English Education Department, Graduate Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Jambi 36124, INDONESIA

Abstract
Despite the existence of many studies about language learning strategies (LLS) around the world, little work has been reported on the LLS use of Islamic university students from a qualitative perspective. Thus, to fill this empirical gap, this study is aimed to explore the LLS use and choice by learners studying at an Islamic university in Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative approach by interviewing 18 learners who would become teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). They have been interviewed about the ways or strategies when they are learning English. The data gained from the interviews were analyzed by thematic analysis. The findings demonstrated that learners reported using the strategies which are classified into six LLS categories (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) in learning English. However, most strategies reported by the learners were categorized into metacognitive strategies. Another significant finding is that several strategies such as practicing strategies (practicing four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing), watching TV/ English Movies, memorizing, and using the internet were mostly reported by learners in improving their English skills. This study is beneficial for the classroom practice of teachers in enhancing their teaching methodology by knowing learners' learning strategies to make it easier for the teachers to design the learning activities. Furthermore, this study is also beneficial for novice EFL learners in which the strategies in this study could be models for them.

Keywords: Learning strategies, EFL, language learners, language skills, practicing.

---

* Corresponding author, email: alfian@uinjambi.ac.id

1.   INTRODUCTION

Research has confirmed that the success of language learning is significantly impacted by the factors associated mostly with the learners themselves (Lamb, 2004; Rubin et al., 1982). Rubin et al. (1982) emphasize that "you, the language learner, are the most important factor in language learning" (p. 1). This assertion emphasizes the significant role of the learners in finding their way by developing positive attitudes to learning, and thus be successful learners. These positive ways or attitudes of the learners are best identified via their choices and use of language learning strategies (LLS), which, in turn, are defined as the behaviors, ways, steps, or actions taken by learners to enhance their learning of another language (Chamot, 2004; Cohen, 2011; Grainger, 2012; Griffiths, 2003; Oxford, 1990, 2016). Research has constantly shown that varieties and appropriate choice and use of LLS assist learners to be successful, independent language learners (Griffiths, 2003; Ni et al., 2008; Rubin, 1987; Yılmaz, 2010).

Since LLS is considered as one of the critical factors affecting learning outcomes and success in language learning, it likewise develops independent learners. Experts in language learning have been investigating the strategies used by language learners for several decades around the world (Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Habók & Magyar, 2018; Lin et al., 2017; Park, 2005; Rao, 2016; Thomas & Rose, 2018). Within the Indonesian context of EFL learning, several studies of LLS (Alfian, 2016; Alfian, 2018; Annurahman et al., 2013; Hapsari, 2019; Lengkanawati, 2004; Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011; Mistar, 2001; Santihastuti, & Wahjuningsih, 2019; Setiyadi, 2004; Wahyuni, 2013; Yusuf, 2012) have been conducted. These studies have provided a useful contribution to the body of knowledge related to language learning within the Indonesian context. However, most studies reported above focused on the quantitative design in which the data was collected through a survey using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. LLS use and choice of students from the qualitative approach has not received widespread attention from language learning strategy researchers in Indonesia, particularly concerning prospective English language teachers of Islamic Universities. Moreover, there have been insufficient studies that explore Islamic university EFL learners. The majority of studies on LLS have focused on junior and senior high school students (Alfian, 2016; Amir, 2018; Mistar & Umamah, 2014; Pradita, & Nindita, 2019). In filling these gaps, this present paper documents the use and choice of LLS from the qualitative perspective of 18 prospective English language teachers at an Islamic university context in Indonesia.

Specifically, this study has attempted to find the answers to the following research questions:
1. What categories of language learning strategies are mostly used by students in improving their English?
2. What specific strategies are mostly chosen by students in improving their English?

This current study is expected to fill up the gap in the previous studies since the findings may provide a deeper understanding of how learners experienced English learning. Knowing the way or strategies of the learners will make it easier for teachers to design the learning activities to meet the need of the learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Most experts agree that the term of LLS represents steps or actions or ways taken by learners to enhance their learning of another language (e.g., Chamot, 2004; Cohen, 2011; Griffiths, 2003; Oxford, 1990, 2016). Therefore, language learning strategies can be defined as the ways, actions, or steps used consciously by students when learning a language in order to be able to use the language. LLS represents one of the most significant aspects of language learning "especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence" (Oxford, 1990, p. 1).

LLS also helps learners to "facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information and increase self-confidence" (Khosravi, 2012, p. 2123). Thus, it is closely related to successful learning (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007). Research on LLS has shown that using and choosing appropriate learning strategies improve potentially overall achievement or improvement in a specific skill area and language proficiency (Ni et al., 2008; Rubin, 1987). In addition, employing specific LLS will help the learners to accomplish their language learning goals (Norton, 2016). Finally, a productive student-centered learning environment can be created by using LLS (Gursoy, 2010). This learning environment would encourage students to be independent or autonomous learners – learners who are taking control of their learning (Benson, 2011; Dickinson, 1995; Yurdakul, 2017).

2.2 LLS Category

Given the importance of LLS, experts in language learning strategies have achieved the classification of LLS in many ways, and there is no agreement on one classification. Rubin (1987) categorized learning strategies into three types, these types, in turn, affect learning both directly and indirectly and are consequently referred to as direct and indirect strategies. Rubin (1987) has categorized cognitive and metacognitive as direct strategies but has categorized communication and social strategies as indirect strategies. These strategies were then developed by Oxford (1990). However, Ellis (1994) has differentiated only two types of language learning strategies. First, some strategies that focus on a learner's mastery of the linguistic content of the target language, similar to cognitive strategies. Second, some strategies that focus on the learner's developing communicative competence as a skilled speaker, reader, and writer are supported via metacognitive strategies, such as consciously searching for practice opportunities. These categories are different from those of Chamot and O'Malley (1994) and Chamot (2004) who categorize LLS into three groups, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies.

Another category that is used mostly in current research is a category proposed by Oxford (1990). Like the category proposed by Rubin, Oxford has placed the strategies into two categories, namely, direct and indirect strategies. However, there is a difference between Oxford's and Rubin's direct strategies. Oxford divided direct strategies into three sub-strategies, namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies, while Rubin's direct strategies consist of cognitive and

metacognitive. Indirect strategies are divided into three sub-strategies, namely metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (see Figure 1).
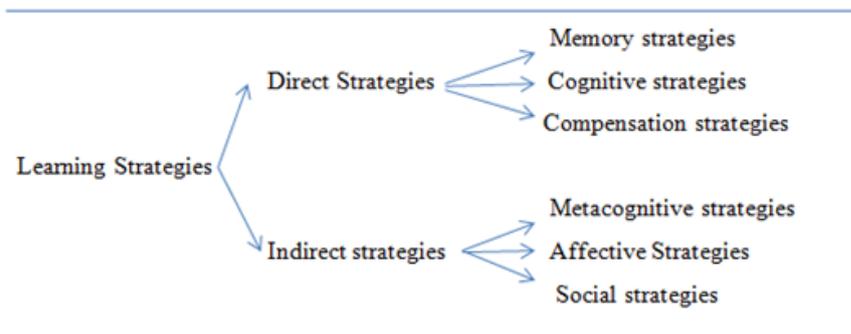

Figure 1. The classification of LLS (adapted from Oxford, 1990, p. 16).

If Oxford's model is compared with that of Chamot and O'Malley (1994), it is noticeable that the social/affective strategies of Chamot & O'Malley (1994) originated from two categories of Oxford: affective and social. Oxford has also added more strategies in these two categories. Oxford's (1990) classification provided more comprehensive strategies (Chang, 2011; Ellis, 1994) and the strategies are elaborated clearly, in greater detail (Tamada, 1996). This LLS classification has been employed for three decades, and the strategy category is still used until today (Griffiths & Incecay, 2016; Oxford, 2016; Shawer, 2016). According to Habók & Magyar (2018), Oxford has revisited the strategy categories by developing them into four strategy categories: metastrategies, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive. The metastrategies are divided into metacognitive, meta-affective, and meta-sociocultural-interactive strategies (Griffith & Oxford, 2014; Oxford, 2016). However, Oxford did not provide a detailed explanation of the new strategy classification. Therefore, the current study on LLS relied on the original taxonomy of LLS (Habók & Magyar, 2018), which has been used as the basis for the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. This SILL has been widely employed by researchers around the world (Alfian, 2018; Alhaysony, 2017; Fithriyah et al., 2019; Santihastuti & Wahjuningsih, 2019; Suwanarak, 2019).

2.3 Studies on LLS

Studies on the use of the six noted categories of LLS using SILL around the world displayed different results in accordance with the contexts of the studies. Muniandy and Shuib (2016) found that metacognitive strategies were used at the highest frequency among the other five strategies when they conducted a study in Malaysia. Similarly, Javid et al. (2013) who conducted a study at a Saudi Arabia university found that metacognitive strategies were the most used. This finding supported Radwan's (2011) study at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, wherein it was noted that metacognitive strategies were the most used. According to Oxford (1990), this favored use of metacognitive strategies indicated autonomous learners - the leaners who can manage and control their own learning (Benson, 2011; Dickinson, 1995; Gursoy, 2010) and student-centered learning in which participants were guided by the skills of arranging, planning, monitoring and evaluating (Oxford, 1990).

Another study demonstrated that students also chose additional strategies that assisted with their learning. For example, Alhaysony (2017) who undertook a study in Saudi Arabia, found that cognitive (translating and analyzing) strategies were used at a high frequency by the learners. Similarly, Suwanarak (2019) who conducted a study in Thailand also found that the learners used cognitive strategies as the most, which shows that learners choose these strategies when dealing with learning activities and new information. While Lan (2005) found that the participants used affective strategies at a high-frequency level, indicating that this strategy category was often used. Another study by Park (2005) also found that Korean learners were in favor of compensation strategies, and this was similar to Yang (2007) who conducted a similar study in Korea. The high use of compensation strategies indicated that learners liked guessing, rephrasing, and using gestures in their learning process (Muniandy & Shuib, 2016).

Within the Indonesian context of LLS studies, most previous studies have argued that the use of memory strategies among the Indonesian learners was at high frequency (Lengkanawati, 2004; Setiyadi, 2004). Current studies on LLS have a very contrasting view of what has been argued by Lengkanawati (2004) and Setiyadi (2004). Most of the current studies within the Indonesian context found that metacognitive strategies were mostly employed by the learners (Alfian, 2018; Annurahman et al., 2013; Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011; Santihastuti & Wahjuningsih, 2019). Mattarima and Hamdan (2011), who undertook a study on LLS by surveying 170 high school students in Indonesia, found that the learners used metacognitive strategies at a high frequency, and memory, cognitive, compensation, affective, and social strategies were at a medium frequency, with compensation strategies the least used.

In another study, Annurahman et al. (2013) investigated the LLS use of 201 college students learning English by using SILL. They found that the uses of metacognitive strategies were at a high frequency and memory strategies were the least used. This finding is similar to Alfian (2018) who found that successful learners employ metacognitive strategies while unsuccessful learners are indicated to use affective strategies. Similarly, Santihastuti and Wahjuningsih (2019) found that the most frequent strategy used by successful learners were metacognitive strategies which means that successful learners can plan their learning, have clear goals, control, review, and evaluate their own learning. These findings contrasted greatly with the statement that Indonesian learners often use memory strategies. A study by Yusuf (2012) found that Indonesian learners were eager to practice and communicate and use a variety of strategies, such as watching movies, practicing, memorizing, listening to the radio, and reading books (Gani et al., 2015).

All of the LLS studies above reported the results of the study from the quantitative study using SILL as the instrument of data collection. Several studies using SILL indicated similar findings, while some other studies demonstrated different findings. This means that there are inconsistent findings related to the LLS choice among the participants. Thus, it is very urgent to undertake a qualitative study to compare the findings with the quantitative one. Moreover, because LLS is dynamic and complex, a qualitative approach is considered to be more appropriate in doing a study on LLS (Nguyen & Terry, 2017). This current study provides the language learning strategy from the qualitative side by investigating the most favorable strategies use and choice among EFL learners at an Islamic university. More specifically, it investigates the most favorable strategies used by prospective English teachers.

3.   METHOD

3.1   Research Design

The purposes of this study are to explore LLS categories reported by students in improving their English and also to explore the specific strategies that are mostly chosen by students in improving their English. Thus, this research employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative design was employed because LLS is dynamic and complex in nature, and the qualitative approach is considered to be more appropriate in conducting a study on LLS (Nguyen & Terry, 2017). The qualitative approach was used to get a deeper understanding of the LLS used (Mukminin et al., 2018).

3.2   Participants

There were 18 participants who are prospective English teachers that participated in this study. The participants were chosen purposefully from an Islamic university in Jambi, Indonesia. They were selected based on the assumption that they were knowledgeable about the ways and strategies in learning English because they have studied English for years. It is commonly assumed that the longer the learners learn English, the more strategies were developed.

3.3   Instruments and Procedures of Data Collection

The instrument used to collect the data was the interview guide. The guide for developing the interview questions was based on the theory of LLS in general and the relevant literature. The interview was conducted face to face, which allowed the researcher to motivate each respondent and to clarify the information from the respondents in more detail (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The interview was conducted in the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) to allow participants to express their ideas clearly, and it was conducted in the researcher's office within the university grounds. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was digitally recorded. The interviews started with a light conversation about the participants' studies. This was to make the participants feel more comfortable (Cohen, 2011).

3.4   Data Analysis

The interviews consisted of data related to the strategies that the students had used. These data were analyzed by following the three main steps: data analysis preparation, main data analysis, and reporting of the data analysis (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Ivankova & Stick, 2007). The first step was data analysis preparation. The participants' interviews were transcribed; the transcripts were then sent to each participant for confirmation of their comments and responses; the procedure, thus represented through member checking (Creswell, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was done to maintain the validity of the study (Creswell, 2012; Meriam, 2009). After conducting the member checking, the transcripts of the interview were translated into English for the main analysis.

The second step was the main analysis. The transcripts were analyzed by using "inductive and deductive" analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 453). In the inductive analysis,

the researcher employed open coding (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) for obtaining the words/phrases that indicated LLS usage; this was done by developing a matrix table as a codebook

After conducting inductive analysis, deductive analysis, which involved analyzing the data according to the framework of the study (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014) was carried out. In this step, all the LLS codes were further analyzed using Oxford's LLS Taxonomy, given that it represented the framework of this study. Thus, in the deductive stage, the table matrix of Oxford's Taxonomy of LLS was developed.

The third step of data analysis was to report the results of the analysis. In reporting the analysis results, the verbatim quotes from the interview were included in order to provide a "rich and thick description" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). The quotes or excerpts from the interviews were used to emphasize or illustrate the learners' rationale in choosing the strategies. The quotes of phrases or sentences were incorporated into the analysis to characterize the individual responses and to highlight the participants' general views.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Use of Strategies by the Learners

The participants reported that they use a wide variety of language learning strategies when learning English. The analysis of the interviews demonstrated that overall, approximately 59 strategies were used. These strategies have been categorized into six main headings as per the LLS taxonomy, summarized in Figure 1. These findings are significant because it provides evidence that the participants used a wide variety of strategies. These variations reported in the interviews were an indication that the participants were aware of many strategies for learning English.
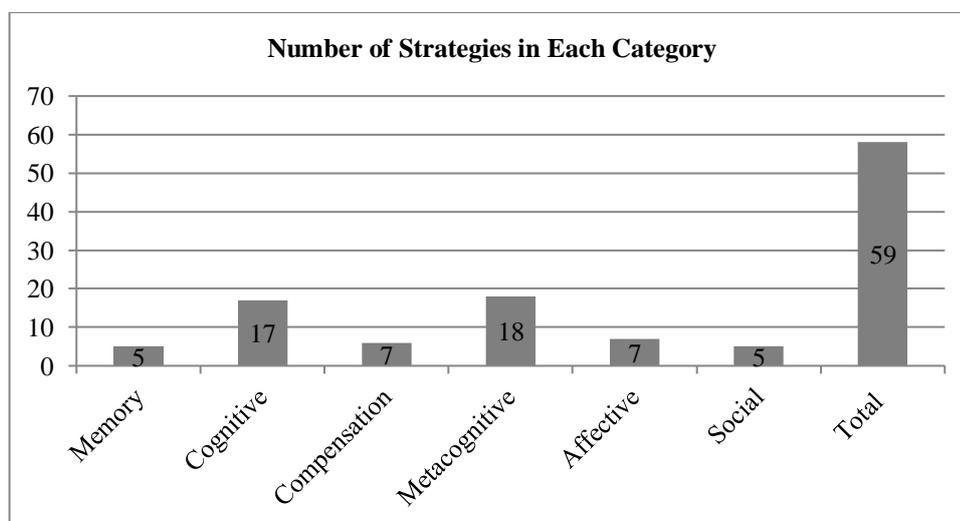

Figure 2. The number of strategies emerging from interviews.

As can be seen from Figure 1, two of the essential strategy categories, namely, cognitive and metacognitive, were reported by most participants. This shows that metacognitive and cognitive strategies were a major focus for them. In contrast with

the metacognitive and cognitive strategy categories, social and memory strategy categories were reported to be the least used. Social and memory strategies reflected similar numbers of strategy items. For example, the social strategies category, relating to how learners coped when interacting with other learners or other English speakers, was only reflected in the five strategies from this category, as reported in the interviews.

Similar to social strategies, the memory strategies category, relating to how learners stored and retrieved information related to the new language, demonstrated that only five strategies emerged from the interviews. Compensation and affective strategy use categories also revealed similar numbers in the interview data. Compensation strategies, which enabled learners to overcome limited knowledge, were only revealed in seven key strategies. Similarly, affective strategies, relating to student feelings when learning a new language, were only revealed in seven key strategies.

As elaborated above, a wide variety of preferred strategy use was evident in the interview data. This demonstrated that the participants in this study were active strategy users; these results also indicated that the participants' positions as prospective English teachers make them aware of the importance of English (Alfian, 2018). Besides a wide variety of strategies, the participants reported strategy items that are connected to all six of the identified strategy categories, with the metacognitive category revealing the highest number of users. The findings of the current study were consistent with the findings of several previous studies (e.g. Alfian, 2018; Alnujaidi, 2017; Annurahman et al., 2013; Fithriyah et al., 2019; Habók & Magyar, 2018) which also indicated that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used by the learners. This shows that the learners highlighted skill in the overall management of the learning process. This included strategies such as planning, thinking, monitoring, and evaluating in learning (Griffith, 2003; Oxford, 1990).

4.2 Choice of Strategies by the Learners

4.2.1 Practicing

Practicing English skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) was a strategy reported by all participants. One of the most popular practice strategies, reported by all participants, was related to practicing speaking skills. This strategy was deemed popular because it related well to the participants' perceptions of the important function of language as communication. Participants felt that language needed to be practiced orally. The other reason why 'practicing speaking' was reported by most participants was its relationship to additional, diverse ways of practicing speaking. The participants reported that there are many ways in which they practiced their speaking. They practiced their speaking with their peers, face to face or by using electronic devices, such as mobile phones; they communicated with their teachers in the classroom, or they engaged in conversations with native speakers. For example, the participant practiced his speaking skills by making conversation with friends, face to face, and by conversing with his teacher; he also used English when he spoke to friends on the telephone.

The following is an excerpt from the interview with the participant (I refers to Interviews and P refers to Participant).

I1   "I am a person who is brave to start speaking. If I make a mistake, I pretend not to know, or I just ignore it. I like people who like to practice English like my friend, AL. I ask him to speak English. I try my ability. I also speak English with my lecturers like Ms. AM. If I speak English with more proficient people, if I make mistakes in speaking, she can correct my English. For example, I say *pree* for free. So, I know my mistake in pronouncing the word". (P1)

This participant has indicated that she kept speaking, even if she made mistakes. She was not afraid of making mistakes when speaking. She believed that mistakes could help her learning by raising awareness of spelling and/or pronunciation. In adopting this approach, she was using a combination of affective strategies that included encouraging her to take risks. Besides, the use of 'practice strategies' was considered an excellent way to identify grammatical mistakes when using language. This participant can be categorized as a good language learner who was not inhibited and was willing to initiate conversation and take risks in conversation (Rubin, 1975). Although the participant in I1 demonstrates that she was brave enough to speak English, she was, however, an exception. Most of the participants in this study declared that they were not brave enough to start a conversation in English because they felt shy and worried that their friends might laugh at them if they made any mistakes. This finding again confirmed a previous finding within the Indonesian context, which indicated that Indonesian learners are shy about practicing their English (Exley, 2005; Lengkanawati, 2004; Suryanto, 2013).

Another practicing strategy is 'practicing listening'. It was an important strategy because it encompassed other important sub-strategies in language learning, such as 'using resources strategies', 'watching TV', 'listening to the radio', and 'identifying different kinds of listening material strategies'. For example, participants listened to songs and conversations; they watched movies via YouTube or TV, and these strategies helped improve their listening. They also found listening materials via the use of media resources that could be downloaded from the internet. Below is a sample excerpt from an interview that indicated the use of media.

I2   "I start listening to the English conversation in the podcast that I download them from (the) internet. I also often listen to the radio, which has a humor program in (on) it. It is very often that there is a tip for improving our conversation in (on) the radio, so I like it very much...". (P7)

The excerpt in I2 demonstrates how listening skill development can be accommodated using media, be it via iPods or listening to the radio, as well as the internet. This language learning could be categorized through authentic learning materials for ESL (English as a Second Language) (Rao, 2006).

'Practicing reading' was also a strategy item reported by most of the participants. Although reading is listed in the metacognitive strategy category in the SILL, it is also a strategy that describes a plan for including reading practice. As such, it can also be categorized as a cognitive strategy, given that it involves practicing via reading online, and includes reading magazines and newspapers. Two examples from the data have provided evidence of participant engagement in the reading of different kinds of materials, including newspapers, books, or comics.

I3 "For improving reading, I read the book loudly at home. I like to read a linguistics book for difficult ones. But, reading for enjoyment, I often read comics. I read comics online or through the internet...". (P1)

I4 "Reading, I said that I mostly read English books and I also like to read novels, comics or any other materials written in English or English lesson books that can improve my English, but I think the one which helps me improve my English is (a) storybook. I also often read newspapers, such as The Jakarta Post…". (P4)

The last practicing language skill is 'practicing writing' which has proved another popular strategy link reported by most participants. The participants noted practicing their writing through diary entries, written messages, and email messages in English when chatting with friends; this included participation via social media. The data have indicated that this strategy was vital because it helped implement a variety of activities that provided enjoyable learning:

I5 "I like to tell my story in the diary. I also like to write important events in the diary". (P8)

The practice strategies elaborated above represent the most reported strategies. This cognitive strategy category included strategies related to how students acquired knowledge and produced a new language (Griffith, 2003; Oxford, 1990). The practice strategy has proven significant because it is one of the sub-strategies in the cognitive category, thereby supporting the findings of other studies in which "practicing the sound of English, practicing reading, practicing with other students" were likewise noted in the SILL strategies used. These strategies were all used at a high-frequency level (Alfian, 2016; Alfian, 2018; Annurahman et al., 2013; Gani et al., 2015). These findings are essential because practicing is one of the characteristics of good language learners, according to Rubin (1975). Rubin et al. (1982) also found that good language learners find opportunities to practice and they practice a lot. Practicing is an important part of many learning activities, such as speaking with peers, reading books, writing in English, and listening to the radio (Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, the 'practicing strategy' use, identified in this study, is also important because it was reported by most participants, thereby supporting the findings of Amir (2018), and Pradita and Nindita (2019). Yang (2007) emphasized that through practicing the learners become familiar with the strategies.

4.2.2 Watching TV and movies

'Watching TV and movies' were visual strategies, also reported by most participants. Eight participants said that they focused on visual learning aids in the cognitive strategy category. This strategy finding is important because watching TV or movies not only improve participant knowledge of English in general, in the realms of vocabulary, listening, and pronunciation, but it also provides entertainment via an interesting way of learning about the culture of English-speaking countries.

In this study, many participants reported that watching movies helped improve their vocabulary and listening comprehension, as well as their pronunciation. Illustrations of the participant's voice, concerning the efficacy of this strategy, are:

I6 "I watch English movies, and I watch the same movie many times, and I try to find the difficult word, I write in my bedroom, toilet, door and I memorize them…". (P3)

This finding is similar to Gani et al. (2015) who found that practicing was the most often used by learners. The high use of this strategy, in this study, is also similar to the findings of Lunt (2000) and Parmawati and Inayah (2019). They argued that learners improved their learning skills, especially pronunciation, by watching TV. Luckily, nowadays, watching TV and watching movies can be done via both technology and media, thereby making the strategy more available and more accessible. This is also confirmed in the high use of the internet by all participants in this study (for using the internet strategy below).

4.2.3 Using the Internet

'Using the internet' is one of the key strategies, mostly reported by the participants in the LLS findings. 'Using the internet' was viewed as an important strategy, in the context of this study, because it covered many other strategies and it has proved most popular in recent times, as a new media option. Many strategies are associated with using the internet, such as 'downloading material from websites', 'practicing listening online', and 'watching movies.' One of the most used strategies reported was 'watching movies', as presented above. Access to this strategy was also available through the internet.

Another popular strategy, 'downloading English material', was also accessible via the internet. There were many kinds of English materials that could be downloaded from the internet, such as podcasts, reading materials, and test materials for exercise practice. Below are excerpts from the interviews.

I7   "I always download (the) audio from the British Council website. From this material, I listen to it. At the beginning, I use (a) script, and I listen again without using (the) script". (P4)

Another strategy that could be accessed through the internet was 'practicing listening online'. For example, P6 practiced her listening on a certain website. Below is a relevant excerpt from the interview.

I8   "I like browsing the internet. There are a lot of sites for us to practice our listening. There is a facility that we can play and record and answer the questions. I like to do that one (play and record)". (P6)

The popularity of the use of the internet for practicing listening was further supported as the most used strategy, 'practicing listening', as presented in section Practicing (practicing listening above).

Besides the strategies associated with internet use in findings, using the internet was the most used strategy for many participants in this study. These, in turn, have validated the findings of other studies in which strategies relating to the internet were identified at the high-frequency use level. This is because the internet has been classified as a way to provide an array of means and it brings a huge change to learning (Ming et al., 2012) whereby language learners can improve their language learning through authentic learning materials for ESL (Rao, 2006).

4.2.4 Guessing meaning

'Guessing the meaning' proved a popular strategy used by the participants. This strategy is also an "overcoming limitation strategy", a sub-strategy in the compensation strategy category that participants used before using a dictionary. The guessing strategy has been considered useful because it allowed participants to overcome any existing, limited knowledge of vocabulary, especially in reading by guessing the meaning of unknown words or vocabulary. In guessing the meaning of unknown words, this strategy combined with other sub-strategies, such as 'using context clues' - 'looking at the word before or after the unknown word or looking at the rest of the sentence' - 'avoiding translating word by word' in comprehending the text. For example, the following participants have noted using context clues when guessing the word meaning and this was done by looking at the previous sentence or by developing an understanding of the gist:

I9 "If there is (a) difficult word that I do not understand in (the) reading, I look at the previous sentence. I do not look up the meaning directly, but I try to guess the meaning. However, if we cannot guess it or I really do not know the meaning, then we need to look it up in the dictionary. But I try to relate the word with the previous or the last sentence, so (that) we can know the meaning". (P4)

I10 "I often read paragraph by paragraph, one or two paragraphs, and I translate it. We do not translate word by word. It will make the meaning different. So, we translate by trying to match with the sentence or using context clues because English has many meanings". (P15)

These participants tried to understand the meaning of the words by avoiding word-by-word translation. They used context clues by looking at the previous sentence or by gauging the gist, which is categorized as compensation strategies. This has been confirmed by the finding of studies using SILL in which guessing was often used with high frequency to assist with understanding unfamiliar words (Alfian, 2018). Similarly, this finding supported the finding of the study by Yang (2007), who found that the learners often employed compensation strategies. The high use of compensation strategies indicated that learners like guessing, rephrasing, and using gestures in their learning process (Muniandy & Shuib, 2016). This also shows that the participants in this study have emulated the characteristics of good readers who "rely on contextual clues (preceding or following context), vocabulary analysis, and grammar, to interpret unknown words" (Cohen, 1991, p. 116).

4.2.5 Memorizing

'Memorizing' is one of the strategies in the memory category that was reported by nine participants who used these strategies. There are several reasons why this strategy proved very important and why a number of participants employed it. A possible explanation for using this memorization strategy is that the participants use 'memorization' via a multipurpose approach; this includes rote memorization and keeping words in mind more effectively by making combinations with other strategies. For example, P3 used 'memorizing' strategies to learn new vocabulary. This participant reported that he found vocabulary easier to remember if he watched movies; this approach enabled him to look for the meaning of words in the movie dialogue and the visual actions; this outcome, in turn, helped him understand. Besides,

he used a rote memorization technique so that he could remember the new vocabulary. This meant that this participant used three of the identified strategies, namely, 'watching movies', 'writing vocabulary', and 'rote memorization', and these, in turn, were a combination of memory and cognitive strategies. P33 had the following points to make about the use of these strategies:

I11 "I watch English movies, and I watch the same movie several times, and I try to find the difficult words. I write in my bedroom; toilet door and I memorize them". (P3)

Another reason given by the participants for using memorization strategies was related to the learning context; as learners, they found that memorization improved confidence. The participants cited in the excerpts above believed that memorization helped them to improve their English. Memorization also helped them remember the vocabulary needed in examinations. In Indonesia, passing examinations drives the need for memorization; this finding is further supported by studies conducted by Rao (2004). The popularity of these strategies among Indonesian and Asian learners was also evident in the findings of several other studies about LLS (Lee & Oxford, 2008; Lengkanawati, 2004; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985).

5. CONCLUSION

The finding of this study indicated that EFL learners used a variety of strategies in improving their English. The most frequently used strategies were metacognitive and cognitive strategies, which indicated that they plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. In addition, the choice of metacognitive and cognitive strategies showed that the students were eager to practice their English. In line with metacognitive and cognitive strategies, the learners mostly employed practicing strategies or practiced their English skills, they also watched TV and browsed the internet. This shows that the learners were aware of their learning and the availability of learning resources. This shows that the learners were aware of their learning and the availability of learning resources.

This study reported new findings from the qualitative perspectives that contribute to a better understanding of LLS choice by prospective EFL who is studying at an Islamic university in Indonesia. It provides a small picture, which is presented to add to LLS use knowledge but not intended to be generalized. The findings of this investigation also contribute to the international body of LLS by presenting a snapshot of LLS choice in an Indonesian context. A growing number of studies contribute to the general understanding of the LLS pattern used in the international context, but not to understand the strategy used by Islamic university learners. The study implies for the learners that they need to see the availability of learning resources and seek the opportunity to practice the language intensively.

Students at the center of this investigation are representing a group of experienced learners. Considering that they are still concerned with finding ways and strategies to learn English, even though they showed that they use a wide range of strategies, it is plausible to question if the strategies that they use are employed correctly and effectively. Therefore, further research investigating LLS from other language learning contexts should be conducted to support or contrast the results of this study.

REFERENCES

Alfian, A. (2016). The application of language learning strategies of high school students in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of English Education*, *3*(2), 140-157.

Alfian, A. (2018). Proficiency level and language learning strategy choice of Islamic University learners in Indonesia. *TEFLIN Journal*, *29*(1), 1-18.

Alhaysony, M. (2017). Language learning strategies use by Saudi EFL students: The effect of duration of English language study and gender. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *7*(1), 18-28.

Alnujaidi, S. (2017). Factors influencing college level EFL students' language learning strategies in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of English and Linguistics*, *7*(1), 69-84.

Amir, M. (2018). Language learning strategies used by junior high school EFL learners. *Language and Language Teaching Journal*, *21*(1), 94-103.

Annurrahman, Kurniawati, T., & Ramadhiyanti, Y. (2013). Exploring Indonesian college students' strategies in learning English language. *Arab World English Journal*, *4*(3), 317 -330.

Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching autonomy* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Chamot, A. U. (2004). Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, 1*(1), 14-26.

Chamot, A. U., & O'Malley, J. M. (1994). *The CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach.* Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Chang, C. (2011). Language learning strategies profile of university foreign language majors in Taiwan. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *8*(2), 201-215.

Cohen, A. D. (1991). Feedback on writing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13*(02), 133-159.

Cohen, A. D. (2011). *Strategies in learning and using a second language* (2nd ed.). Longman.

Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.

Creswell, J., & Clark, V. L. P (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage.

Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation a literature review. *System, 23*(2), 165-174.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Exley, B. (2005). Learner characteristics of 'Asian' EFL students: Exceptions to the 'norm'. In J. Young (Ed.), *Pleasure, passion, provocation: AATE/ALEA Conference 2005* (pp. 1-15). Australian Literacy Educators Association.

Fithriyah, Kasim, U., & Yusuf, Y. Q. (2019). The language learning strategies used by learners studying Arabic and English as foreign languages. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, *46*, 310-21.

Gani, S. A., Fajrina, D., & Hanifa, R. (2015). Students' learning strategies for developing speaking ability. *Studies in English Language and Education*, *2*(1), 16-28.

Gerami, M. H., & Baighlou, S. M. G. (2011). Language learning strategies used by successful and unsuccessful Iranian EFL students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 29*(0), 1567-1576.

Grainger, P. (2012). The impact of cultural background on the choice of language learning strategies in the JFL context. *System, 40*(4), 483-493.

Grenfell, M. & Macaro, E. (2007). Language learner strategies: Claims and critiques. In A. D. Cohen, & E. Macaro (Eds.), *Language learner strategies: 30 years of research and practice* (pp. 9-28). Oxford University Press

Griffiths, C. (2003). Patterns of language learning strategy use. *System, 31*(3), 367-383.

Griffiths, C., & Incecay, G. (2016). New directions in language learning strategy research: Engaging with the complexity of strategy use. In C. Gkonou, D. Tatzl, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *New directions in language learning psychology* (pp. 25-38). Springer.

Griffith, C., & Oxford, R. (2014). The twenty-first century landscape of language learning strategies: Introduction to this special issue. *System*, 43, 1-10.

Gursoy, E. (2010). Investigating language learning strategies of EFL children for the development of a taxonomy. *English Language Teaching, 3*(3), 164-175.

Habók, A., & Magyar, A. (2018). The effect of language learning strategies on proficiency, attitudes and school achievement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1-8.

Hapsari, A. (2019). Language Learning Strategies in English Language Learning: A Survey Study. *Journal of English Teaching Studies*, 1(1), 58-68.

Ivankova, N. V., & Stick, S. L. (2007). Students' persistence in a distributed doctoral program in educational leadership in higher education: A mixed methods study. *Research in Higher Education, 48*(1), 93-135.

Javid, C. Z., Al-Thubaiti, T. S., & Uthman, A. (2013). Effects of English language proficiency on the choice of language learning strategies by Saudi English-major undergraduates. *English Language Teaching, 6*(1), 35-47.

Khosravi, M. (2012). A study of language learning strategies used by EFL learners in Iran: Exploring proficiency effect on English language learning strategies. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 2*(10), 2122-2132.

Lamb, M. (2004). It depends on the students themselves': Independent language learning at an Indonesian state school. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 17*(3), 229-245.

Lan, R. L. (2005). *Language learning strategies profiles of EFL elementary school students in Taiwan* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Maryland.

Lee, K. R., & Oxford, R. (2008). Understanding EFL learners' strategy use and strategy awareness. *Asian EFL Journal, 10*(1), 7-32.

Lengkanawati, N. S. (2004). How learners from different cultural backgrounds learn a foreign language. *The Asian EFL Journal, 1*(1), 2-8.

Lin, C. H., Zhang, Y., & Zheng, B. (2017). The roles of learning strategies and motivation in online language learning: A structural equation modeling analysis. *Computers & Education*, 113, 75-85.

Lincoln, Y. Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic enquiry*. Sage.

Lunt, D. H. (2000). *The learning strategies of adult immigrant learners of English: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Melbourne.

Mattarima, K., & Hamdan, A. R. (2011). Understanding students` learning strategies as an input context to design English classroom activities. *International Journal of Psychological Studies, 3*(2), 328-348.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education*. Pearson Education.

Meriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey - Bass.

Ming, T. S., Mahmud, N., & Abd Razak, N. (2012). The use of wireless technology in UKM: Challenges faced and its impact on English language learning. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature®*, *18*(1), 129 -143.

Mistar, J. (2001). English learning strategies of Indonesian university students across individual differences. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 11*, 19-44.

Mistar, J. & Umamah, A. (2014). Strategies of learning skill by Indonesian learners of English and their contribution to speaking proficiency. *TEFLIN Journal, 25*(2), 203-216.

Mukminin, A., Haryanto, E., Sutarno, S., Sari, S. R., Marzulina, L., Hadiyanto, H., & Habibi, A. (2018). Bilingual education policy and Indonesian students' learning strategies. *Elementary Education Online*, *17*(3), 1204-1223.

Muniandy, J., & Shuib, M. (2016). Learning styles, language learning strategies and fields of study among ESL learners. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*, *12*(1), 1-19.

Nguyen, H., & Terry, D. R. (2017). English learning strategies among EFL Learners: A narrative approach. *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*, *3*(1), 4-19.

Ni, Q., Chatupote, M., & Teo, A. (2008). A deep look into learning strategy use by successful and unsuccessful students in the Chinese EFL learning context. *RELC Journal, 39*(3), 338 - 358.

Norton, B. (2016). Identity and language learning: Back to the future. *TESOL Quarterly*, *50*(2), 475-479.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Newbury House Publisher.

Oxford, R. L. (2016). *Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Self-regulation in context*. Routledge.

Park, S. H. (2005). *Language learning strategies and the relationship of these strategies to motivation and English proficiency among Korean EFL students* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Kansas.

Parmawati, A., & Inayah, R. (2019). Improving students' speaking skill through English movie in scope of speaking for general communication. *Eltin Journal, Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, *7*(2), 43-53.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Politzer, R. L., & McGroarty, M. (1985). An exploratory study of learning behaviors and their relationship to gains in linguistic and communicative competence. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*(1), 103-123.

Pradita, I., & Nindita, J. N. (2019). Language learning strategies: A cross sectional survey of vocational high school students. *ELT Echo: The Journal of English Language Teaching in Foreign Language Context*, *4*(2), 131-137.

Radwan, A. A. (2011). Effects of L2 proficiency and gender on choice of language learning strategies by university students majoring in English. *Asian EFL Journal, 13*(1), 114-162.

Rao, Z. (2004). *Language learning strategies used by non-English majors in a Chinese university: individual and cultural factors* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of South Australia.

Rao, Z. (2006). Understanding Chinese students' use of language learning strategies from cultural and educational perspectives. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(6), 491-508.

Rao, Z. (2016). Language learning strategies and English proficiency: interpretations from information-processing theory. *The Language Learning Journal*, *44*(1), 90-106.

Rubin, J. (1975). What the "good language learner" can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, *9*(1), 41-51.

Rubin, J. (1987). Learner strategies: Theoretical assumptions, research history and typology. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 15-30). Prentice-Hall International.

Rubin, J., Thompson, I., & Sun, H. (1982). *How to be a more successful language learner*. Heinle & Heinle.

Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Santihastuti, A., & Wahjuningsih, E. (2019). The learning strategies used by EFL students in learning English. *Indonesian Journal of English Education*, *6*(1), 10-20.

Setiyadi, A. B. (2004). Redesigning language learning strategy classifications. *TEFLIN Journal, 2*(15), 230-245

Shawer, S. F. (2016). Four language skills performance, academic achievement, and learning strategy use in preservice teacher training programs. *TESOL Journal, 7*(2), 262-303.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory-procedures and techniques*. Sage.

Suryanto. (2013). *The student-teacher relationships in the process of English language teaching and learning in Indonesia* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Flinders University of South Australia.

Suwanarak, K. (2019). Use of learning strategies and their effects on English language learning of Thai adult Learners. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature®*, *25*(4), 99-120.

Tamada, Y. (1996). The relationship between Japanese learners' personal factors and their choices of language learning strategies. *Modern Language Journal*, *80*(2), 120-131.

Thomas, N., & Rose, H. L. (2018). Do language learning strategies need to be self-directed? Disentangling strategies from self-regulated learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, *53*(1), 248-257.

Wahyuni, S. (2013). L2 speaking strategies employed by Indonesian EFL tertiary students across proficiency and gender [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Canberra. https://researchprofiles.canberra.edu.au/

Yang, M. N. (2007). Language learning strategies for junior college students in Taiwan: Investigating ethnicity and proficiency. *Asian EFL Journal, 9*(2), 35-57.

Yılmaz, C. (2010). The relationship between language learning strategies, gender, proficiency and self-efficacy beliefs: a study of ELT learners in Turkey. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(2), 682-687.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Yurdakul, C. (2017). An investigation of the relationship between autonomous learning and lifelong learning. *International Journal of Educational Research Review*, *2*(1), 15-20.

Yusuf, S. (2012). Language learning strategies of two Indonesian young learners in the USA. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(4), 65-72.