Language Learning Strategies
for Foreign Language Learning and Teaching

M. Khairi Ikhsan, S.PdI., M.Pd.
Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
(STKIP) PGRI Sumatera Barat
khairi_ikhsan@yahoo.com

Abstract
This paper is aimed at emphasizing the importance of language learning strategies in foreign language learning and teaching. It summarizes the background of language learning strategies, defines the concept of a language learning strategy, and outlines the taxonomy of language learning strategies proposed by several researchers. It also takes into account the teacher’s role in strategy training and poses questions for further research on language learning strategies.

Keywords: Learning Strategies, Language Learning and Teaching

INTRODUCTION
Language learning strategies are specified actions or techniques that learners use to assist their progress in developing second or foreign language skills (Oxford, 1990). While Bialystok (1979) states that language learning strategies are believed to play a vital role in learning a second or foreign language, as they may assist learners in mastering the forms and the functions required for reception and productions in the second or foreign language and thus affect achievement.

The experts’ opinion above can be summed up that language learning strategies are important to be known and applied, not only by the teacher but also by the language learners. By mastering language learning strategies, the goal of learning will be obtained as well. In addition, it is not only necessary for the native of the language itself, but also for the people who eager to learn foreign language. For instance, in our country-Indonesia, we have foreign language, that is English.

In learning English as foreign language, the strategies have to be applied. In order to get the goal of learning, these strategies must also be considered as well. Considering the importance of language learning strategies, the writer would like to discuss several things that deal with language learning strategies. In this paper, the writer discusses about language learning strategies in foreign language learning. Then, this paper provides various things including background of language learning strategies, definition of language learning strategy, taxonomy of language learning strategies, and the importance of language learning strategies in language learning.
Background of Language Learning Strategies

The first point that the writer discusses in this paper is about background of language learning strategies. Based on the sources that the writer found, it can be stated that research into language learning strategies began in the 1960s. So, it has been more than fifty years ago. There were also many studies about strategies used by language learners during the process of foreign language learning. For instance, William and Burden (1987: 149) promote that developments in cognitive psychology influenced much of the research done on language learning strategies. In addition, Rubin and Wenden (1997: 149) state that in most of the research on language learning strategies, the primary concern has been on “identifying what good language learners report they do to learn a second or foreign language, or, in some cases, are observed doing while learning a second or foreign language”.

Actually, there are still more studies dealing with language learning strategies have been proposed by other researchers. In this case, the writer just takes two experts above as the representative of the basic concept or the background of language learning strategies which is discussed in this paper.

Definition of a Language Learning Strategy

In this paper, the writer shows the term of language learning strategy that has also been defined by several researchers. According to Wenden and Rubin (1987: 19), learning strategies is any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information. Next, Richards and Platt (1992: 209) define language learning strategies as intentional behavior and thought used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information. While, Stern (1992: 261) state that the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques.

From the experts’ opinion above, it can be summarized that all language learners used language learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the language classroom. In addition, the language learners attempt to find the quickest and the easiest way to do what is required, that is using language is necessary. Besides, the learning strategies can be as a tool for the language learners to obtain certain goal in the learning process and activities.

Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies

The term of taxonomy in this paper deals with the characteristics of language learning strategy. In this case, there are several scholars have characterized language learning strategies, they are: Rubin’s (1987), Oxford’s (1990), O’Malley’s (1985), and Stern’s 91992). However, most of these attempts to classify language learning strategies reflect more or less the same
categorizations of language learning strategies without any radical changes. The following are their taxonomies of language learning strategies.

RUBIN’S (1987) CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

According to Rubin, there are three types of strategies used by learners that contribute directly or indirectly to language learning. They are:

1) Learning Strategies
2) Communication Strategies
3) Social Strategies

1) Learning Strategies

It is divided into two main points. They are cognitive learning strategies and meta-cognitive learning strategies. These are explained as follows:

a. Cognitive Learning Strategies

They refer to the steps or operations used in learning or problem-solving that requires direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin identified six main cognitive learning strategies contributing directly to language learning:

- Clarification/Verification
- Guessing/Inductive Inferencing
- Deductive Reasoning
- Practice
- Memorization
- Monitoring


Rubin stresses that these strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. They involve various processes as planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management.

2) Communication Strategies

These strategies are concerned with the process of participating in conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intended. Communication strategies are used by speakers when faced with some difficulty due to the fact that their communication ends outrun their communication means or when confronted with misunderstanding by a co-speaker.

3) Social Strategies

Social strategies are those activities learners engage in which afford them opportunities to be exposed to and practice their knowledge. Although these
strategies provide exposure to the target language, they contribute indirectly to learning since they do not lead directly to the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language.

OXFORD'S (1990) CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Oxford divides language learning strategies into two main classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into six groups. In Oxford’s system, meta cognitive strategy helps learners to regulate their learning. Affective strategies are concerned with the learner’s emotional requirements such as confidence, while social strategies lead to increased interaction to the target language. Cognitive strategies are mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, memory strategies are those used for storage of information, and compensation strategies help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication. Oxford’s taxonomy of language learning strategies is shown in the following:

I. Direct Strategies

Oxford stresses that there are three main points dealing with direct strategies. They are:

a. Memory, consists of four main activities
   1) Creating mental linkages
   2) Applying images and sound
   3) Reviewing well
   4) Employing action

b. Cognitive, that includes four main activities
   1) Practicing
   2) Receiving and sending messages strategies
   3) Analysing and reasoning
   4) Creating structure for input and output

c. Compensation Strategies, that contains two main activities
   1) Guessing intelligently
   2) Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

The explanation above can be summarized that direct strategies is really complicated that should be considered and applied by the language learners in learning process and activities.

II. Indirect Strategies

Oxford promotes three main points of indirect strategies:

a. Meta cognitive strategies, includes
   • Centering the learning
   • Arranging and planning the learning
   • Evaluating the planning

b. Affective strategies, that contains:
• Lowering the anxiety
• Encouraging yourself
• Talking your emotional temperature

c. Social strategies, that concerns with:
• Asking questions
• Cooperating with others
• Empathizing with others.

Indirect strategies, then is also important activities that should be dealt with the language learners. Since it has various activities that would like to be done, the language learners should be aware of doing these activities so that what they want to be gained runs successfully.

O’MALLEY’S (1985) CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

O’Malley (1985) divides language learning strategies into three main subcategories:

a. Meta cognitive Strategies

It can be stated that meta cognitive is a term to express executive function, strategies which require planning for learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Among the main meta cognitive strategies, it is possible to include advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, and self-evaluation. So, this strategy is really complicated.

b. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. Repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imaginary, auditory, representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, inferencing are among the most important cognitive strategies.

c. Socio affective Strategies

Brown (1987) states that in socio affective strategies it can be stated that they are related with social mediating activity and transacting with others. Cooperation and question for clarification are the main socio affective strategies.

In short, the three strategies are really necessary to be comprehended and understood by the language learners. Each of them has their own important points that support the strategies as well.
STERN'S (1992) CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

According to Stern (1992), there are five main language learning strategies:

Management and Planning Strategies

These strategies are related to the learner’s intention to direct his own learning. A learner can take charge of the development of his own program when he is helped by a teacher whose role is that of an adviser and resource person. That is to say that the learner must:

1) Decide what commitment to make to language learning;
2) Set himself reasonable goals;
3) Decide an appropriate methodology, select appropriate resources, and monitor progress;
4) Evaluate his achievement in the light of previously determined goals and expectations.

Cognitive Strategies

They are steps or operations used in learning or problem solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. In the following, some of the cognitive strategies are exhibited:

1) Clarification/verification
2) Guessing/inductive inferencing
3) Deductive reasoning
4) Practice
5) Memorization
6) Monitoring

Communicative-Experiential Strategies

Communication strategies, such as circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrase, or asking for repetition and explanation are techniques used by learners so as to keep a conversation going. The purpose of using these techniques is to avoid the interrupting the flow of communication.

Interpersonal Strategies

They should monitor their own development and evaluate their own performance. Learners should contact with native speakers and cooperate with them. Learners then must become acquainted with the target culture. So, it can be stated that the interpersonal strategies concerns with evaluating the performance of the individuals and good cooperation with native speaker is also necessary. So by having this, learners will deal with the target culture that would like to be gained.
Affective Strategies

It is evident that good language learners employ distinct affective strategies. Language learning can be frustrating in some cases. In some cases, L2 learners may have negative feelings about native speakers of L2. Good language learners are more or less conscious of these emotional problems. Good language learners try to create associations of positive affect towards the foreign language and its speakers as well as towards the learning can help students to face up to the emotional difficulties and to overcome them by drawing attention to the potential frustrations or pointing out as they arise.

From the explanation above, it can be summed up that the strategies that are promoted by Stern are really have many more knowledge that should be gained by the language learners since the learners of the language have to deal with the strategies that can support them in learning process and activities. Besides, these strategies are important to be done and applied by the language learners in their classroom atmosphere.

IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

As stated above that language learning strategies are important for the language learners. Developing skills in three areas - Meta cognitive, cognitive, and socio affective can help the language learner build up learner independence and autonomy whereby he can take control of his own learning. Lessard-Clouston (1997) states that language learning strategies contribute to the development of the communicative competence of the students. Being a broad concept, language learning strategies are used to refer to all strategies foreign language learners use in learning the target language and communication strategies are one type of language learning strategies.

Next, Oxford (1990) states that language learning strategies is important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence.

From the explanations above, it can be stated that language learning strategies is important. It has much contribution especially for language learners. However, there is always the possibility that bad language learners can also use the same language learning strategies while becoming successful owning to some other reasons. At this point, it should be strongly stressed that using the same language learning strategies does not guarantee that bad learners will also become successful in language learning since other factors may also play role in success. Besides, language learning strategies are also give good contribution to the development of the communicative competent of the language learners.

CONCLUSION

Language learning strategies, being specific actions, behaviors, or techniques, facilitate the learning of the target language by the language learners. All language learners, needles to say, use language learning strategies in the learning process. Since the factors like age, gender, personality, motivation, self-concept, life experience, learning style, anxiety etc affect the way in which
language learners learn the target language, it is not reasonable to support the idea that all language learners use the same good language learning strategies or should be trained in using and developing the same strategies to become successful learners.

In the last point of this paper, the writer emphasizes that language learning strategies is important. It means that all of language learners should have good and appropriate language learning strategies in the learning process. As stated in above explanation, language learning strategies can be a tool for the language learners for being active. In addition, it also helps the language learners develop their communicative competence as well. Then, all of strategies stated in this paper should be considered so that the goal of learning process and activities can be obtained as well.

REFERENCES