

## **LEARNER MOTIVATION IN ESL LEARNING STRATEGIES AND GENDER ROLE**

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### **Abstract**

Language learning strategy is one of the main factors that help determine how well our students learn a second or foreign language (Oxford, 2003). Research has shown that more effective language learners use more and better learning strategies than poorer language learners (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). This research investigates the difference in ESL learning strategies used by students with different levels of ESL learner motivation and how gender plays a role in both. Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL; Oxford, 1990) and English Language Learner Motivation Scale (ELLMS; Ardasheva, Tong and Tretter, 2012) were used and adopted to measure English language learning strategies and English language learner motivation, by employing 65 male students and 75 female students from Budi Utama Junior High School as participants. The data analyzed showed that there was significant difference in ESL learning strategies used by the students with different levels of ESL learner motivation but there is no significant role of gender in ESL learner motivation and ESL learning strategies.

Keywords: ESL, gender, learner motivation, learning strategy

### **Introduction**

According to the survey of EF English Proficiency Index (2016) in English Language ability, Indonesia is ranked 32 out of 72 countries. This survey also shows that there is a positive correlation between the level of English ability and the level of economic income, quality of life, business environment dynamics, connectivity and innovation.

Research related to English as a Second Language (ESL) is a field that will continue to be studied because of the importance of English in the aspects of global life. Many studies have shown that successful language learners use more learning strategies than those who are unsuccessful (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). The language learning strategy is one of the main factors determining the success of language learning and plays an important role in the learning process (Oxford, 2003). Learning strategy is a way of regulating cognitive ability to obtain good grades or academic achievement (Salovaara, 2005). In conclusion we can state that learning strategies are needed in the learning process, not least in the ESL learning process, known as the language learning strategy.

Griffiths and Carrol (2003) point out that early in its development, research on language learning strategy aimed to identify or classify the types of language

learning strategies or focused on the relationship between their use and achievement in or mastery (level) of English (Green & Oxford, 1995). Subsequent studies have concentrated on factors influencing the use of language learning strategies, such as motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic (Chang, 2005), (Khazaie., Z. M & Mesbah. Z, 2014), language learning targets, career orientation, age, gender and anxiety ( Ehrman & Oxford, 1990), (Randic & Bobanovic, 2006).

An important factor that is highlighted in the use of learning strategies is the motivation of learners. Oxford (2003) suggests that according to some studies, the use of learning strategies is significantly linked to motivation. According to Chang (2005), motivation is one of the factors that has a relationship with the use of language learning strategies. Motivation is a force that can encourage someone to do something, it can come from outside or from within the individual.

This study will explore the strategies and motivation of the learners, specifically ESL Learning Strategies and ESL Learner Motivation. Based on previous studies, the researchers hypothesized that there is a significant difference in the use of ESL learning strategies at a low, medium and high ESL motivation level.

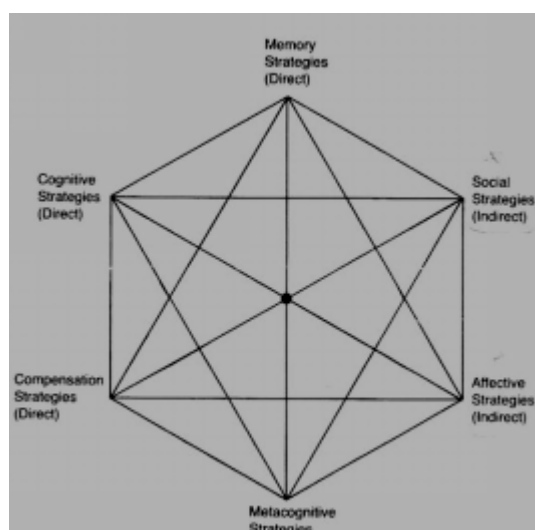
Besides ESL Learner Motivation, another factor to be studied in this research is gender. The term gender is distinguished from sex. Sex refers to the biological dimensions of a man and woman, whereas gender refers to a sociocultural dimension of a man and woman (Santrock, 2002). Numerous studies have looked into gender as a factor affecting language learning strategies in different cultural backgrounds. Some have found that learning strategies are used more frequently by women than men (Oxford, 2003; Zeynali, 2012). However, there are also studies that show the opposite, such as Zamri's study (as cited in Zeynali, 2012), which shows that men are more likely to use learning strategies than women, or even the results of Chang and Chou's study (as cited in Zeynali, 2012), which shows no significant difference in the use of language learning strategies based on gender. The hypothesis in this study and the inconsistency of previous research results relating to gender roles in the use of ESL learning strategies raises the question: does gender have a significant role in ESL learning strategies and ESL learner motivation? If ESL learner motivation has an influence on the use of ESL learning strategies and gender has no strong significant role in ESL learning strategies, it can be assumed logically that gender also has no significant role in ESL learner motivation. Similarly, if ESL learner motivation has an influence on the use of ESL learning strategies and gender has a significant role in ESL learning strategies; it can be assumed logically that gender has a significant role in ESL learner motivation.

### ***ESL Learning Strategies***

Oxford (1990) defines a language learning strategy as an action performed by the learner to assist in the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information; the act is specific and aims to make the process of learning languages easier, more effective, fun and self-directed. More specifically, Oxford (1990) classifies language learning strategies into two types, namely direct strategies and indirect strategies. Oxford explains that the direct strategy involves the use of languages studied directly to facilitate the learning process. Direct strategies consist of

memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies consist of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Indirect strategies provide indirect support in language learning in many ways: focusing attention, planning, evaluating, controlling anxiety, seeking opportunities, enhancing cooperation and empathy. Although the classification of Oxford language learning strategies seems to be divided into two types, direct and indirect, both types - along with the six categories of learning strategies - are interrelated and supportive of one another.

Oxford (1990) likened the direct and indirect linkage of strategies to an actor performing onstage with a backstage director. Both are mutually cooperative and inseparable. It is this connection that explains why previous theories have confirmed that successful language learners use more and varied strategies than unsuccessful language learners (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). An explanation of the relevance of the six learning strategies can be seen in figure 1.



**Figure 1. Interrelationships between Direct and Indirect Strategies among Six Strategies Group**

Source: Oxford, 1990, p. 15

Language learners can combine all of these strategies, so the process of learning the language becomes easy, enjoyable and varied. Language Learning Strategies used will have an affect on the learning outcomes of related languages (Chamot, 2004). The more language learning strategies chosen and flexibly used contextually by language learners, the more it will assist in the success of language acquisition (Oxford, 1990; Chamot, 2004).

### ***ESL Learner Motivation***

In a general sense, ESL learner motivation can be defined as the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized,

operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Still according to Dörnyei and Ushida (2011), language learner motivation represents a unique situation even in motivational psychology; language has a very unique role both personally and socially. Language, as an integral part of one's existence, covers almost all mental activity. Language is the most important element in our communication system and is also a tool of social organization. In the context of a foreign language as well as a second language, language has an additional function: it allows entry into the social, cultural and material arrangements of the native speakers of that language.

An important factor in the use of learning strategies is the motivation of learners. Oxford (2003) quotes from several studies show that the use of learning strategies is significantly linked to motivation. Dörnyei, Z. & Csizér, K (1998) have convincingly shown that motivation in the ESL context is a powerful variable. Chang (2005) explains that motivational variables have a great influence on the use of language learning strategies. Highly motivated learners use more learning strategies than lower motivated learners. The existence of motivation in a student will allow the student to overcome all obstacles encountered in the learning process; the primary way to do this is to use learning strategies.

Research on the motivation of language learners is still based on the grand theory of motivation, namely self-determination theory (SDT) from Deci and Ryan (1985). The development of self-determination theory in learning, especially second language acquisition (SLA), was advanced by Noel (as cited in Ardasheva, 2012). Noel divides SDT into seven aspects: 'amotivation,' three types of intrinsic motivation, and three types of extrinsic motivation. The three types of intrinsic motivation are: a) intrinsic motivation arising from stimulation, for example when a person wants to learn a language because of its aesthetic beauty when he/she hear it; b) intrinsic motivation arising from attainment, i.e. a person experiences positive feelings when he/she succeeds in understanding something difficult in the context of the new language; and c) intrinsic motivation arising from a desire to acquire new knowledge. For extrinsic motivation, Noel's three types are: a) extrinsic motivation because of values, such as a personal goal to become fluent in more than one language; b) Extrinsic motivation arising from internalized internal pressure ('interjection setting'), such as the feeling of wanting to avoid guilt or the desire to impress others; and c) 'external settings' or behaviors driven by external factors, such as punishment, reward or praise. The last aspect of SDT is 'amotivation,' which is the opposite of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in motivational orientation. Amotivation refers to situations where one sees no relationship between his/her actions and their consequences. Consequence is seen as something beyond one's control, so that there is no motivation to continue with an activity like learning a foreign language (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

This study specifically uses English learner motivation variables, based on seven aspects of Noel, but summarized and simplified by Ardasheva, Tong and Tretter (2012) into three factors, namely: external regulation, introjected regulation and intrinsic motivation.

### ***Gender***

The term gender is distinguished from sex, in which sex refers to the biological dimensions of a man and woman, whereas gender refers to the sociocultural dimensions of a man and woman (Santrock, 2002). In many studies related to language learning strategies by learners from different cultural backgrounds, it was found that learning strategies were used more frequently by women than men (Oxford, 2003; Zeynali, 2012).

From the description of language learning strategy variables and language learner motivation, gender becomes one of the variables attached to the profile of a language learner. Thus, although many previous studies have examined the variables of language learning strategies and the motivation of language learners in terms of their gender, the fact remains that there are differences in the results of existing research regarding its relevance. Some have found differences in the use of ESL learning strategies and motivation of ESL learners (Oxford, 2003; Zeynali, 2012), but others have not (Zamri, 2004; Chang, 1990; Chou, 2002 as cited in Zeynali, 2012).

From theories and results in previous studies regarding the use of ESL learning strategies and ESL learner motivation, this research constructs the hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the use of ESL learning strategies at low, medium and high ESL learner motivation levels. As for the inconsistency of gender roles with ESL learning strategies from previous studies, this study will answer the question: does gender have a significant role in ESL learning strategies and ESL learner motivation?

### **Method**

The population in this research consists of students at SMP Budi Utama during the 2016/2017 academic year. Budi Utama School is a member of the association of tri-lingual schools in Indonesia (PERSTIBI), in which English is used as a secondary means of instructional and communicative language. PERSTIBI schools also utilize native English speakers as members of the faculty and the learners are encouraged to use English both inside and outside of the classroom environment. Due to these factors, the subjects, consisting of 65 male and 75 female learners are adequately classed as ESL as opposed to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners.

Before performing validity and reliability tests on the measuring instrument used, the researchers conducted back-translation on all measuring tools both for English learning strategy and learner motivation. Back-translation is a method of adapting and verifying a measuring instrument by first translating it into a second language and then back into its original language. After the translation was matched and its consistency confirmed, the researchers conducted validity and reliability tests on the measurement method.

The inventory tool of the language learning strategies used in this study refers to the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL version 7.0 for ESL/EFL learners; Oxford, 1990). "The SILL is a standardized measure with versions for students of a variety of languages. It has also been used in studies that correlate strategy use with variables such as learning styles, gender, proficiency

level, and culture” (Chamot, 2004, p. 16). Nevertheless, the researchers tested the validity and reliability of the SILL again. After omitting 9 items from the original 50, we obtained the value of item validity coefficient range from 0.212 - 0.716. From the Alpha Cronbach reliability test, the scale of language learning strategy has a reliability coefficient value of 0.981. The data collected with SILL shows both the level of use of the ESL learning strategy on the overall total of six learning strategies as well as the use of ESL learning strategies in each of its strategies. Level of use of ESL learning strategy is divided into 3 levels; high (score range: 3.5-5.0), medium (score range: 2.5-3.4), and low (score range: 1.0-2.4).

The scale used to measure the motivation of learners in this study is the adaptation of English Language Learner Motivation Scale (ELLMS) owned by Ardasheva, Tong & Tretter, (2012) which is an adaptation and simplification of the Language Learning Orientations Scale-Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation Subscales (LLOS-IEA) developed by Noels, KA, Pelletier, LG, Clément, R., & Vallerand, RJ. ELLMS is used to measure ESL learner motivation at an elementary and junior high school level. ELLMS includes a series of SDTs, such as; intrinsic motivation (6 points of statement), Introjection regulation (2 points of statement) and extrinsic regulation (4 points of statement). Due to the fact there are only two questions dedicated to determining introjection, the compilers of ELLMS recommended (via correspondence) that the researchers add two additional items to the introjection regulation section using the questions in LLOS-IEA.. This scale is chosen because ELLMS is designed for elementary and junior high school students. After the validity test, ESL learner Motivation Scale has a value of item validity coefficient range of 0.299 - 0.585. Due to all 14 items being stated as valid the researchers chose to include all items. From the reliability test conducted, Language learner Motivation Scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.832 (reliable). Categorization of the ESL motivation learner levels was based on mean and standard deviation. Categorization of scores was ordered into three levels: low ( $X < 32.7$ ), medium ( $32.7 \leq 51.3$ ) and high ( $51.3 \leq X$ ).

The data for the hypothesis that there is a difference in the use of ESL learning strategies in terms of ESL learner motivation was analyzed using Annova for normal distributed learning strategies, and Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric tests for non-normal distributed ESL learning strategies. Then the question of whether gender has a significant role in ESL learning strategies and ESL learner motivation was answered by analyzing the data using chi-square and t-test.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Differences in the use of ESL learning strategies in terms of ESL learner motivation***

The result of data analysis shows that there are different uses of ESL learning strategy employed by ESL learners with low, medium and high motivation level. The results of calculating the uses of ESL learning strategies employed by students with low, medium and high motivation levels can be seen in table 1 below.

**Table 1. ESL Learning Strategies Based on Their ESL Learner Motivation**

ESL Learning strategies *	ESL Learner motivation						Statistic Test
	Low		Medium		High		
	Score	Level	Score	Level	Score	Level	
Total	92,2 ± 27,1 <sup>a</sup>	-	108,4 ± 20,6 <sup>a</sup>	-	135,3 ± 19,7 <sup>b</sup>	-	34,509
	Aspect (standardized score)						
Memory <sup>1)</sup>	1,82 ± 0,67 <sup>a</sup>	low	2,39 ± 0,56 <sup>b</sup>	low	2,97 ± 0,62 <sup>c</sup>	medium	21,101
Cognitive <sup>1)</sup>	2,06 ± 0,86 <sup>a</sup>	low	2,74 ± 0,57 <sup>b</sup>	medium	3,38 ± 0,69 <sup>c</sup>	medium	22,367
Compensation <sup>2)</sup>	3,13 ± 1,17 <sup>bc</sup>	medium	3,13 ± 0,91 <sup>a</sup>	medium	3,77 ± 0,84 <sup>c</sup>	high	15,113
Metacognitive <sup>1)</sup>	2,62 ± 1,23 <sup>a</sup>	medium	2,94 ± 0,74 <sup>a</sup>	medium	3,78 ± 0,61 <sup>c</sup>	high	26,719
Affective <sup>2)</sup>	1,72 ± 0,90 <sup>a</sup>	low	2,16 ± 0,67 <sup>a</sup>	low	2,61 ± 0,73 <sup>c</sup>	medium	14,810
Social <sup>1)</sup>	2,57 ± 0,89 <sup>a</sup>	medium	2,52 ± 0,68 <sup>a</sup>	medium	3,23 ± 0,71 <sup>c</sup>	medium	17,079

Note: the numbers in the table are the mean ± standard deviation (std deviation)

Table 1 shows that memory, cognitive, metacognitive and social data are normally distributed. The test statistic shows the F value for the analysis of variance; when  $F > 3.06$  then  $H_0$  is rejected at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Average comparisons were made with the least significant different method at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Whereas in the compensation and affective strategy the data is not normally distributed, the test statistic shows the value of  $\chi^2$  for Kruskal Wallis non-parametric test; when  $\chi^2 > 3.84$  then  $H_0$  is rejected at  $\alpha = 5\%$ . Average comparisons were made by the Mann-Whitney non-parametric test at  $\alpha = 5\%$ .

The results show that there are indeed differences in the uses of ESL learning strategies employed by students with low, medium and high ESL learner motivation. Furthermore, significant differences were found only in the low and medium vs. high groups, there was no significant difference in the ESL strategies between low and medium ESL learner motivation groups.

This result confirms theories from previous studies that there are indeed significant differences in the use of learning strategies at low, medium and high ESL learner motivation levels (Dörnyei, Z. & Csizér, K, 1998; Chang, 2005; Oxford, 2003).

#### ***Gender roles on the use of ESL learning strategies and ESL learner motivation***

Data was tested using chi-square to see the difference in frequency of the usage of ESL learning strategies in men and women. The results indicate that the difference in the use of ESL learning strategies only appears in the use of memory strategies, whereas in the 5 other learning strategies there is no significant difference. The results of the analysis can be seen in table 2 below.

**Table 2. Gender Differences in ESL Learning Strategies**

Learning strategies	Gender		Total	Sig. Chi-Square test
	Male	Female		
Memory	Low	33	23	.032
	Medium	22	41	
	High	10	11	
Cognitive	Low	16	10	.189
	Medium	33	40	
	High	16	25	
Compensation	Low	14	8	.208
	Medium	22	30	
	High	29	37	
Metacognitive	Low	9	11	.771
	Medium	29	29	
	High	27	35	
Affective	Low	43	43	.333
	Medium	16	27	
	High	6	5	
Social	Low	19	24	.922
	Medium	28	32	
	High	18	19	

Table 2 shows that in both men and women, there is no significant difference in the use of cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. This is shown by the absence of significant interaction ( $p > .05$ ) in these five ESL learning strategies. The only difference exists in the memory strategy where the significant value of chi-square test strategy memory was ( $0.32 < .05$ ).

This research shows that there is no difference in the usage of ESL learning strategy between men and women. Additionally, the difference in motivation level of ESL learners in men and women was tested using an independent t-test. The difference in ESL learner motivation rates in men and women can be seen in table 3.

**Table 3. ESL Learner Motivation based on Their Gender**

Gender	N	Score of Motivation		Level of motivation		
		Average	SD	Low	Medium	High
Male	65	48,98	9,49	4 (6,2%)	31 (47,7%)	30 (46,2%)
Female	75	50,72	8,05	1 (1,3%)	37 (49,3%)	37 (49,3%)
Total	140			5 (3,6%)	68 (48,6%)	67 (47,9%)

The motivation of ESL learners in men and women was compared using the t-test under the assumption of normal distribution. Assumption checks were performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. It obtained a Sig. Value of 0.094 and 0.200, which is greater than the 5% significance level, and indicates that the data represents a normal distribution, so that requirements are sufficiently met for a t-test to be performed.

The independent t-test obtained Sig value. of  $0.244 > 5\%$ , therefore it can be concluded that there is no difference in the average ESL learner motivation of male and female students.

From the results of this study it can be seen that gender does not play any significant role in the use of ESL learning strategy and motivation level of ESL



learners. In other words, gender has no influence on the use of ESL learning strategy and ESL learning motivation level. This result confirms the results of previous research; however, the chi-square analysis performed in the research also indicates that women tend to use more ESL memory learning strategies than men. Additionally, although there is generally no significant difference, it is true that more women use ESL learning strategies than men (a disparity of 1.8% according to the total scores).

### **Conclusion**

Results of this study confirm the previous studies which state that there are significant differences in the use of ESL learning strategies in ESL learners with low, medium and high motivation levels. Thus, the researchers suggest that ESL educational institutions and learners explore more instruments that can be used to improve ESL learner motivation, so that learners can optimally use ESL learning strategies.

The results of this study also found that gender does not play a role or influence ESL learning strategies and ESL learner motivation, so it is better for educators to avoid the stigma or prejudice that men tend to lack in motivation and use fewer learning strategies. In addition, ESL learning settings should also focus more on creating environments that motivate students because this research indicates that only in a group of high ESL learner motivation can we significantly see the difference in the use of ESL learning strategies.

The researchers also recommend that research should be conducted on subjects from more diverse ethnic and geographic backgrounds and with wider age ranges to determine whether the results will remain consistent. In Indonesia, there are a number of schools that use English as a second language as opposed to treating it as a foreign language. Therefore, in regards to ESL, it is both possible and practical to expand this study. However, the researchers suggest that study on language strategy variables in the context of EFL – as opposed to ESL – is similarly needed within Indonesia in its efforts to increase its ranking on the EF English Proficiency Index (2016), which is currently a dismal 32 out of 72 countries.

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