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# The Development of Students' Learning Autonomy in An English as A Foreign Language Reading Class

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perkembangan belajar Bahasa Inggris secara mandiri di kelas program membaca dari 24 mahasiswa politeknik jurusan Teknik Sipil di Bandung, Indonesia. Hal ini dilakukan karena salah satu tujuan pendidikan adalah mengembangkan kemampuan peserta didik untuk menjadi manusia yang mandiri; dengan demikian kemandirian tersebut harus dikembangkan secara sistematis dan dilatih di kelas. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan kerangka penelitian tindakan kelas diawali dengan fase diagnostik dan dilanjutkan dengan tindakan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan membaca dan belajar bahasa sebanyak tiga siklus selama dua semester. Eksplorasi perkembangan belajar mandiri dievaluasi dari empat komponen yaitu tujuan, motivasi, pengetahuan, dan keterampilan. Hasil dari penelitian ini memperlihatkan bahwa perkembangan kemampuan belajar Bahasa Inggris secara mandiri sejalan dengan perkembangan kemampuan mereka dalam menemukan masalahnya sendiri dalam membaca teks yang berbahasa Inggris. Setiap komponen secara umum berkembang dari aktifitas fisik menuju ke aktifitas kognisi dan metakognisi. Perkembangan setiap mahasiswa berbeda tergantung pada kemampuan Bahasa Inggris, keyakinan dan pengalaman belajar mereka.

**Kata kunci:** perkembangan belajar mandiri, strategi belajar, karakteristik pembelajar yang berpengalaman, karakteristik pembelajar pemula

One of education goals is to develop learners' autonomy or individuals' ability to decide what they think and do (Boud, 1988 in Benson and Voller, 1997) and autonomy is a human right (Palfreyman and Smith, 2003). Education is to form an individual as a core of a democratic society (Roger, 1969 in Benson and Voller, 1997) and to provide tools for engagement in social struggle (Freire, 1970 in Benson and Voller, 1997).

In the domain of teaching and learning, many experts agree to define autonomy in learning as one who takes charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981 cited in Oxford, 1990; in Ridley, 1997; in Gardner and Miller, 1999). However, Benson (2001) prefers to define it as the capacity to take control of one's own learning; because, in philosophy and psychology, autonomy has come to be associated with the capacity of the individual to act as a responsible member of society since

learners cannot be free because of others (Benson and Voller, 1997).

Total autonomy is an ideal and rarely reached (Little, 1996) because autonomy is influenced by various aspects, internal and external interactions (Little, 1990) and ones can only move toward it. Breen and Mann (1997 in Benson and Voller 1997) further explain that in language learning, the central paradox for autonomy is the unavoidable tension between the individual and the group or the classroom, the representation of the wider world in which the individual relates to society. In fact, autonomy is the product of interdependence rather than independence (Littlewood, 1999; Palfreyman, 2003); it is facilitated if the environment is supportive, its sense loses if the contact is too controlling (Littlewood, 1999). In supportive environment, autonomous person plays two self-regulated levels, reactive or cooperative and

proactive or collaborative autonomy (Flannery's, 1994 in Littlewood, 1999) by orchestrating various strategies to achieve their goals. These two levels of self-regulation can occur simultaneously and dynamically (Pintrich, 2004). Being reactive or cooperative learners, they regulate the activity once the direction has been set and work independently. Being proactive or collaborative learners, they regulate the direction of activity and the activity itself. They determine objectives, select methods and techniques to be used, and evaluate their learning.

In response to the needs of autonomy for learners' future lives, teachers of primary to tertiary levels of education are to enhance learners' autonomy stated by The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (Depdiknas, 2006). One of the many ways to prepare and develop learners' autonomy is to equip them with international foreign languages, one of them is English. This language hopefully helps them enrich knowledge (Depdiknas, 2000), enlarge their community, and improve their quality of lives. However, teaching English without allowing learners to develop their language learning autonomy might hinder their autonomy development because schools cannot give all learners' future needs and English is continuously changing.

In short, English is one of tools to develop learners' autonomy but learners need to learn it autonomously too, especially in Indonesia where English is regarded as a foreign language and where learners rarely obtain English exposures in daily communication. Learning this language, then, learners have to work hard, and to be 'good studiers' and 'good acquires' as argued by Holec (1987).

To provide English exposures, many English courses and institutions set up a self-access centre (SAC) or self-access language learning (SALL). This room is to provide their learners to obtain English exposure and enhance autonomous either alone or in groups using various means. However, there are some SACs or SALLs programs that are used inappropriately. Teachers often do not explain the function of these facilities to the learners, and they send learners to these rooms just to give another learning environment at the end of semester.

This study is to investigate the learners' problems, strategies and the autonomy development of non-English department students in EFL reading class at a state polytechnic in

Indonesia. The reading class was conducted both in the classroom and SALL for two semesters; the program was carried out to enhance learners' autonomy in language learning. The results of this study hopefully give light to teachers to develop their students' language learning autonomy.

As it has been stated above that autonomous persons have two-self regulated levels - reactive and proactive autonomy. They regulate themselves by orchestrating various strategies to achieve their goals which are in line with their society. Since this study focuses on autonomy in language learning especially in a reading class, learners are encouraged to apply strategies for language learning and reading. The followings describe briefly language learning strategies, the characteristics of independent and dependent learners, reading process and strategies, the characteristics of good and novice learners and readers, and treatments to promote language learning autonomy; and finally the results are discussed.

#### *Learning strategies*

Learning strategies are mental steps or operations used by learners to regulate their efforts and to learn a new language (Chamot, 1990). They enable learners to govern and regulate their thoughts, actions, and feelings (Littlewood, 1999), make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, self-directed, effective and transferrable to new situation (Oxford, 1990). Further, Wenden (1987) defines learning strategies as specific controlled techniques to learn and acquire the language, they are problem oriented, and they are changeable. Learning strategies are consciously deployed when learners learn new things or they have to do things accurately and appropriately. These strategies are ranging from naturalistic language practice techniques to analytic, rule-based strategies (Oxford, 1990). All appropriate language learning strategies are oriented toward the broad goal of communicative competence. This process requires realistic interaction using meaningful and contextualized language. This learning strategies help learners participate actively in authentic communication, and encourage the development of communicative competence (Oxford, 1990).

Oxford (1990) divides language learning strategies into two categories, direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies require mental processing of the language - memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Memory strategies

are to help learners to store and retrieve new information; cognitive strategies enable learner to understand and produce new language by many different means; and compensation strategies help learners bridge 'gaps' between what the learners know and what they want to say when they are communicating. The indirect strategies support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. Oxford (1990) divides them into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies consist of planning, centering, and evaluating and monitoring learning. They are 'thinking about thinking' and essential for language learning for they allow learners to plan, control and evaluate learning and develop cognitive skills (Anderson, 2002, in Khan et.al. 2004). Pintrich (2004) describes that when learners are focusing and planning, they set specific target. In evaluating and monitoring, learners are aware of the relative discrepancies between their goals and progress toward their goals and errors. These process require learners to apply various cognitive strategies for memory, learning, reasoning, problem-solving and deep thinking.

Affective strategies, such as lowering anxiety, encouraging oneself, and controlling emotional temperature, deal with emotion, attitudes, and motivations. Learners regulate their motivation and emotion by identifying their learning motivation either extrinsic motivation or intrinsic motivation (Oxford, 1990; Pintrich, 2004). Learners maintain a more mastery, focus their learning on their goals, and increase task value by attempting to make the task more relevant or useful to them, their careers, experiences or lives. Social strategies help them maintain their motivation. They also regulate their social strategies by asking for clarification, correction, and help, cooperating and empathizing with others.

Metacognitive and social-affective strategies work simultaneously. Language learners without a metacognitive approach are learners without direction and ability to review their progress and accomplishment and future learning directions. Without controlling their motivation by means of applying affective and social strategies, learners will not be able to lower their learning anxiety and use the language.

#### *The Characteristics of Experienced and Novice Learners*

Experienced language learners are mostly autonomous language learners and their main

characteristic is the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of learning (Holec, 1981, in Benson and Voller, 1997). Littlewood (1996) posits that they have willingness and abilities. Willingness is influenced by learners' purposes and motivations; and abilities are influenced by their knowledge and skills. These four components integrated tightly and they are capable of balancing them using various strategies to achieve their learning goals. They are able to manage their learning process consciously by determining the objective or learning purpose and defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly, and evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1987).

The purpose or the objective of language learners is communicative competence which they conceive as being their own in the communicative situations in which they will find themselves (Holec, 1979). Communicative competence consists of four types of competence, or knowledge and ability (Widdowson, 1989 in Holec, 1996), linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences (Holec, et.al. 1996).

Experienced learners have strong motivation and desire to internalize the knowledge, custom and values surrounding them. Motivation is divided into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Niemic and Ryan, 2009). The strongest one is intrinsic motivation which exerts learners to continuously learn things through playing, exploring and engaging in activities with full of fun, excitement and challenge. The extrinsic motivation refers to behaviours performed to obtain some outcome separable from the activity itself (Ryan and Deci, 2000 cited in Niemic and Ryan, 2009). This motivation gears learners to learn because of rewards or the punishment. Extrinsic motivation can be divided into four subtypes, external, introjected, identified, and integrated regulations which highly influence the degrees of learning willingness (Niemic and Ryan, 2009). Learners' motivation can further explore by means of four loci i.e. 'locus of control', 'locus of value or purpose', 'locus of self-esteem', and 'locus of success'. These four loci influence the development of learners motivation (Littlejohn, 2008).

Experienced learners have knowledge and skills (Littlewood, 1996). Knowledge can be the knowledge of the world and knowledge of the subjects they learn; and these two subtypes of knowledge are to be applied appropriately and

integratedly. Skills are applied dynamically with great flexibility; these skills can be learning skills and others used unconsciously and consciously called strategies.

In a more detail way, there are several characteristics of experienced or autonomous language learners. They have insight into their learning styles and strategies or robust sense of self (Breen and Mann, in Benson and Voller 1997; Ridley, 1997). They manage their learning and take an active approach to the learning task at hand, have initiative and proactively seek ways to promote their own learning well (Holec, 1987). They know well their needs, wants, interests and how to achieve their goals (Breen and Mann, in Benson, P., and Voller. P. 1997) and have potential to monitor, control, regulate their learning and set clear standards or goals, motivate themselves to achieve their goals (Holec, 1987; Pintrich, 2004; Ridley, 1997; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Griffiths, 2003). They direct their attention to a particular problem, solving it by coordinating their various learning strategies in spite of external pressure such as lack of time and the present of teachers (Ridley, 1997).

Experienced learners orchestrate high level learning strategies. They apply 'high-level' mental operation such as analyzing, hypothesizing, critiquing, reflecting, and interpreting to solve their perceived problems (Littlejohn, in Benson and Voller 1997). Griffiths (2003) call good language learners as 'mature memorizer' for they has developed the capacity to remember efficiently (Brown, 1977 in Ridley, 1997). They try to recognize relationships and patterns of what they learn and fit this new knowledge into the overall language system. They monitor their learning strategically by means of bottom-up and top-down strategies, revise and take positive action. they are always willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply (Edith Esch, 1996 in Khan et.al. 2004).

Experienced learners place importance on accuracy and appropriacy. They pay attention to the form as well as the content (Griffiths, 2003; Ridley, 1997). They are risk taking learners (Brown, 1994), high tolerant and able to learn anywhere. They are willing to take risk by communicating in the target language and seek opportunities to engage in real communication. They have the capacity to negotiate and collaborate in strategic ways between their needs and the desires of their groups (Ridley, 1997, Breen and Mann, 1997, in Benson

and Voller. P. 1997). They are tolerant of ambiguity and manage continuity of learning in the face of imperfect knowledge by applying compensation strategies such as guessing (Griffiths, 2003). They are able to learn effectively whatever the modality: face-to-face or distance, in a classroom with peers and individually in self-access centers (Edith Esch, 1996 in Khan et.al. 2004).

On the other hand novice language learners do not have some of those characteristics and they have some of these characteristics. They prefer to learn various aspects of language incidentally, and this learning behaviour will need a long time to internalized (Smith, 1988 in Ridley, 1997). They have extrinsic motivation influenced by external regulation such as to pass the examination (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). They do not develop their learning strategies and still apply their low-level strategies (Porte, 1990, in Griffiths, 2003). They have learning strategy deficiencies; they apply 'low-level' mental operation such as memory retrieval, decoding semantic meaning, repeating, and applying patterned rules which require relatively little cognitive effort (Victory and Lockhart, 1995). They also apply poor cognitive performance and literally translating and looking up every new word (Naiman et.al. 1978 in Griffiths, 2003). They spend their energy on multiple-choice reading exercises rather than obtaining new language skills. They select materials they used before and easily available to them and if the Self-access Center is full, they prefer going away to changing and applying their learning strategies (Pearson, 2004).

Novice learners are teacher dependent; they expect teachers to assigning and correcting homework, explaining grammar and providing exercises (Ridley, 1997). They have negative and limited beliefs about the nature, demands and difficulties of learning tasks (Victori and Lockhart, 1995). They tend to manage their learning in a rather isolated fashion and manage their feelings by means of writing their feelings in their diaries and talk about it to someone (Griffiths, 2003).

#### *Reading Process and Strategies*

When reading readers apply a complex behavior that involves conscious and unconscious use of various strategies, including problem-solving strategies, to build a model of the meaning that the writer is assumed to have intended' (Johnston, in Mickulecky, 1990). When constructing meanings from texts (Nuttall, 1989; Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991; Anderson et al. 1991, in Aebersold, 1998),



readers have certain purposes, recollect feelings, knowledge and experiences (Smith, 1988). Readers are able to elaborate intertwined variables of letters, words, associated meanings, sentence structures, typography, discourse structure, genre, and context to convey their ideas in texts to get the message from the texts (Mikulecky, 1990).

This process requires readers to apply continuously two aspects of what Mikulecky (1990: 2) calls 'human information processing system'. First, a concept driven or 'top-down' strategy; this is applied when readers focus on their existing knowledge or schemata to comprehend a text (Brown, 1994: 284; Aebersold, 1998; Nuttall, 1989). Second, a data driven or 'bottom-up' mode. This strategy is applied when readers rely on the textual information to comprehend it (Rumelhart, 1980 as cited in Mikulecky, 1990: 2). These two processing strategies are employed interactively and simultaneously, but they are not used equally; it depends on the readers' knowledge of the content and the language used in the text. Readers will rely on any knowledge heavier if they lack one of the knowledge (Mikulecky, 1990: 3).

#### *Characteristics of Experienced and Novice Readers*

To construct meanings, experienced readers read with a certain purpose (Nuttall, 1989; Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991; Aebersold and Field 1998). They make some effort to get the meaning by applying rapid decoding, large vocabularies, phonemic awareness, knowledge about text features, and a variety of strategies (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991). They elaborate various tactics by looking at the text forward and backward to make causal and temporal chains of events and integrating information across sentences to identify main ideas, and making inferences (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991; Aebersold and Field, 1998, Nuttall, 1989). Expert readers are good guessers (McKeown, 1985 in Nation, 2002); they construct meanings maturely from texts and always monitor their comprehension. They always refine and revise and evaluate their ideas as they crunch the data to find the gist (Johnston and Afflerbach, 1985, in Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991). They combine multiple standards of information and their background knowledge to evaluate the passage. Moreover, good readers have high motivation; they avoid failure and prefer applying multiple strategies for processing texts.

Novice readers, however, focus on single words, and fail to adjust their reading for different texts or purposes; they are unfamiliar with cues in text structure. They read the text only once in linear fashion. They seldom look ahead or backward in text to monitor and improve comprehension. They avoid the problems by remaining passive, applying familiar primitive strategies, compensating with greater efforts in other subjects, or through complaining, and avoiding thoughtful strategic reading (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991).

Both experienced learners and readers are good guessers. They have purpose, high motivation, knowledge of language and content, and orchestrate various skills or strategies to construct meaning and achieve their goals. In addition, good learners are able to manage their learning and responsible for their learning. In relation to these characteristics, the learners' autonomy of this study was analyzed from learners' learning purposes, motivation or affective response, knowledge of language and strategies, and skills or strategies especially learning and reading strategies.

#### *Promoting Learning Autonomy*

Language teachers have at least three main responsibilities in teaching reading. First, they help learners acquire the basic process of comprehension (Cooper, 1986), develop their comprehension strategies including applying high level of cognitive strategies, vocabulary, and make some corrective or remedial teaching (Roe, Stodt, and Burns, 1986). Second, they improve learners' language knowledge and skills in line with learners' interests (Hutchinson and Waters, 1989). Third, they are expected to teach learning strategies so that the students may become autonomous learners (Biggs, 2003) because it is impossible to teach learners everything they need to know in class (Nunan, 1996) within a short time. In addition, Nunan (1996) also finds that learning autonomy can be developed by applying learner-centered approach and providing strategy training i.e learning and metacognitive strategies. This approach required teachers and learners to collaborate in the decision-making process.

Cohen (2003) proposes various strategy trainings, one of them is 'strategies-based instruction'. It has many activities; first, teachers individualize strategy training, suggest specific language strategies, and reinforce strategies while presenting the regular course content. The target

isolated strategies are introduced through modeling, explaining the benefits, practicing extensively and providing opportunities to transfer the strategies to new learning context by integrating the strategies into everyday class materials (Cohen, 2003). To provide more opportunities to practice and transfer the strategies Gardner and Miller (1999) suggest teacher conduct integrated program, a program that integrated classroom and self-Access Language Learning Activities.

Second, learners are consciously involved in their own learning by means of awareness-arising through some reflective questions. These reflective questions help learners diagnose their strengths and weakness, become aware of what helps them learn efficiently, perceive their problems, develop a broad range of problem-solving strategies, make decisions, monitor, evaluate and transfer the successful strategies (Cohen, 2003; Oxford, 1990). As vehicles for reflection and self-evaluation, writing reflective journals are suggested (Kent, 1997 and Moon, 1999 as cited in Little, 2007) because it is highly conscious and considered responses (Wallace, 1998) and they can be presented both orally and in written. These activities help learners become aware of their own strategies and powerful ways to collect information on how they go about their learning. Finally, learners are advised to have opportunities to share their preferred strategies with others and to increase their strategies use (Cohen, 2003).

In response to these suggestions, this study tried to improve learners' reading and cognitive strategies, and vocabulary and enhance learners' language learning autonomy by applying learner-centered approach.

### **Method**

In line with learner-centered approach and to investigate the development of learners' autonomy, this study applied a case qualitative study using a framework of inductive action research (Wallace, 1998) conducted with 24 civil engineering students of a state polytechnic in Bandung, Indonesia. The study started with a diagnostic phase or need analysis to discover learners' needs, wants and interests (Nunan, 1996; Hutchinson and Waters, 1989); then, based on the need analysis, three cycles of treatments were conducted for about twenty nine weeks.

The researcher of this study was an active participant who directly taught the students,

observed the class and conducted class discussions and small talks (Wallace, 1998, Nunan, 1996). The instruments for collecting data were the researcher, closed and open-ended questionnaires, three main types journals – learning, reflective, and thinking process journals, field notes of observation, small talks (Wallace, 1998; Cohen et.al., 2007; Nunan, 1996), and class discussion (Nunan, 1996) and vocabulary leveling tests (Nation, 2002). The learning journals were written when the students studied in Self-Access Language Learning (SALL); the reflective journals were written after at the end of each cycles; and the thinking process journals were written while the students were guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words.

To discover the paths of learners' autonomy development, continuous comparison among learners and across cycles were carried out. The validity of this study was achieved by triangulating the journals written in various times and observation (Cohen et.al., 2007).

### *Treatments*

At the beginning of the study as suggested by Nunan (1996) and Hutchinson and Waters (1989) a diagnostic phase was conducted concerning with the academic environment by means of observation and interviews some related authorities of the institution. The students' learning experience and levels of reading comprehension, strategies and levels of vocabulary were also carried out by means of questionnaires devised by Nunan (1996), TOEFL-Like test, Chamot et. al (1999), and Nation (2002) respectively. In response to Nunan (1996) suggestions and the framework of this study, the results of diagnostic phase was negotiated with the students and it was agreed that the students' vocabulary (the students' perceived problems) and reading strategies (the institutional goal) were to be improved, and the other three language skills were also developed by means of writing journals and presenting oral reports.

The first cycle, lasting for five weeks, was called "Exploring Learning Strategies", this cycle was to introduce various learning strategies as suggested by Nunan (1996) while developing reading strategies. The students were introduced with memory and guessing meanings of unfamiliar words from contexts; in addition, they also learned how to apply metacognitive strategies when learning in SALL. The materials for reading were authentic materials taken from newspapers, magazines, and story books as suggested by the students.

The results of the first cycle became the basis of the second cycle which lasted for 15 weeks; this cycle was called "Modelling and Practicing". The treatments of this cycle were focusing on developing high level learning strategies through modellings presented by the instructor and some selected students. The models and practices of guessing meaning from context were carried out whenever the students encountered unfamiliar words while reading authentic texts dealing with the students' majoring subjects. Once a month, they practiced their learning autonomy in SALL where they were allowed to select any authentic materials available in SALL dealing with their majoring subjects. By the end of Cycle 2, they were assigned to guess the meanings of several nonsense words (Nation, 2002) from a text dealing with 'surveying'.

The results of observing and reflecting the second cycle treatments became the basis of the third cycles which was called "Modelling and Launching The Learners" lasting for nine weeks. This cycle was to prepare the students to learn independently in SALL for four weeks successively. The first three weeks, they were required to select reading SALL materials but on the fourth week, they were allowed to select any materials and any equipment available in SALL. Finally at the end of this cycle, they were required to write reflective journals and assigned to guess the meanings of some nonsense words of two related texts, the topics of which were dealing with 'dams'.

## Results

This section discussed the three cycle students' problems, strategies to solve their problems and development of learners' autonomy. Each is discussed successively from the diagnostic phase, if any, to the end of Cycle 3 so that the development and their interconnection were depicted clearly.

### *The Students' Problems*

The students' problems discuss the students' perceived problems when reading texts and the problems perceived by the lecturer. During the three cycles of treatments, these problems grew into more various specific problems.

At the beginning, the students perceived that they had limited language knowledge i.e. vocabulary and grammar. Some students believed that if they mastered all English grammar and had sufficient amount of words, automatically they would be able to speak and write in English. The lecturer found that these students had three main

problems in reading and learning the language – limited language knowledge and proficiency needed for their ages, language learning strategies, and English exposures and supports from their learning environment.

First, the students had limited language knowledge and proficiency especially in reading were indicated in their result of TOEFL-Like which was 363 in average; and vocabulary size was about 1500 in average (based on Nation's test, 2002). These students had limited reading strategies which were indicated in that these students rarely monitored and evaluated their reading comprehension; and they had limited strategies to apply their compensation strategies when they had difficulties with unfamiliar words.

Second, in English class, these students were dependent learners; they did not have language learning purpose and they expected to acquire the language through enjoyable activities. In English class they liked to acquire the language by using the language for fun but they communicated in L1 or L2; outside English class they were not required to communicate orally or in writing. However, at the same time they had lowest type of external motivation to learn the language namely 'external regulation' or learning English to pass the tests because too much external control.

Finally, these students also had limited English exposures and supports from their learning environment even though it seemed that the head of the Civil Engineering department was struggling to improve the students' English proficiency by providing English references. However, these students were not encouraged to read these references, give oral presentation and write assignments in English except for the final paper abstract at the final semester.

At the end of Cycle 1, these students found more problems, limited language knowledge, compensation strategies, especially word-attack strategies, and few students had difficulty to express ideas. The lecturer also perceived these lacks and most of them had limited learning strategies. They were not able or willing to manage and control their language learning and 'low level' cognitive strategies such as copying the descriptions of terms, consulting bilinguals dictionaries, and asking directly to friends. The students' motivation was not pure 'locus of value' to improve their English; their 'locus of value' was to enrich their knowledge of their social lives.

At the end of Cycle 2, the students' identified more specific problems than at the previous cycle. Most of them had problems with their limited language knowledge; and the number of students who had problems with guessing strategies and expressing ideas increased. From the lecturer's points of view, in addition to those perceived by the students, most of them had 'low level' cognitive strategies and limited context scope, they focused on words (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991). They were not willing to manage their language learning and some of them still expected to acquire the language and they did not have language learning purposes. In addition to impure 'locus of value', some students had low self-esteem and they were not able to control their learning.

Finally at the end of Cycle 3, the students still had similar problems, but nine students admitted that they had low self-control to learn the language. The lecturer found that these students had various problems and degrees. Some students were not consistent with their learning goals or they did not know how to achieve their goals, for example they wanted to be able to speak and write but they were reluctant to practice these skills. Their problems were influenced by their language proficiency, motivation and their beliefs in language learning.

#### *Students' Strategies*

This section discusses the students' strategies to solve their problems when they were allowed to study in SALL at the end of each cycle. Through out this study, the students' strategies improved from solving problems by means of having enjoyable activities to learning the language and learning strategies by considering their learning preferences, abilities and the available materials.

At the beginning, the students solved their perceived problems by having enjoyable activities. Some of them were counter-dependent and some were dependent (Breen, and Mann, in Benson, P., and Voller. P. 1997). Among 17 students only two students set goals to solve their problems using computers and they accomplished their learning (Holec, 1987; Ellis, 1994). The others did not have English learning purposes; they expected to acquire the language by having fun. Some were watching their friends playing games and some were busy talking with classmates (Smith, 1988 in Ridley, 1997). All their communication was in Indonesian or Sundanese. Their evaluation of their learning was being pleased because they enjoyed the activities and improved their vocabulary.

At the end of Cycle 1, these students controlled their learning activities but they did not control their learning purposes or they were starting to be reactive in action (Flannery, 1994 in Littlewood, 1999). The two students had language learning purposes and they were able to orchestrate their strong and weak direct (Littlejohn, in Benson, P., and Voller. P. 1997) and social strategies. They

maintained their motivation by 'loci of control and purpose or value' (Littlejohn, 2008) – they controlled their learning, had learning purpose and accomplished it.

The others, on the other hand, did not have language learning purposes and they applied weak direct and social strategies and did the tasks by copying the texts (Griffiths, 2003). They applied top-down strategies and relied their background knowledge to comprehend the texts. They admitted that they had limited language knowledge, guessing strategies, and some of them had difficulties to express ideas. To maintain their learning motivation, some of them only had 'locus of value' (Littlejohn, 2008) - they admitted that their vocabulary improved and their knowledge of their social lives was enriched. Some of those who had very limited proficiency had 'locus of success' (Littlejohn, 2008) because they were encouraged and able to read authentic texts.

At the end of Cycle 2, these students controlled their learning activities but most of them failed to control their purposes or most of them were reactive in action (Flannery, 1994 in Littlewood, 1999); except for seven students had language learning purposes. When doing their tasks, four of these seven students applied strong direct strategies (Littlejohn, 1997; Ridley, 1997), while the others students who had limited language proficiency relied on their background knowledge. The four student maintained their motivation by having 'loci of control, value and success' (Littlejohn, 2008). The other three applied weak direct strategies and had 'loci of control and value' (Littlejohn, 2008). However, when constructing meanings, most students, except for two low achievers, monitored and evaluated their constructed meanings.

Some students controlled themselves by applying affective strategies to lower their anxiety to pursue their set goals (Oxford, 1990; Pintrich, 2004). They had 'locus of value' and the others had 'locus of success' and 'locus of self-esteem' (Littlejohn, 2008). All students evaluated themselves that they still had problems with guessing strategies, specific



language knowledge, especially grammar, and more students found that they had problems to express ideas.

Finally at the end of Cycle 3, these students controlled their learning activities and they also control their purposes (Holec, 1987; Pintrich, 2004; Ellis, 1994; Ridley, 1997). They were listening to their abilities, beliefs and learning preferences (Breen and Mann, 1997; Ridley, 1997) or they became both reactive and proactive learners (Flannery, 1994 in Littlewood, 1999). Most students, except for one student, had language learning purposes. They learned using their preferred learning strategies either to improve their language knowledge or to solve their problems (Ridley, 1997). Those who had fairly high proficiency selected challenging materials; and the low proficiency ones selected the easy ones (Pearson, 2004) but at the end they tried to select the more challenging ones. All of them applied strong strategies (Littlejohn, 1997 in Benson, P., and Voller. P. 1997); they constructed meanings of words by analyzing, synthesizing, relating to wider contexts; they monitored, evaluated and ready to reject hypotheses (Ridley, 1997; Griffiths, 2003). Finally, some of them were able to identify their problems of their language and compensation strategies more specifically than before (Ridley, 1997). They maintained their motivation by having 'loci of control, value and success' because they obtained their self learning awareness.

After introducing various learning strategies and providing various peer models and allowing the students to practice their cognitive and metacognitive strategies, the lecturer released some of her controls and allowing the students to control their learning. The results showed that they orchestrated various strong and weak direct and social strategies. They improve their motivation from having 'locus of value', 'loci of value and success' to 'loci of control, value and success' (Littlejohn, 2008) or 'external regulation' to 'introjected' and might be 'identified regulations' (Niemic and Ryan, 2009).

#### *Development of Learners' Autonomy*

This section is devoted to discuss the development of Learners' Autonomy. This is presented to discovered the interconnection of the four autonomy components – purpose, motivation, knowledge and skills or strategies (Littlewood, 1996, 1997). Holec (1987) claims that when learning, autonomous learners: (1) decide or select objectives; (2) select content or materials and at the

same time decide the (3) methods and techniques; finally (4) assess the outcome.

In the diagnostic phase, most students did not have language learning purpose, their interests were on the content of the learning activities, their evaluation of their motivation was mostly on the enjoyment of having the activities and most students reported that they improved their vocabulary. They were playing and they communicated in Indonesian or Sundanese or read Indonesian websites, except for two students. This showed that most of them did not know how to learn a language.

After introducing various learning strategies for five weeks, the students' learning purposes were still not on learning English, except for two students. Their affective response was mostly on their enjoyment of the activities, and their vocabulary was improved. Most of them (15 students) were aware that they applied guessing strategies learned. However, based on their thinking process journals, 13 students copied the texts and two relied their background knowledge only.

The treatments and tasks in Cycle 2 stimulate the students to identify their problems. They identified more problems, such as limited language knowledge, strategies to express ideas and strategies to guess meanings of new words. After providing some models and allowing the students to practice, seven of the students had language learning purposes, the other ten students still pursued their interests. Their affective response was mostly concerning with expressing ideas, guessing and learning strategies. The students' thinking process journals showed that they were able to make use of these knowledges. However, only a few of the students were aware that they applied their knowledge of language and strategies. This reflected that they unconsciously had made used their knowledge and they acquired the skills.

Providing models and practicing learning using SALL materials for four weeks in Cycle 3 had encouraged these students to be reactive and proactive learners (Flannery, 1994 in Littlewood, 1999). SALL materials helped the students have both language learning purposes and some rooms to listen to their learning preferences and beliefs. Finally, some students reported that they enjoyed the learning activities because they achieved their self-learning awareness. These students were those whose English proficiency were fairly high; and they selected challenging materials. The others

were still in the exploring stages and improving their language. Those whose proficiency was very limited selected strategy training materials because the language were easy and enjoyable but at the end they started to select more challenging materials.

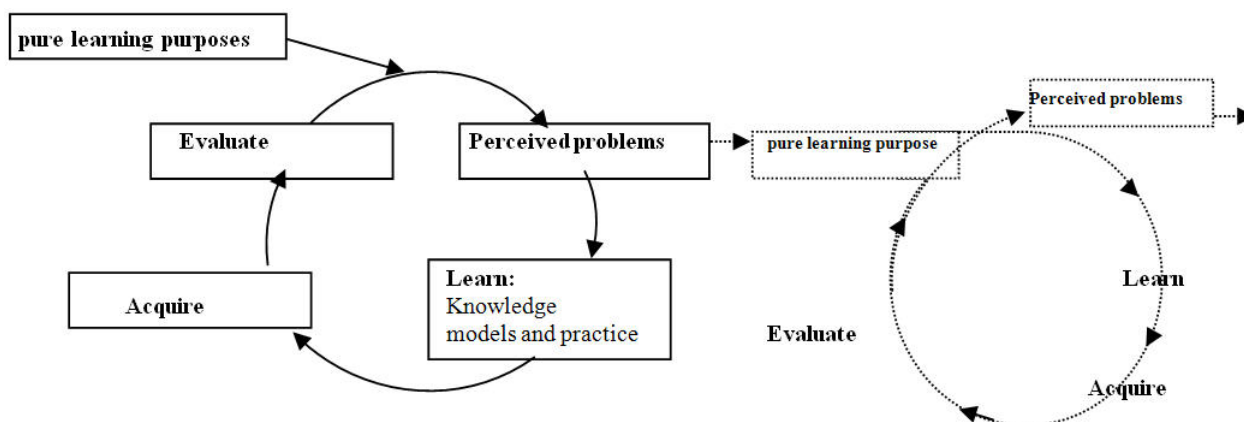
At the end of Cycle 3, more students, especially the fairly high proficiency, developed their awareness of language and strategy knowledges in various degrees. When these were triangulated with their thinking process journals, the gaps between their awareness and their skills were smaller than before. Finally, they identified more specific problems and hopefully these cycles continuous as claimed by Wenden (1987), Little, D. et.al. (2003); these specific problems were more tangible than before.

This study discovered that when the learners did not have clear learning purposes, their activities were focusing on enjoyable activities, they evaluated that the activities were enjoyable and they were not able to evaluate their language learning achievement. In addition, they always perceived that they had problems with their limited vocabulary and grammar.

However, when the students had language learning purposes and were encouraged to have lots of practices, they were able to evaluate their achievement and identified more specific problems which geared them to learn and have more practices and finally they learned and acquired the skills. Models and practices did not give much improvement on the knowledge but they did not hinder it either; but they developed the students' skills. These process made the students learn and acquire the language in balance and finally these students became 'good learners or studier', and 'good acquirers' (Holec, 1987). This process is depicted in Picture 1.

Language instruction and strategy training developed language and strategy knowledge; with the helps of models and practices, learners' learning controls and skills developed and learners acquired the language and strategies. If learners had too much knowledge, they monitored their use and if they often monitored, this hindered their fluency. The process of development were summarized in the following:

1. The learners' learning purposes developed from physical activities to learning for solving problems. In detail the development moved from (a) enjoyable activities, (b) reading for obtaining content information, (c) reading for learning language, (d) improve language starting from easy materials, to (e) learning based on preferences/interests, (f) improving language (vocabulary/grammar) using challenging materials, to (g) learning for solving problems. Stages (e), (f), and (g) were applied by the students who had fairly high proficiency; at this stage they applied their beliefs and learning preferences some students learned the language top-down and some others preferred bottom-up. Usually learners who applied top-down approach had limited ability to monitor and evaluate their language (Krashen, 1981).
2. The learners improved their motivation from various reasons which developed from (a) enjoying the learning activities, (b) learning language knowledge, (c) using learning strategies, (d) developing thinking skills, (e) finding problems and solving their problems, (f) applying imagination & creativity, (g) expressing ideas, (h) remembering words longer, to (i) being able to do challenging exercises and learn independently.



Picture 1: Cycles of Learners' Learning Autonomy

3. The development of learners' awareness of their language moved from (a) vocabulary, (b) grammar, (c) constructing meanings from words and clues; (d) constructing meanings from analyzing words and sentences; to (e) constructing meanings by relating it to the main ideas.
4. The strategy awareness developed in three clusters and each cluster ended with a self-awareness. The clusters were (a) The process of low level cognitive strategies and ended with an awareness of being able to save energy. (b) The process of guessing and ended with an awareness of being able to guess. (c) The process of internalization and ended with an awareness that the strategies helped them remember longer.
5. The skills for constructing meanings developed from three clusters: (a) typography of texts, (b) analyzing and classifying words, synthesizing meanings from other words, finally (c) relating meaning to wider scope of contexts.
6. The stages of learners' perceived problems developed in four clusters. (a) emotional cluster such as low – self confidence, self-control; (b) language clusters; (c) strategy cluster, finally it seemed that the students started to go on to (d) managing cluster. Each cluster developed from general to specific ones.

When the students' learning purposes were in line with their perceived problems, the students' motivations, language, strategies and skills were developed as depicted in the diagram 4. In addition, this study also showed that learners' learning behaviour developed from the physical matters to a more mental or cognitive and metacognitive ones.

### Conclusion

This study which had a frame of action research and conducted for two semesters with a class of Civil Engineering students in reading class showed that during three cycles of treatments, the students' language learning autonomy developed in various degrees. The degrees were ranging from being novice to experienced or autonomous language learners. These were indicated in the development of the four components of learner autonomy i.e. learning purpose, motivation,

knowledge and skills (Littlewood, 1996). In the diagnostic phase these students did not have pure language learning purposes; when reading in English class, their purposes were to obtain the information of the texts. Second, they had low motivation to learn the language; their motivation was to pass the final examination even though they were aware that English could help them obtain good jobs in the future and they perceived that they had limited language knowledge. Finally, they had limited language and learning knowledge and skills or strategies.

These students' strategies to solve their problems in reading were social strategies and low level cognitive and metacognitive strategies i.e directly consulted bilingual dictionaries, applied word-for-word translation or asked to a more able people. The students' learning purposes were not to learn the language and they rarely monitored and evaluated their reading. They maintained their motivation by having impure 'loci of value and success' because the value and success were to entertain themselves and pass the English tests respectively.

However, after three cycles of treatments, especially after having some models and practices, the students were able to identify more various and specific problems. To solve their perceived problems, they were orchestrating more appropriate high and low cognitive strategies. They maintained their motivation by having pure 'loci of control, value and success'; they identified their problems which became their learning purposes, then they controlled their own learning, accomplished their set goals and constructed meanings successfully and obtained their self learning awareness. As a result, the students' language knowledge and skills developed and some of them were aware of these improvement.

In general, the paths of the development of the four components moved from enjoyment physical activities to mental activities. First, the students' learning purposes developed from learning for enjoyment to learning for solving their perceived language problems, improving their English or learning for enhancing learning strategies and thinking strategies. Their purposes were influenced by their levels of language proficiency, beliefs and learning preferences.

The students' motivation developed from having activities to entertain themselves toward

having pure 'loci of control, value and success'. In high schools, they had 'external regulation' or they did not have their own 'locus of control', they were tightly controlled by other authorities; and their motivation was to pass the tests. When they had pure language learning purposes they had 'locus of control' and had 'locus of value', which then led these students to have 'locus of success'. Finally, the students had 'loci of control, value and success'. The speed and the quality of these loci were influenced by the students' perceived problems, purposes, and language proficiency.

The students' knowledge measured from their awareness of their knowledge of language and learning strategy. Their knowledge awareness developed from general knowledge to more specific ones. At the diagnostic phase, they had some knowledge that English could be learned and acquired from having fun activities but they did not know how to do it even though they were aware that they had limited language knowledge. The students' language knowledge developed from obtaining vocabulary, then grammar to morphemes and sentences, then discourses. The strategy knowledge developed from low level cognitive strategies to compensation strategies and then developed to knowledge of how to apply these strategies. Each strategy cluster was ended with self learning awareness which develop from physical awareness to mental learning awareness. The development of these awareness depended on the students' learning purposes, perceived problems and language proficiency.

The students' language and learning skills developed from skills to do physical activities to cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Their language skills developed from copying to reporting what they thought when writing journals or presenting oral reports. Their learning strategies reflected when constructing meanings developed from applying physical strategies or low level strategies such as consulting dictionary, asking and copying, to high level cognitive strategies such as analyzing, categorizing, synthesizing and relating to wider contexts.

Then, it can be concluded that the treatments which provide knowledge of language and learning strategies, lots of models and practices either in the classroom and SALL have encouraged learners to identify their own language and learning problems and set learning purposes. These, in turn, make

learners learn and acquire the language and learning skills and have improved learners' awareness of their knowledge learned and acquired. Finally they gain their self-confidence to learn the language independently which is in line with their learning environment. Therefore, the quality of the learners' autonomy are in line with the quality of the students' perceived problems and learning purposes which are influenced by the students' language proficiency, learning experience, background, and beliefs.

The English lecturers are, then, to provide language knowledge, exposures, allowing learners to have models and practices in balance which are presented in balance starting from enjoyable activities but encouraged learners to apply their high level learning strategies so that their 'school knowledge' become 'action knowledge' (Barnes, 1976 cited in Little, 1998). They have to encourage learners to be 'good studier' and 'good acquirer' (Holec, 1987).

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