

The Episode of Inspiration and Aspiration:
Acquiring a Highly Self-efficacy and Persistent Autonomous Language Learner

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“Champions aren’t made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them – a desire, a dream, a vision.”

Muhammad Ali

Being an independent foreign language learner is not effortless attempt when it is not supported by both natural setting and official demand. In reference with the success note uttered by Muhammad Ali, this paper aims to present the resistant experience of an autonomous professional translator who used to be the writer’s pupil. Despite being a free-lanced translator, he never restrains to acquire his personal professional achievement. Joining any award competition in writing blogs and book reviews leads him to be at the level of such qualified professional. He is also requested to be a thesis reviewer in some opportunities. The learning and professional strategies he has been undergoing to enhance his career would be a commendable discussion in this narrative study. It may become such an authentic sample in EFL teaching and learning from what he is inspired and aspired to become a highly self-efficacy and persistent language learner.

INTRODUCTION

Being an English teacher for years put me to the period where I meet my ex students who really make their life good with their professions. Yet, there were only few of my students that I could not forget how I got along with them both in the classroom and outside. I found that there were some students who inspired me to be a highly motivated English advanced learner. Among my special students, there was only who really drove me to be the way I am now, as an English teacher who always attempt to make my students learn profoundly rather than only get a lesson from my teaching.

The topic proposed in this conference is the opportunity for me to share my personal feeling and experience about my student in the form of narrative story combined with some interviews I conducted through mail. The reason I choose the model to be my model of ‘a good language learner’ due to that he does not involve in any institution at the moment. He works as a translator independently. He writes some articles for online magazine and his blog. Amazingly he is very active in joining any writing competition to put himself as the one who has an

astonishing competence in his field by winning some awards as well. Personally, I cannot hide my admiration to what he has achieved so far. To start his brief review to be a successful English learner and practitioner, the following is the result interview with him some time ago.

It seems to me that you really make your life from being an English nerd. How can you gain such a highly motivation to improve and maintain your English proficiency while you do not work any longer in any institution or company?

It was my father who shaped my soul to be like what I am now. He inspired me to spend the whole time to read and study. He was not a teacher but he never spent his time for nothing but reading. He always told me that life is time to learn, then do not waste time not to learn anything.

That was about your motivation in learning. How about your English proficiency? Since when do you like English?

Actually I never think that English would be my way for living. I like learning language since I studied at Denanyar Jombang where Arabic and English were the daily languages used for communication. It was my teacher from Maroko that encouraged me to be more intensive and sharpened in learning English although I got 6 for my English grade in rapport. I think that the turning point of my English interest and the time I aspire myself to be more keen on English.

Looking at your CV, I wonder how you can keep and develop your personal professional competence. Would like to share your secret of learning English? Do you have any special strategy?

When you mentioned the word 'strategy', it has come to me as an awkward notion since what I am about to reveal are perhaps simple tips rather than elaborate techniques you may require. These are what came to my mind when speaking of my personal 'strategy' in language learning. Frankly speaking, I am kinda fond of learning new languages, the foreign ones. This fact may have driven me to learn a new language. I personally find it pleasant and a bit cushy when learning a language, especially English and Chinese Mandarin. But this does not apply to other

foreign languages which I have proven to be not good at. Let's say I am a language enthusiast. Things about language are always interesting and attractive to learn because we also study history and culture within the language.

Do I have strategy to pave my way in learning a foreign language? The following tips may be relevant to what you are expecting.

1. DICTIONARY

I keep my dictionary handy. This is my past habit when I started learning English. Whenever I go, I take my small dictionary with me. When new words struck me (say, appearing on billboard, products leaflet, etc.), I rushed to look up their meaning in the dictionary. As soon as I know what those words embody, I put them in my own sentences. I composed sentences to implant their meaning in my mind. However, I no longer take any dictionary now when I am outdoor. Instead, I memorize words I find and hurry to get the meaning when I return home. In fact, the drive to learn new words are less strong than what I previously experienced. But I still do like injecting any foreign words/expressions into my memory collection.

2. COMMUNITY

During college, I joined an English club where we shares ideas about many things and spoke in English actively. This activity was of great value since we had the opportunity to express thoughts and arguments from our own perspective. We were encouraged to develop and improve both our speaking skill in English and how to communicate with clarity.

3. PRACTICE WITH NATIVE/ENGLISH SPEAKER

Since I no longer belong to any groups or language clubs, I now train my language skill by talking to friends or people who speak English. As a matter of fact, we donot speak the way speaking normally happens. Instead, I chat with whom I can talk in English via Facebook or Blackberry Messenger. This definitely enriches my vocabularies and enables me to gain more confidence to use English as a second language in the real life context.

4. READING

You certainly agree that reading is inspiring. Being face to face with particular text in English keeps my mind spinning to process information and to stock up new vocabs and insights as well. There is much to say about reading benefit. But something is very certain: reading protects our brain from internal damage.

5. WATCHING FILM

While my listening competence is not outstanding, it is always useful to watch movies in English where we enjoy beautiful scenes and extract many valuable things including foreign expressions and different culture. When it is possible, reading the script will make us comprehend what we may miss during watching. This probably ignites better understanding about elements in the film thoroughly.

6. WRITING

It is no doubt that putting ideas in words do reinforce what we have in mind. When appearing in writing, words sustain ideas as well as language aspects inherent in the paragraph. Writing allows me to store my ideas or personal opinions in words and highlights my competence progress in terms of insight. The other major advantage is that I can practice my English where I deal with syntactic structure and semantic features. And that is the reason why I keep writing, either by embedding ideas on my personal blog or by taking part in a contest where English is chiefly required.

Above all, dictionary is still very dominant in my language learning. I look up to find synonyms and meaning in order to create more creative sentences and compelling expressions instead of sloppily dull presentation.

What an excellent tips for other language learner! Indeed, I have no uncertainty to say you are a very good example of highly self-efficacy and persistent autonomous language learner. I must learn how to acquire such a good self-efficacy and motivation from you.

Discussion

Considering the present interview, I may state that the model has two strong points to become such a startling self-efficacy and highly motivation language learner. There are truly persuaded from both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Dornyei:1990). Certain learners seemed to be successful regardless of methods or teaching techniques as Brown affirm that no single method of language teaching and research findings would mark the start of universal success in teaching a second language (2007). From what he shared, he has awareness style and action strategies in shaping his English proficiency. Dealing with his past experience when he got 6 for his English grade, he had a very strong self-determination theory to breed his autonomous action in improving his language learning. Based on attribution theory, the people's past experiences may affect their future achievement (Dornyei: 2000).

The present figure also has a very clear goal theory that lead him to the recent position where he does not merely to be hired by any particular company to be acknowledged by a commercial translator. His attempt to set his position in his field has been noted evidently by his works and his activity in his blog. His orientation is clearly stated to make him as he is at the moment since he always has goal in learning foreign language (Dornyei:2000).

Related to his strategy, he seems that he does not apply any particular strategy, yet most of his experience in learning foreign language are in line with the characteristics of good language learner. The following is the review of what he has done for his proficiency development.

1. Using Dictionary

Dictionary is the tool that the model depends on for his cognitive strategy towards new vocabulary (Griffiths: 2008). Based on the characteristics of language learning, the model seems to have his own way and personal responsibility to his way of learning of vocabulary (Rubin and Thompson: 1994). The model admitted that he relied on dictionary very much as he has high inquisitiveness at novel term he had never known before. His awareness style in comprehending novel vocabularies urge him to facilitate his cognitive strategy by organising the information of the language (Rubin and Thompson: 1994). His action to implant the new words is by making a sentence that use the new term he just got. This indicates that he utilizes action strategy to accomplish his awareness (Brown: 2007). By implementing such new terms in appropriate context, he

has the creativity to feel the language in command usage as indicated he possesses the second and third characteristics of a good language learner, i.e. organize information about language and creative and try to feel the language by experimenting its grammar and words.

2. Community and practice with native/English speaker

By joining the community that facilitate the model to practice his English, he has shown that he is the language learner who create the opportunities to use English inside and outside the classroom (Rubin and Thompson: 1994). It covers his necessity to enhance his skill practice in speaking and sharing the ideas in natural setting. His awareness to attain his English community constrains him to the socioaffective strategies (Brown: 2007) as he mentioned that by using social media such as facebook and blackberry messenger group to maintain the community that he no longer had like once he had in the college.

3. Reading

Being inspired by his late father, the model acquire his cognitive knowledge by establishing good reading habit. By reading English books he attains the vocabularies in the real common usage and shapes the sentence semantically in his mind. This habit makes his linguistic input of reading is naturally required. Although in a first language, linguistic input is usually initially received via listening, it is often via reading that students are exposed to a language other than their first. Reading in English also highlights the importance of action orientation in the target language reading classroom (Schramm in Griffiths: 2008). In a process called elaboration, the model integrate pre-knowledge elements into his mental models. The availability of such pre-knowledge depends on interests, which means that texts based on unfamiliar cultural information pose a higher reading challenge than texts based on one's own culture. By reading, the model also gains more information is derived from his intrinsic factor. This habit fosters him to be familiar with discourse markers and deepen his linguistic input. It afterwards associates with a reading strategies or set of strategies such as recognizing main ideas, inferring connections among parts of a text, recognizing organizational

patterns in texts, identifying typical genre features of a text (Grabe:2009). This reading habit is a significantly distinguished language learner's character that expands the model's expertise as he does reading for his personal willingness and interest.

4. Watching Film

Another attempt to get involve in natural setting of English is managing all activities that may facilitate the target language environment. Since English is not a daily language for the model, he made film as one of target language media to enrich and practice his listening comprehension as he noted that listening is the skill he isdeficiently practiced.This strategy corresponds with the characteristics of a good language learner number 5, i.e. *learn to live with uncertainty by not getting confused and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding every word* (Rubin and Thompson: 1994). Listening practice by watching film correspondingly brings him to be accustomed with interpersonal and transactional conversation. Therefore the familiarity of the interlocutors produces the conversations with more assumption, implications, and other meanings hidden between the lines (Brown: 2007).

5. Writing

Reading a lot of information may make one write his prior knowledge he gained from reading activity. The model with his astonishingly self-efficacy reinforce himself to write what he has in mind. He strives to sustain ideas as well as language aspects inherent in the paragraph. His linguistic inputs plays more significantly in his writing.Use memory strategies to bring back what has been learned in his writing puts him that he is truly a good language learner (Rubin and Thompson:1994). Pertaining linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of the first language, in learning a second language build his writing is suggestively recommended to read. His cultural awareness in his bilingual writing also demonstrates natural translation. This competence indicates that he owns the 14th characteristics of a good language learner i.e.*Learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language regarding the formality of the situation*(Rubin and Thompson:1994).

Closing

Regarding the strategies have been discussed, it comes to the conclusion that being a good language learner requires an irrefutable distinguished character and strong personality. A strategy is useful if the following conditions are present: (a) the strategy relates well to the L2 task at hand, (b) the strategy fits the particular student's learning style preferences to one degree or another, and (c) the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies. Strategies that fulfill these conditions "make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990). Learning strategies can also enable students to become more independent, autonomous, lifelong learners (Little: 1991). Yet above all, the episode of inspiration and aspiration may not be separated from one's success of learning. Primarily, the presence of inspiration people assists meaningfully to shape a highly self-efficacy and persistent autonomous language learner.

References


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Appendix


The Model Curriculum Vitae

KHOMARUDIN, ISNAINI

Contact Details

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Personal Particulars

Place/Date of Birth	: Lamongan/29 January 1982
Sex	: Male
Marital Status	: Married
Interests and Hobbies	: Writing, Singing, Philosophy, Literature, Swimming
Nationality	: Indonesian
ID Card No.	: 3201242901820002

Qualification

Qualification	: Bachelor's Degree
Field of Study	: English
Major	: Literature
Institute/University	: Diponegoro University, Semarang
Grade	: 3.33
Graduation Date	: September 2005
Latest TOEFL score	: 553

Seminar and Training

- 2008 *Understanding Motivation and Identifying Child's Learning Behavior*, a Talent Seminar by PumpingIndonesia Foundation, Bogor, West Java
- 2007 *Basic Conversational Mandarin*, Hanlin Mandarin Institute, Bogor, West Java
- 2007 *The 55th TEFLIN (Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia) International Conference* held by The State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta
- 2006 *Teacher Training*, BBC English Training Specialist, Semarang
- 2006 *Financial Revolution*, Solo, Central Java, with motivator Tung Desem Waringin
- 2004 *Teacher training*, BBC English Training Specialist English, Semarang, Central Java
- 2002 *Fiction Writing Workshop*, Faculty of Letters, Diponegoro University, with bestselling author Ahmad Tohari
- 2002 *On Scientific Writing*, Faculty of Letters, Diponegoro University

Employment Record

- 2008 – 2009 Editor for motivational books at ***Penebar Swadaya Publisher***, Depok, West Java
- 2006 – 2008 Editor for English textbooks at ***Yudhistira Publisher***, Bogor, West Java
- 2004 – 2006 English instructor at ***BBC English Training Specialist***, Semarang, Central Java
- 2005 Interpreter for ***IWAPI – PEP Canada***, Central Java
- 2005 Translator for foster parents support at ***Yayasan Kesejahteraan Keluarga Soegijapranata (YKKS)***, Semarang, Central Java
- 2004 Part-time surveyor at ***MarkPlus and Co.***
- 2003 English teacher at ***First Study*** English Course
- 2008 – 2011 Owner and teacher at ***brightinstitute*** (a free English course for underprivileged children in Cibolang, Bogor)

Award and Honor

- 2001 Scholarship from Dikti for learning support
- 2001 Winner of English narrative text reading competition, Diponegoro University
- 2005 ***Teacher of the Year*** at BBC Branch II, Tlogosari, Semarang
- 2011 1st winner of *Ttokpokki* book review contest
- 2011 1st winner of blog review contest held by www.sederet.com
- 2013 1st winner of book review contest held by WahyuMedia Publisher (www.wahyumedia.com)

2013 1st winner of book trailer contest held by NouraBooks Publisher (www.noura.mizan.com)

Books and Publications

Year	Book/Project Title	Author	Employer/Publisher	Employed as
2012-2013	English lyrics/songs	Sean Yap	Malaysian composer	Translator
2012	<i>Hand of Iblis</i>	Omar Zaid	Zaytuna, Jakarta	Translator
2011	<i>The Life of Muhammad</i>	Al-Waqidi	Zaytuna, Jakarta	Translator
2011	<i>Fire of Hell & Garden of Paradise</i>	Syaikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani	Zaytuna, Jakarta	Translator
2011	<i>The Quran and the Life of Excellence</i>	Sultan Abdulhameed	Zaytuna, Jakarta	Translator
2010	<i>Indonesian Movies Catalogue</i>	Team	The Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Translator
2010	<i>Asyiknya Panen Bersama (bilingual)</i>	Aisha S. Maharani	Sixmidad, Bogor	English editor
2010	<i>Conspiracy Theories</i>	Jamie King	Raih Asa Sukses, Depok	Translator
2010	<i>100 Ways to Happy Children</i>	Dr. Timothy J. Sharp	Raih Asa Sukses, Depok	Translator
2009	<i>100 Ways to Happiness</i>	Dr. Timothy J. Sharp	Raih Asa Sukses, Depok	Translator
2009	<i>200 Magnificent Wisdom from Hadith for Kids (bilingual)</i>	Agil Abdullah HP	Pustaka Hisyam, Bogor	Translator
2009	<i>Science: Workbook 1, 2, 3 for Elementary Students Grade 4, 5, 6 (bilingual)</i>	Science Team	Yudhistira, Bogor	Translator
2004	<i>Head to Toe Science</i>	Jim Wiese	Pakar Raya, Bandung	Co-translator (with Herudjati Poerwoko, PhD)

Other Publications

- 2010** Translation editor of a book entitled **Success** by Andrea Molloy for Raih Asa Sukses Publisher
- 2010** Translation editor of a book entitled **Coach Yourself to Success** by Andrea Molloy for Raih Asa Sukses Publisher
- 2010** Translation editor of a book entitled **Redesign Your Life** for Raih Asa Sukses Publisher
- 2009** Editing English translation for **Information and Communication Technology 1–3 for Junior High School Grade 7, 8 and 9** for Yudhistira Publisher
- 2009** Editing English translation for **Information and Communication Technology 1–3 for Senior High School Grade 10, 11 and 12** for Yudhistira Publisher
- 2006** Poems contributor for an anthology of poems entitled **Khianat Waktu**, by Lamongan Arts Council
- 2006** Author of a personal collection of poems entitled **Sujudku Meneteskan Rembulan**, published by Nuansa Aulia, Bandung, West Java
- 2005** Poems contributor for an anthology of poems entitled **No! (Zero)**, by Faculty of Letters, Diponegoro University
- 2004** “*Ambivalensi Kebebasan*”, an essay for Suara Merdeka daily newspaper
- 2004** Translator (with Herudjati Poerwoko, PhD) for a book entitled **Head to Toe** for Pakar Raya Publisher, Bandung, West Java
- 2004** Poems contributor for an anthology of poems entitled **Lanskap Telunjuk** by Lamongan Arts Council
- 2003** Poems contributor for an anthology of poems entitled **Bulan Merayap** by Lamongan Arts Council
- 2003** Poems in *Manunggal University Magazine*
- 2003** Poems in *Jurnal Puisi*
- 2003** “*What is Literature?*”, an article for Miracle English Magazine
- 2003** “*A Note on Creativity*”, an essay for *Hayam Wuruk, Faculty Magazine*
- 2002** Story contributor for a book entitled **Graffiti Imaji** (anthology of short short stories), by Yayasan Multimedia Sastra, Jakarta
- 2002** Poems in *Annida biweekly Magazine*