COMPARING STUDENTS' LEARNING STRATEGIES
A Study on English Students of STAIN Kediri

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Abstract

The research is intended to find out how the language learning strategies (LLS) of English department students of STAIN Kediri is like. The questionnaire developed by Oxford was used to assess students' language learning strategies. From the statistical analysis of significance on the use of LLS, it is apparent that the students in between (moderate use of LLS) are really in the middle. They are not different significantly in the use of LLS to the upper level of students and the lower level of students. Yet, the use of LLS between the upper and the lower level of students is really different, that is, the difference really occurs. So, what we have to do with the students in between is encouraging them to be better students, so as to make them more effective students. The statistical analysis on the students' English achievement is in line with the statistical analysis on the use of LLS. Both statistical analyses show that the students in between are not significantly different from above them as well as below them, yet the significant difference between upper students and the lower students really exists. Put simply, from the questionnaire and the test, the modest students are not different, in terms of their frequency in the use of LLS and their achievement, from the effective students and the less effective students. However, a difference does exist between the effective students and the less effective ones, seen from both measures.

Key words: LLS, slow learners, modest learners, effective learners, motivation

I

A. The Background of the Study

If learning is to take place, it must involve the collaboration of two people; they are a teacher and a student. The teacher cannot do it all alone, and most students find difficulties of doing it all alone overwhelming. It is totally true that many foreign language learners are able to acquire facility in social language use through exposure to the new

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language in communicative context, as it is suggested by Krashen[1] by the natural second language acquisition. However, teachers find out that students' competence in English is still not sufficient to participate successfully in the mainstream curriculum. Then, in trying to develop the students' communicative and academic competence, EFL teachers may wonder why some of their students seem to learn rather easily, while others apparently find learning English fraught with difficulties[2].

The above mentioned fact may probably be the reason why, in the last two decades, research in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language has shifted its focus from the teacher to the learner. Instead of investigating the presumed effective teaching techniques, researchers have become much more interested in describing how the students learn and measuring how the strategies they employ affect their achievement. Furthermore, teachers really realize that students are, among other factors, the most significant factor in the success of language learning.

It is absolutely true that learners use different language learning strategies in performing the tasks and processing the new input they face. Language learning strategies are good indicators of how learners approach tasks or problems encountered during the process of language learning. In other words, language learning strategies give language teachers valuable clues about how their students assess the situation, plan, select appropriate skills so as to understand, learn, and remember new input presented in the language classroom.

With regard to the teaching English in Indonesia, it has been long claimed that English teaching in Indonesia in all levels is not successful yet. Efforts to improve it have been done; syllabus has been improved, English teacher trainings have been conducted, facilities have been completed, but still the outcome is not as good as it is expected. They probably neglect the idea that it is the students who learn and who acquire. Teachers, facilities, and syllabus just facilitate the learning. That is why, the students need to be made aware of the variety of available learning strategies as well as their potentials to improve their English by making them realize and know how to use language learning strategies. It is, eventually, because of the idea that the research is worth conducting.

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[1] S. D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982)

[2] Ann Uhl Chamot, The learning strategies of ESL students. In Wenden, A., and Rubin, J. (Eds.). 1987. *Learner strategies in Language Learning.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987).

B. The Research Problems

1. What are the characteristics of less effective students, modest students, and effective students? Researches that have been conducted only deal with dichotomous classification of students into less effective students and effective students on the basis of using the LLSs. But in fact, the LLSs students employed are not that dichotomous, but continuum. Researchers as well as teachers only talk about less and effective students; they never talk about students in between.
2. After classifying the students into these three group (less, modest and effective learners), the researcher wants to find out whether these three groups differ significantly in term of their English proficiency.

C. The Research Objectives

1. The research is intended to find out the characteristics of less effective students, modest students, and effective students
2. The research aims at knowing whether students in the middle (modest students) in the use of LLS really exist.

D. The Significance of the Research

The research study has the following significances: (1) The research gives us, lecturers, any information on language learning strategies among English students of STAIN Kediri so as to increase students' language learning strategies as the key factor of success. (2) The research gives us evidence in order to provide some language learning strategies, so that the students will be more motivated and realize their own motivation level that can encourage them to be much more motivated. (4) Knowing the difference in language learning strategies between the two groups of students provides some insight of the present condition of our students, so that we can do something on it or on other things to improve students' success. (5) The study provides practical techniques and guidelines on how to motivate students. Every body knows the importance of language learning strategies, but they may not know how to motivate. Even if they know, they may not know what motivational techniques are appropriate. (6) A research on language learning strategies is worth conducting since language learning strategies plays the most significant role towards students' success, among other affecting factors. From the review of the related literature, it is found out that language learning strategies factors can override other factors, even the aptitude effect. (7) The study makes

the students aware of the significance of language learning strategies, and know how to motivate themselves during their academic lives at least. That is to say, by providing language learning strategies strategy, the students will not always depend on their lecturers, but they are able to motivate themselves and know how to do it. Thi8s, eventually, leads to *learner autonomy* as the final goal of education. (8) The study also gives contribution to the institution on which the quality of the students depends. That is to say, the quality of the students is indeed the prime priority. Neglecting it will reduce people's trust, meaning losing reputation, since the quality of the students depends very much upon their language learning strategies. (9) The research encourages lecturers to be reflective of their own practice to enhance the quality of education for themselves and their students. Lecturers should realize that the failure of their students is also the failure of the lecturers.

E. The Theoretical Framework

It is inevitable to say that learners use different language learning strategies in performing the tasks and processing the new input the face. According to Fedderholdt[3], the language learner capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve his language skills in a better way. Metacognitive strategies improve organization of learning time, self monitoring, and self evaluation. Cognitive strategies include the use of previous knowledge to help solve new language problems. Socioaffective strategies include asking native speakers to correct their pronunciation, or asking a classmate to work together on a particular language problem. In short, developing skills in these areas—metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective—can help the language learners build up learners' independence and autonomy whereby he can take control of their own learning.

Oxford[4] states that language learning strategies "…are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence." Teachers who train students to use language learning strategies can help them become better language learners. Helping students understand good language learning strategies and training them to develop and use such good language learning strategies can be considered to be the appreciated characteristics of a good language

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[3] Karen Fedderholdt, Using diaries to develop language learning strategies. (On internet communication division, temasek polytechnic on internet,1997).

[4] R. L. Oxford, Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know. (Boston: Heinle and Heinle Pub. 1990).

teacher[5]. That is to say, English students cannot just rely on the classroom interaction to be able to master English; otherwise, they cannot master it though they have been in the English department for years.

There are many researches that have been conducted by teachers as well as educational observers on language learning strategies. Abraham and Vann[6] conducted a research on strategies used by two language learners; one successful learner and the other is unsuccessful. They identified any strategies used by the successful learner and ones used by the unsuccessful one.

Dryer and Oxford[7] jointly conducted a study on learning strategies and other predictors of proficiency in English as a second language among Afrikaans. The question was whether there was a statistically significant different relationship between learning strategy use and proficiency in English. The instruments used are Oxford's SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) and TOEFL. The finding was the correlation between the strategies employed and the achievement was positive and highly significant

F. The Research Design

The research is an exploratory study aiming at finding out how the English students employ different learning strategies and how they are different. The students' learning strategies are assessed. In addition, their writing ability is also assessed in order to determine the division of the LLS so as to make sure that the difference among groups really exists.

G. The Research Subject

The subject of the study is the English department students of STAIN Kediri sitting in the fourth semester. They are chosen under a consideration that they have finished their first half in which they normally lose their motivation. It is the research that attempts to increase their motivation again so as to gain their ultimate attainment.

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[5] M. Lessard-Clouston, ESL vocabulary learning in a TOEFL preparation class: a case study. *Canadian Modern Language Review,* 53 (1), 1996, 97—119.

[6] G. R. Abraham and J, R. Vann, Strategies of two language learners: a case study. In Wenden, A., and Rubin, J. (Eds.). 1987. *Learner strategies in Language Learning.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987).

[7] C. Dreyer and R. L. Oxford, Learning strategies and other predictors of ESL Proficiency among Afrikaans speaker in South Africa. In R. L. Oxford (Ed) *Language Learning Strategies around the World: cross-cultural perspectives.* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum center, 1996).

H. The Research Instruments

The instruments to collect the data are questionnaire developed by Oxford and writing test. Questionnaire is used to assess students' language learning strategies. The questionnaire is called SILL. Its validity and reliability have been proved. In addition, test is also used to have to check whether the tentative conclusion from the questionnaire is supported by the test.

I. The Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered at the end of the semester. This is intended to attain any information on whether the provision of language learning strategies during the semester increases students' language learning strategies.

J. Data Analysis

There are two kinds of data: qualitative data and quantitative data. The quantitative data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical technique—ANOVA, while qualitative data will be analyzed by using inductive data analysis. It is a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made. The steps are as follows: (1) Read the data and identify frames of analysis. (2) Create domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis. (3) Identity salient domains, assign them a code, and put others aside. (4) Reread data, refining salient domains and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data. (5) Decide if your domains are supported by the data and search data for examples that do not fit with or run counter to the relationships in your domains. (6) Complete an analysis within domains. (7) Search for themes across domains. (8) Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among domains. (9) Select data excerpts to support the elements of your outline.[8]

II

A. The Research Findings

After scoring the questionnaire based on Likert scale, the students' use of LLS can be depicted as in figure 1. Having arranged the means scores of LLS from the highest to the lowest, the figure is divided into

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[8] J. Amos, Hatch, *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

three areas determining the effective students (group A), the modest students (group B), and the less students (group C).

Figure 1

(means scores of students' use of LLS)
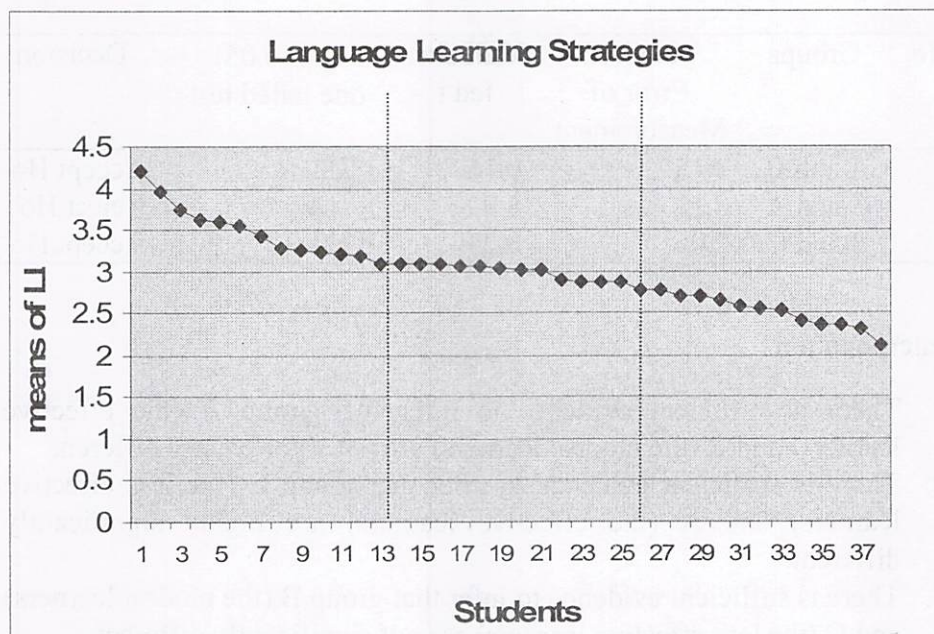
Having determined the three groups of students, statistical analysis was carried out to find out whether the three groups differ significantly on the use of LLS; that is, (1) whether there is a significant difference on the use of LLS between group A and B, (2) whether there is a significant difference on the use of LLS between group A and C, and (3) whether there is a significant difference on the use of LLS between group B and C. Table 4.0 and table 4.1 below describe and summarize the results of statistical analysis.

Table 4.0

Comparison on the Use of LLS

(Effective, Modest, and Less Effective Learners)

Effective Learners (A)	Modest Learners (B)	Less Effective Learners (C)
$x_A = 3.49$	$x_B = 2.10$	$x_C = 2.53$
$\Sigma x_A = 45.34$	$\Sigma x_B = 35.96$	$\Sigma x_C = 32.85$

$\sum x^2_A = 159.45$ $\sum x^2_B = 107.85$ $\sum x^2_C = 83.51$

$N_A = 13$ $N_B = 12$ $N_C = 13$

$SD_A = 0.33$ $SD_B = 0.10$ $SD_C = 0.20$

Table 4.1

Statistical Analysis of Significance on the Use of LLS

No.	Groups	Standard Error of Measurement	Calculated t	$(p \leq 0.05)$ one tailed test	Decision
1	A and B	3.15	0.16	1.711	Accept Ho
2	C and A	0.11	8.9	1.714	Reject Ho
3	B and C	2.06	0.23	1.711	Accept Ho

Interpretation

1. There is sufficient evidence to infer that group A (the effective learners) and B (the modest learners) are not significantly different.
2. There is sufficient evidence to infer that group C (the less effective learners) and A (the effective learners) are highly significantly different.
3. There is sufficient evidence to infer that group B (the modest learners) and C (the less effective learners) are not significantly different.

From the statistical analysis of significance on the use of LLS, it is apparent that the students in between are really in the middle. They are not different significantly in the use of LLS to the upper level of students and the lower level of students. Yet, the use of LLS between the upper and the lower level of students is really different, that is, the difference really occurs. So, what we have to do with the students in between is encouraging them to be better students, so as to make them more effective students.

Seen from the theory of classification proposed by Grainger[9] pointing out:

a. High usage (always or almost always used with a mean of 4.5—5.0; or usually used with a mean of 3.5—4.4),
b. Medium usage (sometimes used with a mean of 2.5—3.4),
c. Low usage (generally not used with a means of 1.5—2.4; or never or almost never used with a mean of 1.0—1.40).

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[9] P. R. Grainger, "Language learning strategies for learners of Japanese: investigating ethnicity." *foreign language annal.*30 (2) 1997, 378—385.

The study shows that 18.42% of the students is of high usage, 68.42% of the students is of medium usage, and 13.16% of low usage. However, to be more detail, my classification is of five levels. They are

1. very high usage with the means of 4.5—5.00,
2. high usage with the means of 3.5—44,
3. medium usage with the means of 2.5—3.4,
4. low usage with the means of 1.5—2.4, and
5. very low usage with the means of 1.0—1.40.

On the lens of my classification, the findings look like the following table 4.2:

Table 4.2

Classification of Students based on LLS

No.	Levels of LLS Usage	Criteria	Percentage
1	Very High	4.5—5.00	0 %
2	High	3.5—44	18.42 %
3	*Medium*	*2.5—3.4*	*68.42 %*
4	Low	1.5—2.4	13.16 %
5	Very Low	1.0—1.40	0 %

Based on the table above, the majority of the students under the study is only in the medium usage of LLS. That is to say, most students are only in between or in modest position of LLS usage.

After identifying and classifying the students into three groups (Effective, Modest, and Less Effective Learners), then their English proficiency is computed to find out the significant difference between these three groups. The results are shown graphically as in figure 2 below.

Figure 2

(students' achievement)
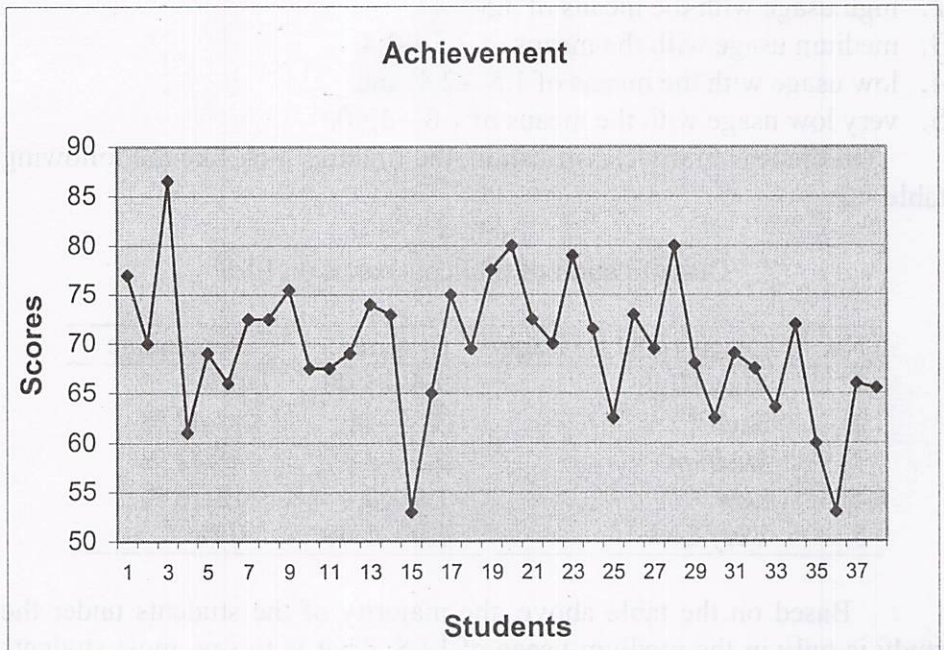
The above figure shows the students achievement. As figure 1 for LLS (figure 1), this figure is also divided into three parts showing the achievement of the effective group, the modest group and the less effective group. Then, a statistical analysis is needed to find out (1) whether there is a significant difference in achievement between group A and B, (2) whether there is a significant difference in achievement between group A and C, and (3) whether there is a significant difference in achievement between group B and C. And the results of the statistical analysis are shown at table 4.3 and table 4.4.

Table 4.3

Comparison of Students' Achievement
(Effective, Modest, and Less Effective Learners)

Effective Learners (A)	Modest Learners (B)	Less Effective Learners (C)
$\bar{x}_A$ = 71.38	$\bar{x}_B$ = 70.7	$\bar{x}_C$ = 66.89
Σx_A = 928	Σx_B = 848.5	Σx_C = 869.5
Σx^2_A = 66711.5	Σx^2_B = 60640.25	Σx^2_C = 58678.25
N_A = 13	N_B = 12	N_C = 13
SD_A = 6.24	SD_B = 7.65	SD_C = 6.6

Table 4.4

Statistical Analysis of Significance on Achievement

| No	Groups	Standard Error of Measurement	Calculated t	$(p \le 0.05)$ one-tailed test	Decision
1	A and B	2.78	0.24	1.711	Accept Ho
2	C and A	2.52	1.79	1.714	Reject Ho
3	B and C	2.85	1.34	1.711	Accept Ho

Interpretation
1. There is sufficient evidence to infer that group A (the effective learners) and B (the modest learners) are not significantly different.
2. There is sufficient evidence to infer that group C (the less effective learners) and A (the effective learners) are significantly different.
3. There is sufficient evidence to infer that group B (the modest learners) and C (the less effective learners) is not significantly different.

The statistical analysis on the students' English achievement is in line with the statistical analysis on the use of LLS. Both statistical analyses show that the students in between are not significantly different from above them as well as below them, yet the significant difference between upper students and the lower students really exists. Put simply, from the questionnaire and the test, the modest students are not different, in terms of their frequency in the use of LLS and their achievement, from the effective students and the less effective students. However, a difference does exist between the effective students and the less effective ones, seen from both measures.

The comparison between these two measures can be seen on the figure 3 below:

Figure 3
(Comparison between the graphs of achievement and LLS)
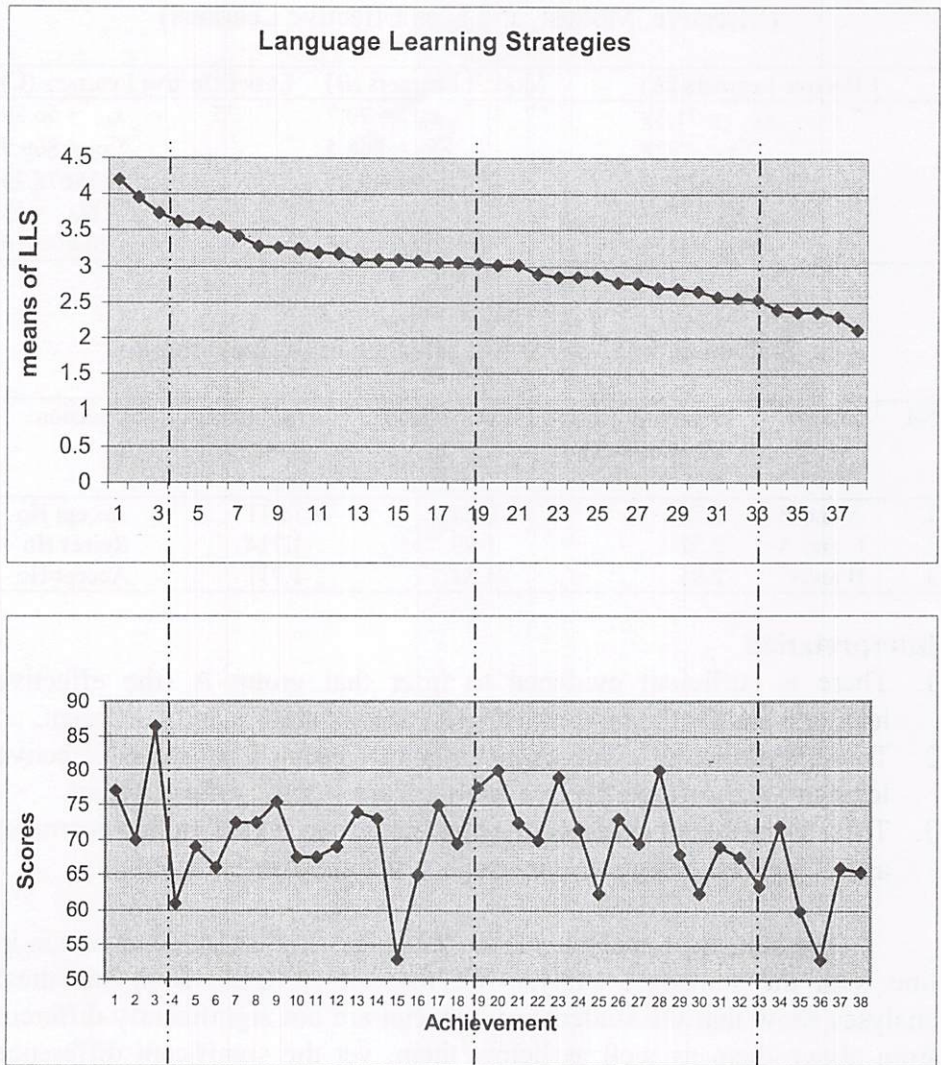
Based on the characteristics of effective and less effective learners, modest students stand in between. There are not specific characteristics addressed to them, but what makes them distinct from the other two groups is only the *degree* of their intensity or variety in using

and applying the activities employed by the two groups. Using the classification above on LLS, learners fall into three main categories: effective, modest, and less effective learners. The effective one is further divided into two subcategories: very highly effective and highly effective; and the less effective is divided into two, too: less effective and very less effective. This division looks like table 4.5.

In addition, Prokop[10] identified learning activities employed by successful and unsuccessful language learners. He asked learners the strategies and techniques that help them most when studying a foreign language. That is what the strategies that might be used and might not be used when learning a foreign language. The answers from the students are varied, and the following table 4.6 is the comparison of the strategies used by the successful learners and the unsuccessful ones.

Table 4.6
The Characteristics of Students

Successful language learners	Unsuccessful language learners
▪ I speak to myself while walking or jogging. ▪ I give myself little tests ▪ I write down key points of each chapter ▪ I speak to my friend or natives when I get the chance ▪ I use association (mental picture) ▪ I make lists and study sheets and try to remember by association ▪ I try to answer all questions mentally in class ▪ I use mnemonic devices to remember	▪ I study with someone ▪ I jot information on index cards ▪ I write information over and over ▪ I translate everything ▪ I remember by association and repetition ▪ I use the appendix in book ▪ I look over my notes regularly ▪ I make up lists and read them loud

The problem now is how about the students in between. This sort of students may sometimes do what the successful learners do and sometimes not, and sometimes do what the unsuccessful learners do and sometimes not. As the research finding of the research shows, the

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[10] M. Prokop, *Learning strategies for second language users: an analytical appraisal with case studies.* (USA: the Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).

students in between do not differ significantly with both the successful learners and the unsuccessful ones.

From the data analysis above, it can be concluded that the only significant difference of students' achievement lies between the effective students and the less effective one, while the modest students' achievement is neither significant to the effective nor to the less effective ones. It means that such students sometimes employ or use any strategies used by the upper and lower groups. That is to say, this kind of students does not specific characteristics, since what makes them different is only the frequency or intensity of applying the strategies. It is shown from the insignificant different between the group in the middle to the upper and lower ones.

Similar to the analysis on the students' achievement, the analysis on LLS shows similar findings. The only significant different on the use of LLS in only between the effective students and the less effective ones, whereas the LLS of the modest students, like their achievement, is not significant compared to the effective and the less effective students. Another research finding also shows that unsuccessful learners also use the strategies used by the successful ones, yet they do not use effectively. This might also happen to the students in between and the lower group of the study. This will lead to the urgency of strategy training.

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