

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HIGH ACHIEVERS' LEARNING STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACTS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE COMPOSITION

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Abstract

The use of strategies can be useful when students are conscious about their capability in writing. Learners use various strategies as their approaches to deal with difficulties in writing. Oxford (1990) believes that strategies are the conscious steps of behavior used by language learner to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall and new information. Inopportunately, there are still many learners who do not realize the importance of using appropriate strategies in analyzing their writing strategies which later can make the learners be anxious in facing the problems or difficulties in writing enhanced composition.

This research is descriptive case – qualitative research dealing with learning strategies of English Education Department students in writing descriptive composition. The research questions were 1). What learning strategies are used by English Education Department high achievers in writing descriptive compositions? and 2). What are the impacts of learning strategies for high achievers' writing descriptive compositions? To answer the research questions, interviews, observations, and writing analyses were used as research instruments on five English department students as the subjects of this research. Based on the academic data from staff administrator and lecturers, those students are high achievers in their writing course in the department

The researcher attempted to describe the types of participants' strategies in writing descriptive compositions to find out the high frequency strategies and their impacts in students' writing descriptive composition.

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The results demonstrated that the learning strategies used were able to assist the students in composing essays; those strategies are cognitive and compensation strategies. Nonetheless, some students consciously relish to use social strategy. At some points, the data showed that the more strategies used by the students, the better the writing quality will be.

Keywords: *learning strategy, writing, descriptive text, high achievers*

Research Report

Writing is one of the English skills that must be enhanced by English learners including university students. It is a productive skill of English which enables the students to convey thoughts and perceptions to other people. Similar to speaking, writing is written communication to express ideas in mind and to transfer knowledge or to provide information from an author to a reader through text. Weigle (2002) believes that writing functions primarily to support and reinforce patterns of oral language use, grammar, and vocabulary. Further, it is also utilized in communication among people in order to achieve a personal goal. This contrasts listening and reading which belong to receptive skills.

Writing is also a way of knowing, a method of discovery and analysis. Through writing, learners discover new aspects of a certain topic and its discourse; therefore, it is a task which is partially dependent on the individuals, their creativity and the way they approach each topic. Moreover, students in the university level must obtain the capability in academic writing. It is one of crucial skills and basic requirement that must be owned by university students for academic purpose. The students are demanded to write thoughts and concepts in the form of papers or research reports. The students' writing skills distinguish the quality of their written thought about how to generate their words in an academic form. Along with reading skill, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in non-academic purpose in various fields;

such as social and economy. Further, some academic requirements, such as applying for a scholarship or job, need a formal written form to convince the tester.

In order to get a higher level of writing skill or achieve a high score in writing, learners may use various strategies in learning that can simply be used to assist in writing academically. Strategies are the conscious steps of behavior used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall and one of new information (Oxford, 1990). The strategy used by the learners may be various since the learners tend to use similar or the same behaviors or actions in learning the language. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) present three main categories of learning strategies; including meta-cognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies. In addition, Oxford (1990) classifies the categories more comprehensively. She made distinctions between direct and indirect strategies which are generated into small classification each. Direct strategies cover memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. The indirect strategies include meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies.

In the present study, the researcher intended to investigate the learning strategies used by the English education department students in writing an essay in what paces the students generate and elaborate the knowledge and schema in written form. The investigation of the students' learning strategy obtains students' awareness on the strengths and weaknesses in getting higher level of writing skill. In this study, the students who are called high achievers attain high competences in English proficiency skills. They are able to accomplish and complete the writing task with high score through various strategies. The strategies used by the students are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed environment, which is essential for developing communicative competence (Irmawati, 2014). Moreover, the English department students will discover advantages when the English

writing skill reaches higher level to fulfill academic requirements. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved and greater self-confidence (Oxford, 1990). Considering all advantageous of investigating the learning strategies, the researcher means to conduct a study on learning strategies in writing. This present study is entitled “English Education Department High Achievers’ Learning Strategies and Their Impacts in Writing Descriptive Composition.”

Research Problems

In connection with the title and the background of the study, two research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the learning strategies used by the English education department high achievers in writing descriptive compositions?
2. What are the impacts of learning strategies for the high achievers in writing descriptive compositions?

Significance of the Study

The results of the study give some contributions to students, teachers, and future researchers. It is crucial and functional for both teachers and learners in the English intensive program and the language center of the university to acquire higher level of writing skill. The result of this study can be a reflection and measurement for English Education department in determining language learners’ improvement.

Moreover, the students can identify the strengths and weaknesses about the learning strategy they use. This stimulates the students’ awareness and willingness in learning to write English essays. Further, they can improve their writing skills to communicate well in written English professionally and academically; such as articles, summaries and even thesis.

The research findings are also expected to encourage the teacher to be able to comprehend, recognize and stimulate their learning strategies

for the students to improve their writing skills. Having investigated the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies, the teacher may have more opportunities to improve accurately the students English writing skills.

At last, this research gives information about strategies used by the first year high achievers of English Education program in essays. Expectantly, the finding can help the next researchers to develop or continue the topic of the research. The result of the investigation can be used as a reference for developing future research about learning strategies in writing skill.

Defining Learning Strategy

The term “Learning strategy” has been defined by many experts. Yet, the definition is slightly dissimilar from learning style. Brown (2007:119) defines strategy as a specific method of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation of achieving a particular end, well-planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. Learning strategies as specific behaviours or thought processes the high achievers use to enhance their own learning. Moreover, Richards and Piatt (1992: 209) state that learning strategies are “intentional behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information”. In the other words, learning strategies are the complex plans concerning learning process learners make. Further, all the learning plans must differ the students techniques’ in acquiring and enhancing the certain knowledge or skill.

Learning strategies are initiatively used by students to achieve certain goal. Through learning strategies, the students may have dissimilar competence one to another in enriching higher level of English proficiency skills. Further, Faerch Claus and Casper (1983:67) stress that a learning strategy is “an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competences in the target language.” Through the students learning strategies, they consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and

the learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques. Therefore, the students shall make appropriate learning plans in light of their learning task characteristics.

On the other hand, the students may have difficulty in selecting appropriate series of techniques and strategies in learning. They involve an ability to access the effectiveness and later revise the techniques and strategies when necessary (William and Burden, 2000). On the contrary, if the students do not use certain strategies in their learning, they find difficulties in accomplishing their learning objectives. In other words, they get unsatisfied if only accomplishing certain objectives. While the students are trying to memorize certain vocabularies, the students can use an alternative technique to help them memorize chunks of words.

However, to summarize all definitions above, the present study adopts Oxford's definition (1990:8) of learning strategies, in which learning strategies are seen as specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques of students often consciously use to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using.

Oxford's classification of Learning Strategies

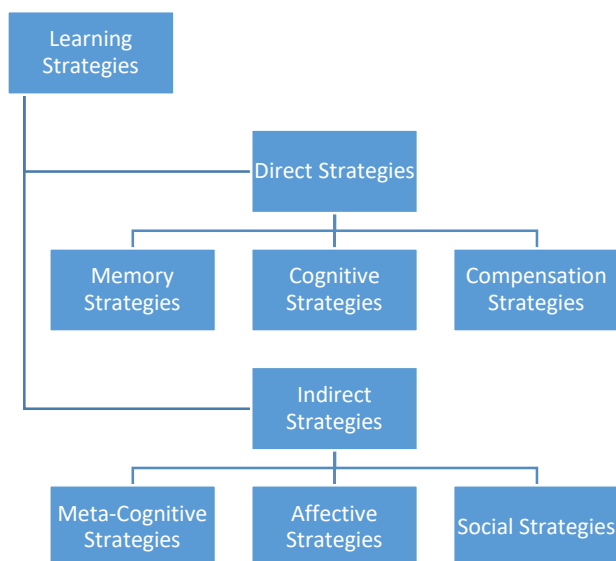
Oxford (1990) offers more comprehensive and full-scale language learning classifications. The classifications deal with learning strategies for second language acquisition through making a distinction between direct and indirect strategies. The direct strategies are learning techniques which are directly used in learning a new language. The strategies which encompass direct technique are memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. On the other hand, indirect strategies are used widely for general management of learning. The strategies which belong to this category are meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies. The explanations of the terms above are described below:

Firstly, the three types of direct strategies conferred, including memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies differ the students'

capability in enhancing learning objectives. However, each strategy has different outcomes, yet strengthens or weakens the students' learning outcomes. *Memory* strategies are learning strategies that help students to store and retrieve new information, such as grouping or making inference, creating mental linkages, and applying images and sounds. *Cognitive* strategies are strategies that enable learners to understand and produce a new language by a variety of different means; the strategies include deductive summarizing and reasoning. Additional examples include practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. *Compensation* strategies are strategies that allow learners to use the language despite their large gaps in knowledge base. The learners can guess intelligently the words, using synonyms, and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing in improving the target language.

Secondly, indirect strategies include meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. *Meta-cognitive* strategies are language learning strategies such as planning for language tasks and setting goals that provide a mechanism for individuals to coordinate their own learning process. *Affective* strategies are strategies that help learners gain control over emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. To lower their anxiety, learners can listen to music or make positive statements or reward themselves to become high-spirited or try to take their emotional temperature to concentrate on their learning. *Social* strategies are strategies that involve interactions between and among learners. When they have classroom collaborative activities, learners could use social strategies to help them obtain information they need, for example, strategies of asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. Oxford's classification can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Oxford's Classification of Learning Strategies



The Oxford's classification has more composite descriptions about learning strategies than O'Malley & Chamot's. Nevertheless, although Oxford's classification system has differences with O'Malley & Chamot's, there are similarities identified. For example, both classifications include the category of meta-cognitive strategy which involves the process of thinking, planning, monitoring and evaluating. Meanwhile, Oxford's classification is based on how the students engage the objectives of learning through the technique whether it is direct or indirect strategies. Moreover, Oxford generates more types of the strategies based on direct and indirect techniques. O'Malley & Chamot's (1990) classification emphasizes more on meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies and lesser focus on social/affective strategies. In their classification, they provide cognitive theories to support the classification of learning strategies. However, Oxford's classification is more comprehensive and offers six types of learning strategies with an emphasis both on direct and indirect functions of strategies. In addition, Oxford's classification addresses the social and affective components, which are less developed in O'Malley & Chamot's

classification. Moreover, Oxford's classification system can be measured by her widely recognized Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). For these reasons, Oxford's classification system and the accompanying strategy inventory are selected to be used in the research study.

Research Design

In this research, the researcher used Descriptive-case with Qualitative study to analyze the data and answer the research questions. The researcher investigated the high achievers' strategies to identify how they could attain the writing task or writing course with tremendous marks. Donald Ary (2010) says that research design is a plan of how to proceed to gain an understanding of some groups or phenomena in the natural setting. By investigating the learning strategies of the students, the researcher explored and collected a variety of strategies and their impacts on the descriptive writing composition. Further, the research helped the students identify how learning strategies could be employed by the students in order to cope with language problems or enhance their language learning.

Subjects of the Research

The researcher intentionally selected five high achievers as the participants out from the population through purposive sampling. The sampling was done by selecting the students based on their score. The data of students' scores were officially obtained from the department.

The participants of this study were the students of English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in the academic year 2017/2018. The students were in the second, fourth, sixth and eighth semester of the English Education Program who had achieved grade A or A+ (plus) in the academic writing courses in the university and got high score in the descriptive composition. The academic writing courses were taught by several lecturers who graded the students' work as well.

However, the descriptive composition was the writing task graded by the researcher. Both sets of scores were used to select the participants of this research. Subsequently, the researcher then interviewed five participants whose final score was A+ in the final test of the academic writing course in the university.

To grade the students writing ability in making a descriptive composition, the researcher obtained the scores as given in the rubrics. The researcher categorized those having score 85 – 100 as excellent. The researcher used an analytic scoring rubric to assess the students' writing. The scoring rubric and classification of the scores used by the researcher were listed in Table 1 and Table 2 as follows:

Table 1. Scoring Rubric of Writing

Score	Content	Organization	Vocabulary	Grammar	Mechanics
5	Main ideas are stated clearly and accurately, change of opinion very clear	Well organized and generally coherent	Very effective choice of words and use of idioms and word forms	No errors, full control of complex structure	Mastery of spelling and punctuation
4	Main ideas are stated fairly clearly and accurately, change of opinion relatively clear	Fairly well organized and generally coherent	Effective choice of words and use of idioms and word forms	Almost no errors, good control of structure	Few errors in spelling and punctuation

Score	Content	Organization	Vocabulary	Grammar	Mechanics
3	Main ideas are somewhat unclear and inaccurate, change of opinion somewhat weak	Loosely organized but main ideas clear, logical but incomplete sequencing	Adequate choice of words but some misuse of vocabulary, idioms and word forms	Some errors, fair control of structure	Fair number of spelling and punctuation errors
2	Main ideas are not clear or accurate, change of opinion weak	Ideas are disconnected, lacks logical sequencing	Limited range, confused use of words, idioms, and word forms	Many errors, poor control of structure	Frequent errors in spelling and punctuation
1	Main ideas are not at all clear or accurate, change of opinion very weak	No organization, incoherent	Very limited range, very poor knowledge of words, idioms, and word forms	Dominated by errors, no control of structure	No control over spelling and punctuation
<p>The total number gotten x 100 = n</p> <p>The maximal score</p>					

Table 2. Classification of Scores

No.	Grade	Qualification	Range of Scores
1.	A	Excellent	85 – 100
2.	B	Good	70 – 84
3.	C	Average	55 – 69
4.	D	Poor	50 – 54
5.	E	Very Poor	0 – 49

After selecting the students' works by using the scoring rubric above, the researcher used Table 3 to show the list of the students' score:

Table 3. Students' Score in Writing Descriptive Text

Criteria	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Content					
Organization					
Vocabulary					
Grammar					
Mechanics					
Total					
Score					

Data and Sources of Data

Data

The data used in this research were high achievers' script and writing. The researcher attempted to arrive at a rich description of the people, objects, events, places, conversations, and so on (Donald Ary,

2006). Thus, the researcher obtained the data using observation sheets. The data referred to the rough materials which the researchers collected from the field that they were studying. The data included were materials, records of the students studying in the classroom, interview transcripts, observation sheets, and field notes. In this research, the data collected are in the form of statements and descriptions related to the students' strategies in writing. The researcher also made the interview transcripts as a data collection instrument. Moreover, analyzing the observation sheets and the students' essays provided deep and rich data. Therefore, the data in this study belong to qualitative data. The data presented in this study were later used to be analyzed in order to answer the research questions.

In addition, the data also included things which others had created such as diaries, photographs, official documents and newspaper articles (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). In this study, the researcher collected the non-verbal data from the observation sheets and self-reviewing check-lists. This helped the researcher identify the pattern of the strategies and the characteristics.

Source of Data

The data sources of the research were five high achievers and their descriptive writing products. Those five high achievers were the selected students of English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya who achieved high score Grade A or A+ of Writing. The students had completed the writing course in the second, fourth, sixth and eighth semester. Nonetheless, the researcher used purposive sampling to only choose the students who achieved highest scores in the writing courses in each semester. To gain the data from the high achievers, the researcher did interview sections through questions developed from the Oxford's theory on learning strategies. The researcher then generated and narrated the data in the interview section into high achievers' transcript.

Further, the researcher also got the data of the strategies by

observing and scoring the high achievers writing. Through observation check-list, the researcher noticed students' behavior in composing the writing products. The observation check-list was developed from the Oxford's theory of learning strategies. The result of the observation check-list analysis was generated and narrated into words to support the data in transcript and the writing score of the participants.

Thus, the primary data sources of the research were the data obtained by the researcher directly from the subjects through conducting interviews, observations and writing task evaluations.

Instruments and Tools

In this research, the researcher used an interview guide and observation sheet as the instruments. The instruments were purposively used to comply with the research questions.

Interview Guide

In this study, the researcher used interview as verbal questioning to collect data from the participants. Cohen (2000) explained the meaning of interview as a two-person conversation, initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on the content specified by the research objectives of description and explanation. The researcher did a purposeful interview about the participants' strategies in composing a descriptive text. To obtain the data, the researcher used a semi-structured interview to limit the conversation topics and the answers. A semi structured interview is a kind of interview in which the interviewer uses a set of questions developed to gain specific information. Thus, the researcher interviewed the students related to their learning strategies that they employ in writing, how the students employed those strategies in writing narrative text, and the contribution of those strategies to help them produce a good descriptive writing. Below is the list questions for the interview guide:

Table 4. Interview Guide

General Question
<p>Personal Information</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Why did you choose English Education Program in this university?2) Are you taking other language course or institution in order to improve your English proficiency skill? How long and where?3) Do you like learning English? Why?4) Do you find difficulties in learning English?
<p>Writing Difficulties</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5) In what skills do you find difficulties in enhancing English? Why?6) What do you think about writing skill?7) Did Writing course assist you in getting higher level of writing skill? In what aspects?8) To write an essay, what preparation do you need to write a good essay?9) How do you get the idea in writing the essay?10) How do you develop the idea?11) Do you get any lacks or problems in writing essay?
<p>Common Strategies used</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">12) How do you usually do to overcome the lack or problem?13) Do you have any specific strategies you can use to help you writing essay?14) Are there any significant improvement in using those strategies? What are they?15) How often do you practice to write in English? In what form?
Specific Questions
<p><i>Memory Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you memorize new vocabularies?• Do you open dictionary to find the vocabulary you need?

<p><i>Cognitive Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you make notes of new vocabularies found? • Do you write new vocabularies and pronouncing them? • Do you read online journal or article before writing? • Do you read essay to get idea? • Do you observe surroundings and trying to write? • Do you read grammar books? • Do you memorize grammar patterns when write the sentence? • Do you make an outline to help me organize the essay?
<p><i>Compensation Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you only select the interesting and familiar topic? • Do you ask someone for help?
<p><i>Meta-cognitive Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you only pay attention on specific aspects of writing? • Do you identify purpose of writing to find the idea? • Do you do self-evaluating on writing?
<p><i>Affective Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have relaxation before writing? • Do you write a language learning diary (common word)?
<p><i>Social Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you ask someone for correction? • Do you ask questions to friend or lecturer?

The researcher developed the interview questions based on the Oxford's theory on learning strategies which was adapted to writing descriptive composition. The questions were divided into two big areas which were about general questions and specific questions. The general questions were intended to get the students profile and learning desire in writing. While the specific questions focused on how the students could achieve the highest marks of the writing task. Both questions contributed

to answer the first research question: “What are the learning strategies used by the English education department high achievers in writing descriptive compositions?”.

Observation Sheets

In this research, observations were conducted when the participants did the writing task. The observation was done using observation sheets and video recorder. It was done to get information about the students’ behaviors and learning strategies in reality. Through observation, a researcher can get a clearer description about social life that is difficult to be obtained when using another method (Nasution, 2003). The observation sheet in this study was used to give evidence about the variety of learning strategies used by the students. Below is the observation sheet used by the researcher:

Table 5. Observation Sheet

No.	Learning Strategies	Yes	No	Comment
1.	Memory Strategies a. Memorizing new vocabularies b. Providing special target in memorizing new vocabularies			
2.	Cognitive Strategies a. Making notes of new vocabularies that were found b. Writing new vocabularies and pronouncing them c. Opening dictionary d. Reading online journal or article e. Reading essay f. Observing surroundings and trying to write			

No.	Learning Strategies	Yes	No	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Reading grammar books h. Memorizing grammar patterns i. Doing grammar exercises j. Practicing writing 			
3.	Compensation Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Selecting the interesting and familiar topic b. Asking someone for help 			
4.	Meta-cognitive Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Paying attention on specific aspects of writing b. Identifying purpose of writing c. Self-evaluating on writing 			
5.	Affective Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Having relaxation before writing b. Writing a language learning diary 			
6.	Social Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Asking someone for correction b. Asking questions to friend or lecturer 			

Further, observing the students was done to each of the students in and individual classroom setting. The researcher technically used video recording to capture the students' personal techniques in composing descriptive text. Essentially, the observation sheet was developed from the learning strategy theories proposed by Oxford (1990), namely memory, cognitive, compensation, meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies.

Data Collection

In this study, the researcher did an extensive analysis to the five cases of descriptive composition writing. There were descriptions of stages in collecting research data.

First, in the interview section, the researcher did individual interviews with the participants by recording using video and audio recorder devices. The interview was completed within about 17-19 minutes each case in an informal setting (outside the classroom). The researcher asked two primary questions which are general questions, containing identity, interest and qualification of the students, and specific questions such as asking about how they write a descriptive composition.

Second, the researcher did an observation when the students wrote descriptive compositions in the setting made by the researcher. During observation, the researcher made a field note to record the data. Field note was taken in the classroom setting to know how the first year students of English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya employed strategies in writing an essay. To support the data observation and remind the researcher about the strategies, the researcher recorded the observation through devices. Further, it could be a reminder for the researcher in analyzing the participants' behavior. Moreover, the field note was used to complete the data taken from the interview and self-assessment sheet.

Data Analysis

In this present study, the researcher collected the data using interviews and observations. Data analysis is a process where the researchers systematically search and arrange the data in order to increase their understanding of the data and enable them to present what they learned to others (Donald Ary: 2010). The technique of data analysis is the way data to be analyzed by the researcher. The technique of data analysis in this research is qualitative data analysis. In this case, the researcher analyzed the data descriptively and not statistically from the result of conducting

interview. So, the data was analyzed by the researcher continuously until the researcher got a common conclusion based on the research topic.

Donald Ary (2002) mentioned that there are three steps in analyzing the data: organizing the data, summarizing the data, and interpreting the data.

Organizing the data

The first thing to do in organizing the data was to reduce the data, which was done through a process called *coding*. The reducing data was done by grouping or categorizing the data from field notes, interview transcripts, audiotapes, video recordings, observer comments, and other data collected. The data was organized based on the theme, setting, or activity. The data organization is based on the research questions.

Summarizing the data

In summarizing the data, the researcher initiated to see what was in the data by examining all entries with the same code, and then merge these categories into patterns by finding links and connections among categories. In other words, after working in organizing or grouping the data, the researcher summarized the data based on the research questions. Therefore, there were two parts of summary referring to the formulation of research questions, they were: 1) the strategies employed by the high achievers in English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in writing descriptive composition and 2) the contribution of the employed strategies to produce a good writing product.

Interpreting the data

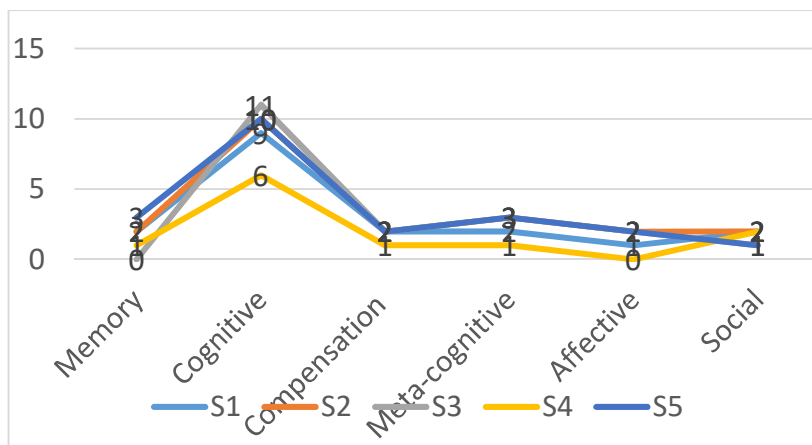
In interpreting the data, the researcher gave a verbal narrative account of the data to extract meanings and insights from the data. The researcher later explained what he found was important, why it was important, and what could be learned from them. Donald Ary (2002) states

that the quality of the interpretation depends on the background, perspective, knowledge, and theoretical orientation of the researcher and the intellectual skill he or she brings to the task. The same opinion stated by Creswell (2007) that the researchers' interpretation cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understanding.

After collecting the data about students' English learning strategies in writing, the researcher analyzed the data by working with the data through organizing the data and classifying the data into learning strategies employed. Then, the researcher classified those learning strategies groups of learning strategies which were presented by the expert above. In this case, the researcher used the inductive method to analyze the data. Inductive method was the method of analyzing data from a particular or specific one to draw a general conclusion. The data interpretation was started by analyzing the English learning strategies of each student, and the next was generating the data into a general conclusion.

Learning Strategies of High Achievers in Writing A Descriptive Composition

Figure 3.
Learning Strategies of High Achievers' in Writing A Descriptive Composition



The data presented in this study were collected using an observation sheet, questionnaire in the form of self-assessment sheet, evaluating the students' writing composition and doing semi-structured interviews. The researcher investigated the students' strategies in writing a descriptive composition. The subjects of the research were the first year students of English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya who were selected using certain criteria.

By answering the questions, the next questions were raised orally to identify the students' strategies in writing and the impacts of applying the strategies. Further, the learning strategies used by the subjects were explained in this portion. The subjects had their own strategies to improve and reach good achievement in writing. In attempt to identify the writing strategies employed by the students, the researcher had conducted an observation, in-depth interview and asked the students to fill in the self-assessment sheet of writing strategies.

Data from Observation

The data obtained from the observations were able to clarify the result of the interview. The observation check list showed the students' strategies in composing the descriptive text done both inside the classroom setting and outside the classroom settings. There were data similarities both from the interview and observation; yet, there was a distinction from both sides.

Since the strategies used depended on the student's preferences and characteristics, each student had strengths and weaknesses regarding the strategies used. The differences were shown from how the students got the idea and overcame the lacks identified during the process of composing the essay. Before composing the descriptive text, some students might consult the topic or idea which would be the best and most suitable for them. At some points, they chose interesting topics to catch the readers' attentions. Some others prefer to read some narrative stories from books,

internet, or magazines to enrich their knowledge about the story and language styles.

When facing difficulties in translating new vocabularies, they liked to consult the dictionaries. Sometimes, they also translated the unfamiliar vocabularies with electronic dictionaries or via the internet. They easily searched the meaning of unfamiliar words on the internet because this college provided free Wi-Fi and most of the students had sophisticated gadgets to access the internet.

When they did not understand some cases, they asked their lecturers or friends. They even asked the questions by using English, instead of using their first language. After they finished writing, they edited and revised it again. In addition, they also asked their friends to correct their writing before they submitted it to the lecturers.

Referring to the descriptions of the findings of each of the subject related to the strategies employed in writing narrative text, the employed strategies were presented as follows.

Direct Strategies

Direct strategies were language learning strategies that directly involve the target language. They required mental processing of the language. Direct strategies were divided into three groups: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Those three groups of direct strategies did the mental processing differently and for different purposes.

1) Memory Strategies

Table 6. Students' Memory Strategies

No.	Learning Strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
1.	Memorizing new vocabularies			-		
2.	Providing special target in memorizing new vocabularies per day	-	-	-	-	
3.	Making flashcard of new vocabularies and its translations, then pasting them on the wall bedroom and memorizing them			-	-	

From the data shown, the percentage of memory strategy used was 33 %. It can be seen that there were only S1, S2, S4 and S5 who employed memory strategies. Memory strategies were used by the subjects of the study to master some vocabularies. S1 liked to memorize new vocabularies every day at home because it would be easier to concentrate. He usually found new vocabularies after reading a passage. S3 had a different strategy in mastering vocabularies. She had a target to memorize five new vocabularies per day. In a day, she repeated the words to memorize several times until those new vocabularies kept on her mind. Meanwhile, S4 preferred to make a flashcard contained of new vocabularies and its translations, then pasted them on the wall bedroom and memorized them. While she relaxed her body and mind in her room, she could memorize them at the same time. After they had memorized new vocabularies, they tried to make a story using those vocabularies. Thus, they did not only memorize the words, but also applied them directly. Those strategies really helped them in writing a narrative text because they had many vocabularies to be used. It also gave variations in subjects' writing styles.

2) Cognitive Strategies

Table 7. Students' Cognitive Strategies

No.	Learning Strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
1.	Making notes of new vocabularies that were found				-	
2.	Writing new vocabularies and pronouncing them					
3.	Opening dictionary					
4.	Reading narrative stories from books				-	
5.	Reading narrative stories from internet					
6.	Reading English novels					
7.	Observing surroundings and trying to write	-	-		-	
8.	Reading grammar books				-	-
9.	Memorizing grammar patterns	-			-	
10.	Doing grammar exercises					
11.	Practicing writing					

Related to the use of cognitive strategies, most of the participants applied the strategies in terms of processing knowledge that they have gotten directly at the time. The percentage of the strategy used is 83 % from 46 compensation strategies used by the students. Cognitive strategies helped the students understand and produce a new language by many different means. From the table above, cognitive strategies are the strategy that was most employed by S5. S5 employed seven kinds of cognitive strategies while others only employed five strategies.

S1, S2, S4, and S5 used the same strategies to increase their vocabularies. They made some notes of new vocabularies that they found when reading a narrative text. Besides writing new vocabularies, S5 also

pronounced those vocabularies while the others were not.

Another strategy that was used by the students (S1 and S3) was consulting the dictionary. When they found difficulties in translating some vocabularies, S1 and S3 consulted their dictionaries. Sometimes, they used pocket dictionaries because they were practical and sometimes they also used electronic dictionaries.

In getting and developing ideas, there was a student (S5) who had a special strategy. S5 firstly observed her surroundings, what was happening around her, and tried to write them. From the interview, the researcher knew that S5 felt easier to write the situation around her because it was simpler and easier. She got many ideas from observing. In addition, she also read narrative stories from books and the internet. These strategies were also employed by S2 and S3. Meanwhile, S1 preferred reading from the internet only, while S4 loved reading English books and novels.

One of the ways to make the students' writing get better is by learning grammar. There were some strategies employed by the students in learning grammar. S1 liked reading a grammar textbook. For example, before he wrote a narrative text, he read about past tense. He learned regular and irregular verbs that would be used in writing a narrative text. It was different from S5 who decided to memorize grammar patterns. This strategy was helpful in organizing sentence structures when she wrote. Meanwhile, S2, S3, and S4 learned grammar by doing grammar exercises. They believed that the more they did the exercises the easier they wrote a text.

In addition, all of the subjects (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) agreed that practicing writing more often would improve their abilities in writing a narrative text. Thus, the students who wanted to get good achievements in writing should apply this strategy by practicing writing more and more.

3) Compensation Strategies

Table 8. Students' Compensation Strategies

No.	Learning Strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
1.	Selecting the interesting and familiar topic				-	
2.	Asking someone for help					

Compensation strategies percentage was 90%. The strategy was used by the students to overcome the limitation of knowledge in writing the descriptive composition. As the result of interview with all the participants, they had the same strategies to make their writing easier and more enjoyable; one of them was selecting the interesting and familiar topic. By choosing the topic that they were interested in and familiar with, the students could easily develop their ideas in writing. Moreover, they could select which topic they master the most. Therefore, their achievement improved over the time.

Related to overcoming the limitation of knowledge in writing a narrative text, all of the subjects asked someone for help. Based on the interview, S1 was more interested to ask his lecturer when he got difficulties in writing. It was different from S2, S3, S4, and S5 who asked for help to their friends whenever they did not know something related to the writing.

Indirect Strategies

Indirect strategies were language learning strategies which support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. They covered meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

1) *Meta-cognitive Strategies*

Table 9. Students' Meta-cognitive Strategies

No.	Learning Strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
1.	Paying attention on specific aspects of writing					
2.	Identifying purpose of writing				-	
3.	Self-evaluating on their writing	-			-	

Based on the table, meta-cognitive strategies were used by four students. The percentage for this strategy is 80 %. This type of strategies related to how the students managed their knowledge in writing so that their writing did not overlap. It was related to the students' behavior during writing a text. From the result of interview, it was known that all of the participants (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) paid attention to specific aspects of their writing such as vocabulary, punctuation, and sentence construction. They also determined the purpose of their writing, whether it was used for giving information, persuading, or entertaining the readers.

Moreover, from the self-assessment sheet of writing strategies, it was found that all the research participants evaluated their own writing by rereading their writing then editing and revising it if needed. Employing those strategies really supported the subjects of the research to be successful in writing, especially in composing a descriptive text.

2) *Affective Strategies*

Table 10. Students' Affective Strategies

No.	Learning Strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
1.	Having relaxation before writing				-	
2.	Writing a language learning diary	-			-	

Affective strategies are related to how students regulated their emotion and motivation. It was used by 70 % students in this study. The strategies were employed by S4 and S5. After conducting the interview, the researcher knew that S4 and S5 did a relaxation five to ten minutes before they started to write a text. It was needed to refresh their minds in order to have a good mood and lower the anxiety. After they felt better and fresh, then they started to write. By having a good mood, the ideas to write would come easily. In addition, all of the research participants (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) kept on writing a language learning diary. They wrote everything about their feelings or thoughts in English. They wrote it every day in their free time.

3) Social Strategies

Table 11. Students' Social Strategies

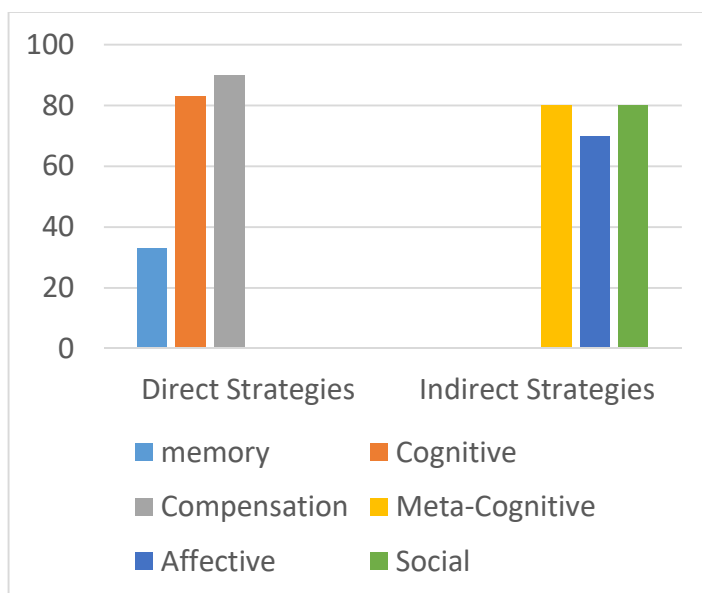
No.	Learning Strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
1.	Asking someone for correction			-		
2.	Asking questions to friends or lecturer					-

The social strategy was used by 80% students in this research. The strategy helps the students to learn through interactions with others. To get better writing, all of the research participants employed social strategies by asking for correction to their friends. The students asked their friends to correct some errors in their writing. Usually, they learned in pairs or in groups so they could do correction on each other's writing. This strategy gave advantages in improving students' writing because they knew in which part they made errors so that they could produce correct pieces of writing in another time. In addition, they also asked questions to their friends or lecturer in English whenever they faced difficulties in writing. Based on the explanation above, the researcher concludes that the participants of the study employed learning strategies according to the

Oxford's classification. The students employed six types of learning strategies offered by Oxford. They were memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. From those six strategies, the most employed strategies by all the participants of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) were cognitive strategies.

The Impacts of the Strategies Used for High Achievers in Writing Descriptive Composition.

Figure 4. Impact of Learning Strategies in High Achievers' Writing



Based on the result of interview with subjects of the study, it is known that the strategies they employed in writing a descriptive composition gave significant and positive contributions to their success in learning. S1, S3 and S5 stated that memorizing vocabularies would make them easier to transfer their ideas in mind into sentences on a paper. By having enough vocabularies, they could write well. According to S1,

consulting dictionary was a good strategy to know the meaning and spelling of vocabularies. While S3 stated that it was useful to help her translate unknown words into the target language.

Reading more about descriptive text from books or the internet and observing the surroundings gave the students more ideas when they (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) were writing a narrative text. They learned how the other writers used different language styles in their writing so that it gave the students more references to write. Moreover, S5 could engage and collaborate what on real life was and her imagination to produce an interesting story.

Learning grammar by memorizing the patterns and practicing the exercises gave positive effects on the students' writing. By mastering grammar, they (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) could produce good sentence constructions, this was done by balancing it with writing practices. When they faced difficulties in writing descriptive text, they also had a strategy that was asking their friends or lecturer. S1 liked to ask his lecturer, while S2, S3, S4, and S5 preferred to ask their friends. They employed these strategies to overcome the limitation of their knowledge and got better understanding about writing.

In producing a good narrative writing, all of the subjects (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) had the same strategies. At first, they identified the writing purpose; who the target of their writing and what purpose in writing it. By determining the purpose, the students would not overlap in writing a text. Then during writing, they paid attention on specific aspects of their writing such as vocabulary, punctuation, and sentence construction. After writing was done, the students evaluated their own writing by rereading their writing then editing and revising it if needed. They also asked for correction to their friends. These strategies increased students' mastery on writing and reduced the students to make an error in their writing in another time.

Another strategy that gave advantages to the students (S4 and S5) was having relaxation before they wrote a narrative text. When they relaxed

their bodies, their mind would also be refreshed. It made the students had good mood. As the result, many ideas came and developed easily. In addition, S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5 also employed an interesting strategy: all of them kept on writing diary at home. By writing diaries, they might express their feelings and thoughts, besides it made their writing improved over the times.

From the explanation above, the strategies employed by the high achievers of English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya were helpful and giving many advantages. Those strategies were contributive to help the students (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) produced good descriptive composition. The contribution of the employed strategies could be summarized in Table 12 as follows.

Table 12. Summary of the Learning Strategies impacts to the High Achievers

No.	Learning Strategies	Contributions
1.	Memorizing vocabularies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easier to transfer ideas in mind into sentences on paper. - Gave variations on subjects' writing style. - Easier and simpler in writing because there was no need to always open dictionary.
2.	Opening dictionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knew the meaning or definition of words or phrases. - Knew the correct spelling of vocabulary. - Helped in choosing appropriate vocabulary.
3.	Reading stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gave more ideas to write. - Gave references of language styles used in writing a story. - Could be the examples of which and how the interesting story was for the readers.
4.	Observing surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taught to engage a real life story and imagination to create an interesting story.

No.	Learning Strategies	Contributions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gave ideas to write. - Practiced writing of simple and easy thing.
5.	Memorizing grammar pattern and doing grammar exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produce good sentence constructions. - Minimized errors in writing.
6.	Identifying writing purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevented overlap in writing. - Could identify target of writing. - Could determine the purpose of writing a story.
7.	Evaluating own writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knew in which part we made an error. - Reduced of making errors in other times. - Improved self-assessment. - Produced better writing.
8.	Asking for correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased collaborations among students. - Helped to identify errors in others' writing.
9.	Having relaxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crated a good mood and good condition. - Lower the anxiety. - The ideas came easily.
10.	Writing diary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressed students' feeling and thought. - Improved the students' writing skill.

Discussion

The data in this study were collected from five selected students as the subjects of the study. The results of data collection are presented on research findings. The researcher found some kinds of strategies used in composing a descriptive text. The data showed that the students who were good in writing applied various learning strategies. Each student had his/her own strategies in writing. They applied appropriate strategies which made

them learn more effectively.

Based on the data found in the interview with the subjects, those kinds of strategies can be categorized and classified into six types of learning strategies stated by Oxford. Oxford (1990) divided learning strategies into two categories; direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies consist of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. On the other hand, indirect strategies include meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Here are the discussions of strategies used by the high achievers of English Education Program at UIN Sunan Ampel in composing descriptive text. The first discussion is about direct strategies by Oxford which covers memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies.

1. Memory Strategies

Memory strategies are strategies which help the students store new information in memory and retrieve it when needed. Generally, these strategies are employed by the students when learning new vocabularies. In this case, memory strategies which were used by the subjects of the study were: memorizing new vocabularies by heart which was employed by S1, providing special target in memorizing new vocabularies per day employed by S3, and making flashcards of the new vocabularies and the translations, then posting them on the wall bedroom and memorizing them was employed by S5.

Oxford (1990: 38) stated that memory strategies fall into four sets; they are *creating mental linkages*, *applying images and sounds*, *reviewing well*, and *employing actions*. Related to those strategies found above, the first and second strategies belong to applying images and sounds in term of using imagery. Meanwhile, the third strategy belongs to employing actions in term of using mechanical techniques. The subjects of the study (S1, S2, and S3) could relate new information to the meaningful concepts in their mind by using those strategies. Applying those strategies in language

learning was said to be helpful to remember what have been heard or read as stated by Oxford (1990: 68) in her theory of language learning strategies.

2. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning. They enable learners to understand and produce new language by various different means. Based on the research findings, the strategies which were included into cognitive strategies are: making notes of new vocabularies that were found employed by S1, S2, S4, and S5, writing new vocabularies and pronouncing them employed by S5, opening dictionary employed by S1 and S3, reading narrative stories from books employed by S2, S3, S4 and S5, reading narrative stories from internet employed by S1, S2, S3 and S5, reading English novels employed by S4, observing surroundings and trying to write employed by S5, reading grammar books employed by S1, memorizing grammar patterns employed by S5, doing grammar exercises employed by S2, S3 and S4, and the last practicing writing were employed by all subjects of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5).

There are four sets of cognitive strategies stated by Oxford (1990: 43), they are: *practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output*. Based on the finding, from those four sets of cognitive strategies, the students only employed three sets. They did not employ the *analyzing and reasoning set*. There are five strategies which belong to the practicing sets; they are *writing new vocabularies and pronouncing them, observing surroundings and trying to write, memorizing grammar patterns, doing grammar exercises, and practicing writing*.

The next set is receiving and sending messages. *Opening dictionary, reading narrative stories from books, reading narrative stories from internet, reading English novels, and reading grammar books* are included in this set. In this case, the subjects of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4,

and S5) used resources for receiving and sending messages. There are two kinds of resources: printed sources (dictionary, novels, and grammar books) and non-printed resources (internet). Both resources provide useful information so that the students can better understand the written language. The last one is creating structure for input and output. *Making notes of new vocabularies* is involved in this set. It is the way how the subjects create structure for their comprehension in learning writing. Making notes enable participants of the study (S1, S2, S4, and S5) to have better understanding about what they have learned in their own language.

3. Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies help learners to overcome their limitation of knowledge in learning. So, it can solve the students' problem in writing. From the data, the strategies involved in compensation strategies are: selecting the interesting and familiar topic and asking someone for help. From two sets of compensation strategies (*guessing intelligently and overcoming limitation in writing*), the subjects of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) only employed the second set.

The next explanation is indirect strategies. Those strategies involve meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The discussions are stated as follows.

4. Meta-Cognitive Strategies

Meta-cognitive strategies are related to how the subjects of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) control their own cognition or regulate their learning. It has three sets: *centering the learning, arranging and planning learning, and evaluating learning*. Paying attention on specific aspects of writing, identifying purpose of writing, and self-evaluating on writing are included into meta-cognitive strategies. Those strategies agreed with Oxford's theory (1990).

5. Affective Strategies

Affective strategies deal with how the students regulate their emotion, attitude, motivation, etc. Having relaxation before writing was employed by S4 and S5, and writing a language learning diary employed by all subjects of the study belongs to affective strategies. Affective strategies have three sets: *lowering anxiety, encouraging the students' selves, and taking emotional temperature* (Oxford, 1990). Having relaxation belongs to the set of lowering anxiety, and writing a language learning diary belongs to the set of taking emotional temperature. Those strategies made the subjects of the study more enjoy in writing.

6. Social Strategies

The last types of learning strategies are social strategies in which the subjects of the study learned through interaction with others. In this case, all subjects of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) involved other people in learning writing. Social strategies involve three sets of strategies, they *are asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others*.

From the data, the students' social strategies are asking someone for correction and asking questions to friends or lecturer. Asking someone for correction and asking questions to friends or lecturer belong to the set of asking questions. The students asked for corrections when facing difficulties during writing. Oxford (1990: 170) stated that asking for correction is mostly used in speaking and writing because errors which are most obvious to other people occur in producing the new language. Usually, the amount of corrections depends on the level of the students and the purpose of writing.

The subjects of the study (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) employed many strategies in writing in different aspects and purposes. All of those strategies gave positive contributions for them. Based on the discussion above, it showed that the five selected subjects who had good achievements in

writing employed various kinds of learning strategies. Those strategies could help and support them to improve their writing competences and produce good narrative writing. In short, it can improve their achievements in writing class. If they did not employ those strategies, they would face difficulties in learning.

Some researchers studying the characteristics of good language learners reported that higher achievers use a greater quantity and better quality of learning strategies, and have a superior ability to directly manage their learning process, most often consciously (Oxford, 1990). Thus, the results of this research strengthen the existed theory. The subjects of the study who were good at writing were employed various kinds of learning strategies.

Moreover, Cohen (2003) stated that the more aware learners are on the strategies they employ (why use them), the more effective and skillful learners they will be. Thus, the students who were aware of using certain strategies, they could succeed in learning. The awareness gave positive impacts on the students' achievement.

Conclusion

From the result of the research, it can be concluded that the students who had good achievement in writing employed various learning strategies. From the first research problem "What learning strategies are used by English Education Department students in writing descriptive compositions?" the researcher found that there are learning strategies used by the students in writing descriptive composition. The strategies were divided and analyzed through language learning strategy's Oxford theory into six types of strategies as mentioned below.

1. Memory strategies are memorizing new vocabularies, providing special target in memorizing new vocabularies per day, and making sticky notes of new vocabularies and the paraphrases included.
2. Cognitive strategies are making small sticky notes of new

vocabularies, writing new vocabularies and pronouncing them, opening dictionary, reading article or essay on paper or magazine, reading descriptive composition on internet, reading English novels, observing surroundings and trying to write, reading grammar books, memorizing grammar patterns, doing grammar exercises (grammar question), and practicing essay writing.

3. Compensation strategies are selecting the interesting and familiar topic and asking someone for help.
4. Meta-cognitive strategies are paying attention on specific aspects of writing, identifying purpose of writing, and self-evaluating on their writing.
5. Affective strategies are having relaxation before writing and writing a language learning diary.
6. Social strategies are asking someone for correction and asking questions to friends or lecturer.

Meanwhile, the strategies used by the students gave positive contributions to the students in writing descriptive composition. Through those strategies, they could develop their ideas easily, enrich vocabularies, and increase grammar mastery which are the significant enrichment and development in composing sufficient descriptive essay. In a nutshell, by having adequate skills in writing, the students perform better in composing essays and be professional good writer.

In conclusion, the students who were good in writing a descriptive composition used various kinds of learning strategies. Those learning strategies were employed by the students in different ways. They have composed descriptive essay and overcome the lacks and problems in writing by applying more various learning strategies.

Suggestion

Having concluded the research, the researcher gives particular

recommendations to improve writing competence in descriptive composition and they are shown as follows:

For the students, in applying certain learning strategies, selecting the suitable strategies will help the students improve the writing quality and find more various ways to support their learning to write and overcome writing lacks and difficulties. Further, learning aptitude, such as active and creative, in learning writing can improve students writing abilities; Hence, the result of the study can be used as one of the references for the students in learning writing so that they can be successful as they are supported by learning strategies.

Meanwhile, for the English teacher, they must be more aware in giving opportunities to their students in implementing their own strategies and choosing the activities that will support and encourage their interest to be better language learners. In addition, the teacher should apply various teaching strategies in order to support variations of the students' learning strategies.

Finally, for the future researchers who intend to conduct research on the similar area that is learning strategies in writing, they can use the result of the study as a reference. They can evaluate the weaknesses of this research to produce better research.

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