

## **LEARNING STRATEGY TRAINING: FACTORS NEED CONSIDERING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION IN EFL CONTEXT**

By: Widiani Trisnaningsih  
Prodi pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP UM Metro

### **Abstract**

Learning strategies are defined as special thoughts, actions and behaviors taken in the purpose of achieving learning objectives. Many researches have found that applying learning strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context seem effective. As the extension, there is an attempt to train or to instruct the learning strategies in the purpose of building students' awareness of the importance of applying strategies in their learning which is later on known as 'learning strategy training' or 'learning strategy instruction'. This present article discusses some factors need considering for the implementation of learning strategy training in EFL context. The factors include: Principles of effective strategy training, selecting appropriate learning strategies, explicit or integrated strategy training, language of instruction, and strategy training models. The discussion emphasizes on the literature review available from many sources and the previous researches concerning on learning strategies and learning strategy training. Suggestions are also included for the strategy training implementation to provide the better and more effective one in the future.

*Key words:* learning strategy, learning strategy training, independent learner, effective training.

### **Introduction**

Learning strategies are defined as special thoughts, actions and behaviors taken in the purpose of achieving learning objectives. The strategies used play important role to get success or failure in the learning. The more and the better strategies used will result in more success of the learners. Wesche (1977:363) in Larsen-Freeman and Long (1992) cites that 'in the classroom, both the *diversity* of observed learning activity and the relative *amount* of such activity characterized the better students'. Rubin (1975) in Shekan (1989) adds that good language learners use more and better learning strategies than poor language learners do. Unfortunately, some students still are not aware of it or perhaps do not realize the learning strategies they are applying. Perhaps, one way to overcome this problem is by providing learning strategy training or learning strategy

instruction, i.e. an attempt to train or to instruct learning strategies and to build students' awareness of learning strategies they are probably applying. It is expected that learning strategy training can encourage students to use strategies in their learning, facilitate them to acquire the language at a maximum and further, to make them become more independent learners.

Learning strategy training has been topical since the 1970s (Clark, 2000). In Clark's systematic review (2000), there were 38 studies of strategy training published on the internet journal found. 24 out of 38 studies were set in EFL or ESL (*read: English as a Second Language*) and only 11 out of 38 involved school students. The rest involved university students, higher education or adult students of languages. Therefore, Clark suggests that more evidence of

strategy training for school learners of modern languages is needed as well as Oxford (2004) cites that there is growing evidence that L2 (*read: second language*) teachers can and should conduct strategy instruction in their classrooms. Helping students understand good language learning strategies and training them to develop and use such good language learning strategies can be considered to be the appreciated characteristics of good language teachers (Lessard-Clouston, 1997:3 in Hismanoglu, 2000)

Nevertheless, strategy training may have negative impact too. Crowded curriculum materials might become one of the great problems to conduct such strategy training (Chamot et al., 1999). It seems that teachers must allocate teaching times for the materials stated in curriculum rather than for an extra lesson (*read: strategy training*). However, in term of its effectiveness, Clark's study finds that most studies were effective. 17 out of 38 studies report only positive results. 6 studies report both positive and negative results and only 2 studies report negative findings. Meanwhile, the need of strategy training in Indonesian EFL classes nowadays seems crucial. Moreover, the Indonesian curriculum, KTSP, has emphasized learner-centered approach in which students are to meet standard competences in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas properly (Sanjaya, 2008). Therefore, teachers as the learning facilitators should allow students to drive their own learning process as independent as possible so that they can reach the competences required. To develop the independency, learners might need knowledge of the learning process as well as they need strategies to apply that knowledge. Seeing this phenomenon, providing strategy instruction in EFL classes is very reasonable. To make strategy training implementation at a

maximum, some factors need considering. The present article particularly addresses the following problem:

*"What factors need considering for the implementation of learning strategy training in EFL context"*.

### **Principles of Effective Strategy Training**

Chamot et al. (1999) suggest that effective learning strategy training should involve four factors, i.e.: (1) students' belief of the strategy training positive effect; (2) teachers' belief of the success obtained by providing the training; (3) classroom context that relates to the classroom environment that must encourage students' risk-taking ,i.e. by accepting students' responses without judgment; (4) instructional approach which emphasizes that teachers should focus on students' learning processes, as well as on outcomes.

Meanwhile, Oxford (1994) suggests some principles to be applied in strategy training that it should: (1) be based clearly on students' attitudes, beliefs, and stated needs; (2) choose strategies that mesh with and support each other so that they fit the requirements language tasks, learners' goal, and learners' style of learning; (3) be integrated into L2 activities over a long period of time rather than taught as separate; (4) give students plenty opportunities for strategy training during language classes; (5) include explanations, handouts, activities, brainstorming, materials for reference, and home study; (6) directly address affective issues such as anxiety, motivation, beliefs, and interests; (7) be explicit, overt, relevant and provide transferable strategies to future language tasks beyond a given class; (8) be somewhat individualized, as different students prefer or need certain strategies for particular task; and (9) provide

students with a mechanism to evaluate their own progress and to evaluate the success of the training and the value of the strategies in multiple tasks

There seem many factors that influence the success of strategy training. Teachers have to bear in mind the principles underlying effective strategy training. The effectiveness of strategy training is not solely teacher's responsibility. It needs cooperation with students and requires students' belief that by applying appropriate strategies, their learning will be more effective.

### **Learning Strategy Identification**

The identification of learning strategies aims at finding out students' current language strategies before conducting the strategy training. This approach can help students develop their own metacognition about themselves as strategic learners (Chamot, 2004). Chamot cites that language learning strategies can be identified through self-report. Although self-report may be inaccurate if the learner does not report truthfully, it is still the only way to identify learners' mental processing. Selfreport data may be gained through retrospective interviews, stimulated recall interviews, questionnaires, written diaries and journals, and think-aloud protocols concurrent with a learning task (Chamot, 2004).

Perhaps the simplest way to gain selfreport data is by distributing questionnaire. The limitations are that students may not remember the strategies they have used in the past, may claim to use strategies that in fact they do not use, or may not understand the strategy descriptions in the questionnaire items. However, it can be overcome by distributing the standardized questionnaire whose validity and

reliability have been reviewed. The use of Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire (LLSQ) proposed by Setiyadi (2004) might be a good way in identifying the Indonesian students' use of learning strategies in EFL learning. The LLSQ has been translated in Bahasa and particularly addressed the four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing in which there are 20 items for each skill and also provided with one open-answer question to anticipate strategies which come as answers out of the strategies available in the questionnaire items. Reliability and validity of LLSQ have been statistically reviewed. The reliability is proved by taking into account the internal consistency of the items of the language learning categories and the correlation among the skill group categories, while LLSQ validity by reference to the construct validity was conducted by having peer-rating or *interrater* (Setiyadi, 2004).

### **Explicit or Integrated Strategy Training**

Before teaching strategies, teachers need to consider whether the instruction should be integrated into the regular course – curriculum, in some cases – or taught separately. Both have their own advantages and disadvantages as well. Explicit learning strategy instruction essentially involves the development of students' awareness of the strategies they use, teacher modeling of strategic thinking, student practice with new strategies, student self-evaluation of the strategies used, and practice in transferring strategies to new tasks (Chamot, 2004). By teaching strategies explicitly, students are more likely to realize the importance of applying strategies in their learning and have clear explanation of the strategies and its application in language task as well.

However, explicit strategy training implemented in a single EFL skill, seems unable students to apply the strategies into other skills. The superior is that students might apply the strategies in completing the tasks of the skill being trained at a maximum. Another drawback is that teachers and their learners need to allocate separate time for the training. It seems difficult to apply this kind of explicit strategy training in Indonesia since teachers' job description priority is to convey the crowded materials stated in the curriculum. Besides, teachers as the trainers must be well-prepared. Needless to say, it is not a simple thing to do.

Meanwhile, integrated instruction provides students with opportunities to practice learning strategies with authentic language learning tasks (Chamot et al., 1999). There is such flexibility to have practice in various language skills rather than the explicit one. For example, training students "imaginary" strategy, learners may make use the strategy when they begin to read an English passage. However, at the same time teacher can lead the students to apply the strategy in writing. In term of practicality, it is easier to integrate strategy training into a regular course than to prepare the separate one and prepare all teachers to teach strategies (Chamot, 2004). The drawback is that it seems too complicated to understand for the students

– especially the low students – since at the same time, they have to learn the language and comprehend the strategy instruction as well.

Consideration in deciding whether to provide learning strategy training explicitly or separately is valuable to make the training effective and efficient. Therefore, teachers need to consider the main objectives of the training, for example, whether the students are

expected to apply the strategies in a certain EFL skill or in the integrative ones. The most important however is that the strategy instruction can enable students to achieve their learning objectives maximally and that they get the benefits from the strategy training no matter whether it is explicit or integrative strategy training.

### **Language of Instruction**

Language of strategy instruction is one of the most important issues that is still being investigated – and debated. Chamot (2004) states that beginning level students do not yet have L2 proficiency to understand explanations in the target language of why and how to use learning strategies. However, it does not mean that strategy training has to be postponed until intermediate or advanced level courses since beginners also need strategies that can make their learning more effective and successful as well.

Some strategy training studies started their lessons in L1 (*read: first language*), the teachers usually begin the preparation phase for investigating students' recent learning strategies in L1. The greatest drawback is that the use of the native language takes time away from exposure to and practice in the target language, and repeatedly models the strategy (Chamot et al., 1999).

As the alternative, the use of both languages seems preferable – rather than debating which language is more effective. The combination of using both L1 and target language might be a "smart" solution. Chamot (2004) summarizes some studies that used the two combination languages in the instruction, take for example: a study of strategy instruction by secondary French and German teachers in London, some of the materials were in English (especially

those used by students for planning and evaluating their work), while check-lists, descriptions of strategies, and strategy activities were written in the target language, simplified as needed (Grenfell and Harris, 1999 in Chamot, 2004). The similar study for Indonesian secondary school students was also done by Trisnaningsih (2007). All materials were presented in English, but the discussion of the learning strategies, recalling students mental processing of using strategies, and reviewing the strategies trained were using both English and Bahasa so that the students could understand the strategies well.

It is obvious that choice of language instruction is worth considering. In conclusion, the exposure of target language on the strategy instruction as much as possible is strongly suggested, as well as on the instructional materials. To avoid the ineffectiveness of strategy training especially when explaining *why* and *how* to use learning strategies, however, the use of L1 is not totally prohibited.

### Strategy Training Models

Strategy training model is an instructional approach for guidance to implement the training. Chamot (2004) summarizes three models relevant to current models of language learning strategy instruction

solidly based on developing students' knowledge about their own thinking and strategic processes and encouraging them to adopt strategies that will improve their language learning and proficiency.

The three instructional models share many features. All agree on the importance of developing students' metacognitive understanding of learning strategy values. It is done through teacher demonstration and providing many opportunities to practice the strategies so that students can use them autonomously. All models also suggest that students should evaluate how well a strategy has worked, choose strategies for a task, and actively transfer strategies to new tasks. The models begin by identifying students' current learning strategies and modeling new strategy explicitly.

The CALLA model is recursive rather than linear so that teachers and students always have the option of revisiting prior instructional phases as needed. The Grenfell and Harris (1999) model, on the other hand, has students work through a cycle of six steps, then beginning a new cycle. The Cohen (1998) model has the teacher take on various roles to help students learn to use learning strategies appropriate to their own learning styles. The three models are presented in the following table:

| SSBI* Model (Cohen, 1998)   | CALLA** Model (Chamot, 2005; Chamot et al., 1999)   | Grenfell & Harris (1999)   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Teacher as diagnostician:</b><br>Helps students identify current strategies and learning styles. | <b>Preparation:</b> Teacher identifies students' current learning strategies for familiar tasks.              | <b>Awareness raising:</b> Students complete a task, and then identify the strategies they used.                |
| <b>Teacher as language learner:</b><br>Shares own learning experiences and thinking processes.      | <b>Presentation:</b> Teacher models, names, explain new strategy; asks students if and how they have used it. | <b>Modeling:</b> Teacher models, discusses value of new strategy, makes checklist of strategies for later use. |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Teacher as learner trainer:</b><br>Trains students how to use learning strategies.         | <b>Practice:</b> Students practice new strategy; in subsequent strategy practice, teacher fades reminders to encourage independent strategy use. | <b>General practice:</b> Students practice new strategies with different tasks.   |
| <b>Teacher as coordinator:</b><br>Supervises students' study plans and monitors difficulties. | <b>Self-evaluation:</b> Students evaluate their own strategy use immediately after practice.   | <b>Action planning:</b> Students set goals and choose strategies to attain those goals.   |
| <b>Teacher as coach:</b> Provides ongoing guidance on students' progress.                     | <b>Expansion:</b> Students transfer strategies to new tasks, combine strategies into clusters, develop repertoire of preferred strategies.       | <b>Focused practice:</b> Students carry out action plan using selected strategies; teacher fades prompts so that students use strategies automatically. |
|   | <b>Assessment:</b> Teacher assesses students' use of strategies and impact on performance.   | <b>Evaluation:</b> Teacher and students evaluate success of action plan; set new goals; cycle begins again.   |

\* Styles and Strategies-Based Instruction

\*\* Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach

### Conclusion

This paper has examined some factors that need to be considered for learning strategy training implementation in the EFL context. The factors particularly involve principles of effective strategy training, selecting appropriate learning strategies, explicit or integrated strategy training, language of instruction, and strategy training models. The factors discussed above can be such basic considerations before providing the strategy training particularly in EFL context with expectation that by considering those factors, the prospective trainers may have such overview of what factors might influence the implementation of learning strategy training so that it can result in such effective and successful learning strategy training. For the learners, the exposure of learning strategies is expected to enable them aware of the importance of learning strategies and the learning strategies they are probably applying and encourage them to apply the learning strategies in

their learning, further, by applying the learning strategies, it is expected that they will achieve the language at a maximum and be more independent learners. Needless to say, there are still many factors that might influence the success of learning strategy training implementation. Therefore, a thorough investigation is still needed.

### REFERENCES

- Chamot, A. U., et al. (1999). *The Learning Strategies Handbook*. New York: Longman. 256 pages.
- Chamot, A. U. (2004). *Issues in Language Learning Strategy Research and Teaching*. Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching. Vol. 1, No. 1. pp. 14-26. Centre for Language Studies. National University of Singapore. April

- 14, 2006. <http://eflt.nus.edu.sg/v1n12004/chamot.htm>
- Clark, D. (2000). *Strategy Training in Language Learning – A Systematic Review of Available Research*. REEL Internet Journal. April 14, 2006. <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/strategy.html>
- Cohen, Andrew. (2003). *Strategy Training for Second Language Learners*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistic. ED482492. December 4, 2006. <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-4/language.html>
- Hismanoglu, M. (2000). *Language Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*. The Internet TESL Journal. Vol. VI. No. 8. December 4, 2006. <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Hismanoglu-Strategies.html>
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane and Long. (1992). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. Longman. New York. 398 pages.
- Oxford, R. (2004). *Language Learning Styles and Strategies: An Overview*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistic.
- Oxford, R. (1994). *Language Learning Strategies: An Update*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistic.
- Sanjaya, Wina. (2008). *Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran*. Kencana. Jakarta. 379 pages.
- Setiyadi, Ag. Bambang. (2004). *Redesigning Language Learning Strategy Classifications*. TEFLIN Journal. Vol. XV, No. 2
- Shekan, Peter. (1989). *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning (Second Language Acquisition)*. Great Britain: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
- Trisnaningsih, Widiani. (2007). *Learning Strategy Training in EFL Reading*. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis. Bandarlampung.