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Jurnal Horison yang diterbitkan di STKIP Nias Selatan merupakan bentuk wahana menyebarluaskan ilmu pengetahuan dan kependidikan tentang hasil penelitian, kajian teori, metode dan gagasan di bidang pendidikan. Melalui jurnal ini sangat diharapkan segala masukan demi kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan serta pendidikan di Pulau Nias khususnya di Kabupaten Nias Selatan. Jurnal Horison menerima sumbangan tulisan ilmiah berupa kajian filosofi, hasil penelitian, teori, metode dan gagasan yang sesuai dengan kepakaran ilmu pengetahuan.

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LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY: A THEORETICAL CONCEPT

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Language acquisition usually refers to the native language or mother tongue, is defined as the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. On the contrary, language learning consists in the process by which a certain language, generally the second language or foreign language, is acquired through the practical language learning strategy. This article addresses the fundamental differences between language acquisition and language learning, and provides the description of language learning strategies urgently needed by the language teachers and learners.

Keywords: Language learning strategy, language acquisition

A. The Definition of Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is the process by which human acquire to perceive, to produce, and to use words in understanding and communicating. Language acquisition is dealt with the process going in the infant's brain in acquiring his/her mother tongue. It is included in a process because a language is not acquired in relatively short time, but gradually learnt. As Kridalaksana (1982: 123) says, "*Pemerolehan bahasa adalah proses pemahaman dan penghasilan bahasa pada manusia melalui beberapa tahap mulai dari maraban sampai kepada kefasihan penuh*". It means that language acquisition is the process of decoding and encoding the language through stages. It is started from babbling period until fluency.

Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. Language acquisition usually refers to *first language acquisition*, which studies infants' acquisition of their native language. This is distinguished from *second language acquisition*, which deals with the acquisition (in both children and adults) of additional languages.

A major question in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from the linguistic input. Input in the linguistic context is defined as "All words, contexts, and other forms of

language to which a learner is exposed, relative to acquired proficiency in first or second languages". Nativists find it difficult to believe, considering the hugely complex nature of human languages, and the relatively limited cognitive abilities of an infant, that infants are able to acquire most aspects of language without being explicitly taught. Children, within a few years of birth, understand the grammatical rules of their native language without being explicitly taught, as one learns grammar in school. A range of theories of language acquisition have been proposed in order to explain this apparent problem. These theories, championed by the likes of Noam Chomsky and others, include innatism and Psychological nativism, in which a child is born prepared in some manner with these capacities, as opposed to other theories in which language is simply learned as other cognitive skills, including such mundane motor skills as learning to ride a bike. The conflict between the theories assuming humans are born with syntactic knowledge and those that claim all such knowledge is the product of learning from one's environment is often referred to as the "Nature vs. Nurture" debate. Some think that there are some qualities of language acquisition that the human brain is automatically wired for (a "nature" component) and some that are shaped by the particular language environment in which a person is raised (a "nurture" component). Others, especially evolutionary

writing. Planned discourse is discourse that is thought out prior to expression. It requires conscious thought and the opportunity to work out content and expression.

6. The Universal Hypothesis

The universal hypothesis provides an interesting account of how linguistic properties of the target language and the learner's first language may influence the course of development. It constitutes an attempt to SLA in terms of independent language faculty, rather than in more general cognitive terms.

The role of linguistic universal in SLA is more complicated than in L1 acquisition. This is because SLA involves two languages—the target language and the learner's native language. Thus the learner brings two types of linguistic knowledge to task of SLA: his knowledge of linguistic universals, and the specific grammar of his first language.

7. A Neurofunctional Theory

The basic premise of a neurofunctional view of SLA is that there is a connection between language function and the neural anatomy. It is important, however, to recognize that, as in Ellis (1985: 271) puts it, 'there is no single "black box" for language in the brain'. The adult's brain never entirely loses the placity of the new-born baby's brain, with result that in cases of damage to specific areas of neural tissue (as in aphasia), the functions associated with those areas who need not to be completely lost, but transferred to other areas.

Lamendella distinguishes two basic types of language acquisition: (1) Primary Language Acquisition and (2) Secondary Language Acquisition. Primary language acquisition is found in the child's acquisition of one or more languages from two to five years. Secondary language acquisition is subdivided into (a) foreign language learning, i.e. the formal classroom learning of L2, and (b) second language acquisition, i.e. the natural acquisition of a L2 after the age of five. He pinpoints two systems as particularly important for language functioning:

- a) The communication hierarchy: this has responsibility for language and other forms of interpersonal communication.
- b) The cognitive hierarchy: this controls a variety of cognitive

information processing activities that are also part of language use.

1. Language Learning Strategy

Several typologies (Ellis; O'Malley et al.; Oxford; Rubin; Wenden; Willing) have been formulated for the description and classification of language learning strategies, such as linguistic, non-linguistic, direct, indirect, cognitive, metacognitive, social, communicative, memory, compensation, and so on. However, in this study, the strategies explored by Oxford (1990-8) will be followed, drawing a general division between *direct* and *indirect* strategies. Direct strategies are those which are concerned with the target language in a wide variety of tasks and situations, and may be subdivided into those strategies used for recalling, storing and retrieving information (*memory strategies*), those which serve to understand, practice and produce the language (*cognitive strategies*) and, finally, those strategies used by learners in spite of the difficulties they find (*compensation strategies*). Indirect strategies, on the other hand, deal with the management of learning and consist of *metacognitive strategies* for monitoring learning, *affective strategies* for regulating personal emotions, and *social strategies* for learning and interacting with others.

a. Direct Language Learning Strategy

The direct strategies are beneficial to the students because they help store and recover information. These strategies help learners to produce language even when there is gap in knowledge. They also help to understand and use the new language.

1. Memory Strategy

Memory strategies are based on simple principles like laying things out in order, making association, and reviewing. These principles are employed when a learner faces challenge of vocabulary learning. The words and phrases can be associated with visual images that can be stored and retrieved for communication. Many learners make use of visual images, but some find it easy to connect words and phrases with sound, motion or touch.

The use of memory strategies are most frequently applied in the beginning process of language learning. As the learners advance to

The psychological distance factors are affective in nature. They include (1) language shock, i.e. the learner experience doubt and possible confusion when using the L2; (2) culture shock, i.e. the learner experience disorientation, stress, fear, etc., as arrest of differences between his or her own culture and that of the target language community; (3) motivation; and (4) ego boundaries, i.e. extroversion, inhibition, etc.

2. Accommodation Theory

The accommodation theory shares certain premises with acculturation model, but it also differs from it in a number of significant ways. This theory is derived from the research of Giles, 1982 in Ellis (1995: 255). Giles sees intergroup relationship as subject to constant negotiating during the course of each interaction. Giles asserts that motivation is the primary determinant of L2 proficiency. Giles *et al.* writes: people are continually modifying their speech with others so as to reduce or accentuate the linguistic and social differences between them depending on their perceptions of the interactive situation. There are two types of change which occur in the L2 speaker's use of 'ethnic speech maker': *upward convergence* occurs when the learner is positively motivated towards the out group community and *downward convergence* occurs when the learner is not positively motivated towards the out.

3. Discourse Theory

Communication is treated the matrix of linguistic knowledge, that language development should be considered in terms of how the learner discovers the meaning potential of language by participating in communication. It is supported by Ellis (1985: 259) that through communicating with other people, children accomplish actions in the world and develop the rules of language structure and use. Hatch proposes the principles of discourse theory are: (1) SLA follow a 'natural' route in syntactical development; (2) native speakers adjust their speech in order to negotiate meaning with non-native speakers; (3) the conversational strategies used to negotiate meaning, and the resulting adjusted input, influence the rate and the route of SLA in a number of ways; and (4) the 'natural' route is result of learning how to hold conversations.

4. The Monitor Model

The monitor model is proposed by in Ellis (1985: 261) which consists of five central hypotheses are: (1) the acquisition-learning hypothesis; (2) the natural order hypothesis; (3) the monitor hypothesis; (4) the input hypothesis; and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. Krashen also discusses a number of other factors, each of which figures conspicuously in the SLA research literature:

- a) Aptitude: the learner's aptitude predicts how well he will perform on grammar-type tests that provide the right conditions for the operation of the monitor.
- b) Role of the first language as a performance strategy: learner initiates an utterance using his first language and then substitutes L2 lexical items, also making small repairs to the resulting string by means of the monitor.
- c) Routines and patterns: Krashen rejects the view that formulaic speech contributes to acquisition. Formulas play a performance role only by helping the learner to outperform his competence. Acquisition catches up with the routines and patterns, which is the structural knowledge contained in the formulas is developed separately.
- d) Individual differences: there is variation in performance, brought by the extent learner's reliance on learnt knowledge. Krashen indicates three types of monitor users: over-users, under-users, and optimal users.
- e) Age: age influences SLA in a number of ways. It affects the amount of comprehensible input that is obtained; younger learner may get more than older.

5. The Variable Competence

The model is based on two distinctions-one of which refers to the process of language use, and the other refers to the product. The theory also proposes to account for SLA within a framework of language use. In other words, it claims that the way a language learnt is a reflection of the way it is used (Ellis, 1985: 266).

The product of language use comprises a continuum of discourse types ranged from entirely unplanned to entirely planned. Unplanned discourse is discourse that lacks forethought and preparation. It is associated with spontaneous communication, e.g. everyday conversation or brainstorming in

communication, and teaching affective strategies.

Anxiety could be both helpful and harmful. It is felt that a certain amount of anxiety is helpful for learners because it helps them obtain their optimum level of performance. Too much anxiety has the opposite effect where it hinders language learning. Anxiety often takes forms of worry, frustration, insecurity, fear, and self-doubt. A common high anxiety creating situation for learners is to perform before the peers and teacher when they are not prepared.

Here is an example of how learners try to lower the anxiety. Some listen to their favorite music for a few minutes before practicing the target language.

3. Social Strategy

Social strategies are very important in learning a language because language is used in communication and communication occurs between people. Three sets of strategies are included in this group: Asking Questions, Cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.

Among the three, asking questions is the most helpful and comes closest to understanding the meaning. It also helps in conversation by generating response from the partner and shows interest and involvement.

Cooperation with others eliminates competition and in its place brings group spirit. Studies show that cooperative learning results in higher self-esteem, increased confidence, and rapid achievement. Learners do not naturally apply cooperative strategies because of strong emphasis put on competition by educational institutions. Sometimes competition brings a strong wish to perform better than others, but it often results in anxiety and fear of failure. It is important to help learners change their attitudes from confrontation and competition to cooperation.

Empathy is very important in communication. Empathy means to put oneself in someone else's situation to understand that person's point of view. Learners can use social strategies to develop cultural understanding and become aware of thoughts and feelings of others.

Learners can apply the strategy of cooperating with others by doing something together in the language they are learning. Daily telephone conversation with a friend in

the target language is an example to practice listening and speaking skills.

C. The Influential Factor of Foreign Language Acquisition

1. Internal factor

Internal factors are those that individual language learner brings with him or her to particular learning situation. There are six internal factors that influence the acquisition of foreign language proposed by Ellis (1985: 104-121).

- a) **Age:** second or third language acquisition is influenced by the age of the learner. Children, who already have solid literacy skills in their own language, seem to be in the best position to acquire a new language efficiently. Motivated older learner can be very successful too, but usually struggle to achieve native-speaker-equivalent pronunciation and intonation.
- b) **Personality:** introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek out such opportunities. More outgoing students will not worry about the inevitability of making mistakes. They will take risks, and thus will give themselves much more practice.
- c) **Motivation:** an emotional process that determines the success or failure of learner. There are two kinds of motivation: intrinsic motivation or internal motivation emerges from inside that greatly supports the success of learning for it is pushed by the interest to learn the language. Clearly, students who enjoy language learning and take pride in their progress will do better than those who do not. Extrinsic motivation or external motivation is also a significant factor. Such motivation gives low result since the base reason is not definite by his interest but the need of prestige.
- d) **Experience:** learners who have acquired general knowledge and experience are in a stronger position to develop a new language than those who have not. The student, for example, who has already lived in three different countries and been exposed to various languages and cultures has a stronger base for learning a further language than the student who has not had such experiences. In the other hand, the

higher level of proficiency memory strategies are mentioned very little. It is not that the use ceases, but the awareness of its use becomes less.

Here is an example to apply memory strategy by making association. If a learner wants to remember the name Solange of a French person, it could be associated by saying Solange's face is so long.

2. Cognitive Strategy

These are perhaps the most popular strategies with language learners. The target language is manipulated or transformed by repeating, analyzing or summarizing. The four sets in this group are: Practicing, Receiving and Sending Messages, Analyzing and Reasoning, and Creating Structure for Input and Output.

Practicing is the most important in this group which can be achieved by repeating, working with sounds and writing, and using patterns. The tools of receiving and sending messages are used when learners try to find the main idea through skimming and scanning. It is not necessary to check every word. The adult learners commonly use analyzing and reasoning strategies. These are used to understand the meaning and expression of the target language. These are also used to make new expressions.

Here is an example of a learner who practices with sounds of the words that have letters *ough*. The words through, though, tough, and trough contain *ough* but sound different. To understand them better the learner may make own phonetic spelling: *throo, thow, tuff, and troff*.

3. Compensation Strategy

Learners use compensation strategies for comprehension of the target language when they have insufficient knowledge of the target language. These strategies make up for the deficiency in grammar and vocabulary. When learners do not know new words and expressions, they guess the meaning. A learner brings own life experience to interpret data by guessing.

Compensation strategies are also used in production when grammatical knowledge is incomplete. When a learner does not know the subjunctive form of verb, a different form may be used to convey the message.

Here is an example of guessing based on partial knowledge of the target language. When a learner recognizes the words shovel,

grass, mower, and lawn in a conversation, it could be understood that it is about gardening.

b. Indirect Learning Strategy

Indirect language learning strategies work together with the direct strategies. They help learner regulate the learning process. These strategies support and manage language learning without direct engagement and therefore called indirect strategies.

1. Metacognitive Strategy

Metacognitive strategies go beyond the cognitive mechanism and give learners to coordinate their learning. This helps them to plan language learning in an efficient way. When new vocabulary, rules, and writing system confuse the learner, these strategies become vital for successful language learning.

Three sets of strategies belong to this group and they are: Centering Your Learning, Arranging and Planning Your Learning, and Evaluating Your Learning. The aim of centering learning is to give a focus to the learner so that the attention could be directed toward certain language activities or skills. Arranging and planning learning help learners to organize so they may get maximum benefit from their energy and effort. Evaluating learning helps learners with problems like monitoring errors and evaluation of progress. Research has found that compared to cognitive strategies metacognitive strategies are used less consistently by the learners.

Here is an example of arranging and planning learning. For a learner who wants to listen to the news in the target language can plan the task by first determining what topics might be covered in the program. Most news programs have segments of politics and economics. The learner can look up the words related to the topics before listening to the news. This would better prepare the learner.

2. Affective Strategy

The affective factors like emotion, attitude, motivation, and values influence learning in an important way. Three sets of strategies are included in this group: Lowering Your Anxiety, Encouraging Yourself, and Taking Your Emotional Temperature.

Good language learners control their attitudes and emotions about learning and understand that negative feelings retard learning. Teachers can help generate positive feeling in class by giving students more responsibility, increasing the amount of natural

more experiences learner has the easier the learner acquire other languages.

- e) **Cognition:** in general, it seems that students with greater cognitive abilities will make the faster progress. Some linguists believe that there is a specific innate language learning ability that is stronger in some students' than in others.
- f) **Native language:** who are learning a second language which is from the same language family as their first languages have, in general, a much easier task than those who are not. So, for example, a Dutch child will learn English more quickly than a Japanese child.

2. External factor

Besides the internal factors described above, external factors are also regarded can influence human to learn foreign language. Those that characterize the particular language learning situation.

- a) **Curriculum:** for English as a second language student in particular, it is important that the totality of their educational experience is appropriate for their needs. Language learning is less likely to place if students are fully submersed into the mainstream program without any extra assistance or, conversely, not allowed to be part of the mainstream until they have reached a certain level of language proficiency.
- b) **Instruction:** clearly, some language teachers are better than others at providing appropriate and effective learning experiences for the students in their classrooms. These students will make faster progress. The same applies to mainstream teachers in second language situations. The science teacher, for example, who is aware that she is too responsible for the students' English language development, and makes certain accommodations, will contribute to their linguistic development.
- c) **Culture and status:** there is some evidence that students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress. It is expected to understand the culture of native speaker besides learning the language of native speaker. It emphasizes to avoid some problem probably emerge between the native

speaker and foreigner during the conversation or discourse. In SLA, the acculturation model is the process of becoming adapted to a new culture. He explains that it is an important aspect of SLA, because language is one of the most observable expressions of culture and because in second (as opposed to foreign) language setting the acquisition of a new language is seen as tied to the way in which the learner's community and the target language community view each other. In addition, Ellis (1985: 251) says, "Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language".

- d) **Motivation:** students who are given continuing, appropriate encouragement to learn by their teachers and parents will generally fare better than those who are not. For example, students from family that place little importance on language learning are likely to progress less quickly. Reinforcement is definitely smoothen the language acquisition process whether first language acquisition or second and third language acquisition.
- e) **Access to native speakers:** the opportunity to interact with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom is a significant advantage. Native speaker are linguistic models and can provide appropriate feedback. Clearly, second language learners who have no extensive access to native speakers are likely to make slower progress, particularly in the oral/aural aspects of language acquisition.

Conclusion

Language acquisition and language learning are two totally different concepts. Language acquisition is simply identical to the native language or mother tongue, and language learning refers to the second language or foreign language acquisition. Language learning strategies, including non-linguistic, direct, indirect, cognitive, metacognitive, social, communicative, memory, and compensation have to be taken into account for the success of language learning.

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