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## LEARNERS' STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the strategies applied by the learners in learning English pronunciation. This research attempts to answer the following research questions: (1) what are the strategies applied by the learners in learning English pronunciation? (2) What is the impact of the strategies applied by the learners toward their achievement in learning pronunciation? The participants of this study are 30 students who are still in the second semester in English Education Study Program, Pakuan University. The data were collected through classroom observation, questionnaire, and documentation in a form of audio recording, and in-depth interview with six representative participants. The major findings of this study are: (1) the strategies applied by the participants of this study are based on the strategies proposed by Calka (2001). From six strategies, cognitive strategy is the strategy whose the tactics mostly applied by the participants. (2) There is a good impact of pronunciation strategies toward pronunciation learning. The impacts are in a form of facilitating the process of learning and developing pronunciation ability and achievement.

Keywords: EFL, Case Study, Pronunciation Learning Strategies

### ABSTRAK

*Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris dalam mempelajari Pronunciation Bahasa Inggris. Studi Kasus di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Pakuan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menginvestigasi strategi yang diterapkan oleh pembelajar bahasa Inggris dalam mempelajari pronunciation Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini difokuskan untuk menjawab pertanyaan; (1) Apakah strategi yang diterapkan oleh pembelajar dalam mempelajari pronunciation bahasa Inggris? (2) Apakah dampak dari penerapan strategi belajar terhadap pembelajaran dan kemampuan pronunciation? Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 30 mahasiswa semester 2 Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Pakuan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara observasi dalam kelas, kuesioner, dokumentasi berupa rekaman suara partisipan saat membaca kata dan kalimat, serta interview perwakilan dari partisipan. Temuan dari penelitian ini antara lain; (1) Strategi yang diterapkan oleh partisipan adalah strategi yang disusun oleh Calka (2001). Dari enam strategi, kognitif strategi adalah strategi yang taktiknya paling banyak diterapkan oleh partisipan. (2) Ada dampak yang sangat baik dari penerapan strategi pembelajaran*

*pronunciation terhadap kemampuan pronunciation. Dampak tersebut juga terlihat dari proses pembelajaran yang menjadi lebih mudah.*

*Kata Kunci; EFL, Studi Kasus, Strategi Pembelajaran Pronunciation*

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

For many years, some English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners argue that acquiring English pronunciation is a complex skill to develop, especially if the main goal is to pronounce as a native speaker. The complexity might be caused of several circumstances; such as lack of practice, the variety of English accents and also the influence of students' native language. Meanwhile, pronunciation is very important to learn by English learners in the classroom for some reasons no matter how difficult it is. Perceiving such issue, in English Educational Study Program, Pakuan University, pronunciation becomes one of classes required to take by the learners. The class which goal is to develop learners' ability to produce the sounds correctly and to pronounce the words, the phrases, the clauses and the sentences intelligibly is taught along two semesters. At last, having completed the class, it is hoped that the learners will get easy to accomplish the process of communication in English.

Ironically, even the learners have got English class in their junior and senior high school; some of them still get difficulties in acquiring English pronunciation. However, despite the problems in learning pronunciation, there are some strategies that can be applied by the learners in learning pronunciation. The strategies like reading aloud and repeating the words aloud several times are assumed will help the learners to develop pronunciation ability. Such this condition was found in the study conducted by the writer. It is discovered that some learners applied those

strategies in learning pronunciation. The strategies applied really help them overcome the problems in acquiring pronunciation. Therefore, based on the preliminary research and some theories, this study attempts to investigate other strategies applied by the learners in learning English pronunciation.

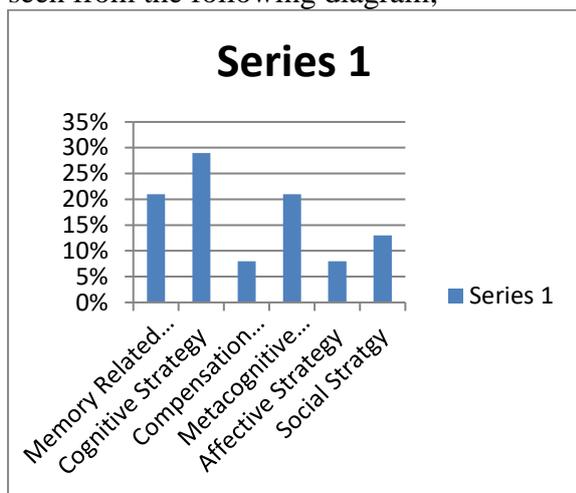
## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The approach of this study is qualitative research and the methodology applied is descriptive method. Therefore, the main data is in form of words rather than number. It is as stated by Merriam (1991:7) that in such this study "the result are presented using words and pictures rather than numbers". The data is gathered through four different techniques; among others are classroom observation, questionnaire, interview and documentation. One class from second semester of English Educational Study Program was chosen as the participants of the study. The number of the students in this class is 30. The class is chosen since it consists of the students who has the highest and the lowest score of Pronunciation Practice among all of the students from six different classes.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Having gathered and analyzed all of required data, it is found that all of the participants applied all of the strategies the strategies proposed by Calka (2011); i.e. Memory-Related Strategy, Cognitive Strategy, Compensation Strategy, Metacognitive Strategy, Affective Strategy, and Social Strategy. The classification of the strategies in line with the number of the

participants applied each strategy can be seen from the following diagram;



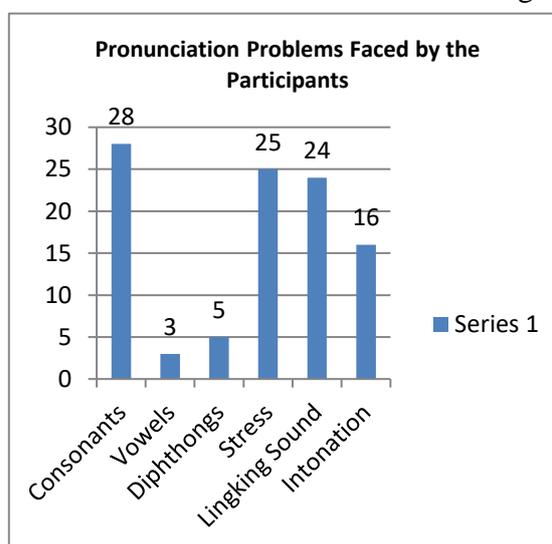
From the diagram, we can identify that the strategies mostly applied by the participants is cognitive strategies. It might be assumed that the tactics in this strategy are easily applicable along the learning process. The diagram also shows that the least tactics applied are those from compensation and affective strategies. Although the tactics from compensation strategies are chosen by some participants as tactics that are sometimes applied, comparing within six strategies, compensation strategy gets the least percentage. Seeing affective strategy in the least position is not surprising since most of the tactics from strategies are not applied by the participants of this study. It might be caused by the difficulty in applying the tactics during the learning process.

Concerning the findings from classroom observation, it is also discovered that the participants applied certain tactics to complete the task given by the teacher. Besides, there are some tactics that cannot be applied separately. Those tactics need kind of support from other tactics along the process of pronunciation learning. The findings elicited above support, prove, strengthen and also contradict the idea and the findings from several scholars.

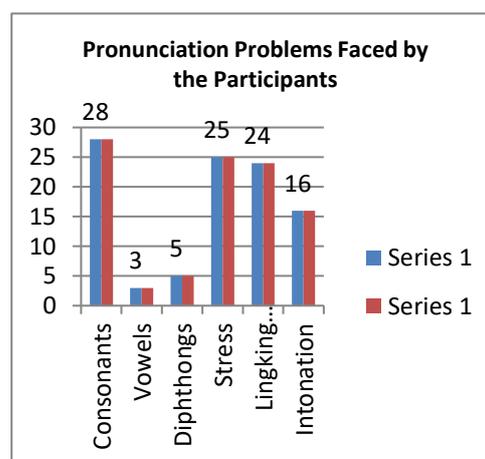
Another finding of this research is related to the impact of applying pronunciation learning strategies on students' pronunciation problems. The

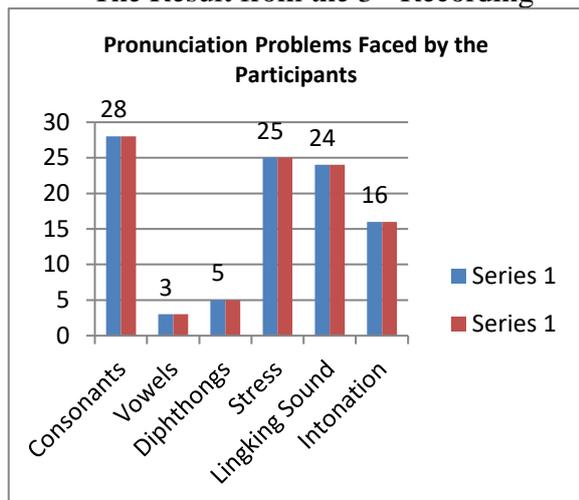
problems commonly faced by the students is classified into two categories, they are segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation (Burns and Claire; 2003). Consonant, Vowel and Diphthong sound belong to the former one while Stress, Lingking sounds and Intonation include the latter one. The data is gathered by analyzing students' audio in a form of recording. Three different recordings are analyzed and compared one and another to gain the required insight. Then, the result is crosschecked by the findings from interview. The results of the recordings are as follows;

The Result from the 1<sup>st</sup> Recording



The Result from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Recording



The Result from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Recording

From the diagram above it leads to a conclusion that applying pronunciation learning strategies gives a very positive impact on students' pronunciation learning and achievement. Such this impact is mentioned by Oxford (2001) that learning strategies make learning becomes 'easier, faster and more transferable to new situation'. Although most of participants have no any experience learning pronunciation in their previous classrooms situation, applying appropriate pronunciation learning strategies help them to learn pronunciation faster and more effective. As a result, the improvement in terms of learning and achievement is unquestionable. Another point that needs to take into account is the role of the teacher in the classroom. The role in stimulating, instructing and directing the participants to apply several tactics from strategies makes kind of great improvement on participants' pronunciation ability. This finding is in line with the point of view shared by Nunan (1999).

## DISCUSSION

### Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Learning strategies has become the concern of some researchers several years ago started since the mid-1970s (Anderson: 2010). The previous researches concerned on several primary strategies; among others

are memorization strategies, clarification strategies, communication strategies, monitoring strategies and prior knowledge strategies. However, according to Cohen (2010: 628 - 683), language learning strategies can be classified into three different ways, they are strategies for learning and use, strategies based on skill area and strategies according to function. The first type of the language learning strategies is the difference between language learning strategies and language use strategies. Cohen and Weaver defines language learning strategies are the strategies applied by the learners for a very first time they learn a material. However, language use strategies are the strategies occupied for using the material that has been learned.

The second way to categorize language learning strategies is based on the skill area. Cohen, then, views the strategies in terms of their role in listening, reading, speaking and writing. All elements in those basic skills such as vocabulary, grammar and translation also have their own strategies. Another element of language, pronunciation, also has its own classification regarding learning strategies. This part becomes the concern of this study and will be discussed on the next part of this chapter.

The last method to classify learning strategies, based on Cohen's points of view, is by considering their functions, among others are metacognitive, cognitive, affective and social. Such this way becomes the concern of several researchers in identifying and classifying language learning strategies. Peterson (2000); Griffiths and Parr (2001); and Anderson (2010) have the same points of view about the classification of learning strategies. They support Oxford (1990) and Nunan (1999) points of view in dividing the learning strategies into two classes, namely direct strategies and indirect strategies. The difference between those two classes is in terms of their focus. While the former one deal with the target language and it consists

of memory-related, cognitive and compensatory strategies, the later one manages learning without directly involving to target language and it involves metacognitive, social and affective strategies. Here are the following explanation and examples for each strategy:

- (1) **Memory-related Strategy**  
Oxford (1990) cited in Celcie (2001: 364) views that this strategy help learners to link one L2 item or concept with another, but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. This strategy deals with the storage or retrieval of knowledge.
- (2) **Cognitive Strategy**  
This strategy enables the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways. Note taking, summarizing, synthesizing outlining, recognizing and using formulas and patterns are the examples of cognitive strategies applied to develop stronger schemas or knowledge structures. It is as supported by Oxford (1990) cited in Celcie (2001: 363).
- (3) **Compensatory Strategy**  
Griffth and Judy (2001: 251) agree that this last strategy included in direct one helps the learner to make up for missing or limited knowledge, e.g. using mime or gesture.
- (4) **Metacognitive Strategy**  
Oxford (1990) cited in Celcie (2001) states that this strategy are employed for managing the learning process overall. It might be applied through identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task, gathering and organizing materials, monitoring mistakes, etc.. Furthermore, Purpura cited in Oxford (1990) found that metacognitive strategies had a very significant and positive effect and also executive role to support the use of cognitive strategy in completing the task in hand.
- (5) **Affective Strategy**  
Griffths and Judy (2001: 251) view this strategy as the one that related to students' personality like mood, anxiety, attitude, etc. For example, students may read linguistically simplified books to develop a positive attitude toward reading materials.

Besides, trying to relax whenever they feel afraid to speak in English is another example of the use of this strategy.

(6) **Social Strategies**

This last strategy helps the learner work with others and understands the target culture as well as the language. Asking the correction and trying to learn the culture of English speaker are the examples from the application of this strategy. It is a point of view from Griffths and Judy (2001: 251).

**Pronunciation Learning Strategies**

Language learning strategy is defined as techniques, devices or ways applied by learners to make the process of language learning become easier, faster and more effective. For short, learning strategies are chosen and used to help them achieve the goal of their learning. At last, it is hoped that the process of learning becomes more successful. In line with the definition of language learning strategies, Calka (2011: 150) defines pronunciation learning strategies as specific actions taken by the learner to make learning pronunciation becomes easier, faster, more effective and more enjoyable.

Furthermore, Calka also designs the classification of pronunciation learning strategies. The categorization of pronunciation learning strategies is based on the classification of learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1990: 7-15) and Peterson (2000). In line with their points of view, Calka (2011: 151) categorizes Direct and Indirect strategies as the first division of PLS. Each division is broken down into several strategies; Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social strategies. The first three strategies belong to direct strategy and the last three of them include into indirect one.

Every single strategy has different group of strategies. Calka (2011: 152-153) mentions that Memory strategy have some groups of strategies, among others are representing sounds in memory, reviewing well, employing action and rote learning. The strategy that relates to the cognitive one

has four groups of strategies, i.e. practicing pronunciation, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. However, the last strategy that belongs to direct strategies, compensation strategy, has only two groups of strategies, they are guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in pronunciation.

The first strategy that includes in indirect strategy, metacognitive strategy, has three groups of strategy; centering, arranging and planning, and evaluating one's learning. The other two strategies, affective and social strategies have five groups of strategies, three of them belong to the former strategy and the rest of them belong to the latter one. Lowering anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking ones emotional temperature are groups of strategies for affective one. Asking questions and cooperating with others are related to the social one. It is as proposed by Calka (2011: 154)

Interestingly, having divided the strategies into two different dichotomies, then elaborated the group of strategies for each, Calka also mentioned different tactics for each group of strategies. There are 40 tactics in Pronunciation Learning Strategies and all of them are scattered in every single group of strategies. It is assumed that the variety of tactics in PLS makes the learners have some choices. The choice of the strategy is influenced by three major factors; they are learners' belief about language learning, age and learning experience, and affective states. No matter what the factors are influenced the choice of the strategy, the large number of strategies and tactics in learning pronunciation can make the process of learning pronunciation become easier, faster and more effective.

### **Related Research**

In 2001, Derwing and Rossiter from University of Alberta conducted another research about pronunciation learning. The participants involved in their study were

100 adult immigrants, 36 males and 64 females. Although one of the variables in this study was the learners' need in learning pronunciation, the focus of this study was to identify the learners' perceptions on their pronunciation difficulties and strategies. Having interviewed the learners individually, it was found that most of the learners get difficulty in segmental features of pronunciation. Interestingly, the difficulty faced by the learners affected their communication. In order to solve their communication breakdown, it was also found that some learners used the following strategies, they are paraphrasing, spelling, volume adjustment, speaking clearly, and slowing speech rate. Among those strategies, paraphrasing was indicated as the most favorite strategy applied by the students to make their pronunciation become more understandable.

Another study was conducted by Kolokdaragh in California State University on 2009. The focus of this study was almost same as the study conducted by Derwing and Rossiter. However, the participants involved in this study were 46 adult learners who were classified not only as ESL learners but also EFL learners. The researcher involved 46 adult students divided into 9 different native language groups; they are Farsi (30 students), Spanish (3 students), Vietnamese (3 students), Arabic (2 students), German (2 students), Japanese (2 students), Korean (2 students), Turkish (1 student) and Chinese (1 student). The variety of participants in this study made the researchers discovered some interesting findings regarding pronunciation learning strategies. Having administered the questionnaire to all participants, there were similar findings with the previous researchers. Paraphrasing still becomes the most preferred pronunciation strategy. However, there were other strategies applied by the participants in learning pronunciation. Some students tend to ask a native speaker and listening to music/TV/movies in order to develop their pronunciation ability.

There were also students who liked noticing the contrast between their native language and the target language, paying attention to their own pronunciation and correcting it while speaking, trying to understand pronunciation rules, paying attention to people's mouth movement when they are speaking, pronouncing difficult words loudly, writing pronunciation of words in English, speaking slowly to have correct pronunciation, and writing pronunciation of words in their native language.

Moreover, the participants were also asked to mention other strategies they use in learning pronunciation. Almost one third of the learners had no idea. Meanwhile, the others participants mentioned that they learn pronunciation through listening, using a dictionary, practicing, imitating native speakers, singing a song, connecting words rather than producing them individually, and memorizing.

## CONCLUSION

There are two major conclusion in this study. First, it is found that there are six kinds of strategies applied by all participants in this study. The strategies are those proposed by Calka (2011). However, the number of tactics from all strategies applied by the participants is not as many as it is designed by the scholar. Only 24 out of 35 tactics are chosen and applied by all participants. The tactics applied by the participants in the classroom have a specific purpose, i.e. to complete the task given by the teacher. Second, comparing the result from three different audio recordings triangulated with the answer of in-depth interview brings to a final point that there is a significant impact from applying pronunciation learning strategies toward pronunciation learning and achievement.

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