Teachers' Strategy to Develop Independent Learner Students in EFL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify teachers' strategy to develop independent learners and how the teachers implement it in English class. This research uses qualitative descriptive method to describe deeply a phenomenon regarding teacher;s strategy in developing independent learner. The source of this data is 7 teachers in North Sumatera who teach English in Junior High School and Senior High School. The data is all the answers from the teachers through questionnaire. The answer responses are analyzed based on the theories to answer these problems. The results show that the social strategy is the most strategy implement by the teachers and the way they implement by asking students to do collaborative work and asking students to accomplish tasks individually.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is deliberate and purposeful learning that is done independently. Independent learning is one of the ways that learners can receive and seek knowledge according to their abilities and how they do it. Independent learning is a process in which students actively, consciously, and responsibly manage their own learning activities in terms of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. It is a transition activity from learning controlled by teachers or adults to learning controlled by students themselves, with the aim of forming lifelong learners.

Based on Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe (2007) While some students seem to know instinctively how to learn independently, most need to be taught both strategies and methods to implement these strategies. Many students feel that they are doing self-directed learning, but they do not know whether their learning is effective or not as it may affect their learning outcomes and goals. The main purpose of self-directed learning is not just to improve academic grades, but to help students become experts in managing their own learning, not only in the classroom, but also in daily life. It also involves transferring control from the teacher or adult to the students, so that they can determine for themselves how to learn most effectively. Based on Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe (2007) Power is transferred to learners so that they can accomplish tasks more effectively and with less frustration once they understand the methods that work best for them. That way the teacher, who is a facilitator, can provide support to students in their process of independent learning. Gibbons (2002) The role of the teacher is changing and becoming more important and more demanding. Teaching self-directed learning requires a full repertoire of professional instruction, including training, coaching, mentoring and counseling skills. It is important for teachers to know what strategies suit the needs of their students, so that self-directed learning will be effective and achieve the goals that lifelong learners want to achieve.

While some students seem to know instinctively how to learn independently, most need to be taught strategies and methods to implement these strategies: While some students seem to know instinctively how to learn independently, most need to be taught strategies and methods to apply these strategies for self-directed learning to have an effective process and achieve the desired results. Based on this, the researcher would like

to conduct a mini research on how teacher's strategies create students to do independent learning in their classrooms.

Based on this gap, this article investigates strategies used by teachers in the classroom to develop students to become independent learners and investigate how teachers implement strategies to develop independent learners in the classroom.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Adhi Kusumastuti (2019:12), qualitative data are usually in the form of words or actions rather than numbers. Creswell (2016) states that qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem. In line with that, Hendryadi et al. (2019:218) define qualitative research as a naturalistic inquiry aimed at deeply understanding social phenomena in their natural context. Since this study explores the strategies used by teachers to foster independent learners, the qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration through open-ended questions during interviews. The subjects of this study were a teacher at on the school in Medan, and the object is her perspective of teacher's strategy to develop independent learners.
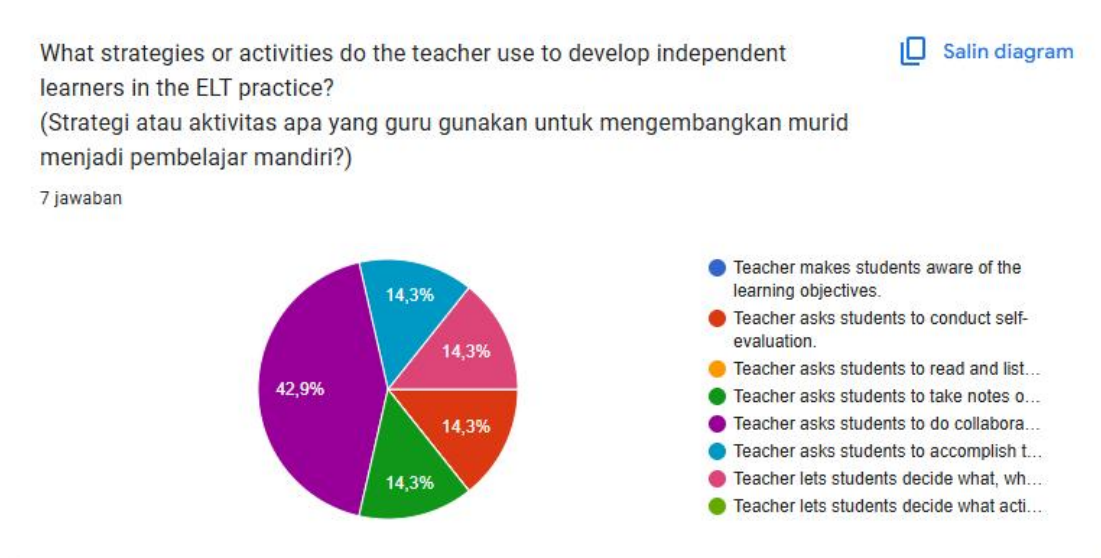
The primary data in this research were collected through interviews with an English teacher. The purpose was to gain insights into the strategies teachers use to encourage students to become independent learners. The data is from teachers's strategy to develop independent learners and the data source is from an English teacher.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain that qualitative research typically occurs in natural settings, and the researcher is a key instrument in data collection, directly interacting with the participants.

RESULTS

The first research problem is investigating the teachers strategy to develop students' independent learning can be found based on the answer of questionnaire. This article investigates 7 English teachers of junior and senior high school whom has at least 3 years experiences as teacher. According to Borg and Al - Busaidi (2012), there are 4

dimensions of activities that teacher use as strategy to develop independent learning students. They are technical dimension, psychological dimension, social dimension, and political dimension.

What strategies or activities do the teacher use to develop independent learners in the ELT practice?
(Strategi atau aktivitas apa yang guru gunakan untuk mengembangkan murid menjadi pembelajar mandiri?)

7 jawaban

- Teacher makes students aware of the learning objectives.
- Teacher asks students to conduct self-evaluation.
- Teacher asks students to read and list…
- Teacher asks students to take notes o…
- Teacher asks students to do collabora…
- Teacher asks students to accomplish t…
- Teacher lets students decide what, wh…
- Teacher lets students decide what acti…

42,9% 14,3% 14,3% 14,3% 14,3%

Based on the chart, 4 teachers use social strategy/dimension, 1 teacher uses psychological strategy, 1 teacher uses technical strategy, 1 teacher uses political strategy.

The social strategy takes place when learners collaborate in pairs or groups and provide feedback to one another. For example, a teacher might assign collaborative tasks or have students complete activities on their own. Group activities are beneficial because they allow students to support each other and learn collectively. Moreover, The activity "Teacher asks students to accomplish tasks individually" is categorized under the social dimension because it promotes individual responsibility within a social learning context, encouraging students to independently manage their learning. This fosters self-regulation and accountability, which are essential social skills for collaborative environments. Additionally, individual tasks prepare students to contribute responsibly in group work, enhancing their social autonomy.

Table 1. Distribution of the Questionnaire Items.

Strategy/dimension	Activities	Number of teachers
Psychological dimension	Teacher asks students to conduct self-evaluation.	1
Technical dimension	Teacher asks students to take notes of important points.	1
Social dimension	Teacher asks students to do collaborative work.	3
	Teacher asks students to accomplish tasks individually.	1
Political dimension	Teacher lets students decide what, when, and how to learn.	1

Based on the chart, it can investigate the second problem of this research, which is the way the strategies implemented. The table outlines the distribution of questionnaire items across four educational strategies: psychological, technical, social, and political. In the psychological strategy, one teacher encourages students to engage in self-evaluation, promoting self-awareness and personal growth. The technical strategy is represented by one teacher who asks students to take notes on important points, helping them develop organizational and academic skills. The social strategy has the most engagement, with three teachers promoting collaborative work among students to enhance teamwork. Additionally, one teacher within the social strategy emphasizes individual responsibility by assigning tasks to be completed independently. In the political strategy, one teacher supports student autonomy by allowing them to choose what, when, and how they learn. Overall, the table highlights varied teaching practices that support different aspects of student development.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study clearly indicate that teachers employ a variety of strategies to promote independent learning, with the social dimension emerging as the most frequently implemented. This observation is consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), which categorizes strategies into four interrelated dimensions: technical, psychological, social, and political. Notably, more than half of the participating teachers—four out of seven—demonstrated a strong inclination toward social strategies, incorporating activities such as collaborative group work and individual assignments conducted within a socially interactive environment.

Although at first glance individual tasks may appear to emphasize personal responsibility over group dynamics, their design within a broader social context justifies their classification as social strategies. Such activities allow students to take ownership of their roles while remaining part of a collective learning experience. This finding reinforces a key argument from the literature review: that independent learning is not limited to solitary study but also encompasses learner autonomy developed through meaningful social engagement and peer collaboration.

Conversely, strategies linked to the psychological, technical, and political dimensions were notably underutilized, with each being adopted by only one teacher. These less prevalent strategies included practices such as self-assessment, systematic note-taking, and the delegation of decision-making authority to students—each of which plays a crucial role in fostering self-regulation and learner agency. The minimal application of these dimensions may be attributed to several factors, including teachers' limited exposure to learner-centered methodologies, a lack of professional development in this area, or a persistent reliance on traditional instructional norms that prioritize teacher control over student autonomy.

Nonetheless, as supported by prior research (e.g., Benson, 2011; Kasanga & Kavurah, 2020), enabling learners to monitor their own progress and make choices about their learning pathways significantly enhances both their independence and intrinsic motivation. These insights suggest that while the current emphasis on social

strategies reflects a positive shift toward more interactive learning environments, it is equally important to cultivate a more holistic integration of all four strategic dimensions. A well-rounded approach that includes psychological reflection, technical skills, and political empowerment would not only reinforce the foundation of independent learning but also align more closely with the overarching goal of nurturing lifelong, self-directed learners—an objective central to this study.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to identify the strategies teachers use to develop independent learners in English language classrooms. The findings indicate that the social dimension is the most frequently applied strategy, with teachers encouraging collaboration and individual responsibility within a group setting. This confirms that independent learning does not solely mean learning in isolation but also involves building autonomy through interaction and mutual support among peers. However, the limited application of psychological, technical, and political strategies suggests a gap in the implementation of more holistic learner-centered approaches. A more balanced use of all four dimensions, as outlined by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), could enhance students' self-direction and long-term motivation. Therefore, it is important for teachers to expand their strategy repertoire to better support students in becoming autonomous, lifelong learners.

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