

THE LEARNING STYLES AND STRATEGIES OF A HIGH ACHIEVER STUDENT

Sulhusni Mubarak, Regina, Ikhsanudin

English Education Study Program, Language and Art Education Department
Teachers Training and Education Faculty of Tanjungpura University, Pontianak
Email: mubarak.klink.bizz@gmail.com

Abstract: High achiever students develop their own effective and efficient strategies that suit themselves in their learning process. The purpose of this research is to discover the learning styles and strategies of a high achiever student. He is referred to as ZX. He is the participant of the research. He is a high achiever student of year 2011 of Semester Five of English Education Study Program in academic year 2013/2014. He has the highest learning achievement among the students. It is expected that the result of this research will be useful as one of the sources of information to better understand the learning styles and strategies of a high achiever student who in this case is ZX. In order to achieve the purpose of the research, the writer conducted an idiographic case study research. In conducting the research, the writer used observation, interview, Oxford's SILL, Reid' PLSPQ, and documents as the tools of collecting the data. Based on the result of the data analysis of the research, it is found that ZX had learning styles and learning strategies which were unique to himself. His learning styles and strategies enabled him to learn faster, easier, more enjoyable, and comfortably. His learning styles were tactile, individual, visual, and kinaesthetic. His learning strategies were diligence, responsibility, commitment, great passion of learning for his love towards English, setting goals and targets, understanding himself and others, working together with others, reading English comics, playing video games of English RPG, and management ability.

Keywords: Learning styles and strategies, High achiever, Idiographic case study

Abstrak: Mahasiswa berprestasi mengembangkan strategi yang efektif dan efisien yang cocok dengan diri mereka sendiri dalam proses pembelajaran. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan gaya dan strategi belajar dari seorang mahasiswa berprestasi. Dia diberi kode nama ZX. Dia adalah partisipan dari penelitian ini. Dia adalah seorang mahasiswa berprestasi angkatan 2011 semester lima pada program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris tahun akademik 2013/2014. Dia meraih hasil belajar terbaik di antara semua satu angkatan dengannya. Diharapkan hasil penelitian ini akan berguna sebagai salah satu sumber informasi untuk lebih memahami gaya dan strategi belajar dari seorang mahasiswa berprestasi yang dalam hal ini adalah ZX. Dalam rangka mencapai tujuan dari penelitian ini, penulis melaksanakan sebuah penelitian studi kasus idiografi. Di dalam menjalankan penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan observasi, interview, SILL Oxford, PLSPQ Reid, dan dokumen sebagai alat-alat dalam mengumpulkan data. Berdasarkan hasil dari analisis data penelitian, telah ditemukan bahwa ZX

memiliki gaya dan strategi belajarnya sendiri yang unik. Gaya dan strategi belajarnya membantunya untuk bisa belajar dengan lebih cepat, lebih mudah, lebih menyenangkan, dan nyaman. Gaya-gaya belajarnya meliputi gaya taktil, individual, visual, dan kinestetik. Adapun strategi-strategi belajarnya meliputi kerajinan, tanggungjawab, komitmen, semangat yang besar dalam belajar dikarenakan rasa senangnya terhadap bahasa Inggris, menseting gol dan target belajar, memahami dirinya sendiri dan orang lain, bekerjasama dengan orang lain, membaca komik-komik berbahasa Inggris, memainkan game video RPG berbahasa Inggris, dan kemampuan manajemen.

Kata kunci: Gaya dan strategi belajar, Mahasiswa berprestasi, Studi kasus idiografi

In this globalization era, languages play an important role in connecting people with the knowledge. One of the languages is English in which it has been being used internationally by people around the world. People around the world take part in learning the language. In almost every country in the world, English is taught in the curriculum of the education institutions of the society, from kindergarten, elementary schools, until the college.

The learning of English as an international language in the education institutions of the countries has drawn interest of many researchers from all over the world. They want to know how those people learn English. This curiosity has lead them to the discovery of learning styles and language learning strategies.

Every year many senior high school graduates come to English Education Study Programme of FKIP Untan to take the study programme with various reasons. They become the students of the study programme. Time goes by as they undergo the process of studying in the study programme. Each of them produce various learning achievements from good, standard, and even below standard. Then the researcher finds an interesting phenomenon among those students that is a student of the year 2011. His name ZX. The interesting part about him is that he achieved the highest Grade Point (GP) and Grade Point Average (GPA) among other students of year 2011 in semester five. He achieved both GP 3.83 and GPA 3.76. The researcher is curious and wants to discover how he learns this foreign language.

There are several definitions of learning styles which have been proposed by many experts. Dunn and Dunn (1999) define learning styles as “a term that describes the variation among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience”. Claxton and Ralston (1978) define the term as referring to a learner’s “consistent way of responding and using stimuli in the context of learning (p.7). Keefe (1979) stated that learning styles are “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (p.4). Dun et al (as cited in Clenton, 1998) say that learning styles includes variables such as “individual responses to sound, light, temperature, design, perception, intake, chronological high and lows, mobility needs, and persistence, ..motivation, responsibility (comformity), and need for structure...” (p.56).

Based on Reid (1995), learning styles have some fundamental characteristics, on which they are based. The characteristics are: 1) Every person, student and teacher alike, has a learning style and learning strengths and weaknesses; 2) Learning style exists on wide continuums, although they are described as opposites; 3) Learning styles are value-neutral, that is, no one's style is better than others; 4) Students must be encouraged to 'stretch' their learning styles so that they will be more empowered in a variety of learning situations; 5) Often students' learning strategies are linked to their learning styles; 6) Teachers should allow their students to become aware of their learning strengths and weaknesses.

Reid (1995) also explains that learning styles have many dimensions. One of them is Perceptual Learning Styles. Perceptual learning styles consists of visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic, group, and individual styles. Students with visual style learn more effectively through eyes (seeing). Students with auditory style learn more effectively through ears (hearing). Students with tactile style learn more effectively through touch (hands-on). Students with kinaesthetic style learn more effectively through complete body experience. Students with group style learn more effectively through working with others. And student with individual style learn more effectively through working alone.

Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations (Oxford, 1990, p.8). Oxford (1990) explains that learning strategies have several key features. As she explained, learning strategies: 1) contribute to the main goal that is communicative competence; 2) allow learner to become more self-directed; 3) expand the role of teachers; 4) are problem-oriented; 5) are specific actions taken by learner; 6) involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive; 7) support learning both directly and indirectly; 8) are not always observable; 9) are often conscious; 10) can be taught; 11) are flexible; and 12) are influenced by a variety of factors.

As learning styles which have dimensions, learning strategies also have several dimensions. Oxford (1990) lists about 62 learning strategies. All of them are classified into two main categories. They are Direct Strategies and Indirect Strategies. Direct learning strategies cover memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. While indirect strategies includes metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Direct strategies are strategies that are used by students to directly deal with a new language. Indirect strategies are strategies which are used to manage learning generally.

Oxford (1990) states that direct learning strategies are useful to help students store and recover information. They help learners to produce language even when there is gap in knowledge. They also help them to understand and use the new language. These are the direct language learning strategies.

The first one of direct language learning strategies is memory strategies. Memory strategies are based on simple principles such as arranging things in order, making association, and reviewing. They really help learners when, for example, they are having problems in learning vocabulary.

Memory strategies are very often used by learners in the beginning process when they begin to learn a new language. But when they start to achieve more advanced level, these strategies are less mentioned. It is not because they do not use them anymore, but the strategies are unconsciously used by them. (Samida)

The second one is cognitive strategies. These are the strategies that are used by most learners. The method of these strategies is to manipulate the new language, also by transforming the target language through repeating, analyzing, or summarizing. Practicing is one of the techniques of these strategies. It is done through repeating, working with sounds and writing, and using patterns.

The third one is compensation strategies. These strategies are used by learners when they do not have sufficient knowledge of the target language. For example in grammar and vocabulary, when the learners do not have enough understanding of an expression, they will try to guess the meaning of the expression. The same cases also apply to vocabulary that when they do not know the meaning of a word, they will try to guess the meaning.

The second main category of learning strategies is indirect learning strategies. The first one in this category is metacognitive strategies. These strategies includes the activities of centering the learning process, arranging and planning the learning process, and evaluating the learning process. Centering the learning means that the learner focuses on completing certain activities or skills regarding the target language. And then, through arranging and planning the learning, the learner is able to organize his/her learning process from the beginning until the end of the learning session. And evaluating the learning will become the reflection of the outcome of the learning process.

The second one of indirect learning strategies is affective strategies. These strategies relate to psychological factors such as emotion, attitude, motivation, and values. These factors give influences to the learning. Good language learners control their attitudes and emotions about learning and understand that negative feelings will slowdown the learning.

The third one is social strategies. The main purpose of language is to communicate with people. Without the ability to communicate, a language loses its meaning. Therefore the ability to interact with others plays a very important role in language competence. This is the place where social strategies play their parts.

Social strategies includes asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. Asking questions is very helpful when a learner does not understand some parts of the target language. This activity will trigger an interaction among the students. Through this, the students will be able to able to train their communication ability.

Cooperating with others will teach the students the spirit of togetherness. It will eliminate competition. Sometimes competition make students too ambitious to perform better than anybody else, but it often results in anxiety, fear of failure, and individualism which is not good in socializing with others. Therefore, it is important to help students change their attitudes from confrontation and competition to cooperation. This is due to that studies have shown that learning

through cooperation, or the famous terms is cooperative learning, results in higher self-esteem, increased confidence, and rapid achievement.

One of the very important aspects which can create a good communication is empathy. It will make a mutual understanding among the students. Empathy means to put oneself in someone else's situation to understand that person's point of view. Social strategies will help students to develop cultural understanding and become aware of thoughts and feelings of others.

Direct and indirect language learning strategies complement each other. In order to learn the target language effectively, students need to apply both of these strategies so that they can become more effective learners.

METHOD

By conducting this research, the researcher wants to discover the learning styles and strategies of ZX who achieves the highest both GP 3.83 and GPA 3.76 in semester five of English Study Programme in academic year 2013/2014. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose idiographic case study as the form of this research.

Idiographic approach is a term suggested by Allport in around 1970 to provide another perspective of research in the field of psychology beside nomothetic approach.

According to Hayes (2006), the idiographic approaches emphasizes the study of the whole person and the personal choices that the person makes. The term is derived from the word 'graphic' and 'idio'. 'Graphic' means describing; while 'idio' means individual. Idiographic research is concerned with exploring the nature of individuality and human differences. As a result, idiographic psychological research often involves the exploration of single cases in considerable depth. The underlying aims of such detailed investigation of individuals are twofold: first, it is possible that thorough understanding of one person may lead to the discovery of general principles which can apply to all people, and second, adopting an idiographic approach may provide a detailed understanding of one person as a complete being. The important distinctive aspect of idiographic research is in its emphasis on the individual rather than on groups.

Hayes (2006) still says that psychologists conducting idiographic research, therefore, tend to focus on just one or two cases, but in doing so they tend to use a combination of different techniques for gathering data. They may conduct interviews, they may ask the person to complete psychological tests or to carry out specific tasks, or they may observe a person's reactions carefully in controlled conditions.

There are several reasons for using more than one gathering data method, but an important one is because the person conducting idiographic research does not have a large reference group, or control group, to compare their research findings with. But collecting different sorts of data will allow them to identify recurrent and important themes or patterns in the information. If something emerges recurrently from different types of data, it is likely that it will be useful in

developing a psychological understanding of what is happening with that person. (Hayes, 2006)

Allport (1937) in Hurlburt (2006) stated:

“There is a typical procedure the scientist feels compelled by convention to follow ... First, he makes a critical discrimination of his subject matter, isolating from the individual who confronts him a chosen segment of behaviour. This procedure is called abstraction. He then observes the recurrence of this segment and its condition in many members of a hypothetical class. Finding uniformity in the event and its attendant conditions, he makes a generalizations or law, and then, I he is a thorough investigator, he will submit his law to repeated tests and so establish it securely by empirical verification

...

The piling of law upon law does not in the slightest degree account for the pattern of individuality which each human being enfolds. The person who is a unique and never-repeated phenomenon evades the traditional scientific approach at every step.”

(Allport 1937: 4-6)

There are several definitions of case study from the experts. Cresswell (1998:61) defines Case Study as an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context.

Merriam (1991) proposed another meaning of case study, that is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources.

Yin (2003a), a case study methodologist in education and management, provides a definition that addresses issues of scope, data collection, and analysis strategies. First, he states that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.

Bromley (1986), an expert in the field of psychology, defines case study as the description and analysis of a particular entity (object, person, group, event, state, condition, process, or whatever). Such singular entities are usually natural occurrences with definable boundaries, although they exist and function within a context of surrounding circumstances. Such entities also exist over a short period of time relative to that context.

In the field of Sociology, Theodorson & Theodorson (1969) defines case study as a method of studying social phenomenon through the thorough analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a

community, a society, or any other unit of social life. All data relevant to the case are gathered, and all available data are organized in terms of the case. The case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case. It also provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked with other methods.

In political science, George & Bennett (2005) define the “case” in case study as an instance of a class of events, a phenomenon of scientific interest, such as revolutions, types of governmental regimes, kinds of economic systems, or personality types that the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory (or “generic knowledge”) regarding the causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events. The Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, is a historical instance of many classes of events: deterrence, coercive diplomacy, crisis management, and so on.

Arch G. Woodside (2010) proposes his scope of case study definition which is broader than Yin’s (1994). He defines case study research as an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual, for example process, animal, person, household, organization, group, industry, culture, or nationality.

In collecting the data, the researcher used several techniques and tools. The techniques were observation, interview, documents, and questionnaires. The tools for collecting the data were voice recorder, fieldnotes, learning documents, interview guides, Oxford’s SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) questionnaire, and Reid’s PLSPQ (Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire).

For analyzing the data, the researcher applied qualitative data analysis. The researcher used analysis model of Miles and Huberman. It consists of three phases. They are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction is defined as summarizing the data, sorting the primary data, focusing on the important data, determining the theme and pattern of the data, and discarding unnecessary data. Data display means to present the data so that it is easier to understand what is happening and to plan the next step based on the understanding. The third phase of analysing qualitative data according to Miles and Huberman is conclusion drawing and verification. Early conclusion is still temporary, and will change if stronger evidence is found to continue the next data collecting. But if the early conclusion is supported by valid and consistent evidence when the researcher returns to the field to collect data, then the conclusion is already credible.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

After going through the process of collecting the data, the researcher discovered several findings that can give a description of ZX’s learning styles and strategies.

After conducting observation, the researcher found several discoveries of ZX’s learning behaviors. The first one is diligence and enthusiasm. Diligence and

enthusiasm are two elements that are needed by students if order to perform good academic result (Dembo: 2004). It is found that these two elements are shown by ZX. He has shown diligence in academic activities that he follows every day. He follows them very well. He has a high enthusiasm in following those activities. Not only that, he is also entrusted by some of his lecturers to become the coordinator of the subjects they teach. He fulfils all of his duties with responsibility.

Enthusiasm shows motivation in which motivation plays an important role in influencing the success of a learner in the field that he participates. In psychology, motivation can be described as the driving force which gives purpose or direction to human behaviors which operate at a conscious and unconscious level in order to complete a certain task. Dembo (p.10) views motivation as the internal processes that give behavior its energy and direction. These internal processes include the goals, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations. For example, the persistence on a task is often related to how competent one believes he is able to complete the task. Also one's beliefs about the causes of one's successes and failures on present task influence one's motivation and behavior on future tasks. For example, students who attribute failure to lack of ability behave differently from students who attribute failure to lack of effort.

The capability of ZX to set his ability in balance with his friends' abilities shows that he is able to measure his own and his friends' ability as he said in statement: "I can see that my friends have different range of ability, from low, average, and high."; statement: "I can also see that some of my friends have equal ability, and even higher than me."; and statement 3-3-7: "Although not in exact description, but yeah I can a little bit measure their abilities."

ZX also understands that students with high ability need to help other students with lower ability. He finds himself easier when working with equal or higher ability friends. When working with them, he feels being challenged and pushed when they do better than him; and that it becomes a trigger within him to do better. But when he works with low ability students, he feels some difficulties and he also understands that they are the ones who need to push them forward.

ZX understands his friends' personality as he said in statement, "About my friends, we have been friends for six semesters, so I can say that they have many kinds of character." He said that he and his friends have differences in learning and receiving learning process. He can see that actually some of his friends have high ability, but some of them have standard ability and below.

When the researcher asked ZX about the comparison between his classmates and his friends from the other class, he says that his class is actually silent. Most of his classmates are often silent during the class because there are only several students among them who are actively participating during the class session and capable of maintaining their activeness. While his friends from the other class, although many of them are standard in ability, they have strong desire to actively participate in the learning activities. They are enthusiastic in following the learning process so he can say that they are active students.

As for his class as he said before, there are only several students among them who are active. He says that actually some of them have good ability,

facility, good background and family, but they just don't give enough attention on their study. Dembo (2004: 11) explained that one of the major differences between successful and less successful individuals in any field or specialization is that successful individuals know how to motivate themselves even when they do not feel like performing a task, whereas less successful individuals have difficulty controlling their motivation. As a result, less successful individuals are less likely to complete a task, or more likely to quit or complete a task at a lower level of proficiency. Although successful learners may not feel like completing required tasks, they learn how to motivate themselves to completion to maintain progress toward their goals.

He also mentioned that the other class has more boys than his class. Actually he feels more comfortable when learning with his friends from the other class than with his own classmates. This is due to the similarity of their hobby. For him, approaching people through hobby is easier to do. In the other class, he has more friends with similar hobbies with him than in his own class. With them, their way of thinking is almost similar because they share the same background as gamers. His friends from the other class are also gamers like him, "That's why we can communicate easily among us", said ZX.

ZX is also able to understand the ability of his friends from the other class due to their togetherness in several occasions and events for example when taking the same subject in a joint class, events, celebrations, parties, etc. Through those activities, ZX gets the chances to know them. He understands himself that he is not a really sociable person. When faced with new situations or new environment, he takes longer time to adapt himself. He cannot do it fast. He himself realizes that weakness in adapting to new environment. It also happened when he first entered the campus life. He didn't know anybody and didn't have any friends. He could only slowly get used himself to it. But later on, he gets many friends and some of them become his close friends. He understands himself that he is a rather closed person. He cannot easily become friendly with new people. But he also said that when they become friends, and even close friends, he is able to socialize with them very well, and towards his close friends he has a strong solidarity.

ZX has some interests and hobbies. The earliest thing that became his hobby was playing games. The game was not just ordinary game played by common children during his time, for example folk games. It was playing video games. He started it since he was in elementary school. And then since he was in the third grade of elementary school, he has been fond of reading comic books. He says that even till now he still likes playing the games and reading comic books.

But comics are not the only books read by ZX. Besides them, he also read magazines, academic books, and other general books. And for games, it never changes that since kid he has been loving games until now. He says that playing games and reading comics are the two things that he really thinks have influenced and motivated him to learn English up till now.

When ZX was a kid, comics in English were not still available. Internet access was not still available either in his hometown during elementary school until he was in senior high. So accessing them was difficult. But since he was in

the last year of senior high school, internet access has been available. With its help, all the comics that he read have been in English. For example, there was a famous comic from abroad. Many people read the Indonesian translation, but not him. He read the English translation version. Although in the beginning he faced difficulties to understand them, they were the ones that motivated and challenged him to understand English better.

And then for the games, the games ZX plays are not just ordinary games. They are electronic games called video games. They are a kind of games which are played with electronic device or console that use a screen as the display monitor. The game itself is a software created by using computer and installed in those devices or in the computers. There are many kinds of genre of video games. One of them is RPG, the abbreviation of Role Playing Games. This is the genre of games mostly played by him. RPG imbeds story line in it in which it consist long dialogues. In order to play RPG, the player needs to understand the story of the game. This is the reason he plays them. Therefore he learns English. It was started from his curiosity that he wanted to understand both comics and the games.

Concerning Role-Playing Games or RPG, Stratton (1991) in Phillips (1993) explains that role playing is being creative and having fun with friends. In most role-playing games, one person plays the 'referee'. He can be regarded as the 'Editor' of the story. The Editor will describe a world, or setting; the players can give input if they desire to give any. Each player will take a character and protagonist in this world, and guide their character through the story that the editor and the players are creating.

Concerning Role-Playing Games or RPG, Stratton (1991) in Phillips (1993) explains that role playing is being creative and having fun with friends. In most role-playing games, one person plays the 'referee'. He can be regarded as the 'Editor' of the story. The Editor will describe a world, or setting; the players can give input if they desire to give any. Each player will take a character and protagonist in this world, and guide their character through the story that the editor and the players are creating.

Phillips (1993: 2) describes:

"Role-Playing Games or RPGs should be distinguished from Language Role Plays, Classroom Dramas, and other more commonly employed classroom language learning exercises which teachers attending the conference may be more familiar with. RPGs are games played on a tabletop with pencil, paper, dice (often polyhedral), and a large dose of imagination (unlike the more usual language role plays which are acted out before a class – these games are non-performance oriented). Players can be divided into two types: the referee (commonly called a Game Master or GM) and the Players. The GM creates a scenario which he then sets in motion by explaining the situation to the players who have created Player Characters (PCs) to interact with one another and the GM's characters (Non-Player Characters of NPCs) during the game."

Phillips (p.3) further explains that basically, RPGs are interactive stories in which the GM furnishes the basic plot elements (often based in fantastic or heroic genres) and the Players shape the narrative through their actions within the context of the game. Because the game is played through the verbal interchange of the players, it is ideal for language learners.

Cardwell (1995) in his "Role-Playing Games and the Gifted Student", mentions that there are several language and non-language based learning skills developed directly when students become involved with RPGs. According to Cardwell, these include but are not limited to: following directions, vocabulary, research, independent/self-directed study, planning, choice/decision making, mental exercise, evaluation, cooperation/interaction, creativity/imagination, leadership, problem solving, critical thinking, predicting consequences, figural/spatial reasoning, taking other points of view, asking questions, ethics, prioritizing, interrelated learning, and continuity of learning.

Phillips (p.7) says that along with developing language skills and other related skills as noted above, because RPGs are language-centered communication games, they have a definite positive effect on student socialization skills which are central to RPGs "where much of the game depends on a common perception of the information presented to the Players by the GM (Toles-Patkin, 5). One player characterized the games he most enjoyed playing as having strong social/negotiation elements: "The games we love have a certain amount of diplomatic negotiation going on. A Player tries to influence the outcome of the game by interacting with other Players" (Shaw, 128).

Phillips (p.7) also said that for students who create their own adventures, instead of relying upon published source material, the act of doing so helps them become better thinkers and writers. Sociologist Daniel Dayan characterized the standards for good RPG campaign thus: "The fictional background or universe must be relatively convincing and may call for some amount of historical validity, but it is defined less in terms of historical realism than by the consistency of its imagined features (1222). Similarly, many claim that the game offers an outlet for those with adventure fantasies of their own and teaches them about problem solving, leadership, and survival (Toles-Patkin, 9).

Again Phillips (p.7) explained that whether students are playing in scenarios created by their classmates or using pre-generated modules, RPGs have a strong curiosity appeal which Patricia Mugglestone called the one "primary motive relevant to every teaching-learning situation, whatever the status of the target language, whatever type of course is being followed, whatever the learner's nationality, age, and level of language proficiency, whether he is a volunteer or conscript learner" (112). According to Mugglestone, "projects appeal the curiosity motive if their content is interesting to the learner and if the learner is allowed to develop the project in his own way".

For ZX himself, playing RPGs have helped him learn English because most of the games he plays are in English. For example, when he was in the fifth grade of elementary school, he played some games that used English as the language. It was difficult for him to learn English in the beginning. None of his family members had the background of English mastery. Also finding places to

study English at the time was not easy. He knew some families who had good English mastery background. They taught their children English, for example, at home they didn't only use mother-tongue, but they also used English to teach their children. In public places, he also found such families. They talked to their children not only with mother-tongue, but also with English. While in his family, their daily language was their mother-tongue. That's why most of his interactions with English were through games. At the time, he didn't have any gadgets, for example smartphone and laptop, to aid him learn English. So when he played them, he prepared English dictionary with him. "Usually people are lazy to bring dictionary when they are playing games", said him. He also said, "I found it interesting to learn a new language." This also shows that he has a high curiosity in learning. That's why he was willing to bother himself using dictionary when playing the games.

ZX likes English, therefore he chooses English study programme. He decided to take a major that he might feel comfortable in studying although it might not be quite promising in the future – this was what he thought at the time about taking English. Then English became his choice because he feels passion in learning it.

Based on the record of ZX achievement – GP and GPA – from semester 1 to semester 4, the researcher found data as Chart 1 and table 1 below. It shows that ZX has high academic achievement from semester one until semester four.

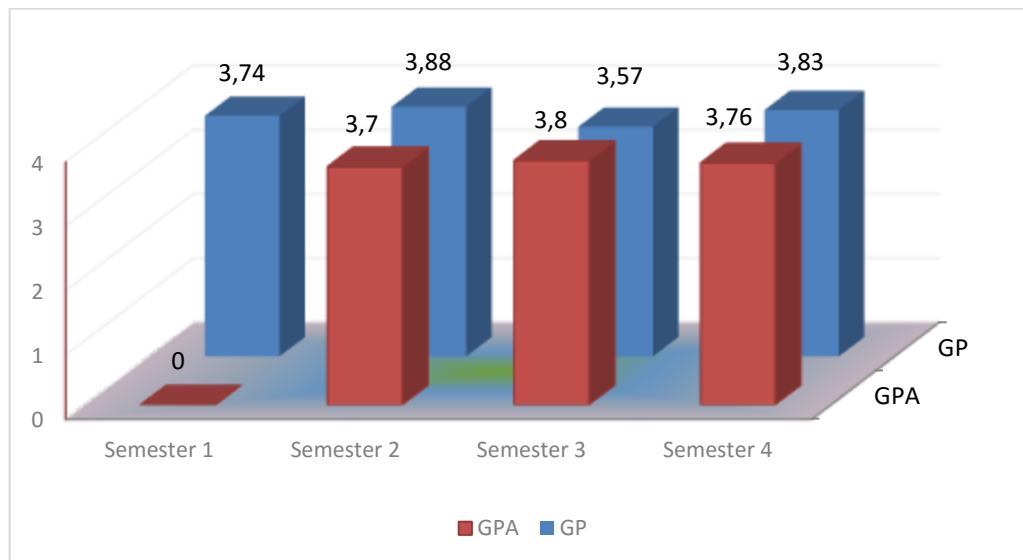


Chart 1.

ZX's GP and GPA of semester 1 to 4

Table 1.
ZX's GP and GPA

Semester	GP	GPA
Semester I	3.74	-
Semester II	3.88	3.81
Semester III	3.57	3.73
Semester IV	3.83	3.76

Another tool of collecting data is Reid's PLSPQ. Based on the result of Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), it was found data of ZX's learning styles as Table 2 below:

Table 2.
ZX's Preferences of Learning Style

Learning Style	Score
Visual	42
Tactile	44
Auditory	32
Group	34
Kinaesthetic	40
Individual	44

Based on the scale of score designed by Reid, from the table 2, it can be categorized as below:

Table 3.
Classification of ZX's Learning Style Preference

Description	Learning Style	Score
Major Learning Styles	Tactile	44
	Individual	44
	Visual	42
	Kinaesthetic	40
Minor Learning Styles	Group	34
	Auditory	32
Negligible Learning Styles	--	--

From Table 4.3, we can see that ZX has high points in four area of learning styles: tactile, individual, visual, and kinaesthetic; and lower points in two areas of learning styles: group and auditory. Therefore based on the PLSPQ scale designed by Reid, ZX major learning style preferences are tactile, individual, visual, and kinaesthetic respectively. Then, his minor learning style

preferences are group and auditory respectively. Tactile means that ZX learns more effectively through touch (hands-on). Individual means that ZX also learns more effectively when he is working alone. Visual means that ZX learns more easily through eyes (seeing). Kinaesthetic means that ZX learns better when he does something through body experience. For Group and Auditory learning styles, they are rarely used by ZX.

The other tool used for collecting data is Oxford's SILL Questionnaire. It is used to identify the learning strategies of ZX. After filling in the questionnaire, the researcher found data of ZX's learning strategies as below:

Table 4.
ZX's Preferences of Learning Strategies

Learning Strategies	Score
Memory Strategies	3.2
Cognitive Strategies	3.4
Compensation Strategies	3.6
Metacognitive Strategies	4.4
Affective Strategies	3.0
Social Strategies	4.1
Whole SILL Average Score	3.6

Based on the scale of score designed by Oxford from table 4 above, it can be categorized as table 5 below:

Table 5.
Classification of ZX's Learning Strategy Preferences

Description	Learning Strategies
High	Metacognitive Strategies Social Strategies Compensation Strategies
Medium	Cognitive Strategies Memory Strategies Affective Strategies
Low	-

From table 5, we can see that ZX's dominant learning strategies are: metacognitive strategies, Social Strategies, and Compensation Strategies. This means that ZX is good at organizing and evaluating his learning; he is good at learning with others; and he is also good at compensating for missing knowledge. While his minor learning strategies are: Cognitive Strategies, Memory Strategies, and Affective Strategies. This means that these strategies are not often used by ZX, but he sometimes used them.

What the researcher can conclude from this is that basically ZX is a type of student who learns more effectively when he studies alone, but at the same time he has the ability to adapt himself to the context he faces. When working in group or studying in group in order to achieve certain learning goals, ZX is able to work well together with his team. He is able to set his ability in balance to his teammates.

Discussion

High achiever students are the students who have the ability to achieve the goals and targets that they have set before by utilizing and combining the factors and abilities which are needed. They are such as the ability to understand themselves, the ability to motivate themselves, and the ability to control and manipulate the factors that can influence their learning behaviors. As in Dembo (2004: 12), Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986) mentioned that educational research indicates that high achievers report using goal setting more frequently and more consistently than low achievers. Dembo (2004) further explained that when individuals establish and attempt to attain personal goals, they are more attentive to instruction, expend greater effort, and increase their confidence when they see themselves making progress. It is difficult to be motivated to achieve without having specific goals. Concerning ZX, he said that he never targets himself to achieve the highest GPA, but he also makes a standard for himself that he must not get GPA below 3.0. In achieving this standard, he doesn't force himself until it becomes a burden for him. Instead, he just does the best to achieve the best result he can get. And he also makes targets that he wants to finish his study in eight semesters.

Dembo (p.4) states that the word 'management' is a key term in understanding successful learners. They self-manage or control the factors influencing their learning. They establish optimum conditions for learning and remove obstacles that interfere with their learning. Educators use a variety of terms to describe these students (e.g., self-regulated, self-directed, strategic, and active). No matter what term is used, the important factor is that these students find a way to learn. It does not matter if the instructor is a poor lecturer, the room is noisy, or if multiple exams are scheduled for the same week, successful learners find a way to excel.

Dembo (p.15) also states that self-management of the social environment relates to an individual's ability to determine when he or she needs to work alone or with others, or when it is time to seek help from instructors, tutors, peers, or non social resources (such as reference books). Knowing how and when to work with others is an important skill often not taught in school. Based on what ZX tells, he and his friends have different learning styles. As for ZX, actually he prefers studying individually to studying together, but it doesn't mean that he dislikes studying together. For certain assignments that require cooperation among the students, he will work in groups with his friends. But he has some difficulties when learning in groups. One of them is the imbalance between his ability and his friends' ability. In group studying, ZX adjusts his ability in

accordance to his friends'. This is due to he doesn't want to end by dominating the whole part in the group. He understands that in group work, the most important thing is not who is the best, but the teamwork to achieve the best result the group can. Each member of the team must contribute the best ability and this will not happen when a member is showing off his ability. This is the way of ZX when learning in groups.

Finally, ZX has his own perception towards grade. For him, grade is relative in the meaning that he may be the highest achiever among his friends at English study programme of FKIP Untan. But when compared with students from top universities, for example University of Indonesia, probably he can only achieve standard GPA. He doesn't want to become a student who is obsessed by grade, but he doesn't want either if his GPA is below standard. "When something is a hobby, getting high scores or bad scores is not the problem" he said. If he gets good results, he is satisfied; but when he doesn't get as he desires, it becomes a trigger for him to do better. "The main point is that I like it. I think that's the key" said ZX.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the data which have been gathered, the researcher can make a summary of the learning styles and learning strategies of ZX as following: 1) ZX is a diligent, responsible, enthusiastic, motivated, and persevering student; 2) ZX likes English very much. He has high curiosity and passion in learning; 3) ZX sets goals and targets in learning; 4) ZX has good adaptability in learning; 5) ZX has good empathy towards his friends in learning; 6) ZX controls well the factors influencing his study; 7) ZX is a sociable student; 8) ZX uses english RPG games and english comic books to increase his passion in learning; 9) ZX likes reading to improve his knowledge; 10) ZX has strong will and motivation to succeed in the English Education Study Program that he has chosen consciously by himself; and 12) ZX is not easily satisfied with his grade and keeps improving it. Therefore in conclusion, it is found that ZX has learning styles and learning strategies which are unique to him. He is a good student who has a good personality and he also has good management skills in his study and life.

Suggestion

There are some suggestions that the researcher would like to give for a better development of similar research topics in the future hopefully. First, for other students who would like to take similar topics, from the beginning they should learn and understand the methodology of idiographic case study research so that in the future they will have the sufficient knowledge, skill, ability, and preparation to conduct the research. The lack of knowledge and references related to the research should be avoided. Second, further researches, if able, should avoid having only one person as the research participant. This is due to the risk of being rejected is rather big. And finally, due to this research used idiographic approach, this research only covers the factors which make ZX a high achiever

student from the perspective of ZX. Further researches should explore more factors that determine the success of students from more perspective.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allport, Gordon W. (1937). *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. New York: Henry Holt
- Allport, Gordon W. (1955). *Becoming; Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*. London: Yale University Press
- Blessing, Lucienne T.M. & Chakrabarti, Amaresh (2009). *DRM, a Design Research Methodology*. Bangalore: Springer
- Bromley, Dennis Basil (1986). *The Case Study Method in Psychology and Related Disciplines*. University of Michigan: Wiley
- Carducci, Bernardo J. (2009). *The Psychology of Personality – Viewpoints, Research, and Applications*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell
- Cardwell, Paul Jr. "Role Playing Games and the Gifted Student," *Gifted Education International*, 1995 v11 n1, 39-46
- Clenton, J. (1998). *Learning Styles and the Japanese, MA dissertation*. University of Sussex Language Institute
- Creswell, John C. (2012). *Educational Research*. Fourth Edition. Boston: Pearson
- Dayan, Daniel. "Review Essay: Copyrighted Subcultures," *American Journal of Sociology*, v91(5), March 1986, 1219-28
- Dembo, H. Myrom (2004). *Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success: A Self Management Approach*. London: LEA (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates)
- Dunn, Rita Stafford & Dunn, Kenneth J. (1998). *The Complete Guide to the Learning Styles Inservice System*. Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon Publishing
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Griffiths, Carol (2004). *Language Learning Strategies: Theory and Research*. New Zealand: School of Foundation Studies AIS St Helens
- Hayes, Nicky (2006). *Foundations of Psychology 3rd Edition*. London: Thomson

- Hurlburt, Russel T. & Heavey, Christopher L. (2006). *Exploring Inner Experience – The Descriptive Experience in Sampling Method*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Keefe, James W. (1988). *Profiling and Utilizing Learning Style*. Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Merriam, Sharan B. (1991). *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Wiley
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. (1984). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage
- Mugglestone, Patricia. "The Primary Curiosity Motive," *English Language Teaching Journal*, v31(2), 111-116
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. New York: Newbury House Publishers
- Phillips, Brian David (1993). *Roleplaying Games in the English as A Foreign Language Classroom*. An early draft of a paper presented to the Tenth National Conference on English Teaching and Learning in the Republic of China – 15 May 1993
- Punch, K. (1998). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Reid, J. (1995). *Learning Styles in ESL/EFL Classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle
- Shaw, David. "Interactive Literature," *Whole Earth Review*, Winter 1987, 128-29
- Stratton, Jerry (jerry@teetot.acusd.edu). *What is Role-Playing?* Article available via anonymous FTP from teetot.acusd.edu, 1991
- Theodorson, G.A., & Theodorson, A.G. (1969). *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology*. New York: Barnes & Noble
- Woodside, Arch G. (2010). *Case Study Research: Theory Method Practice* UK: Emerald
- Yin, Robert K. (2009). *Case Study Research Design and Methods. Fourth Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1986). *Development of A Structured Interview for Assessing Student Use of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies*. *American Educational Research Journal*, 23, 614-628