Affective Learning Strategies Less-Applied by Students: How to Elevate?

by Siti Aimah

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Abstract. Students' self-learning is directed by their inner drive and controlled learning is driven by external motivation. This study aimed to report the self-learning status of students from three different study programs who take English courses. Among the six learning strategies from the SILL questionnaire, affective strategies were the least option that was being used by the students. The data revealed that students have difficulties in coping with their psychological attitudes because they find it hard to meet people who can ignite the positive potential that they have. Further, their classmates are also having the same anxiety about attending English class.

Keywords: Learning strategies · affective strategies · positive attitudes

1 Introduction

Since human being is social creatures, it is logical when they involve their emotional nature in every single decision. Therefore, students performed various behavior and engagement during the learning, mainly English as a foreign language. Students who learn English as a foreign language face several challenges in the process; those can be in the form of interference, academic, sociocultural, and psychological aspects. Those challenges are responded to differently; some students are less motivated, some are giving up, and some are very motivated to keep up. Dealing with the learning process in the classroom or school settings, teachers need to recognize the difficulties since they need to adjust the challenges with the solution to help their students cope with the demands of English subjects. However, some students adapt gradually, while others are hard to adapt, which makes the teacher in the classroom need to recognize the character of the classroom. Recognition becomes compulsory in deciding what approach, strategy, and method is used to teach those various characteristics of the students. Learning Strategies proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) is a specific action that a learner employs to facilitate learning, comprehending, and getting new knowledge. Oxford proposed the same idea that learning strategies are aimed at helping learners learn better, faster, easier, more enjoyable, and more effectively. Six categories designed by Oxford were trying to measure someone's learning strategies, aiming to consciously decide which strategies are more convenient to strive for effective learning. Those learning strategies are divided into six categories with the following detailed actions.

Meanwhile, Chamot and Kupper (1989) grouped three domains of learning strategies; cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective. The questionnaire taken by the participants in this study was SILL **(Strategy Inventory of Language Learning)** adopted from Oxford (1990), which consisted of six categories; memory, cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, social, and affective strategies.

1.1 Learning Strategies

1.1.1 Memory Strategies

Several actions used by the learners belong to memory strategies; those are (a) creating mental linkages, (b) applying images and sounds, (c) reviewing well, and (d) employing action.

1.1.2 Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are performing the following activities; (a) Practicing, (b) receiving and sending message strategies, (c) analyzing and reasoning (d) creating a structure for input and output.

1.1.3 Compensation Strategies

The following activities are categorized into compensation strategies; (a) guessing intelligently and (b) overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

1.1.4 Metacognitive Strategies

The following actions represent metacognitive strategies; (a) cantering the learning, (b) arranging and planning the learning, (c) evaluating the learning.

1.1.5 Affective Strategies

The following strategy, affective, is represented by the following actions; (a) lowering the anxiety, (b) encouraging themselves, (c) taking the emotional temperature.

1.1.6 Social Strategies

These particular activities represent the last categories; (a) asking questions, (b) cooperating with others, (c) empathizing with others.

1.2 Affective Strategies in Learning English as a Foreign Language

Affective strategy is a strategy that involves an emotional nature in its performance. As stated by Oxford, lowering anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking emotional temperature are based on psychological factors. Many students affirmed that learning English drive their anxiety more than they can imagine. Further, Horwitz (2010) revealed that this anxiety is driven by situation-specific anxiety, the same as stage fright or test anxiety. In

addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) that the specific situation is common as the consequence of three conditions; communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. To strengthen the idea, Gardner (1985) stated that the target language achievement mostly causes anxiety. The same perspectives were also gained in English classes when the students confirmed their concerns in the course and affirmed that they got a low score at the end of the semester.

Young (1990) discovered that positive teachers related to students' anxiety. The more positive teacher, the lower students' anxiety. This finding is in line with the English classroom atmosphere, that students' positive engagement was performed when there were no score barriers. Not all students have the ability to switch their fear and anxiety in a positive shift. Large numbers of students in a classroom also affect students' decisions in coping with their problems. Previous random interviews were done to acquire their perspective in English class, and most of them affirmed that the large numbers of students in the classroom- around 60- students sometimes make them insecure in performing English productive skills, speaking, presentation, responding to teacher's questions and delivering their opinion. The situation could be worsened if some of their classmates did not show sympathy to their friends. They said that it was like being judged in front of many people.

That phenomenon drives the students' willingness to stimulate positive attitudes in English class. Lowering anxiety, encouraging themselves, and coping with their emotional status need more effort than when they do the test items.

1.3 Positive Attitudes

Convenience, as part of someone's requirements in doing something eagerly, for some reason, results from several internal and external factors. Koch & Terrel (1991) mentioned that no comfortable activities were dealing with foreign language acquisition. From the interviews, the anxious students also remarked that the inconvenience may come from their classmates and teachers. This phenomenon was quite despairing, and the writer's perspective as a teacher- or lecturer who thought to do their best is still become the students' source of anxiety. It is pretty dangerous for students whenever they said they were anxious they underestimated their competence in English, which led to lower enthusiasm in doing the teacher's instruction or direction, Gardner et al. (1993).

Some researchers mentioned that emotion was defined as a basic phenomenon of human functioning, normally having an adaptive value having effectiveness in pursuing the goals Nyclicek et al. (2011) and others mentioned that emotion is subjective, and evaluative judgments that drive someone to be adaptive in facing a situation, Agudo (2018). From this information, it can be considered that emotion could be used as a means of strategy in facing a certain condition, including anxiety in learning English as a foreign language.

2 Method

The participants were giving their responses to the questionnaire that was adopted from Oxford, consisting of fifty items. Fourteen items belong to Cognitive strategies, six items belong to Compensation strategies, the same numbers for social strategies, followed nine

items categorized into Memory strategies and also the same quantity for Metacognitive strategies, and the last six items belong to Affective strategies. The questionnaire was calculated in excel to get mean and ranked to identify the result.

There were 161 students who participated in responding to the questions. 46 of them are male, and the other 115 are female. Those students were in their first year of undergraduate college. Those 118 students are students from health science and the rest 43 are from English departments. The questionnaire was analysed and calculated to categorize the rank and then presented to seek further influence from the interviews to the participants. The result was presented in the following chapter.

3   Result and Discussion

From the calculation, it has appeared that the learning strategies were used by all students in learning English. From the mean score, social strategies usage was relatively high. It is indicated that the students are familiar with applying the strategies, such as asking questions to their friends and cooperating with others in doing projects or assignments. The teacher's instruction to work in a team was confirmed to give a more comfortable ambiance in attending English learning. The perception that they will be safe and supported by their team was a soothing feeling when they have to perform in front of their classmates (Table 1).

Others' affirmation about asking questions was their bravery in raising questions is different when they stand as a team, it was quite different if they have to raise questions to the teacher or are being questioned by the teacher. The fear of raising questions was perceived by their judgment in valuing the level of questions itself. Some of them mentioned that some questions are raised because they want to get some affirmation from the teacher, get some teacher's attention to indirectly send a message that "I do listen and pay attention" to the teacher's explanation. Dealing with this phenomenon, was in line with Hargreaves, (1998) said that emotion is an integral dimension in teaching. Therefore, it will be very essential in teaching that the teachers are demanded to be wise in modifying and manipulating their emotions.

Though, in fact, teachers are also human being that experiences emotional feelings during their teaching; happiness, sadness, anger, and others feeling that may emerge from unsatisfied feeling in the teaching process. Further, those feeling may lead to the

Table 1. Data of students' learning strategies

Variable	Items	Mean
Memory	9	3.24
Cognitive	14	3.21
Compensation	6	3.20
Metacognitive	9	2.78
Affective	6	2.62
Social	6	3.33

teacher's goal in learning. These disparities may come from their wishes about their own teaching. Less-engaged students, the demand from the institution can also become the source of these unsatisfied levels. Meanwhile, a teacher's unsatisfying condition can influence their teaching performance- and it was read by the students.

Since the teacher showed their emotional preference, the students were also become affected by this condition. Students were trying to avoid negative responses or negative feelings when they get the feedback. These tied would have made the students become rigid and lessened their creativity and freedom to respond in the classroom engagement. The idea of making mistakes is forbidden and will obviously need to be minimized. The four language skills that should be mastered by the students- and most of them are based on skill – that should be accomplished through repetitive practice will definitely impossible to make mistakes.

Maintaining positive attitudes during learning is not only the students' needs but also the responsibility of the teachers. The previous studies also confirmed that teachers need to maintain their classroom atmospheres as a cognition of their professional development, Golombek and Doran (2014). In addition, recognizing emotion is important to evaluate teaching effectiveness, and how to adapt to the school or classroom environment, Chang & Davis (2009).

On the other hand, students were considered raw material that become the main purpose of learning goals, especially for educational transformation. Further, they came from various backgrounds and levels of readiness in attending the class. The areas of maturity, financial status, and interest are the others affecting factors. William & William (2011) perceived that there were several ingredients to stimulate students' motivation that led the learning improvement. Those ingredients are; student, teacher, content, method, and environment. Dealing with this finding, the focus of the treatment will be addressed to students and teachers as two main components of an emotional relationship.

a. Students' Area

Students need to be stimulated by their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation showed a significant role in learning improvement, and it can be identified by recognizing interests or preferences, giving challenges, and creating social bonds. Further, it is also important to involve parents to enforce the student's motivation. It was logical to agree with this perception that the longer duration of students at their families provides more chances in stimulating the students' motivation. In addition, students need to be conveyed the need of learning English, connected with their job orientation after school. To support these arguments, students need to be taught to use their time effectively in learning, by recognizing their habits in learning, particularly the learning strategies. The last, students need to be informed and prominent of their learning goal-short and long targets in their learning.

b. Teachers' Area

Teachers were the other edge of learning success besides the students' factor in achieving the learning goals. Weinstein (2010) revealed that the most important that should be owned are the subject knowledge and motivational level. It can be interpreted that teachers' competence in the subject would drive their students to be more reassured within the teaching process. The other characteristics mentioned were; a great sense

of humour, the academic help outside of the class. This resembled how the students are very semi-dependent on the teacher if we are discussing the teaching and learning process. The interesting part was the idea of testing to motivate the students. While in the fact, some tests were avoided because the students were not ready with the result. Particularly this is dealing with the summative assessment that students were enforced to a certain condition that represented- the last chance to get a good score. Repeating the social bounds above, it was expected that teachers create a comfortable interaction in engaging teaching, become good listeners to students' difficulties, and avoid negative feedback or advice, (Olson, 1997). Further characteristics that were expected from a teacher are enthusiasm, Palmer (2007), and a balance of enthusiasm was perceived as the students' reminder about how to be enthusiastic. The next factor that appeared as the representation of a good teacher is that they trust their students. Showing empathy was considered to build trust between students and teachers, MacGrath (2005).

The lowest rank of affective strategies usage by the students in Fig. 1 has reveal the message that coping with emotional and psychological issues is not tranquil to solve. The students might deal with the issues of learning that its sources are entities such as fear, anxiety, convenience, and others interrelated. On the other hand, memory strategies was having the highest position which become common phenomena in learning English as a forein language. The most preference that resemble the short term memory result in learning. However, this strategy did not try to cover students' weaknesses in learning. In addition, learners might not familiar or even recognize the various strategies in learning, particularly in English. Some participants perceived memorizing as the easiest way to master a language, because they need to save a lot of words and its meaning- and grammar as a requirement in writing sentences.

Many schools came up with students who were not ready to participate in the class-room. They need to deal with their classmates, teachers, and also the courses they take. They might not have schemata to learn English as a means of communication that should be prepared in mastering the skill and the components. Seeing this facts, it will be common to see the students' weaknesses in using English as a means of communication since they did not prepare themselves consciously in the process of learning it.

Reviewed the experts from their studies and observations, one needs to recall the philosophy of learning, as the instrument to pursue someone's transformation- in this
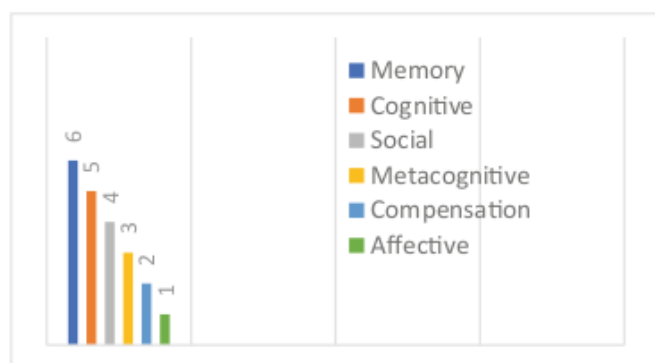

Fig. 1. Students' Learning Strategies Rank

way, the positive ones. As the instrument, it needs to be supported by certain measurable mechanisms, at least by common sense.

The students who learn English were having various reasons under their conscious minds, and the teacher who is considered as the agent who has more competence and capabilities needs to perform a significant effort to overcome the learning constraints as their professional challenges. If we review Weissberg and Cascarino (2013), who proposed Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for engaging schools and preparing students to face the challenges in the future, it may be interesting to apply some ideas that can be interpreted modified and established based on situation owned by each institution. Let's take a look at these characteristics and their nature. It is proclaimed that students should perform these identities:

A. **Self-awareness**; is the ability to recognize its own emotions and thoughts and their influence on their behaviours. Students who came with better emotion perform a better perspectives in showing their behaviour in learning, especially when they meet a failure, and it is become significant in the process of learning.

B. **Self-management;** an ability to regulate emotion and behaviour effectively in a different situation and use it in pursuing academic purposes. The demand of learning anyhow often addressed in various assignments, projects, and many others forms. Students' competence in managing their time and energy in accomplishing the assignments are always become potential issues in learning. However, this competence is also enforced before they go to school.

C. **Social awareness**; an ability to take perspectives and empathy with others who come from diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Engagement in language classes are definitely seen as a need. In many speaking classes, as the examples, they need to work with their partners, and they need to represent the use of language in communication mode. Whenever students failed to work in a team, the will have less chance in practicing the language, and further, they may have friction between themselves. As the consequence, many students prefers to work in a definite teams in which they feel comfortable to work with. If this happens in many times, it may indirectly restructuring the socialization between the students in the class, and for those students who are not able to cope with this situation, they will get some issues in learning-eventhough many students are not being affected by this situation.

D. **Relationship skill**; an ability to maintain a healthy and rewarding relationship through clear communication, active listening, cooperating, and negotiating conflict. Almost near with social skill, relationship skill demand a more reaction in having socialization in learning. Students are expected to be able to decide what steps or others decision in achieveing a good relationship to support the learning process. Students somehow need to ask explanation from their colleagues who have higher competence, and sometimes they get more clear understanding from their friends rather than from their teachers. All of above need some courage and willingness in a relationship that manifested an equal and mutual position.

E. **Responsible decision-making**; an ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviours and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concern, and realistic evaluation. Again, more behavior in learning are driven by their emotional competence. As it can be seen in Fig. 1, affective strategies that

also represent most area from emotional strategies shown the lowest rank. This data become an additional facts from learning process, especially in English that the succed of learning affected and resulted from several factors that interrelated.

Those five characteristics are supported and could be pursued through systematics teaching that affirmed the social and emotional competencies. Teachers need to learn, or at least recognize their students psychological readiness in the learning process. The strategies need to be informed, applied, and reflected together with the students to set up back their learning goals. They need to be repeatedly motivated, and enforced to consciously learning not only in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom. Students need to be introduced and pushed to try several strategies to optimize any sources to help them learning better. They need to be reminded that memorizing is not always the best way in learning if they want to have long-term comprehension and useful skill in English as a means of communication to fulfil their needs later on, in wider scope of life struggling. In addition, it also needs established teamwork from learning communities, such as parents, and teachers' colleagues to create an engaging and motivating English class. The time duration in learning English will also influenced by students' habit, in term of coping with their interpersonal issues in learning. This habis was enforced not only in a-short time yet in years.

To achieve the condition, it was logic that both parties; students and teachers are having the same role and job desk by implementing their own roles as their proportions in the learning process. Meanwhile, a little bit far from classroom setting, parents need to create an atmosphere that provide more benefit for their children' readiness in learning, especially how to engage in a classroom situation and prepare them to any challenge that may be happen during their process of learning. Parents need to learn also to open their perspectives dealing with their children ' difficulties in learning. The support may not be in the form of giving solution, but coming up with a welcome- ears and eyes will be very helpful for their children.

Authors' Contributions. Muhimatul Ifadah contributed to this article by providing the data and also together with another author analyzing the result of the data, and writing the article.

Siti Aimah was giving her suggestions in terms of variables that should be inserted and the references that are appropriate to the flow of the discussion.

Heri Dwi Santoso was giving suggestions on the data computing and data interpretation.

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