

## Language learning strategies used by male and female students in learning speaking

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### Abstract

This research aimed at find out language learning strategies used by male and female students in the fourth-semester of English education study program at Universitas Bengkulu. This research is descriptive quantitative. The population of this research is 117 students of the fourth-semester of English education study program at Universitas Bengkulu in the 2020/2021 academic year, and 52 students are taken as the sample by using purposive sampling. The data were collected by using a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 31 items which represent 6 categories of learning strategies adapted from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 proposed by Oxford. The collected data is analyzed by using Microsoft Excel 2007 and SPSS version 23. The results showed both male and female used all strategies category. Those are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategy. The dominant strategy used by male students are cognitive and compensation strategy ( $M=3.67$ ), while the dominant strategy used by female students is metacognitive ( $M=3.74$ ). Based on the result, there is no significance difference between male and female in using language learning strategy. Finally, the researchers suggest for lecturers who can use this research as information to design lesson plans in their speaking class. It is also suggested for students to use learning strategy in learning speaking more properly, the students have to find appropriate strategies that should be applied in learning speaking and for next researchers who will conduct the same topic of this research should make the next research more detailed information by involving other instruments.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Strategies, Learning Speaking, Male and Female.

## **Introduction**

Students need some strategies to get the learning process and build good communication in English. According to Oxford (1990) "Learning strategies are actions engaged by students to improve their learning. Language learning strategies are particularly important since they provide tools for active, self-directed participation, which is crucial for developing communicative competence". Learning strategies are very crucial for the students to learn a foreign language. The use of learning strategies can give advantages for the students involved more in the learning process.

Speaking is the most important element in learning English. Speaking skill is important to be mastered because speaking skill actually indicates that the learners are able to use the language (Trialoka & Puspita, 2017). The researchers chose the speaking element because speaking is the main part to communicate in English and speaking is considered the most difficult skill. According to Alfianaini (2017) "since speaking requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules, it needs a great courage to speak up".

Based on the researcher's experience in studying English at Universitas Bengkulu, the students face some difficulties in speaking. Firstly the students should master some elements of speaking skills such as vocabulary, grammatical structures, native speakers' accents, and pronunciation. Secondly, the students have less practice in speaking English. Finally, in language learning, several different strategies might use by students. However, many of them may not even realize what strategy they are using. To avoid those difficulties, the students need learning strategies in order to master them well.

Besides, the differences in using strategies can be influenced by many factors such as based on the degree of awareness, stage of learning task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex (gender), nationality, learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language (Oxford, 1989). One of the factors here is based on gender. According to Lee (2010 in Samiyan 2015: 83), various studies have found that gender has a major impact on the extent of strategy use. It is proven that gender can influence the students of using language learning strategies. Between males and females are certain to have different characteristics that

can be influenced their ability in learning English.

There were numerous studies that related to current study such as from Panggabean & Kesuma (2017), the result showed compensation and metacognitive strategies are the highest strategies used by male students, while cognitive, compensation and metacognitive strategies are the highest strategies used by female students. Syehrudin (2017), the result showed that both male and female students with good English speaking skill used the cognitive strategies, the metacognitive strategies, and the social strategies to develop fluency skill. Anun & Apriyanto (2019), the result showed that male students tended to use metacognitive strategies and female students tended to use affective strategies. Next, the study from Marissa (2016), the result showed that female students were most frequently used cognitive strategies, while male students were most frequently used compensation strategies.

Unfortunately, from the previous research by Anun & Apriyanto (2019), Ajeng (2017), and Marissa (2016), none of them apply the descriptive quantitative method as a research design. The number of samples in this current research is also different from the previous study. This study is also different from the previous study by Ajeng (2017) which uses the LLS theory by O'Malley and Chamot , while this one uses the LLS theory of Oxford . This current study has never been conducted in this area. Therefore, this research is different from the previous ones and more concerned with the differences in language learning strategies used by male and female undergraduate students in learning speaking.

Meanwhile, in terms of language learning strategies in speaking, language learning strategies are very important to help students mastering speaking skills. It is undeniable that by mastering speaking, students can raise their career, increase business, enhance confidence levels, get better job opportunities, make public speeches, and give presentations, interviews, and so on. Thus, having good speaking is the key to get better employment opportunities (Rao, 2019; 10). Considering the problems above, the previous studies, and the importance of speaking skill, it is compelling to investigate Language Learning Strategies Used by Male and Female in Learning Speaking Skill of English Study Program at Universitas Bengkulu. Therefore, the research question of this research is "what are the language learning strategies used by

the male and the female students in fourth semester of English students at Universitas Bengkulu in learning Speaking?"

### **Research Methodology,**

This research employed a descriptive quantitative research design. According to Creswell (2012), descriptive quantitative is described and analysis of a research problem based on mathematical analysis in numeric.

The population of this research was fourth-semester students of the English Study Program in the academic year 2021 at Universitas Bengkulu. The total number of the population are 117 students. 52 students were taken by using the purposive sampling as the sample. This study used an adapted Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 as an instrument for assessing language learning strategies used by male and female students. It was developed by Oxford. The questionnaire consists of 31 items. For validity and reliability, the researcher used the content validity technique has been estimated by measuring the professional judgment of an expert.

In collecting the data, there were 31 items of questionnaires administrated to 52 students by using Google form. Then, the questionnaires were sent through a link in WhatsApp personal. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researchers contacted them first.

In analyzing the data the researchers used Microsoft Excel and SPSS. After participants had filled the questionnaire, the researchers got the frequency and percentage of each item using Microsoft Excel. To find out the descriptive statistic, the researchers used SPSS. The last, the researchers interpreted the result of questionnaire accumulation to get the answer to that research questionnaire. Then, to calculate the most frequent strategy use and the least strategy use, the researchers used Oxford's rating scheme for strategy use.

**Table 1:** Rating Scheme for Strategy Use

High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Often used	3.5 to 4.4
Mediu	Sometimes	2.5 to 3.4

m	used	
Low	Rarely used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

## Findings and Discussion,

### Findings

#### Language learning strategies are used by male and female students in learning speaking.

In this research, the data was collected from questionnaires distributed to 26 male and 26 female students of the fourth semester in the English Education Study Program. The data were to answer what are language learning strategies used by male and female students in learning speaking skill. From analyzing the data, the finding showed as follows:

**Table 2:** The Comparison of Language Learning Strategy between Male and Female Students

Type of Strategy	Strategy Category	Male Students			Female Students		
		Mean	Category	Rank	Mean	Category	Rank
Direct Strategy	Memory	3.47	Medium	5	3.19	Medium	6
	Cognitive	3.67	High	1	3.5	High	4
	Compensation	3.67	High	2	3.41	Medium	5
Indirect Strategy	Metacognitive	3.59	High	3	3.74	High	1
	Affective	3.49	Medium	4	3.51	High	3
	Social	2.95	Medium	6	3.53	High	2
Overall		3.47	Medium		3.48	Medium	

Based on table 2, both the male and female students of the fourth semester used all categories of language learning strategy. They are memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and social strategy. From those learning strategies, cognitive

and compensation had the highest mean of all strategies used by male students ( $M=3.67$ ). It means that the dominant strategy used by the male students were cognitive and compensation strategy. It was followed by metacognitive strategy ( $M=3.59$ ), affective strategy ( $M=3.49$ ), memory strategy ( $M=3.47$ ) and the last social strategy ( $M= 2.62$ ). While the dominant strategy used by female students was metacognitive strategy with the mean ( $M=3.74$ ). It was followed by social strategy ( $M=3.53$ ), affective strategy ( $M=3.51$ ), cognitive strategy ( $M=3.5$ ), compensation strategy ( $M=3.41$ ) and memory strategy ( $M= 3.19$ ).

Moreover, there is the difference in term of mean score of each learning strategy category between male and female students. In terms of memory strategy, male students more frequently than female students ( $M=3.47>3.19$ ). The same case can be seen in cognitive strategies and compensation strategies, in which the mean score of male students was higher than those of female students ( $M=3.67>3.5$  and  $3.67>3.41$ ) respectively. Moreover, other learning strategies (Metacognitive, affective and social strategies) showed the mean score of female students was higher than male students. In metacognitive strategy, females are more frequently used than males ( $3.74>3.59$ ). Female students also chose affective strategy as their learning strategies more often than males ( $3.51>3.49$ ). The last, social strategies score of females was also higher than males ( $3.53>2.95$ ). In conclusion, the male students more frequently than female

students in the use of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategy which is those strategies are categorized as direct strategies, whereas female students were more frequently than male students in the use of metacognitive, affective and social strategy which categorized as an indirect category.

In term of overall strategies used, female students used language learning strategies in their learning speaking more frequently than the male students. Females employed the overall learning strategies with a mean ( $M=3.48$ ) while the males ( $M=3.47$ ). It indicated that there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of their mean score in using the learning strategies.

## **Discussion**

The first finding showed that the male students of the fourth-semester

students of the English Education Study Program used all types of language learning strategies in learning speaking. They are memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Cognitive and compensation strategies were the most dominant strategy used by male students in learning speaking. It is followed by metacognitive, affective, memory, and social strategies. According to Syehrudin (2017), cognitive strategies belong to direct strategies that enable the learners or students to understand and produce a new language. With these strategies, the learners were able to manipulate language materials directly. It supports Syehrudin's study (2017) showed the cognitive strategies mostly used by male students. The research result found by Marisa (2016) indicated that compensation strategies are the most frequent strategies used by males in learning speaking. The characters of compensation strategies make them appropriate to be used in learning speaking. It supported as Oxford (1990) stated that these strategies allow learners to use the language despite lack of grammar and vocabularies. Then, these strategies help the users to use all they have to overcome limitations to make the listeners get the message they want to convey.

Meanwhile, the most dominant strategies used by female students are the metacognitive strategy and followed by social, affective, cognitive, compensation, and last memory strategies. Metacognitive strategies, such as organizing, paying attention, setting goals and objectives, self-monitoring, planning, and seeking practice opportunities, can help students become effective learners in learning the language. It is similar to Ansyari & Rahmi's study (2016). They found that the most dominant strategy used by female students was the metacognitive strategy. Syehrudin (2017) had also found that female students use metacognitive strategies in learning speaking. The present study supports those findings. He explained that a possible reason why metacognitive being the most dominant strategy used because it allows the learners to center, planning and evaluating the learning,

In contrast to this current finding, other studies found that male and female students' strategy preferences in learning speaking were different. Anum & Apriyanto (2019) found that the most dominant strategy used by male students was metacognitive strategy, while female students dominantly used

affective strategy. On the other way, Marisa (2016) found that Female students used cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, and affective strategies with the most frequently used were cognitive strategies, while male students only used compensation, cognitive and metacognitive strategies with the most frequently used was compensation strategies. Furthermore, Devarianti (2019) found that cognitive strategies were the most frequent strategies used by males, meanwhile cognitive and social strategies were the most frequently used by female students. It related to finding from Eriza & Kasmairi (2017) that students use social affective strategy frequently. Social Affective strategy made them understanding the materials easily; motivating them to be good learners, and making them feel free to ask.

The second finding of this study showed that the different strategies used by the male and the female students in their frequencies of speaking learning strategies. Male students use memory, cognitive and compensation strategies more dominantly used compared to female students, while female students use metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more dominantly used compared to male students. Memory, cognitive and compensation strategies were categorized as a direct strategy, while metacognitive, affective, and social strategies were categorized as an indirect strategy. According to Oxford (1990), direct strategies are particular language learning strategies that directly require the target language. On the other hand, indirect strategies are methods for supporting and managing language learning that does not concern the target language. In other words, direct strategies are involving language itself, whereas indirect strategies are the supplementary tool for direct strategies. Direct strategy is more concerned with producing concrete details of the target language as practicing the language forms and repeating learning material, while indirect strategies involve being aware of how you feel when learning the target language, and using the target language in various ways and situations (Xiaoguo & Yongbing, 2005).

The finding above showed that males and females used different dominant strategies in learning speaking skills. Hence, it concluded that gender differences affect in choice of language learning strategies. Ariyani et.al (2018) suggests the differences between male and female students in using language learning strategies. They argue that male students tend to depend



more on rote memorization than female students.

Memorization is one of the traits of cognitive strategies, in which memorization tends to be used by males. Therefore, in this study, males were more dominant in using memory and cognitive strategies than females, while females tend to use metacognitive strategies. According to Graham and Rees (1995) stated that female students were afraid of criticism by others for their performance in language proficiency. Their fear of being evaluated by others seems to result in self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-correction. These strategies are included under the metacognitive strategy.

In addition, males are also more dominant in using compensation strategies, while females used social strategies. According to Jamiah et.al (2015) that the females had characteristics like more emphatic and comprehension in thinking, their emotion affected their decision, social thinking and liked cooperating with their peers referred to the social strategy, while the male had characteristics like making fun, more confident, logical, active in expressing their opinion referred to the compensation strategy. Moreover, female students also used effective strategies more dominant than males. It means that females more focused on emotions, attitudes, and motivations before or during the conversation. According to Oxford (1993 cited in Zeynali 2010), female learners tend to pay more attention to their feelings and tend to be more sensitive.

This current finding was different from Mahmud's finding (2018) that male students use memory strategy, metacognitive strategy, and social strategy more often compared to female students, while the use of cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, and affective strategy more often compared to male students. The difference in the frequency of strategy use between males and females may be affected by other variables such as ethnic background, cultural background, and language learning environment. It is because these differences may be relative and influenced by others aspects. Therefore, it needed the interview as an additional instrument to get more detailed information related to other factors involved. In addition, this finding related to the traits and personality of females, in which females are more motivated to explore various ways of learning strategies to improve their language learning process

compared to males. This is supported by Platsidou and Sipitanou (2015), in which females were found to be superior to males in scores of different abilities, skills, and personal characteristics.

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

Based on the findings, it could conclude that both male and female students of the fourth semester used all kinds of strategies category in their learning speaking. Those strategies are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategy. Memory and compensation strategies are the most dominant strategy used by male students. It means that they need strategies to overcome their limitation in speaking skills, while the metacognitive strategy is the most dominant strategy used by female students. It stated that they need more planning, monitor and evaluation in their learning speaking process. The selected strategies used by male and female students could be caused by their differences due to male and female characteristics. It concluded that gender affects learning strategies conducted by male and female students in learning speaking, especially at the fourth-semester students of English education study program.

In relation to the conclusions, this research is suggested to the further researcher who will conduct the same topic of this research. The next researcher should make the next research more detailed information by involving other instruments, such as speaking tests and interview about using language learning strategies. The further researcher is also suggested to investigate the research on language learning strategies in different language skills in English such as writing, listening, and reading. Further study should compare other factors such as motivation, attitude, learning styles, economic situation and social background, that create a difference between genders should be involved in further research.

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