INVESTIGATING RURAL STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LEARNING

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Abstract

The students' strategies in learning English attract many EFL researchers' attention. The objective of this study was to find out rural students' strategies in English learning. The study was conducted in three different senior high schools in Teunom Sub-District of Aceh Jaya regency. The research used a quantitative method by employing survey design. The modified Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire developed by Oxford was used as an instrument to obtain required data. The population of this survey was all classes in the three schools. Three classes of each school were randomly chosen from tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Therefore, 136 students of nine classes became the sample of this research. The collected data were analyzed through a quantitative procedure by using a statistical formula to find the percentage of each statement. The results showed that the students employed a variety of strategies in learning English. The most common strategy employed was metacognitive followed by social, affective, memory, cognitive, and compensation..

Keywords: Student's strategies; rural students; English learning

INTRODUCTION
In the last three decades, the focus in the field of second language acquisition has shifted from teaching method to learner characteristics. It has become obvious that the success in language learning depends more on individual learners. Therefore, learning emphasizes less on teachers and more on students. Concurrently, a shift of researchers' attention has changed from the product to the process of language learning (Oxford, 1990). Since that, many researchers have put more focus on researching learners' individual factors related to the success in language learning. This change can be ascribed to strategies that learners apply in learning a target language. Thus, language learning strategies (LLSs) have been recognized as one of the most important elements in language learning (Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, the growing awareness of the learners' behaviors in language learning has contributed to the learner-centered approach in learning a language (Ellis, 1994; Skehan, 1991). Besides, learning strategies are considered to be goal-oriented behaviors since the learners employ a specific action or behavior, either consciously or unconsciously in order to facilitate learning to be easier and more enjoyable (Kayaoglu, 2013).

To date, a number of studies have revealed that successful learners use a variety of strategies appropriately for both productive and receptive tasks, while less successful learners use the strategies monotonously and inappropriately for the given tasks (Mokhtari, 2007). In addition, successful language learners employ more strategies than less successful learners do, and it becomes one of the differences between successful and less successful learners (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006).

The interest in LLSs emerged in order to investigate the behaviors of a successful language learner with a view to teach these behaviors to the less successful learners (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Grenfell & Harris, 1999). Furthermore, since researchers believe that language learning strategies can be taught, many strategy trainings were done in order to train less successful learners with the strategies that successful learners have. O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-manzanares,

Russo, and Kupper (1985), for instance, carried out a strategy training of ESL high school students. The effectiveness of the study revealed that metacognitive group performs better than cognitive group in all language aspects such as listening, speaking and vocabulary. In addition, the same study also conducted by Prokop (1989) on high and low reading score students. The finding of this study suggested that the high score students increase their strategy use effectively. In the same way, students who possess low score before also switched their ineffective strategies to the effective ones, even though as not effective as the high score students yet. He then concluded that learning strategy instruction can positively help the low score students in achieving the task objectives.

In Indonesian context, students at least are familiar with two languages since they have a variety of vernaculars. Therefore, it seems that Indonesians can effortlessly master a new language. However, it does not imply learning English is easy for Indonesians since most of them find English a very challenging language to learn. Initially, the objective of learning a language is to communicate effectively and efficiently. In Indonesia, English is an obligatory subject starting from junior high school to senior high school, but starting from July 2016, in a new curriculum, it also being a compulsory subject in the elementary level. Roughly estimated, Indonesian students had learned English for six years at formal phase. Even though they spend a great deal of time in learning English, it is not a guaranteed that they are proficient in English, especially in communication skill. Schools mostly stress English on the subject rather than on proficiency level, especially schools in rural areas.

Furthermore, self-awareness of the importance of English has been absent from most Indonesians, if not all. Thus, students view English as only a matter of subject that must be taken. In addition, practicing English in public area or even in school is considered imperious. Yet, the vernacular or Bahasa Indonesia is accepted all the time at any occasion. Such condition can easily found in the rural area. It is a common obstacle in learning English, particularly for countries whose first language is not English.

Regarding the language learning outcomes, there have been significantly differences between students in rural and urban areas, especially in Indonesia. Regardless of the methods used in teaching, learners' factors also contribute in forming themselves to be good or poor language learners such as by employing strategies in learning a language. Therefore, this study is intended to investigate rural students' strategy use in learning English.

Studies on national origin have been conducted by researchers of this area, and national origin has been considered as one of the factors which can influence learners' chosen strategies. Politzer and McGroarty (1985) in their work of investigating Asian and Hispanic students found that Hispanic students engage more in a number of communication strategies than Asian students. The Hispanic students also reported that they have a greater use of interactive strategies as compared to Japanese and Chinese students. The authors of this study then theorize that ethnicity might have a strong influence to some effective strategies employed by students.

In addition to cultural background, O'Malley et al. (1985) in a study of Asian and Hispanic students revealed that Asian students were consistence in using repetition while learning vocabulary. On the other hand, Hispanic students enjoy exploring new strategies and had a better performance in the posttest than Asian's. Similarly, Phillips (1991) and Mullins (1992) did several studies to identify whether or not national origin can influence the chosen strategies. Phillips (1991) identified that Asian university students preferred to use compensation, metacognitive and social strategies. Also, Mullins (1992) who used SILL as the instrument to investigate university students in Thailand reported that metacognitive, compensation and cognitive strategies were more preferable than other types of strategies.

Meanwhile, there have been no studies examining selection of learning strategies by EFL learners in certain geographical setting. Therefore, the present study would fill in the gap by investigating EFL rural students' strategies in learning English.

Definitions of Learning Strategy
Strategies in Language learning have long been connected with effective language learning (e.g. Green & Oxford, 1995; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). As a result, it is claimed that good learners use a lot more strategies than less skillful learners do (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995).

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) consider strategies as consciously employed techniques by learners to enhance their improvement in language learning. "Conflicting views" is the word used by Cohen (1998, cited in Kausar, 2012), while Ellis (1994) uses the word "fuzzy" in defining language learning strategies and provides some characteristics of the strategies. He then characterizes strategies as (1) the general approaches along with specifics actions employed by learners in language learning, (2) strategies are problem-orientated, (3) strategies directly contribute to the learners with the information that they can process, (4) strategies are consciously applied by learners in their efforts of language learning.

In addition, Weinstein and Mayer (1986, cited in Ellis, 1994) define learning strategies as learners' behaviors and thoughts used during learning process which can influence their encoding process. Similarly, Rubin (1987, cited in Ellis, 1994) views learning as learners' action that contributes to the language system development and directly affects learning. In the 1990s, researchers also provide various definitions of learning strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990), for example, see learning strategies as special behaviors that learners employ in order to ease the learning, comprehending and retaining new knowledge. Learning strategies also defined as specific actions used by the learners to be able to learn faster, easier, more self-

directed, more enjoyable, more effective and more transferable to the new circumstances (Oxford, 1990).

According to Macaro (2001), the arising of various definitions of learning strategies is mainly depended on researchers' interest or sphere. Similarly, McDonough (1995, cited in Macaro, 2001) provides a number of terms which used interchangeably with learning strategies such as language skills, a mechanism to compensate, action plans and language processes. However, the exact definition of language strategies seems to be no consensus among researchers.

Apart from the terms and definitions above, this study adopts the definition of learning strategies provided by Oxford. It is because the definition has been widely used by many researchers and it is the most applicable definition.

Classification of Learning Strategies

Learning strategies, referring to Chammot and Kupper (1989)*,* are classified into cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. Cognitive strategies encompass behaviors, actions or techniques employed to ease learners in knowledge acquisition. Metacognitive strategies are techniques the learners use to control their process of learning through planning, monitoring, evaluating and modifying (Rubin, 1981). Socio-affective strategies are techniques the learners use such as by asking for clarification, cooperating, imitating and repeating.

Rubin (1981) classifies learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. The direct strategies are divided into clarification or verification, memorization, monitoring, guessing, practice and deductive reasoning. In addition, the indirect strategies are divided into seeking opportunities and practices. Ku and Chang (2011) provide another dimension of learning strategies. They categorize learning strategies into motivation, attitude, anxiety and information processing. In addition, O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-manzanares, Russo and Kupper (1985) in their research divided learning strategies into cognitive, metacognitive and social.

Nevertheless, learning strategies can also be classified differently. As Oxford (1990) divides learning strategies into two general categories. They are direct strategies, which directly involve the language learned requiring mental processing, and the indirect strategies, which provide indirect support through planning, evaluating, focusing, controlling anxiety, seeking opportunities, and cooperation. The direct strategies are grouped into memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, while the indirect strategies are grouped into metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

In the present study, the researcher uses Oxford's classification of strategies. They are 1) memory strategies: involving how language is remembered by the learner such as by using pictures, sound similarities and key words, 2) cognitive strategies: concerning the acquisition knowledge about language by the learners like synthesizing, note-taking and reasoning, 3) compensation strategies: enabling students to handle their limited knowledge, e. g. guessing from the context,

using gestures or circumlocution, 4) metacognitive strategies: managing learning process by learner, for example by monitoring self-mistake, evaluating task and identifying self-preference and need, 5) affective strategies: regarding students' emotions and feelings such as rewarding oneself, deep breathing and identifying self-anxiety level, and 6) social strategies: concerning learning by interacting with others, for instance through clarification, asking question and look for conversation partner (Oxford, 1990, p. 8).

Factors Influencing Learning Strategies

Studies on language learning strategies revealed that the choice of particular language learning strategies has been linked with a number of variables such as gender, learning styles, cultural background, national origin, motivation, language proficiency, attitudes and beliefs about language learning (e.g. Phillips, 1991; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Yang, 1999). Most of the studies were done to get a better understanding about individual differences for better language learning achievement.

Gender and learning styles

Gender variable has been shown by many studies can influence the strategies chosen especially related to social strategies. Politzer (1983) investigated university students and found that men use less social strategies compared to women. Similarly, Green and Oxford (1995) investigated English learners in Puerto Rico and revealed that women used more learning strategies that men. In this study, women frequently used cognitive, affective, memory and social strategies. In the same line, Osanai (2000) reported that the gender differences do affect the strategies chosen by learners. Based on the study of ESL university students, he concludes that female students use learning strategies more often than male students especially in terms of social and affective strategies.

In contrast, other studies also report that male students use more strategies or there is differences on the strategies chosen related to gender. As an example, Tran (1988) conducted a study among Vietnamese refugees for English acculturation and learning strategies. In this study, he uncovered that male refugees employ more strategies than female refugees for their language skills improvement. The same finding also revealed by Wharton (2000) who studied bilingual university students in Singapore. This study presents the greater use of language learning strategies by male students that tent to use metacognitive, memory and cognitive strategies.

The overall findings above have indicated the existence of gender differences in language learning strategies. Most researchers came to the conclusion that the differences in strategies use by language learners might also formed by other variables such us life experience, socialization and learning style (Wharton, 2000; Osanai, 2000; Green & Oxford, 1995; Tran, 1988; Politzer, 1983). Even though these studies have shown that women are the greater use of

language learning strategies, a decisive conclusion has not been achieved.

In addition to language learning style, it is also considered as an important variable which can determine the chosen strategies on language learning. The connection between learning styles and the learning strategies is claimed to be in existence and the learning styles may be further correlated with current cultural values (Liang, 2009). Further, Oxford (2003), proposed that learning style can make language learners feel more confident in choosing the most appropriate learning strategies in the given tasks, and of course it will lead them to perform well in the target language. In addition, many studies prove that learning style do influence the strategies chosen by the learners (e.g. Chamot & Keatley, 2004; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989). For instance, extrovert learners have preference of social strategies, while introvert learners will frequently use metacognitive strategies to support their learning process (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989).

Motivation and attitude

Motivation has been long linked with language learning strategy choices. Some considerable evidence prove that motivation is able to influence students in determining their learning strategies in which lower motivated students use less strategies compared to high motivated students (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Khamkhien, 2010). As outlined by Gardner (1985), motivation is the main source which contribute to one's language learning. Specifically, Dornyei (2001), one of the well-known experts in this field, claimed that motivation is able to explain why people choose to do something and how long they will sustain the activity to pursue the goals.

A number of studies regarding motivation and strategy choice show that motivation takes an important role for language learners in determining the strategy choice. For example, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) stated that students who learn a new language for the job-related reasons used more and variety of strategies especially in terms of communicative skills. In particular, Prokop (1989) investigated the types of motivation of German university students and revealed that students who possess high instrumental motivation often use more types of language learning strategies appropriately to the given tasks. In a related study, Oxford (1993) in her study of Japanese high school students reported that the level of students motivation strongly influence to the strategy use in which the more students motivate in learning, the more variety of learning strategies they use.

In relation to the attitude, researchers have also found the relationship to the learning strategies. According to Bialystok (1978), he suggested that language learning strategies might be empowered by aptitude and attitude variables. Then, Bialystok (1981) made clear that the strategies chosen by students in learning a second language determined by students' attitudes, not by their aptitude. Similarly, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) in his study of strategy training surprisingly revealed that one of instructors in the study had to stop the training program since he indicated that the students had the negative attitudes together with the lack of motivation.

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METHODOLOGY
Research Design
The present study used the quantitative method with the survey design. The researchers conducted a survey at three different senior high schools. They were SMA 1 Teunom, SMK 1 Teunom and MAN Aceh Jaya which all of them located in Teunom district, Aceh Jaya regency of Aceh Province.

The participants of this research were 136 students of the three different senior high schools in Teunom district, Aceh Jaya.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire developed by Rebecca Oxford was employed in order to get the data about students strategies used in learning English.

Data Analysis
The data elicited from students' responses to the SILL was checked for validation carefully. Then, the data was categorized based on the Liker's scale point to be inputted into the computer and then analyzed quantitatively using Microsoft Office Excel 2013. The next stage was analyzing the data in a statistical descriptive way which consisted of percentage. Lastly, the results of descriptive statistics were tabulated in the table and analyzed qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
SILL is a questionnaire used in this research to investigate students' strategies in learning English. The SILL divides strategies into memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Thus, the results of this research are presented according to the strategies.

Memory Strategies
The SILL items number 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 focus on finding students strategies which are memory-related in retrieving information such as by using images, sounds or locations of the information itself.

Table 1 Memory strategies

	1	2	3	4	5*
1	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them				
	10.3	10.3	38.2	31.6	9.6

	1	2	3	4	5
2	I look for new English words in either online or offline dictionary				
	4.4	5.1	23.5	50.7	16.2
3	I use flashcards to remember new English words				
	23.5	18.4	35.3	14.7	8.1
4	I review English lessons often				
	8.1	7.4	30.9	24.3	29.4
5	I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page or on the board				
	13.2	12.5	32.4	28.7	13.2

*1 = Never true of me, 2 = Almost never true of me, 3 = Somewhat true of me, 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me

According to Table 1, 31.6% students mentioned that they usually used sentences to remember the new English words easily. However, 50.7% students revealed that they usually review the lesson they have learned. In addition, the same result pointed that most students (41.9%) remember the location of the words to help them remember.

Interestingly, many students with the percentage up to 50.7% stated that they usually use a dictionary to deal with new English words either online or offline dictionary. However, 23.5% of respondents reported that they never use flashcards as one of the strategies to remember a new English word.

Cognitive Strategies
This category of SILL addresses questions about students' strategies which encompass numerous techniques, for example, note-taking, practicing in a naturalistic setting and outlining. Students' responses of this category are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Cognitive strategies

	1	2	3	4	5*
6	I say or write new English words several times				
	8.8	9.6	32.4	28.7	20.6
7	I watch English language TV shows, movies or videos spoken in English				
	14.0	7.4	27.9	32.4	18.4
8	I like reading English articles				
	11.0	9.6	27.9	25.0	26.5
9	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English				
	29.4	12.5	33.1	14.7	10.3
10	I try not to translate word-for-word when I read English articles				
	30.9	21.3	27.2	11.8	8.8

*1 = Never true of me, 2 = Almost never true of me, 3 = Somewhat true of me, 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me

Regarding cognitive strategies, the results of surveyed students disclosed that almost half of them remembered new English words by saying or writing them repeatedly (49.3%). Conversely, 29.4% of them never used English for their notes, letters, messages or reports.

With regard to practicing in a naturalistic setting, 50.8% students liked to watch English TV shows, movies or videos. Also, 51.5% of respondents reported that they usually read English articles. However, most of the students were eager to translate word-for-word in understanding the sentences. 52.2% of the students responded that they usually translate word-for-word when they read the English articles.

Compensation Strategies
In this category, the questions asked are intended to analyze students' strategies used to overcome limited knowledge such as by using synonyms, gestures or pause words while speaking. The result of this part can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Compensation strategies

	1	2	3	4	5*
11	To understand unfamiliar English words in reading, I make guesses				
	26.5	20.6	33.1	16.2	3.7
12	When I can't think of a word during an English conversation, I use gestures				

	1	2	3	4	5*
	23.5	11.8	29.4	26.5	8.8
13	I try to guess the other person will say next in an English conversation				
	27.2	16.2	27.2	22.8	6.6
14	I read English without looking up every new word				
	22.1	19.1	25.0	22.1	11.8
15	If I can't think of an English word during conversation, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing				
	12.5	12.5	33.8	33.8	7.4

*1 = Never true of me, 2 = Almost never true of me, 3 = Somewhat true of me, 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me

Guessing is usually a very common strategy used by language learners to handle their limitations, but the data of this study present that 47.1% of the students were low in use of guessing strategy. Also, 43.4% of the students were low in frequency use of guessing what will come next in a conversation. Similarly, most surveyed students (42.2%) rarely used the context in order to comprehend the English readings, while many of them still focused on word-by-word.

However, using gesture during the conversation was used by 35.3% of students if they could not think of

the words to speak up. The last item of this category is the most frequently used strategy with up to 41.2% of students claimed that they usually used a word or phrase that has the same meaning to overcome their limitation of vocabulary knowledge.

Metacognitive Strategies

The five items of this category concern finding information related to students strategies in managing their learning process, for example by monitoring mistakes, focusing, arranging study space and schedule, task evaluating and identifying learning style preference and paying attention. The full report of students' responses is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Metacognitive strategies

	1	2	3	4	5*
16	I try to find as many ways as I can to practice my English speaking skill				
	6.6	6.6	19.9	34.6	32.4
17	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better				
	5.1	6.6	23.5	34.6	30.1
18	I pay attention when someone is speaking English				
	1.5	2.2	16.9	33.8	45.6
19	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English				
	26.5	14.7	26.5	13.2	19.1
20	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English				
	24.3	15.4	27.2	23.5	9.6

*1 = Never true of me, 2 = Almost never true of me, 3 = Somewhat true of me, 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me

In terms of practice, as shown in Table 4, 67% students of the study reported their high efforts of looking for a chance to practice their English as many as possible. Also, 64.7% of the students usually reviewed their own mistakes in order to improve their English. In addition, most of the students with 79.4% reported that they paid much attention to someone who is speaking English.

However, the time management for studying strategies was low in use with only 41.2% of them compared to 32.3% of those who have a high frequency

of use. Similarly, few of the surveyed students looked for opportunities to read English a lot. This kind of strategy used only by 33.1% of them.

Affective Strategies

All of the questions in this category deal with students' emotions and feeling to the language learning task such as identifying the self-anxiety level and rewarding oneself for good performance. Students' feedbacks to this category are available in Table 5.

Table 5 Affective strategies

	1	2	3	4	5*
21	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of speaking English				
	9.6	7.4	25.0	30.9	27.2
22	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake				
	2.2	6.6	22.1	30.9	38.2
23	I feel relief and proud when I do well in English				
	19.1	14.7	30.1	19.1	16.9
24	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying English				
	7.4	8.1	31.6	38.2	14.7
25	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English				
	22.1	14.0	27.9	19.1	16.9

*1 = Never true of me, 2 = Almost never true of me, 3 = Somewhat true of me, 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me

At this category of strategy, as the data showed in Table 5, most students reported their high percentage use almost for all subcategory items. For example, 58.1% students either "almost always" or "always" stated that they overcome their afraid feeling of using English by trying to relax. In addition, whenever they were afraid of making mistake in speaking, they usually kept pushing themselves to speak instead of remain silence with up to 69.1%. With the slight difference of frequency used, 36% of them felt relief and proud when they did well in English such as in speaking, reading or writing.

High frequency of used strategy was also reported by students with 38.2% "almost always" and 14.7% "always" by noticing their own anxiety when they are studying or using English. In relation to the feeling in learning English, they reported their medium use of this strategy with the percentage of 27.9%. With a small difference in percentage (22,1%), they also claimed their low use of this strategy.

Social Strategies
The SILL items in this category emphasis on identifying students strategies by involving with others such as asking for clarification, questioning and culture exploring. Responses to these items are reported in Table 6.

Table 6 Social strategies

	1	2	3	4	5*
26	If I do not understand something in English. I ask other person to slow down or say it again				
	5.1	7.4	24.3	30.1	33.1
27	I ask someone (teacher or friend) to correct my mistakes when I speak English				
	3.7	6.6	19.1	27.9	42.6
28	I practice English with other students				
	13.2	2.9	24.3	29.4	30.1
29	I ask questions in English				
	16.9	9.6	33.1	22.8	17.6
30	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers				
	27.9	8.8	28.7	16.9	17.6

*1 = Never true of me, 2 = Almost never true of me, 3 = Somewhat true of me, 4 = Almost always true of me, 5 = Always true of me

Communicate with others is one of the best ways to improve the fluency in learning a language. It is also experienced by students in this survey, as can be seen in Table 6, in which 59.5% of students claimed they use this strategy frequently in order to sharpen their communication skill. However, 33.1% of students reported their medium use of asking questions in English.

In terms of receiving feedback from others either from teachers or friends, 70.5% students confirmed their high use of this strategy in order to improve their speaking ability. In addition, negotiating while conversation takes place usually happen in order to receive the information well. As data in the Table 6 shows that 63.2% of the students either "almost always" or "always" used this strategy to receive complete message from interlocutors by asking to slow down the speaking speed or even asking for repetition. However, learning English speaker cultures fell to the medium use of strategy with 28.7%. In addition, it has a slightly

difference with 27.9% of them who reported their low use of this strategy.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the data showed that the most common strategy used by the students was metacognitive followed by social, affective, memory, cognitive, and compensation. However, in this study, the researchers only focus on discussing the three most common category strategies employed by the students.

The most-preferred strategy used by the senior high school students in Teunom district was metacognitive strategies, which involve managing learning process such as monitoring their own mistakes, focusing and finding ways to use English. The same findings also found by others researchers (Khalil, 2005; Kausar, 2012). However, this strategy was the least in frequency use amongst Iranian students (Abedini, Rahimi & Zara-ee, 2011). The reason mentioned by the researcher was due to Iranian classrooms being more teacher-centered, where the teacher is the only person who can speak in the class. At this point, students have less opportunity to speak as one of the ways to practice their English. In addition, this finding contradict to the Oxford's (1990) claim in which "metacognitive strategies are extremely important, but the research shows that the learners use these strategy sporadically and without much sense of their importance"

The second most popular strategy employed by students in Teunom district was social strategy which involves questioning and asking for clarification. The current findings support Wharton's finding (2000) who studied Japanese and French learners' strategies in learning English. In the present study, the majority of students preferred to ask their teacher or friend to correct their mistakes while speaking and asked for clarification when they did not understand something in a conversation. The preference of this strategies might reflect the methods used in the teaching and the ways of English learning in the classroom which probably teacher encouraged students to engage more while teaching-learning took place. It is, however, different from what has been found by Li (2010) and Kausar (2012), where social strategies were the least used strategies by students in their research. In addition, a good number of students also reported that they usually practiced their English with other students.

Affective strategies fell to be the third most strategies used by students in this study. Yet, most of the previous research found that this type of strategies as the least frequent used (Oxford, 1993; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Mokhtari, 2007; Lai, 2009). However, in the present study affective strategies emerged as the third most popular strategies used by the students. It indicated that most students in the study aware of their emotions and feelings when learning English such as how to relax and encourage themselves to use English even when they are afraid of making mistakes.

CONCLUSION

The present survey research was conducted in three different senior high schools in the Teunom Sub-District of Aceh Jaya regency. This research was done for the purpose of investigating rural senior high school students' strategies in learning English. As proposed by Hong (2006), knowing students' strategies is essential in order to help students approach the learning appropriately. Also, strategy plays a significant role in forming someone to be a poor or successful language learner.

Senior high school students in Teunom Sub-District employed numerous strategies in learning English, where metacognitive appeared to be the most preferred. Focusing became the highest used strategy in the current research. Based on the findings, the students also favored employing social strategies such as asking someone to correct their English mistakes. In addition, the students also used their emotions and feeling to help them avoid nervousness such as trying to relax when using English even though they were afraid of making mistakes.

Some suggestions can be attained for English teaching and learning, especially at senior high school level in Teunom. First, it is noteworthy that teachers aware of students' strategies used in learning English to provide appropriate teaching and learning practices. Second, the teachers should provide activities which present learning communicatively rather than linguistically. In addition, knowing their own preferred strategies would be very helpful for the students in order to approach learning appropriately and effectively. Last, the students should employ their preferred strategies based on the context of learning.

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