EXPLORING LEARNING STRATEGIES ON ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS AT SMPLB A YPAB SURABAYA

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mendeskripsikan hasil studi tentang strategi pembelajaran yang diterapkan oleh siswa Disabilitas Netra dalam pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris, serta tantangan dan keuntungan penggunaannya. Penelitian ini melibatkan 10 siswa kelas 8 dan 9 SMPLB A YPAB Surabaya, dengan pendekatan deskriptif qualitatif. Koleksi data mencakup wawancara siswa dan observasi kelas. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa siswa menerapkan beberapa strategi pembelajaran. Itu termasuk strategi memori, ketika mereka lebih suka mengingat daripada mencatat; kognitif seperti praktik,mengulangi, menerjemahkan; strategi social yang ditunjukkan dengan pertanyaan yang mereka ajukan ke guru atau orang lain, meminta ulasan, meminta tambahan penjelasan, dan mengonfirmasi; strategi kompensasi, dengan mengatasi keterbatasan dalam berbicara, mencoba memberikan jawaban, dan menggunakan pencampuran bahasa. Hal tersebut juga dilengkapi dengan pemanfaatan teknologi asistif selama pembelajaran seperti penggunaan screen reader pada smart phone. Itu membuat kegiatan belajar mereka lebih efektif dan efisien. Penerapan strategi belajar tersebut juga dipengaruhi oleh otonomi belajar siswa yang menjadi penentu frekuensi penggunaan strategi belajar dan pencapaian dari penerapan strategi tersebut. Sehingga mereka dapat mengatasi perbedaan metode belajar yang diterima dari guru Bahasa Inggris di sekolah. Dengan demikian, siswa disabilitas Netra memiliki strategi belajar mereka sendiri yang dapat mereka terapkan sesuai dengan kemampuan mereka untuk dapat memahami dan menguasai keterampilan berbicara Bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Belajar, Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa Inggris, Siswa Disabilitas Netra.

Abstract

This article describes the results on examining learning strategies applied by visually impaired students in learning English speaking skills including the strength and weaknesses of using it. This study involved 10 students of 8th and 9th graders SMPLB A YPAB Surabaya, using a qualitative descriptive research design. The data collection included student interviews and field observations. The results revealed that students applied several learning strategies include memorizing when they prefer to remember rather than note; cognitive such as practice, repeating, translating; social strategies as indicated by asking their teacher or others, ask for reviews, additional explanations, and confirming; compensation, by overcoming speaking limitation, trying to provide answers, and using language mixing. This also equipped with assistive technology utilization during learning such as using screen reader on their smart phone. Those assist their learning activities more effective and efficient. The implementation of those strategies influenced by the learner autonomy which determines the frequency of using selected strategies and the achievement of applying it. Therefore, they can overcome the differences in learning methods they received from the English teacher at school. Thus, visually impaired students have own learning strategies that they can apply according to their ability to understand English especially for speaking skills.

Keyword: Learning Strategy, English Speaking Skill, Visually Impaired Student.

INTRODUCTION

According to Efrizal (2012), speaking is very important for community interaction where they speak anywhere and every day. Speaking is a way of verbally communicating messages and ideas (Harmer, 2001). Speaking is the most important skill which is indispensable for effective communication (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Prakosha, Salim, & Sunardi, 2018). However, students studying foreign language said that speaking skill is difficult. For most foreign language learners, speaking in the target language is not an easy thing to do because learning to speak a foreign language requires more than just knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Language learners need to have three areas of knowledge involved in speaking namely, the mechanism of language elements (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) which emphasizes the use of the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation; language functions related to speaking performance in the form of transactions and interactions (for example knowing how to change information and provide clarity of important messages); sociocultural norms (such as turn-taking, speed of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants, understanding how to consider who is talking to whom, under what circumstances, about what, and for what reasons) (Richard, 2008). According to Pratolo (2019), there are several speaking skill challenges for EFL students such as limitation of language (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and influence of mother tongue), psychological elements (anxiety), supporting factors (low or unequal friends and participation), the topic of conversation (ignorance and uninteresting topics), speaking practice (practice with media and practice with friends). The finding showed that each topic and sub-topic appear to be related to one another. Sometimes EFL students find the difficulties to respond to teacher's questions because they don't know what to say, what vocabulary to use, or how to use grammar correctly (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Mostly, students in secondary school experience this, including students who are visually impaired

As the term indicates, visual impairment involves problems with vision that interfere with students' academic activities. The Education of Individuals with Disabilities defines a category as a visual impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects the educational performance of the child. This term includes partial vision and blindness (Prakosha, Salim, & Sunardi, 2018). The term blind in Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities belongs to persons with sensory disabilities. People with sensory disabilities are people who have impaired sensory function. According to the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni), blind people are those who have no vision at all (totally blind) to those who still have a residual vision but cannot use their eyesight to read 12 normal writing items in normal light even if they are assisted with glasses. This condition makes blind students experience more limitations in learning. Various materials and media that teachers often use in the classroom are pictures, videos, or films, which they cannot access (Belova, 2017). Blind and visually impaired cannot see pictures, films and pictures, body language, gestures and expressions are also difficult to understand (Susanto & Nanda, 2018).

Facing visual difficulties which are the main stimulus in learning foreign languages, without sight, students rely on the remaining senses, namely auditory feedback and kinesthetic motor learning. Based on this explanation, the authors consider it is necessary to know the learning strategies applied by visually impaired students in learning speaking English by observing in what learning strategies that they use, what challenges and benefits that they have in using those learning strategies. This aims to find the right strategy for visually impaired students in learning speaking skills. This includes finding out learning strategies in speaking skills, the challenges and benefits they experience in using specific learning strategies in speaking skills. In this study, the theoretical framework and previous studies are learning strategies, English speaking, and visually impaired student. Learning strategies are specific thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to help them understand, and learn new information (Wong & Nunan, 2011; Lestari, 2015; Richards, 2015). Language learning strategies are the various choices students use to understand the new language they are learning (Richards, 2015). Besides, Jack C. Richards in www.professorjackrichards.com explained that language learning strategies can be defined as thoughts and actions, chosen consciously by students, to assist them in learning and using language in general, and also in the completion of certain language tasks. A more detailed definition has been proposed by Oxford R. (1990) which explains that language learning strategies are special actions taken by learners, to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, and more effective.

Rubin and Oxford (1990: 16) and Oxford (2005) explained that there are two types of learning strategies namely direct and indirect strategy. Direct strategies are strategies that involve mental processes and directly affect the target language and indirect strategies are those that support and manage language but not directly affect the

target language. Direct strategies include memory strategy that helps language learners to overcome language learning difficulties by keep in mind important information gathered from their learning process, Cognitive strategies are strategies that allow students to understand, comprehend and produce new languages through manipulate or transform target language using some steps such as repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. The last one is compensation strategies are strategies that help learners to use new language understanding or production despite limitations in knowledge (Rubin, 1987; Oxford R. 1990). Besides, Oxford (2005) also defines indirect strategies including metacognitive strategies that allow learners to control their cognitive coordination in the learning process. It means students can evaluate their own language learning patterns and coordinate the learning process. Then affective strategy are strategies that help learners to gain control and regulate personal emotions, attitudes and values. The last indirect strategy is social strategy that strategy used when a student engages others in the language learning process. Social strategies facilitate language learning through interactions with other people or communication taking place between people.

The other factors that affect on students' language learning process is learner autonomy. Students autonomy refers to the principle that students must take maximum responsibility for what they say and how they learn (Oxford, 1990). In addition, Richards (2012) stated that autonomous learning contrasts with the traditional teacher--led approach in which most decisions are made by the teacher. Student autonomy is proven when students take responsibility for their learning. Benson (2012) describes five principles for achieving autonomous learning including other active interactions in student learning, options and resources, offering choices and decision-making opportunities, supporting students, encouraging reflection. However, many researchers agree that both language learning strategy and learner autonomy are interrelated in various ways and contexts (Chuan , 2010; Chen & Hung-Hsi, 2015; Liu, 2015). Student autonomy leads to greater achievement or proficiency. This situation can be summarized by the "five A's": Ability, attitude, + action = autonomy; achievement (Oxford R. , 1999). Learning strategies play a key role in autonomy.

Learner autonomy is the ability and willingness to perform a language task without assistance, with adaptability related to situational demands, with transferability to other relevant contexts, and with reflection, accompanied by relevant actions (use, usually consciously and deliberately, of appropriate learning (Hiago & Teera, 2020). Student autonomy leads to greater achievement or proficiency. Strategy, when defined as above (certain actions or behaviors reflected by individual learners to improve language learning) the level of learning autonomy and is a mechanism by which students develop still greater autonomy. If learners are more aware and responsible for the language learning strategies they use are more likely to succeed in their language learning (Chuan , 2010). Using language learning strategies has also been found to have a high correlation with student autonomy, thus serving as a good predictor of the degree of autonomy (Liu, 2015). It was also shown by Carter & Nunan (2001) stated that language learning strategies are often associated with features of control, goal-orientation, autonomy and self-efficacy. Taking into account such beliefs, it can be said that learner autonomy and language learning strategies are important aspects that contribute to success in language learning.

Furthermore, the research by Safitri (2013) found that teachers carried out five kinds of speaking activities as suggested by Thornburry (2005), namely drilling, dictation, discussion, guessing games, and word-marked assignments. The other study that conducted in 2018 by Susanto and Nanda found that students received inadequate teaching modifications in foreign language learning. However, students use a variety of resources with screen reader technologies such as Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) and Job Access with Speech (JAWS). In addition, this study may provide further aspects to research especially on the importance of learning strategies in special education. The using of learning strategies during the learning process depend on motivation, background, age, learning style, achievement, and gender (Setyawati, Adnyani, & Piscayanti, 2018). There are six strategies used, namely cognitive such as practice, repeating, getting ideas, analyzing and reasoning, summarizing and translating; metacognitive, they pay attention to lessons and show evidence of understanding; social strategy, they empathize with others, ask questions, ask for reviews, ask for additional input, and ask for confirmation; effective, by reducing anxiety; memory, by making associations, contextualizing words, remembering, using visual residues, wrapping up, and repeating previous ideas; compensation, by overcoming limitations in speaking and writing, trying to provide answers, and using language mixing (Setyawati, Adnyani, & Piscayanti, 2018). So, based on these results, students with visual impairments must be specially treated to meet their needs with appropriate teaching strategies and

facilities. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the learning strategies used by visually impaired students, especially in learning English speaking skills, as well as the strengths and weaknesses in implementing them.

METHOD

The main focus of this study is exploring the learning strategies that used in learning speaking skill. The research is designed qualitatively with a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach chosen because this study focused on the student's experiences in speaking skill learning process and to get the dipper findings (Williams, 2007; Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008; Astalin, 2013; Ary, et all., 2019). The subjects of this research are 10 visually impaired students in 8th and 9th graders of Junior High School in Yayasan Pendidikan Anak Buta Surabaya. Their ages range from 13 to 20 years. The consideration of choosing of the subject for the study based on the advice of the principal and the school's English subject teacher. It was better not to involve 7th grade students as participants. It was so because of their condition that has other limitations besides vision. There are two instruments applied for collecting the data in this research namely semi-structure interview and field observation. Field observation have already done three times before the interviews. The researcher joined and followed the teaching and learning activities through Voice Chat Telegram and Google Meet. While the interviews conducted once for each class participant outside of class hours, with the following questions.

- *Apakah kamu suka pelajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah?* <> Do you like English lesson at school?
- *Apakah menurutmu keterampilan berbicara Bahasa Inggris itu penting?* <> Do you think English speaking skill is important?
- *Kegiatan apa yang biasa dilakukan ketika pembelajaran keterampilan Bahasa Inggris di kelas?* <> What activities do you usually do when learning English speaking skill in class?
- *Pada bagian apa dalam pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara Bahasa Inggris yang kamu sukai dan tidak sukai?* <> What part of learning English speaking skill do you like and dislike?
- *Apa saja yang biasa kamu lakukan untuk mengatasi kesulitan ketika pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara Bahasa Inggris?* <> What do you usually do to overcome difficulties when learning English speaking skill?

These interviews were recorded by the researcher so that the data can be analyzed. Other than that, it can be used as proved of data had been collected. The transcripts which were the results of the writing of the interviews have been grouped into tables for coding and information to facilitate data analysis. Meanwhile, the analysis also taken from the observation sheets of the two observation fields, to find out other factors that affect student autonomy in determining the learning strategies they use in English speaking skills learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After retrieval of data through observation of learning and teaching activities and students' interviews, this research is finding two main points. First is the learning strategy students used in learning speaking skills. The second is the strengths and weaknesses of the students' learning strategies used.

Student's strategies for learning speaking

This appears when individual interviews with students conducted. The whole participants said that they were more like memorizing new vocabularies rather than writing them. RN, Students of 8th grade said "Kalau dapat materi, biasanya saya *inget aja*", "Usually, I just remember the material that I got." This is also said by other students. BN said, "Lebih sering mengingat *aja sih* kak.", "I more often memorize it." Besides, from the observations, the researcher know that they also repeated the new vocabularies that they got when English class. Most of them tried to remember new English vocabularies by translating it into Bahasa Indonesia. FM says "Kalau *pas* kelas, diminta praktek satu-satu. Kalau *gak ngerti*, saya bilang Bahasa Indonesia nya terus tanya ke miss HN, Bahasa inggrisnya apa, terus *diinget*.", "if I'm asked to practice and I don't know the English, I said in Bahasa Indonesia then ask Miss HN what the meaning in English, then I remember it." This strategy was also used by most of the students. On the first observation, it is known that when learning speaking skills session in their class, the teacher read one sentence of an English text. Then she asked the students to make a sentence similar to the one that she read. The strategy carried out alternately by the student. Memory strategy can be a strong contributor to language learning, given new vocabulary recall and more effective (Wong & Nunan, 2011; Susanto & Nanda, 2018; Setyawati, Adnyani, & Piscayanti, 2018).

Apart from remembering, they also take advantage of technology as their learning strategy. DW says "Ya kalau *pas gak ngerti* Bahasa Inggris nya, saya pakai aplikasi google translate.", "Yes, when I don't understand the word in English, I use the google translate application." The

students did that during online learning. It can be done since the class use the WhatsApp call group as a medium for their teaching-learning activity. This is evidenced by the sound of the screen reader from their device that was heard by the researcher when following their learning. "Lebih sering WA call group *sih*, selain itu juga pernah pakai voice chat telegram, atau kalau *nggak gitu* google meet.", "We more often use WhatsApp Call Group, but sometimes we also use voice chat Telegram or Google Meet." said JM, one of the students 8th grade. The technology, which is screen reader in their smartphone, gave them access the google translate application to find out the unfamiliar vocabulary. Some students say they access application when waiting for their turn they speak. "ya kan udah dikasih tau contoh kalimatnya, jadi saya sudah kepikiran mau nanya apa ke *temen*. Jadi langsung saya cari.", "The example is already given, so I know what I want to ask my friends. Then, I immediately look for it." DW said, one of the 9th-grade students. This finding supports the results of previous research which stated that visually impaired students have unique learning strategies by utilizing technology that currently makes it very easy for them to learn, the same as non-visually impaired students (Susanto & Nanda, 2018).

Utilization of technology is also applied by some students to access the internet and YouTube. Students accessed media platform to add knowledge of English vocabularies. JM said, "pernah *sih* kak. Biasanya saya cari di internet untuk mencocokkan kata. Sudah bener apa belum artinya.", "Yes, I have. I usually search words, it is a match or not and have the right meaning or not through the internet." While BN also said "kadang-kadang *sih* kak, biasanya milih yang masih pakai Bahasa Indonesia penjelasannya.", "sometimes I do, usually I chose the sources that have an explanation in Bahasa." The other student mentioned that she has never accessed YouTube to look for new meaning during English session unless the material given by the teacher. "ya kalau video biasanya dari guru sih, itu materi, jadi saya denger.", "If the video was from the teacher, which is the material, so I hear it." Said NR students 8th grade. At the beginning of online learning with the first teacher, they often got the material in the form of a link articles or videos from YouTube for them to learn and discussed in the next meeting.

The last learning strategy found in this research is asking people around them. 8 of 10 students said they preferred asked their teacher if they had difficulty when learning English directly. RN grade 8 says "kalau saya jujur lebih suka langsung tanya ke Miss HN *sih* kak, daripada *nyari* sendiri.", "honestly, I like to ask to miss HN directly rather

than look for the English by myself." It is also said by JM, "kadang itu saya *udah nyari* di google, cuma kan disitu ada banyak kata, saya bingung mana yang *bener*. Jadi langsung tanya ke guru saja.", "sometimes I have searched that in google, but I still confuse because there were a lot of words, and I do not know which one is right. So I immediately asked my teachers.". this habit was known by the researcher in every English class that was followed for observation. However, there is one of the students who asked his classmate if he did not know the vocabulary meaning that is being studied. ZD says "biasanya langsung *japri sih*, kalau ada yang tidak tahu.", "usually, I ask my friends directly by private message, if I do not understand." Nevertheless, the whole participants say that they do not have a little discussion about English with their friends outside the class. "diskusi biasanya pas jam kosong aja kak, selain itu gak pernah.", "usually, we have discussions only in the after class hours." Said JM grade 8. Interestingly, in one of the observations, the researcher found that some students did not hesitate to give clues to help their friends remember the vocabularies asked or answer the teacher's questions.In addition, there are students who choose asking to their their family of they have difficulty. "kalau ada tugas yang susah, biasanya *sih* tanya ke mama atau kakak.", "If there is a difficult task, usually I ask my mom or my sister." NR, 8th grade said. This is one of the example strategy in social strategy that explained by Oxford (1990) who said that social strategies facilitate language learning through interactions with other people or communication taking place between people. For instance, asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.

The result of interviews found that they get different learning styles from teacher one and teacher two. Teacher one, who was much longer taught before online learning, over-applying dictation and writing, reading, and remembering English text. FR said "Kalau Mr. RA dulu sebelum pandemic, dibacakan teks, terus ditulis Braille. Setelahnya dibacakan sama dia, dan kita tirukan sama-sama. Baru minggu depannya dipraktekkan individu.", "Before the pandemic, Mr. RA read out the text, then be write it in Braille. After that, he read the text and we repeat it after him. Then, we practice to read aloud that text one by one in the next meeting." The other students also confirmed this rhythm. "iya, jadi habis dicatat, terus dibaca *bareng-bareng,* baru minggu depannya praktek baca satu-satu.", "Yes, after noted it, we read together, in the next week, we will practice reading one by one" said FM 9th grade. This finding support the data from previews research was stated that teachers carried out five kinds of speaking activities as suggested by

Thornburry (2005), namely drilling, dictation, discussion, guessing games, and word-marked assignments (Safitri, 2013; Susanto & Nanda, 2018). This is different from the learning session of the second teacher, which immediately practiced. "kalau sama Miss HN pernah mencatat juga, tapi jarang, lebih sering langsung praktek atau menerjemahkan teks.", "Miss HN's class also have been noted, but rarely, more often straight practice or translating text." MT said.

The strengths and weaknesses of the learning strategies they used

The various learning strategies found in this study, each of them has strengths that have an impact on student learning achievement. For example, they are more comfortable using this strategy because they think that learning a language is easier to remember. "jadi seperti bahasa kita kak, kayak kita ngomong pakai bahasa ibu, lebih mengalir.", "So it's like our language, like we speak in our mother tongue, it flows." JM said. They also chose this strategy instead of taking notes because they were still confused by the different writing and pronunciation of English vocabulary. BN said, "yang sulit itu cara pengucapannya Miss, kalau kita baca aitu beda ternyata.", "The difficult is the way I pronounce it, Miss, if we read it, it turns out to be different." Thus they prefer to remember rather than noted it. This is supported by the observations of researcher that during teaching and learning activities, students do not write the material or sentences that are exemplified by the teacher.This finding different with the preview's study, that found one of the learning strategies used by visually impaired is note the text or materials (Setyawati, Adnyani, & Piscayanti, 2018).

The benefit they get in the next strategy is the use of technology, they can quickly find the English words or vice versa. "langsung *gitu*, kalau ada teks yang diminta untuk diartikan, langsung buka google translate.", "That's right if there is a text that is asked to be interpreted, immediately I opened google translate." DW said. They also feel comfortable using this application because it is easy to access and they can do it during class so this strategy is quite helpful and efficient. The use of this application also helps some of those who are embarrassed to ask questions directly to the teacher. IV said "ya kadang saya itu sungkan Miss, untuk tanya-tanya ke Miss HN.", "yes, sometimes I feel reluctant to ask questions to Miss HN." It also helps them to increase their knowledge of English vocabulary easily. They also use technology such as YouTube and Google as a learning strategy. However, not many students use YouTube to increase their English vocabulary knowledge.

Asking teachers or people around them is their next strategy. This is the choice of almost all participants for different reasons. "kalau cari di google itu kadang masih bingung karena banyak kata yang keluar. Jadi lebih enak tanya langsung ke guru.", "If I search on google, sometimes I am still confused because many words come out. So it's better to ask the teacher directly." NR said. RN also confirmed that opinion. He said, "kalau tanya langsung kan bisa sekalian tau cara pengucapannya kak. Sedangkan tulisan juga diejakan sama guru.", "If I ask directly, I can also know how to pronounce it. Meanwhile, the teacher spell the words." They think that if they ask the teacher, they will also get an explanation of correct grammar at once.

However, there are some obstacles or shortcomings in implementing these learning strategies. 6 of 10 participants have difficulty remembering vocabulary for a long time. BN said, "ya seru *sih*, belajar Bahasa Inggris itu. Cuma saya sering lupa.", "Yes, it is fun learning English but I often forget." DW also said the same thing regarding this strategy. Unfortunately, these problems are more or less influenced by their motivation or desire to learn and increase their knowledge. "ya kalau mau, baca, tapi kalau lagi *males* ya *nggak* baca materi sebelum kelas.", "Yes, if I want, I read, but if I am lazy, I did not read the material before class." That's one statement from one of the students. This proves that student learning autonomy is very influential on the success of the learning strategies applied by students (Benson, 2012; (Richards, 2015).

Another obstacle they found when they used internet access or YouTube to add new vocabulary. They tend to be lazy to use it because they don't understand the long explanations in English videos or articles. One student said it was difficult for him to understand English text when read with a screen reader. This is because they use the type of voice in Indonesian. "bingung gitu kalau *pas* dibaca damayanti, kadang *kan* dibaca kayak tulisannya langsung.", "I am confused if I read with 'Damayanti', sometimes the application read it like the writing was straightforward." Said one of the students. Another obstacle is that they rarely access the internet or google using a laptop or pc. It is quite different with the result description of the study by Susanto & Nanda (2018) which explained that visually impaired student can take advantage of NVDA or JAWS on their device. In this study, it can be seen that the level of students' understanding of assistive technology for visual impairment also affects their learning process and success.

CONCLUSION

In fact, visually impaired students have their own learning strategies in learning speaking skill. The strategies are memory strategy such as memorize the vocabulary, cognitive which indicated by translating the text they got, and social strategy that shown by asking their teacher, their family, and their close friends. Besides, compensation strategy, overcome their limitation in speaking skill by mix the use of English and Indonesian. Meanwhile, the utilization of assistive technology namely screen reader also be an option for them and help their learning process. However, their willingness and motivation to learn is very influential on the achievement they get by using these learning strategies.

Suggestions

The application of teaching methods to visually impaired students should be the same as the application to non-visually impaired students. This is so because visually impaired students have their own learning strategies that they can use to support their learning process, especially English speaking skills. The use of assistive technology can also be explored more. The use of certain media or platforms can also be developed with the aim of increasing their English speaking practice.

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