



## Language Learning Strategies: How the Islamic Learners in IAIN Palopo Learn English

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### Abstract

This study intended to describe the Language Learning Strategies that the English learners use in IAIN Palopo. This descriptive study involved 86 learners from the English Language Education Study Program as the research subject. The data in this study is gained using Adapted SILL Questionnaire, which Rebecca Oxford developed. Through the questionnaire, the study found that the English learners use all the categories of Language Learning Strategies, i.e., Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensation Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies, Affective, and Social Strategies. Furthermore, the level of the learners' LLSs use is categorized into Medium level. Metacognitive Strategies are the most popular strategies used by the learners (29%), followed by Affective Strategies (20,9%). In contrast, the Compensation Strategies (8%) become the least used strategies by the learners.

**Keywords:** Islamic English Learners, Language Learning Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies

### Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language has been discussed for years by scholars. Numbers of methods and techniques have been suggested to foster the learners' English mastery. However, the results seem to be the same from year to year. Learners still consider learning English a problematic task (Chawinga, 2017; Kusmaryati&Amertaningrum, 2017; Rohmatillah, 2014; Ying et al., 2021). The learners' difficulties are related to factors inside and outside themselves. Internal factors include the learners' motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies, while external factors relate to their learning environment, including the teachers' method, learning material, and learning facilities (Iksan& Dirham, 2018; Iksan&Duriani, 2015).

English learners in Islamic institutions have their own challenges in mastering the Language and improving their proficiency. The learners in Islamic institutions have more subjects to learn every semester than those in non-Islamic institutions. In IAIN Palopo, especially, learners should learn and master at least two disciplines, i.e., Islamic studies and their Specialization. On the other hand, in the English Language Education Study Program, learners have more disciplines to master, i.e., Islamic studies, Education studies, and English Language.

The extensive learning loads become one of the biggest challenges for learners. They have to work harder to boost their learning achievement, including their language proficiency. In contrast, it is known that learning English needs more time and practice to succeed. This condition forces the learners to be creative in their language learning. In addition, the learners need to be familiar with language learning strategies and occupy the proper strategy close to their learning styles or characteristics. Therefore, the role of lecturers is also required to identify the learners' characteristics, including their learning motivations, prior English competence, learning styles, and the language learning strategies they occupy. Thus, they can suggest the proper language learning strategies based on the learners' characteristics.

The use of Language Learning Strategies by English learners has become one of the popular topics investigated by scholars. Almost all of the studies agreed that the LLs use is strongly correlated with the learners' proficiency. For example, Hong-Nam (2006), who studied the relationship between the Language Learning Strategies with the proficiency of the second language learners, found that the learners who mostly use strategies get better improvement in their proficiency than learners who rarely use language learning strategies. He also suggested that metacognitive strategies become the most popular strategies by the learners.

Regarding the problems discussed above, it is necessary to conduct studies to gain accurate information about the learners' Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) and their level of LLSs use so that the lecturers can suggest proper strategies to help learners foster their English proficiency.

## Method

This study employed a quantitative method with a descriptive design. It involved 86 English learners from the English Language Education study program of Education and Teacher Training Faculty of IAIN Palopo. The data was collected using the Adapted SILL questionnaire that was developed by Rebecca Oxford (2002). The writer adapted the questionnaire by translating the questionnaire into Bahasa Indonesia and modifying the statements in the questionnaire to meet the learners' context. The questionnaire consists of 50 statement items which are divided into six groups of strategies. A minimum of 6 statement items represents each strategy.

The questionnaire was delivered to the learners in two ways, online via google form and offline via printed questionnaire. The first step of the data analysis process was the tabulation of the result of each student on the SILL questionnaire. Each of the students' results was tabulated in the following table:

Table 1. Students' SILL results

Part A	Part B	Part C	Part D	Part E	Part F	Whole SILL
1. ....	1. ....	1. ....	1. ....	1. ....	1. ....	SUM Part A ....
2. ....	2. ....	2. ....	2. ....	2. ....	2. ....	SUM Part B ....
3. ....	3. ....	3. ....	3. ....	3. ....	3. ....	SUM Part C ....
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.
SUM ...	SUM ...	SUM ...	SUM ...	SUM ...	SUM ...	SUM ...
÷ 9 = _	÷ 14 = _	÷ 6 = _	÷ 9 = _	÷ 6 = _	÷ 6 = _	÷ 50 = _

(Overall Average)

To show the profile of students' results on the SILL questionnaire, the sum of students' results, as shown in the table above, then was drawn into the table as follows:

Table 2. Profile of students' SILL results

Students	Part A	Part B	Part C	Part D	Part E	Part F	Average	Overall Average
1								
2								
3								
Etc.								

After being identified, the average of the student's SILL profile was transferred into three levels of LLSs usage: high, medium, and low. The standard score for each level was as follows:

Table 3. the Standard score for students' level of LLSs use

Level	Frequency of Usage	Score
High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Generally not used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or never almost used	1.0 to 1.4

A descriptive analysis was done using the SPSS application to count the percentage and the mean score of the students' LLSs usage in each category.

## Results

The SILL questionnaire found that the English learners in IAIN Palopo used all the categories of LLSs given by Oxford (1990), i.e., Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensation Strategies, Metacognitive Affective Strategies, and Social Strategies.

### *The Level of LLSs Usage by the Learners*

Although the students use the whole categories of LLSs, each student's levels of LLSs usage are various. Table 4.1 shows the frequency of the level of LLSs use of the students.

Table 4. Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviations of the LLSs Usage Level

Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
High	19	3.911	.3771
Medium	46	2.935	.2496
Low	22	2.050	.2177
Valid N (listwise)	0		

The table shows that 16 students are categorized as high (usually, almost always and always) users of LLSs. In comparison, 114 students are medium (sometimes) users, and 41 students are low users. The table also shows that the highest mean among the three levels of LLSs use is the mean of the high level of LLSs usage (almost always – always use) by mean 3.725. Therefore, the findings in Table 4 indicate that by frequencies, the English learners in IAIN Palopo are categorized as medium users of LLSs. However, the means score shows that the high LLSs users had the highest mean score (3.725).

### ***The Level of LLSs Usage by the Learners***

The LLSs usage by the English learners in IAIN Palopo that was found from the SILL questionnaire is described and can be seen in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Frequencies and Mean Score of Students' LLSs Usage

LLSs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory	10	2.7400	.66533
Cognitive	10	2.6500	.52967
Compensation	8	2.7500	.65465
Metacognitive	25	3.1720	.37807
Affective	18	2.8389	.58020
Social	15	2.7200	.72526
Valid N (listwise)	0		

From the table above, the LLSs use of the students in SMA Negeri in Palopo can be mentioned in general as follows:

- 1) The most dominant used strategy by the students is Metacognitive Strategies (25 learners), followed by Affective Strategies (18 learners).
- 2) The least dominant used strategy by the students is Compensation Strategies (8 learners).
- 3) The highest average of strategies used by the students is Metacognitive Strategies (mean: 3.1720) used by 25 learners, and in the second place is Affective strategies (mean: 2.8389) used by 18 learners.
- 4) The lowest average of strategies used by the students is Cognitive strategies (mean: 2.6500) used by 10 learners.

### ***The Level of LLSs Usage by the Learners***

The LLSs usage by the male and the female learners can also be seen as described below:

Table 6. The LLSs used by Male and Female Learners

LLSs	Male	Female
Memory	3	7
Cognitive	4	6
Compensation	2	6
Metacognitive	10	15

Affective	4	14
Social	2	13
N	25	61

Tabel 6 shows that both male and female learners dominantly use Metacognitive strategies. Among 25 male learners, Metacognitive strategies become the most popular strategies, dominantly used by 10 male learners. While cognitive and affective strategies were used 4 male learners of each, then Compensation and Social strategies were dominantly used by 2 learners of each.

Similar to the male learners, the female learners are also found to be mostly use Metacognitive strategies as their dominant strategies in their English learning. Among 61 female learners, Metacognitive strategies are the most popular and dominantly used by 15 learners, followed by Affective strategies (14 learners) and Sosical strategies (13 learners), then Memory strategies (7 learners), Cognitive strategies (6 learners), and also Compensation strategies (6 learners). Both male and female learners share identic tendention in terms of the most popular LLSs used by them, i.e., Metacognitive strategies.

## Discussion

The study results reveal that the English learners in IAIN Palopo use all the strategies mentioned by Rebecca Oxford (2002), i.e., Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensation Strategies, Metacognitive Affective Strategies, and Social Strategies. This finding indicates that the learners in their language learning have used strategies. However, despite the learners using all the strategies, the results also showed that the learners' level of the LLSs usage is medium. It means that the English learners in IAIN Palopo do not always use LLSs in their English learning; or in other words, it can be said that their learning frequency is not high but medium. This information also indicates that the learners are not familiar with the LLSs. This finding can also suggest that the learning activities they got involved in are not enough to motivate and lead them to be more active in learning and practicing their English. Therefore, medium LLSs users could not be claimed to be successful learners because the LLSs usage is in line with the learning activities that the learners do. Moreover, the more the learners learn, the more they use the strategies. Therefore, from this information, the lecturer can understand that they have to work harder to motivate their students and be more creative in designing learning materials and activities that can lead the learners to be more motivated and active in their language learning.

The study also reveals that the Metacognitive Strategies have become the most popular strategies used by the learners. This finding is in line with the studies done by some scholars, which reported that Metacognitive becomes the strategy used mainly by English learners. (Chand, 2014; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Iksan & Duriani, 2015). According to Oxford (2002), Metacognitive strategies are the strategies that help the learners to regulate their own cognition by assessing how they are learning and planning for future language tasks. Referring to the Oxford idea, it can be inferred that the English learners in IAIN Palopo are primarily independent and can manage and center their learning. This potential is beneficial for them if supported by a positive learning environment, including the learning input provided by the lecturer.

These findings might bring insight for stakeholders in IAIN Palopo that the academic demands push the learner to adapt their learning strategies, including their language learning strategies. The result of this research reveals that most of the learners occupy Metacognitive Strategies in their English learning. The academic atmosphere with large learning loads leads the learners to be more creative and manageable in their learning. Therefore, they can not only lay their learning success on their cognitive capacity and their metacognitive capacity. This finding is in line with the ideas suggested by Sedhu et al.(2017), indicated that Metacognitive Strategies could help learners improve their English skills, especially listening skills. They also reported that even average intelligence learners engaged in metacognitive regulation and given an effortful cognitive task get successful in their learning.

The study also reveals that in learning English, most male and female learners use Metacognitive strategies. In contrast, the rest of them do not show significant differences among other strategies. This finding is different from the findings of the research conducted by Sumarni&Rachmawaty (2018) and Mahmud &Nur (2018). Sumarni and Rachmawaty, in their study, reported that Social strategies are the most popular strategies among male and female university students. While Mahmud &Nur, in their study investigating the LLSs used by the senior high school students in Makassar, revealed that both male and female students occupy different strategies in their English learning. Mahmud &Nur reported that female students mostly use Cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, and Affective strategies. While the male students mostly use Memory strategies, followed by Metacognitive strategies and Social strategies.

The differences among the research findings are acceptable. It is because the location and the background of the subject of the studies are also different. As mentioned in this paper's introduction, the characteristic of English learners in IAIN Palopo is different from those of other university students. In IAIN Palopo, the design of the curriculum is different. The curriculum does not contain not only language competence but also Islamic and educational competence. Therefore, the English learners are possible to occupy different LLSs compared to other universities students.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the English learners in IAIN Palopo use all the strategies suggested by Oxford (2002), i.e., i.e., Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensation Strategies, Metacognitive Affective Strategies, and Social Strategies. Metacognitive strategies are the most popular strategies used by English learners in IAIN Palopo, and the level of the LLSs usage by the learners are medium. Therefore, some suggestions are given to the lecturers to be proactive in introducing the LLSs to the learners and be more creative in designing learning materials and learning activities to engage the learners and be more motivated in learning and practicing their English.

Further investigation is also needed to investigate the learners' English proficiency and the correlation between the Metacognitive Strategies usage and learners' English achievement. It is also necessary to clarify how the metacognitive

works for the high, medium and low-level users to help improve the learners' English proficiency.

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