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## **CASE STUDY: THE ROLE OF LEARNING STRATEGIES, PERSONALITY AND MOTIVATION IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: WRITING PROFICIENCY OF A SOMALIAN STUDENT**

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<b>ARTICLE</b>	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p><i>Second language acquisition, learning strategies, personality, motivation, writing</i></p>	<p>The study aims to investigate a case study of second language acquisition of a foreign learner studying at Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang. There are three aspects examined by the researcher such as the learning strategies, personality, and motivation which influence the learner's second language acquisition of English. The findings of the research show that the subject has good learning strategies such as reading English books, learning via online media, and studying with friends. The subject has a good personality, an introvert who is confident in practicing English with several people in Indonesia. The subject has high motivation in learning English to get the scholarship and to have a good career in the future. After assessing his essay with the rubric score, the students' writing proficiency is improved.</p>

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is the method of expressing ideas and emotions in the form of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols are used to encode and decode the information. There are many languages spoken in the world. The first language learned by babies is his or her mother tongue. It is the language, which they hear since birth. Any other language learned or acquired is known as the second language.

The definition of second language acquisition and learning is the acquisition and learning of a second language once the mother tongue or first language acquisition has been established. Second language acquisition or SLA is the process of learning other languages in addition to the native language, even though it may actually be the third, fourth, or tenth to be acquired (Saville-Troike, 2006: 2) For instance, a child who speaks Bahasa Indonesia as the mother tongue starts learning English when he starts going to school. English is learned by the process of second language acquisition.

Some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. This simple fact is known by all who have learned a second language or taught by those who are using their second language in the school. Clearly, some language learners are successful by virtue of their sheer determination, hard work and persistence. However there are other significant factors influencing success that are largely beyond the control of the learner.

The first factor triggering the second language acquisition is learning strategies which are the particular approaches or techniques that learners employ to try to learn second language. They use learning strategies when dealing with some problems in learning language. Strategies, according to Brown's (2000) definition, are "... specific methods of approaching a problem or task modes of operation for achieving a particular end, [or] planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information ..." (p. 113). Such contextualized plans might vary from time to time. Moreover, strategies vary intra-individually; each of us is said to have various ways to solve a certain problem. In the context of language learning, learning strategies are referred to as those conscious and unconscious processes which language learners utilize in learning and using a language (Oxford, 1990). Learning strategies may be applied to a simple undertaking such as learning new vocabulary, or more complex one such as language production (Platt, Platt & Richards, 1998). Learning strategies are the actions learners take in making learning easy and fast and the process of tackling input, namely, messages from others, by means of processing, storage, and retrieval for either sustained retaining or future use.

Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can explain what efforts they made to learn something. According to Ellis (2008) different kinds of learning strategies have been identified; firstly cognitive strategies which involve in the analysis or transformation of learning materials for example 'recombination', which involves constructing meaningful sentences by recombining known elements of the L2 in a new way. Secondly metacognitive strategies include in planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning for example 'selective attention', where the learner makes a conscious decision to attend to particular aspects of input. Lastly social/affective strategies concern the way in which learners choose to interact with other speakers for example is 'questioning for clarification' (asking for repetition, a paraphrase, or example). Such studies have shown that successful learners use more strategies than unsuccessful learners. They have shown that different strategies are related to different aspects of L2 learning. The study of learning strategies is of potential value to language teachers.

Personality characteristics have an effect to language learning process. Some of them are argued to have correlation to the learning of the language which has been studied even though

provide different results. Extroverted person is said to be well suited to language learning. According to MacIntyre (1995), since anxious students focus on two things such as the task at their hand and their reactions to it, they tend to not learn as quickly as relaxed students, and this makes anxiety to have such an important. However, in certain situation such as before a test or an oral presentation, anxiety can provide the right combination of motivation and focus to succeed on it. It also is influenced by learners' social interactions inside and outside the classroom. Anxiety is related to learners' willingness to communicate, and communicating in second/foreign language itself related to number of people present, the topic of conversation, and circumstances formality. The difficulty in investigating personality characters is the identification and the measurement used. In addition, personality variable is considered as a major factor only in the acquisition of conversational skill, not in the acquisition of literacy or academic skills.

Different view about personality is given by Sharp (2000) that an extrovert is said to receive energy from outside sources, whereas an Introvert is more concerned with the inner world of ideas and is more likely to be involved with solitary activities. This trait does not just describe whether a person is outgoing or shy, but considers whether a person prefers working alone or feels energized and at home working in a team. A Sensing preference relies on gathering information through the five senses, attending to concrete, practical facts. Sensors are less likely to see the 'bigger picture' and more likely to follow a step by step approach. An Intuitive thinker is more likely to be drawn by abstract possibilities, meanings and relationships and will be drawn by the innovative and theoretical. A Thinking person is more likely to prefer decisions made in an impersonal, logical, objective manner. A Feeling person will make decisions based more on personal values, relationships and the feelings of others. Women are more likely to be Feelers. Judging and perceiving are personality preference describing how a person deals with the outside world. The Judger is more likely to look for a planned and controlled life, seeking closure, preferring planning and regulation. The Perceiver deals with the outside world through sensing or intuition, but prefers spontaneity, flexibility, freedom and autonomy and 'playing it by ear'

Motivation in second language learning is a complicated prodigy which can be defined into two factors: learners' communicative needs and their attitudes towards the second language community (Lightbown and Spada, 2001: 56). Motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn. Various kinds of motivation have been identified, they are: (1) *Instrumental motivation*, learning language for some functional reasons, such as to pass examination or to get a job; (2) *Integrative motivation*, learning language for personal growth and cultural enrichment; (3) *Resultative motivation*, meaning motivation is the

cause of second language achievement; (4) *Intrinsic motivation*, it involves the arousal and maintenance of curiosity in learning situation; (5) *Social group identification motives*, like integrative motivation added with the desire for becoming the real members of the group that speaks the new language ( Ellis, 2008: 75-76; Dulay, *et. al.*, 1982: 47-51).

Dorney (2001) proposes the three phases of motivation such as choice motivation, executive motivation and motivation retrospective. Similarly, Hedge (2001) has claimed that integrative motivation is related to language-learning due to its value in helping learners to integrate with speakers of that language. Learners who learn the (foreign) language out of interest in identifying with the target culture or target language communities are thought to be driven by integrative motivation. Under the above concept, language learners who are actively engaged in the learning of a foreign language (FL) or L2 may be highly interested in learning through L2 music, magazines or newspaper, and in having association with native language users. As Gardner (2005) claimed, motivation is a multifaceted concept.

Ju Lin Hsu and Yun Yang Shu (2014) investigated the learning English strategy of EFL students and found that instrumental motivation exerts primary effects on the participants during their junior or high school period, for expanding vocabulary in pursuit of good performance on English tests, the participants' instrumental motivation and integrative motivation subtly interweaved at a later stage of their life, alternately activating their English learning; and (3) cognitive, memory and compensatory strategies were more facilitative for the participants' vocabulary learning. Ditual (2012) found that the respondents who were highly motivated towards learning English have good speaking and writing skill. They were both instrumentally and integratively motivated as they want to learn English for career purposes and to be able to speak with English speaking people. Istianti (2013) also found that there is a significantly positive correlation between motivation and students' speaking and writing ability.

This research focuses on the role of three factors above towards the writing proficiency of the student. As reported by several studies, writing attitude is proved to be an essential factor which significantly correlates with the students' writing performance. Graham et al. (2007) suggest that writing attitude influences the writing performance in which students with positive attitudes perform better than those with negative ones. A negative attitude towards writing may lead to less efficient processing during writing. This may be particularly disruptive for writing, as it is a challenging task that requires considerable effort.

According to the explanation above, the researcher investigates the role of learning strategies, personality, and motivation as the factors of second language acquisition towards the student's writing proficiency.

## **METHOD**

The method used by the researcher in this research is qualitative descriptive. Qualitative research is chosen as a fundamental approach in examining the proficiency level of writing skill of the subject which is influenced by the three aspects affecting the second language acquisition/learning; the learning strategies, personality, and motivation. Case study is selected as the research design involving an in depth-exploration of a single case in which the purpose is to elicit detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998: 54; Mertens, 2010: 233). The subject of this research is Liban Isak Mohammed, a 4<sup>th</sup>-semester college student majoring Accounting in Islamic at Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. He is a student from Somalia who practices English actively in the University to communicate with other students from Indonesia and he also has good oral and written English skill proved TOEFL high score 537 and good speaking test result. Therefore the researcher select him as a subject. The data was collected through deep-informal interview and filling writing rubric score. The interview questions covered the learning strategies, personality, and the subject's motivation. The researcher gave a writing text of an argumentative essay to examine his writing proficiency. The data was analyzed by reviewing the interview transcription and writing rubric score. The interview and writing test were taken on May 2020.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings and discussion are divided into four categories; learning strategies, personality, and motivation to give a clear description about the subject's second language acquisition. Next, the description of subject's language proficiency in English is given to measure the role of learning strategies, personality, and motivation. The findings of the research are obtained by analyzing the interview data and assessing an essay written by the subject using a writing rubric score.

### **A. *Learning Strategy***

The research subject started learning English from 1<sup>st</sup> grade until 12<sup>th</sup> grade as a foreign language. In Somalia, English is the fourth language that people use daily after Somali, Arabic, and



Italian. English is still considered as important due to its function as the international language so the government arrange it in the school curriculum. His good English proficiency is one of the factors he got scholarship to learn Accounting in Indonesian University. It helps him to communicate with Indonesian lecturers and students in the classroom and outside. Sometimes he speaks Bahasa in the daily interaction but his Bahasa is not really good so he rather speaks English.

Reading is the subject's hobby so he prefers learning English by reading to listening. In his leisure time, he likes reading history books in English as the result he can learn both English and what happened in the past. His reading hobby helps him improving other English skills such as speaking and writing; he has more ideas to give and uses a lot of vocabulary in the conversations and essays. This finding supports the research done by Novita (2016) who found the positive relationship between reading and the students' speaking skills that prove the more books read by the students, the better their speaking skill.

The subject usually learns English in a group because he can get new vocabulary that his friends use in the discussion. Learning in a group is also more interesting since he can interact with his friends, sharing ideas, as well as asking and answering questions if he does not know what the task is. Therefore his learning strategy is supported by Ellis (2008) theory about social/affective strategies which concern the way in which learners choose to interact with other speakers for example is 'questioning for clarification' (asking for repetition, a paraphrase, or example).

Technology is one of the media he uses to learn English, especially online media. He regularly improves his English skill by watching videos on You Tube and accessing English applications. The need of English in daily communication when living in Indonesia is very prominent so it leads him to develop his English skill more. The importance of technology in learning is explained by Khan (1997, in Anderson, 2008:17) who states that online instruction as an innovative approach for delivering instruction to a remote audience, using the Web as the medium. Online learning, however, involves more than just the presentation and delivery of materials using the Web: the learner and the learning process should be the focus of online learning. As a result, he defines online learning as the use of the Internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning, and to grow from the learning experience.

### ***B. Personality***

The subject personality is introvert in which he does not speak much about his privacy to other people around him. However, he likes studying in a group with his friend as he can get help

about the assignment from them. His introvert personality does not really influence his learning in English because he thinks that learning language needs practice with other people. In his view, it is impossible to learn language alone as practice is the best teacher. Herrman and Oxford (1995) argue that introverted personalities may not have so many friends, and have a preference for working in pairs or smaller groups. They may prefer individual activity, perhaps with one clear purpose. Working in groups may well be less successful, because of a reluctance to participate in speaking activities.

The subject has high confidence in producing a well written text because his head is full of ideas, he has a lot of vocabulary, he is good at grammar, and he has practiced writing in daily communication. He always texts his Indonesian friends using English as the result he is confident enough to write in English. For the speaking, he also speaks English every day at his boarding house with his Indonesian friends so he is accustomed to practice his English speaking skill. The researcher thinks his speaking skill is very good as he speaks fluently, he can convey the message clearly, and he uses various vocabulary. Xu (2011) states that self-confidence is an affective variable which is related to the social psychological approach in the broad context of research on attitudes and motivation for L2 use and achievement in which self-confidence gives such a high influence towards the L2 improvement.

Sharp (2000) asserts that students can be categorized into Senser, Thinker, Judger, Perceiver, and Feeler. The subject of the research is classified into The Perceiver who deals with the outside world through sensing or intuition, but prefers spontaneity, flexibility, freedom and autonomy and 'playing it by ear'. He focuses on learning English by reading and speaking and he does not like to memorize vocabulary. Practicing the English expressions is a better way to learn English than memorizing a plenty of vocabulary since the capacity of brain is limited on his view.

### ***C. Motivation***

Motivation is one of the factors that give students willingness to learn English. The subject has some motivations pushing him to learn English. One of the favorite things in his life is learning many languages in the world. Arabic, English, and Italian are languages that he has learned at school and in the near future he plans to study French and Hebrew. Learning language is interesting to him as he can know what most people say, he can read many books written in different language, and he can communicate with global society throughout the world.

Getting scholarship in foreign countries is the subject's dream for a long time. Finally he gets the scholarship in Islamic University in Indonesia. One of the requirements in joining the scholarship is mastering English language which is used to communicate in the university and

social environment. As the result he learns English more often to reach his dream. He takes English courses in an institution in Somalia before applying the scholarship. Many daily expressions, speaking techniques, and grammar had been learned during his course. It really helps him to develop his English skill until present.

English as an international language which is used by most of the people in the world becomes his consideration if he looks for a job in the future after graduation. Many local and international companies have English as one of their primary requirement in their company recruitment. Therefore he is eager to learn the global language using many strategies such as studying in group, practicing every day, and using online media. In his research, Morris (2011) examined the Chinese college English majors' language learning motives from a Career Goal perspective and it is the most prominent motive which has been found to influence Chinese college students in their English language learning.

#### ***D. Subject's Language Proficiency in Speaking***

After selecting a second language (L2) learner, the researcher had an interview to know the subject's language productive proficiency regarding to the English writing proficiency. In conducting the interview, the researcher had some questions on the topics such as hobbies and English education background. After interview, the researcher gave a writing text and then the researcher used scoring rubric to measure the subject's writing proficiency. This rubric contains three aspects on writing that are accuracy including grammar and vocabulary, accuracy and intelligibility.

In line with the description above, the researcher conclude that English learners' speaking proficiency is intermediate proficiency. This proficiency can be seen on how the subject (learner) was talking during interview, using vocabulary, fluency in writing, and his intelligibility to answer and to deliver his message. The researcher determined his score range 70-80, with the right score is around 78. It means that he is an intermediate L2 learner. His ability in writing can be seen in the result of the scoring rubric.

Related to the theory of interlanguage, this case can be explained related to the interlanguage theory proposed by Selinker (1972) "interlanguage" that means learners' developing second language knowledge, L2 learners construct a linguistic system that draws on the learner's L1 but it also different from it and also from the target language. His L2 learner tries to develop their knowledge or ability in using second language. The characteristic of learners' interlanguage can be influenced by the learner's previous learned language(s). Therefore, in this case, L2 learner may have some mistakes in using second language. Moreover, Ellis (1997) an interlanguage L2



learner, s/he has some error made in their speaking. These errors can be varied such as developmental errors, overgeneralization, and simplification errors. In this case, the subject chosen still produced some errors in choosing verb for past tense, namely developmental error made such as when he wrote, "I go" that should be "I went", 'he brings' instead of 'he brought', 'when I'm in senior high school' instead of 'when I was in senior high school'.

He frequently made mistakes when writing the past even in which he should use past tense rather than present tense. He also made overgeneralization mistakes in which he should not use V-ing in a sentence "I usually going" but it happens sometimes. The dictions selected by the subject are categorized poor for instance he said 'travelling in place outside' when he actually wanted to write 'nature' and 'my step sister' to say 'my cousin'. He also made mistakes in distinguishing verbal and non-verbal sentences such as 'I'm join course', 'she is come to my house', and 'we are just do the task'.

#### ***E. The category of the subject's aspects of language***

Below are the language aspects that have been measured by the researcher after analyzing the data obtained from the investigation.

Aspects	Category			
	Very good	Good	Moderate	poor
Learning strategies		√		
Personality		√		
Motivation		√		

After conducting an observation, the researcher decided to classify the subject's English writing proficiency as an intermediate level. Most of the three aspects contribute to the subject's current level of English proficiency as it means that language proficiency is the ability of an individual to write in an acquired language. Therefore, English speaking proficiency is more about the writing skill of the learner in which it is related to the fluency and the language competence as well.

As for the first aspect that is the learning strategies of the subject being observed, it is categorized as a good learner. He gets the knowledge of English by doing several activities aside of formal one as in school. The unavailability of a good model in writing English does not stop him from

learning English even though he starts to like English a bit late as stated previously. He lets everything in his mind out without minding a lot of grammatical errors he produces. Being confident in writing English is a good start although he always needs to improve his writing skill.

The fact that he is already in the fourth semester of his study with his writing skill leads to the conclusion in deciding his English proficiency. Since intermediate level is characterized as a learner who writes and speaks conversational and academic English without apparent difficulty, but understands and wrote in academic English with some hesitancy, and also who continues to acquire reading and listening skills in content areas needed to achieve grade level expectations with assistance, therefore, it is concluded the learning strategies the subject applies for the time being contributes enough to his English writing proficiency level. The second aspect which contributes to the subject's level of English writing proficiency is personality. He is an introvert student but still can work together with his friends in a small group because he likes sharing ideas. He is confident in writing and speaking about his study using English as he uses it every day with Indonesian friends.

Learning or acquiring language is not something easy, in fact language acquisition is so complex that one needs a precise framework for understanding what it involves. It is the main vehicle by which a speaker knows about other people's thoughts, and the two must be intimately related. Every time people speak, they are revealing something about language. Besides, foreign language learning is considered as foreign culture learning, and, in one form or another. Hence, the activities done by the subject in order to improve his English skill such as reading English magazine, watching movies and listening to music become other contributions to his current level of English writing proficiency. His knowledge about English language gets widen and his vocabularies items get richer at the time she starts speaking.

The last aspect of language discussed is the motivation of the subject has related to learning English. Motivation plays an important role in foreign language learning. Learning motivation is to promote and guide and maintain learning activities which have been conducted an internal strength or internal mechanism. In accordance with the topic discussed, Gardner and Lambert (1972) point out the notions of instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to the learner's desire to learn a language for utilitarian purposes (such as employment or travel or exam purposes) in the context of language learning. On the other hand, integrative motivation refers to the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully into the target language community. As the subject states several reasons behind his interest to English, his dream to go abroad motivates his passion in learning English the most. Therefore, he always tries

to improve his speaking skill and it makes him not in the beginner level since his English skill develops for the time being. A high motivation is needed for a learner to get the knowledge and competence in learning a particular language, in this case is English.

## CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate several aspects of language which contributed to the level of English proficiency of a learner. The findings indicate that aspects of language such as good learning strategy, personality, and also motivation determine this research subject's language proficiency into intermediate level. He learns English through several ways formally and informally and he has certain reasons for learning the language. He has good personality, he is confident and he has high motivation in learning English such as he wants to get the scholarship to foreign countries and gets a good job in the future. His writing is considered as good as he made minor mistakes in his essay.

Learning or acquiring English as a second or foreign language can be reached if the learners are able to utilize what they already have in their surrounding as well as keep learning and practicing such as setting the goal in order to improve their motivation, being aware that English is important and needs to be learned such as by using English whenever the learners can, talking to people about English, or even finding a friend who is learning English too could increase the level of English proficiency they have up to advanced learners. Since learning English requires action, therefore, learners need to improve themselves not only in such formal institution such as school, but also other activities which are beneficial to them.

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