EXPLORING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES: INSIGHT FROM TIKTOK'S ENGLISH ON THE STREET INTERVIEWS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the English language learning strategies employed by individuals, drawing insights from spontaneous interviews featured on TikTok's *English on the Street* channel. Drawing on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies, the research aims to explore English language learning strategies as revealed through TikTok's "English on the Street" interviews. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzed 83 publicly available street interview videos using thematic analysis based on Braun, & Clarke (2006). Unlike previous research that has predominantly relied on structured surveys in formal classroom contexts, this study captures how learners naturally express and demonstrate their strategies in real life digital interactions. The findings revealed a diverse use of strategies, with cognitive, social, and metacognitive strategies being the most frequently reported. Participants indicated learning English through media exposure, social interaction, self-directed practices, and to a lesser extent, memory and affective strategies. These results highlight the effectiveness of informal, learner-driven approaches and emphasize the relevance of digital platforms in supporting English learning. Practical implications suggest integrating similar strategies in formal education, while future research is encouraged to investigate underreported strategies such as affective and compensation strategies using more in-depth interviews.

Keywords: English Language Learning, English on the Street, Language Learning Strategies, TikTok English Interviews

INTRODUCTION

Language learning strategies play a crucial role in developing learners' linguistic competence (JN et al., 2025). The frequent use of appropriate strategies can significantly enhance a learner's ability to acquire the target language effectively (Oxford, 2016). Understanding which strategies contribute most effectively to language acquisition is essential for educators and learners. Each individual typically adopts strategies that are suitable for their learning styles and preferences, which not only fosters a sense of autonomy but also supports more meaningful and personalized learning experiences. While instructional strategies implemented by teachers can provide structure and guidance, independently developed strategies are often perceived as more flexible and effective in achieving language learning objectives.

In recent years, technological advancements have played a significant role in improving the quality of teaching and learning processes (Sari &Wahyudin, 2019). The integration of technology in education, particularly through social media platforms, has received growing attention. TikTok, for instance, has emerged as a popular digital tool that can contribute to the development of students' English language skills especially for young people. Several studies such as Laili (2023) and Simanungkalit & Katemba (2023) have reported that TikTok enhances student motivation and engagement in language learning. Moreover, it offers learners a platform to share their experiences and independent learning strategies, thereby further supporting their language proficiency development.

Language learning strategies are the ways to learn English more enjoyable and more useful for enhancing English language competence. Oxford (1990) classified language learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies refer to the strategies that influence learners directly when they are learning, such as memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Meanwhile, indirect strategies mean that the strategies support the learning process without directly involving language use, namely metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

Numerous studies have examined the use of language learning strategies among learners with varying backgrounds and by employing different research instruments. For instance, Hapsari (2019) conducted a survey using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to investigate the strategies employed by students in an English Language Education Department, revealing that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used. Similarly, Lestari & Wahyudin (2020) explored language learning strategies among students enrolled in an English Literature program using the same questionnaire (SILL), and likewise

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identified metacognitive strategies as dominant. In a different context, Lee & Heinz (2016) investigated the language learning strategies reported by advanced English learners in Korea through essay writing, also concluding that metacognitive strategies played a significant role in learners' language development. More recently, Chanderan & Hashim (2022) utilized the SILL questionnaire to identify the strategies used by ESL undergraduate students, and their findings indicated that both metacognitive and social strategies were among the most frequently adopted. Collectively, these studies underscore the prominence of metacognitive strategies across diverse learner populations and methodological approaches, highlighting their consistent relevance in English language acquisition.

However, despite these contributions, existing research has primarily focused on formal educational settings and data collection through structured instruments like surveys and written reflections. There remains a limited understanding of how language learning strategies are employed and articulated in informal, real world contexts, particularly through digital platforms such as TikTok. Few studies have investigated how learners demonstrate and verbalize their language learning strategies in spontaneous, authentic interactions online. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to explore English language learning strategies as revealed through TikTok's "English on the Street" interviews by using qualitative descriptive approach and analyzing selected video content from the TikTok platform that features unscripted interviews with individuals discussing their experiences with English. This method allows for the identification and classification of language learning strategies based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, as naturally expressed in everyday.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design by collecting street interviews, with the data analyzed through descriptive-analytical methods. The sample in this study consists of visitors to Baraga, Bandung, West Java who have been interviewed by TikTok content creators in English on the street channel. The analysis revealed several English language learning strategies that individuals employ in their everyday lives.

The study ensured the ethical use of data by only analyzing content that was publicly accessible and anonymizing any identifiable information in the final report. There are 152 videos in English on the street channel on TikTok. The selected videos featured a diverse range of respondents, including both Indonesian and international participants. The content creator asks some questions related to their identity including their job and how did they learn English. Meanwhile, 65 videos do not mention how did they learn English. There are 3

videos shown behind the scenes and there is an error video. Therefore 83 were selected for analysis and 69 were excluded.

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, data triangulation was applied through the combination of three sources, namely primary verbal data from the TikTok video interviews, non-verbal contextual cues such as gestures, tone, and spontaneous reactions captured in the videos, and researcher field notes that documented repeated patterns and insights during the data coding and analysis phases. hese multiple data sources supported a richer understanding of participant responses and minimized bias by cross verification the emerging themes.

This study was analyzed by using thematic analysis as the primary technique for analyzing qualitative data. This analysis was adopted from Braun, & Clarke (2006) which have six phase frameworks. The analysis began with a process of familiarization, during which the researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the content. Selecting particular sections of an interview while excluding others is crucial in this pocess as it results in a more concise transcript that is easier to analyze (Lamba et al., 2022). This was followed by generating initial codes by identifying key statements and phrases that reflected the participants' English learning strategies. These codes were descriptive in nature, such as "practicing with friends," "watching English movies," or "asking for feedback." Coding was done manually to allow for close engagement with the content.

The next step involved organizing these codes into broader themes, which were followed by commonly recognized categories of language learning strategies, based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy. Oxford divides language learning strategies into two categories, namely direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include memory strategies for storing and retrieving information (e.g., using mental images, associating words with experiences), cognitive strategies for understanding and producing language (e.g., repetition, translation, take a note), and compensation strategies for overcoming knowledge gaps (e.g., guessing meaning from context, using synonyms or gestures). Meanwhile indirect strategies contain metacognitive strategies for managing the learning process (e.g., planning, monitoring, evaluating progress), affective strategies for managing emotions and motivation (e.g., encouraging oneself, using relaxation techniques), and social strategies for interacting with others to enhance learning (e.g., asking questions, cooperating with peers, seeking correction).

Each theme was then carefully reviewed to ensure internal consistency and relevance to the research questions. The themes were refined, clearly defined, and named to reflect their underlying meaning and significance. For instance, references to practicing English with peers or using social media for language exposure were categorized under "social strategies," while instances of self monitoring and goal setting were grouped under "metacognitive strategies."

Finally, the thematic findings were interpreted and connected to the existing literature in the field of language learning, providing insights into how learners in informal, real-life contexts such as those interviewed in the street develop and apply their English learning strategies. This analytical approach allowed for a detailed, nuanced understanding of the participants' learning experiences and strategy use in authentic, spontaneous situations (Nowell et al., 2017).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The responses to the interview question "How did you learn your English?" reported a variety of strategies that participants employed in their language learning journeys. The findings were categorized based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, which includes six main groups: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

1. Cognitive Strategies

A significant number of participants mentioned strategies such as watching English-language media (movies, Disney shows, Barney, Phineas and Ferb, TV shows), reading novels, playing games, and listening to music and imitating the lyrics. These reflect the use of cognitive strategies, particularly repetition, elaboration, and inferencing, as learners actively process and engage with language input.

Some participants stated that watching movies such as Barney when they were kids was their way to learn English. This strategy can improve their English ability therefore they can speak English very well right now.

"I've been learnig English since I was little basically. Um my parents forced me to watch Barney without subtitles and I think my love for English grew since then."

These findings align with Oxford's (1990) description of cognitive strategies, which involve manipulating language material directly through reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, and practicing. The use of authentic media provides rich, contextualized language exposure that fosters incidental learning and improves vocabulary, listening comprehension, and

pronunciation (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). As supported by Lee & Heinz (2016), learners who engage with English language media outside the classroom tend to develop stronger receptive skills. Moreover, using language learning applications like Duolingo and Discord English servers also falls under this category.

" Actually when I was in high school I really shy about my English and I really not confidence about my English. But I think since covid, I spend my time in from of my laptop and then because that I like to join the community and application Discord".

This observation supports findings by Aminatun & Oktaviani (2019) and Godwin-Jones, (2018), who emphasized the role of digital platforms in promoting autonomous, gamified learning environments. Such platforms enable vocabulary practice, grammar drills, and peer interaction, thus reinforcing cognitive engagement with language.

2. Social Strategies

Participants reported learning English through interaction with others, such as talking with foreigners, traveling abroad, learning from friends or church communities, speaking English every Friday in the office, and even learning directly from parents or workplace owners. These activities are classic examples of social strategies in Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, where learners seek opportunities for meaningful communication, ask questions, and cooperate with others in learning.

"... I meet so many people from Malay, America, thats way I learn my English with them"

These strategies highlight the significance of social interaction in language learning. Recent evidence from Zhu (2025) shows that social media language communities offer diverse social contexts that enhance motivation and language use. Research during the pandemic confirms similar benefits in digitally mediated social contexts (Husna et al., 2022). By engaging in real time conversations and using English in social settings, learners receive immediate feedback and negotiate meaning, which deepens language acquisition. Studies by Dörnyei (2005) and Richards (2003) have also emphasized the effectiveness of social interaction in developing communicative competence.

Furthermore, using church communities or office environments as informal learning spaces illustrates how language learning naturally integrates into social routines. *" I think I learn a lot about English from community which is in my church"*. This highlights the importance of creating supportive environments where learners can use English without fear of judgment.

3. Metacognitive Strategies

Some participants mentioned self-directed practices such as speaking English every day

alone, using language learning apps, and participating in structured learning activities like English courses. These actions reflect metacognitive strategies, including planning for learning, monitoring progress, and evaluating language use. Oxford (1990) emphasized the importance of these strategies for managing the learning process effectively

" I just try force my self , you know myself like keep talking in English like everyday".

Learners who practice English regularly or set specific goals (e.g., speaking English every Friday) demonstrate awareness of their learning needs and take deliberate steps to meet them. This strategic self regulation is positively correlated with language achievement (Oxford, 2016). These results also are aligned with Hapsari (2019), who found that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used among university students. Additionally, by using applications and online resources, learners can personalize their learning experiences and develop autonomy.

4. Memory Strategies

This kind of strategy is not explicit ly stated, some strategies imply the use of memory-enhancing techniques. For example, imitating music lyrics or repeating lines from TV shows involve memory strategies such as repetition, imagery, and association. According to Oxford, (1990) these techniques aid in storing and retrieving new language forms.

Although memory strategies were less prominently reported than cognitive or social strategies, their presence supports the idea that learners naturally employ multiple strategies simultaneously. These findings support Elli's (2008) observation that vocabulary acquisition, especially in informal contexts, often involves repeated exposure and rehearsal.

5. Affective Strategies

Although not directly mentioned, several responses suggest affective involvement. Watching cartoons, listening to music, and participating in relaxed social learning environments may reduce anxiety and increase learners' motivation. According to Oxford, (1990), affective strategies help learners control their emotional responses to learning, such as fear of speaking or lack of confidence.

Entertainment media, by providing enjoyable learning contexts, help learners build positive associations with the language. As Dörnyei, (2005) notes, motivation is a central component of successful language acquisition, and affective engagement is particularly important for learners in informal settings.

6. Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies, such as guessing meaning from context or using synonyms when vocabulary is limited, were not explicitly mentioned in the participants' responses.

However, it is possible that learners used such strategies during interactions with foreigners or while watching media content without subtitles. The absence of explicit references suggests that compensation strategies may be more difficult for learners to identify or articulate without targeted questioning.

Overall, the participants in this study demonstrated a rich variety of language learning strategies, especially cognitive, social, and metacognitive strategies. These findings strongly align with prior studies such as Lestari & Wahyudin (2020) Hapsari (2019) and Chanderan & Hashim (2022), all of which highlight the prominence of metacognitive and social strategies in successful language learning. Furthermore, this study contributes new insights by revealing how these strategies are applied in informal, real life digital contexts, such as TikTok interviews and online communities. The use of spontaneous language, peer interaction, and digital tools illustrates the evolving nature of language learning in the 21st century.

These findings shows the relevance of Oxford's (1990) taxonomy as a comprehensive framework for analyzing informal learning practices. The interviews also reveal how modern tools such as apps, digital media, and social networks play an increasingly central role in shaping language learning outside the classroom. It supports sociocultural views of language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Richards, 2003), emphasizing the importance of emotional and social engagement. The diversity of strategies reflects not only the learners' resourcefulness but also the importance of designing instructional interventions that support strategy development in both formal and informal settings.

CONCLUSION

This study explored English language learning strategies as reflected in responses from TikTok's English on the Street interviews. By categorizing the responses using Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, the research revealed that learners employ a diverse range of strategies, with cognitive, social, and metacognitive strategies being the most frequently used. Participants often reported learning English through media consumption (TV, music, games), social interaction (with friends, communities, or foreigners), and self-regulated learning practices (daily speaking routines, apps, and courses).

These findings confirm that informal and media-rich environments, along with digital tools and social contexts, play an increasingly important role in language learning today. They also support the ongoing relevance of Oxford's (1990) taxonomy in analyzing language learning behaviors across diverse and contemporary settings.

This research suggest that, language teacher can incorporate authentic materials such as

song, videos and games into the learning process in the classroom. English language learner can use English in daily self-practice, using language apps (e.g., Duolingo, Discord), and interacting with English speakers in informal settings can significantly improve fluency and confidence. It is important to curriculum developers to integrate strategy training, especially cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies into course syllabi to foster learner autonomy and adaptability.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample was not randomly selected and came from a single TikTok account, limiting generalizability. Futhermore, participants' responses were brief and not probed in depth, which may have led to underreporting of less obvious strategies.

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