

LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY IELTS TEST TAKERS WITH AT LEAST 7.5 AS OVERALL BAND SCORE

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Abstract

Learning strategies is defined as actions done deliberately to learn language more effectively. Many learners do not know what the best learning strategies work for them. Nowadays, more learners are required to take IELTS for many purposes especially education. In order to achieve the targeted band score, learners need to employ the most effective learning strategies so that it will not be a waste of time and money. This study is aimed to examine what learning strategies employed by IELTS test takers with at least 7.5 as overall band score and how metacognitive strategies are implemented by them. The research questions are answered by collecting data through distributing SLIL questionnaires to 15 subjects obtaining at least 7.5 as overall band score and conducting written semi-structured interviews with two participants who employed metacognitive strategies as the most frequent learning strategies used. The findings of this study are many of participants employed various learning strategies and the most common learning strategies used were social, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. In contrast, the least common learning strategies used were affective and memory strategies. Furthermore, metacognitive strategies employed by the selected participants were paying attention, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating.

Keywords: IELTS, learning strategies, metacognitive strategies

Introduction

In this globalization era, more students are interested to continue their higher education abroad. Guruz (2008) revealed, “Student mobility, although the biggest part, is just one component of the international higher education scene in today’s world (p.3).” It is seen that more students are more willing to leave their homes to seek the truth in education and knowledge. Guruz (2008) added that knowledge in forms of technical expertise and other information has been needed to improve the quality of life of humankind (p.3). The quality of life itself is strongly related to individual or national economy growth. Students are motivated to search for the best but affordable education anywhere in the world. They aim to be able to join the global labor market competition and create more business and social networks. The result is a big number of students attend institutions of higher education in

foreign countries (p.16). This phenomenon affects Indonesian students to join international higher education. Many of them note this as their dream whether it is as post graduate students, master degree students, or even undergraduate students.

The problem is the tuition fees are obviously not affordable for many students. Michael (2005) supported the fact that, "The unit cost of higher education, that is, the cost of producing one graduate in any discipline, has risen steadily (p.21)." Seeing the importance of higher education, therefore, universities and other institutions try to provide funding aids such as loans and scholarships. Students who apply for study loans are commonly found in developed countries. However, scholarships can also be given to those who need them and fulfill the selection requirements. There are several well-known scholarships which can be applied by Indonesian students to study in foreign countries such as Fullbright, Chevening, LPDP, Australian Awards, etc.

Both scholarships and foreign universities applications need English language proficiency test especially in English native countries such as the U.S., the U.K. and Australia. Most of Australian and European countries require their international students to have official IELTS certificates. The minimum score needed is 6.5 for all four skills. However, every scholarship and university have different policies about the IELTS score required. They range from 6.5-7.5 as the overall score. The test includes four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Every skill has their own band score which is ranged from 0-9. Here is the average of IELTS score taken by Indonesian speakers in 2018.

Table 1.1. Indonesians average score of IELTS

First Language	Below 4	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9
Indonesia	0%	0%	2%	6%	14%	23%	22%	17%	11%	4%	1%	0%

Source: www.ielts.org

The next figures show the mean overall and individual band scores accomplished by IELTS (academic) test takers from Indonesia.

Table 1.2. Indonesians average score of IELTS per skill

Language	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall
Indonesian	6.62	6.66	5.67	6.28	6.37

Source: www.ielts.org

As an English learner, every test taker has their own difficulty in preparing the IELTS test. However, what is behind the urge of taking IELTS test must motivate the learners to achieve the targeted band score. Ortega (2009) stated, "...when human want to exert better control over thoughts and actions they strategize about their emotions as much as about cognitive and conative processes (p.208)." In the end, learners decide 'how to learn more efficiently and how best to improve their learning outcomes (Wenden, 1998, p.531).' Therefore, being aware of having sufficient knowledge of learning strategies is important to obtain the best result. Correct and relevant language learning strategies improve proficiency and self-

confidence (Oxford, 1989). Some studies report that higher-proficiency learners apply more strategies than lower proficiency learners (Ellis, 2015). The most popular typology of language strategies are listed by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) in Ellis (2015): metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. On the other hand, Oxford (1989) mentioned more learning strategies which are divided into two groups: direct and indirect learning strategies. Memory strategies, compensation strategies, and cognitive strategies are grouped as direct strategies. Whereas indirect strategies consist of social strategies, metacognitive strategies, and affective strategies.

This study investigates learning strategies which were used by English learners who got at least 7.5 as overall band score for their IELTS test. Every learner has their own reason and motivation in order to achieve the targeted band score. Not to take the test seriously is a waste of money since the test costs more than 2 million rupiahs. Thus, this study expected to discover learning strategies as their devices or tools to learn English efficiently especially the implementation of metacognitive strategies which are related to ‘how students manage their own learning’ (Griffiths, 2004, p.4). The research questions of this study are written below:

1. What learning strategies are used by the test takers with at least 7.5 as overall band score?
2. How are metacognitive strategies implemented by the test takers with at least 7.5 as overall band score?

Literary Review

What is IELTS?

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a very popular English language proficiency test around the world. Many people take IELTS tests to join academic and professional institutions in Australia, the UK, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and other countries in which English is used in the workplaces and classrooms. The test instruments are arranged by an international team of experts and checked in comprehensive research so that the test is fair and unbiased for everyone everywhere. IELTS consists of four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The test order is started by listening, reading, and subsequently writing. All of the tests are conducted on the same day but speaking test. Depending on the test center, the speaking test can be conducted on the same day or up to seven days before or after that. The learners will speak to one examiner in a private room. The four skill-tests are done under three hours (www.idp.com). The following table contains the description of IELTS instruments:

Table 2.1. IELTS Instruments

Skills	Items	Parts	Duration	Question Types
Listening	40	4 sections: 1. a conversation between 2 people in an everyday context	40 minutes	multiple choice, matching plan/map/diagram labelling, form completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, summary completion, sentence

		2. a monologue in an everyday context 3. an academic discussion between 3 to 4 people 4. an academic lecture		completion, short answer questions
Reading	40	Academic module: 3 long passages (can be from journal, textbook, etc) General Training module: 4 shorter passages (about daily life, workplace, and general topics)	60 minutes	multiple choice, identifying information, identifying writer's views/claims, matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary, note, table, flow-chart completion, diagram label completion, and short answer questions.
Writing	2	Task 1: 150 words Task 2 : 250 words	Task 1: 20 minutes Task 2: 40 minutes	Task 1: a descriptive essay based on a picture of bar chart, line chart, pie chart, table, map or process diagrams Task 2: a discursive text-an essay of opinion, discussion, advantage and disadvantage comparison, direct question, or solutions) General training module: simpler questions and topics
Speaking	3	3 parts	11-14 minutes	Part 1: Questions about yourself, your family, your work and hobbies Part 2: Having monologue about a topic, several response questions that I need to answer.

Part 3: Discussing the topic from previous with the examiner, answering further questions to discuss the topic.

Source: www.idp.com

Even though the minimum of IELTS band score needed varies, the focus of this study is to examine the learner strategies used by the ones who got at least 7.5 as overall band score but the score for a skill can be less or more than 7.5. Here is the general description for band 7 and 8.

Table 2.2. Band Score Description

Band Score	Skill Level	Description
Band 9	Expert user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding.
Band 8	Very good user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.
Band 7	Good user	The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

Source: www.idpielts.me

There is no specific description for 7.5 test takers but they are obviously grouped as better than *good users*. They fulfill the description for band 7 but not for the whole band 8. Also, band 7.5 is classified as C1, proficient, in Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Learning Strategies

Several definitions of learning strategies imply the actions done to achieve expected results of language learning. It tends to be practical rather than theoretical. Some are observable but some are not. Leaver et al (2005) stated, “Learning strategies are the specific actions one takes and/or techniques one uses in order to learn (p.65).” Oxford (1989, p.235) in Ellis (2015) defined learning strategies as, “Behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable (p.69).” Language learners have expectations, thus, learning strategies are applied on purpose. Leaver et al (2005) added, “Some are consciously employed, and others are automatic.” Although learning strategies are used consciously, they also enhance learning-acquisition continuum (Oxford, 1989). The following table describes language learning strategies in more details.

Table 2.3. Features of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1989)

No.	Feature	Explanation	Example
1.	communicative competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the main goal of language learning help learners participate actively in authentic communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> metacognitive strategies: help learners to manage their own cognition and to focus, plan, and evaluate their progress affective strategies: improve the self-confidence and perseverance needed
2.	self-direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage greater self-direction without being dependent on teacher 	
3.	new roles for teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no longer teacher center identifying students' learning strategies, conducting training on learning strategies, helping learners become more independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilitator, helper, guide, consultant, adviser, coordinator, idea person, diagnostician, and co-communicator
4.	problem orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> functioned as tools to solve a problem, accomplish a task, meet an objective, attain a goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using reasoning or guessing strategies to understand a reading text better
5.	action basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the learners' action basis is related to the problem orientation of language learning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking notes, planning for a language task, self-evaluating, and guessing intelligently
6.	involvement just beyond cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not restricted to cognitive functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> metacognitive: planning, evaluating
7.	direct and indirect support of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct strategies: a. memory strategies b. cognitive strategies c. compensation strategies indirect strategies: a. metacognitive b. affective d. social strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. reviewing well b. analyzing and reasoning c. guessing intelligently a. looking for practice opportunities b. rewarding yourself c. asking for correction

8.	degree of observability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not always observable to the human eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • memory strategy
9.	level of consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategies (Greek): consciousness and intentionality • learning strategies (modern): always conscious • making appropriate learning strategies automatic 	
10.	teachability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easier to teach and modify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategy training
11.	flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language learning strategies are flexible not in exact patterns • sometimes predictable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after skimming or scanning a reading passage, learners often guess to fill in any gaps and finally take notes or summarize to organize the material
12.	factors influencing strategy choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factors affecting the choice of strategies: degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality, general learning style. personality traits, motivation level, purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher expectations manifested in classroom instructional and testing methods obviously influence learners' strategies • more motivated learners use more appropriate learning strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Oxford (1989) defined metacognitive strategies as “actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process (p.136).” It is important to notice the word *coordinate* since it implies the main skill needed in these strategies. Learners who use metacognitive strategies must be able to coordinate themselves. A similar definition revealed by Wenden (1998) that metacognitive strategies means, “... general skills through which learners manage, direct, regulate, guide their learning i.e. planning, monitoring and evaluating.” The definition shows some actions in which learners rely on themselves instead. It is also emphasized by Wenden (1998) that the use of the three strategies in learning is indicated as “self-regulation in cognitive psychology and as self-direction in adult education and in the literature on learner autonomy in FL/SL learning (p.519).”

Oxford (1989) revealed that in metacognitive strategies there are ‘three strategy sets: centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, and evaluating

your learning (p.136).’ Those sets are described into more following actions. Centering your learning includes ‘overviewing and linking with already known material, paying attention and delaying speech production to focus on listening’. Next, arranging and planning your learning consist of ‘finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, planning for a language task, and seeking practice opportunities’. Furthermore, evaluating your learning comprises ‘self-monitoring and self-evaluating’ (Oxford, 1989). Learners who are involved in metacognitive strategies obviously seek many opportunities to learn outside the classroom (Oxford 1989). They clearly become active learners who do not passively follow teachers’ instructions (Wenden, 1998).

Method

This study employed a qualitative study to answer the research questions. The subjects of this study were 15 people who had joined official IELTS tests especially academic module and got at least 7.5 as their overall band score. Most of them joined graduate programs from different universities. There were three kinds of evidence needed in this study. The first evidence consisted of copies of IELTS certificates as the written documents which showed that they got 7.5 as overall band score to verify the subjects selected. This evidence also informed the researcher about the detailed score of each skill tested.

The second evidence was derived from questionnaires of The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 (Oxford, 1989). There are 5 options of response for 50 statements provided: never or almost never true of me (5), usually not true of me (4), somewhat true of me (3), usually true of me (2), always or almost always true of me (1). The statements are grouped into 6 parts (A, B, C, D, E, F). The description for each part is as follows: A (remembering more effectively/memory strategies), B (using all your mental process/cognitive strategies), C (compensating for missing knowledge/compensation strategies), D (organizing and evaluating your learning/metacognitive strategies), E (managing your emotions/affective strategies), and F (learning with others/social strategies). After the subjects finished completing the questionnaires, average for each part was calculated. Then, the overall average was found by summing up the average from each part and dividing them equally. The results showed what learning strategies were used by the IELTS test takers.

By considering the results, two participants were selected to be interviewed in order to answer the second research question. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in written via online chat. The subjects received 4 main questions regarding learning strategies in pursuance of obtaining the targeted IELTS score:

1. What did you do as your learning strategies to succeed in IELTS reading test?
2. What did you do as your learning strategies to succeed in IELTS listening test?
3. What did you do as your learning strategies to succeed in IELTS writing test?
4. What did you do as your learning strategies to succeed in IELTS speaking test?

The data were coded to classify the learners’ metacognitive strategies set: centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, and evaluating your learning (Oxford, 1989). The findings of the document interpretation, questionnaire and interviews were described in the form of narrative. Eventually, brief conclusions of the research findings were drawn.

Findings and Discussion***Data from Questionnaire***

Table 4.1. Results of SLIL Questionnaires

Partici- pant	Memory Strategies	Cognitive Strategies	Compensation Strategies	Metacognitive Strategies	Affective Strategies	Social Strategies
1	1.8	3.4	2.5	2.7	2.3	3.2
2	2.5	3.6	3.8	3.4	2.2	3.3
3	2.1	3.9	4.5	4.8	2.5	3.8
4	3.8	3.8	4.3	4.1	2.2	3
5	2.4	4.3	5	4.5	4.6	4.8
6	3.2	4.2	4.6	4.1	2.8	4.6
7	3.1	4.5	4	4.2	3.5	4.1
8	3.8	4.7	4.3	4.6	3.6	5
9	4.3	4.3	3.5	4.6	4	4
10	3.2	3.7	4.1	4	3.3	3.6
11	4.1	4.7	4.5	4	3.3	4.6
12	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.4	2.1	3.1
13	3.2	4.2	4.6	4.1	2.8	4.6
14	3.3	4.5	4	4.8	3.1	5
15	3.8	4.5	4.6	4.7	2	4.8
Mean	3.2	4.1	4.6	4.7	2	4.8
	Remember- ing more effectively	Using all your mental processes	Compensating for missing knowledge	Organizing and evaluating your learning	Managing your emotions	Learning with others

Based on the learning strategies categorization by Oxford (1989), the learning strategies used most by learners who got at least 7.5 as overall band score are social strategies with an average of 4.8, followed by metacognitive strategies with an average of 4.7, and compensation strategies with an average of 4.6. The results show that they are classified as *always or almost always use*. Social strategies aid learners learn through interaction with others (Oxford, 1989). Learners can ask help from people who have higher proficiency or their peers. Metacognitive strategies demand the learners to have autonomy to manage, regulate, monitor and evaluate their own learning. Some strategies which are involved as compensation strategies stated by Oxford (1989) are guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. Learners guess intelligently by using linguistic clues and other clues. Then, learners overcome their limitations in speaking and writing by doing some ways such as using mime or gestures, using circumlocution or synonym, approximating the message, coining words, getting help, etc.

The second group of most learning strategies used is cognitive strategies with an average of 4.1. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) in Leaver et al. (2005) mentioned some examples of cognitive strategies are rehearsal, organizing, and elaborating. Oxford (1989) stated that cognitive strategies are the most popular strategies used among language learners. However in this study, a group of cognitive strategies is labeled as *usually used* by the learners. The next group of learning strategies is memory strategies with an average of 3.2 categorized as *sometimes used*. The lowest group is affective strategies with an average of 2 interpreted as *generally not*

used. All these numbers show that the test takers with at least 7.5 as overall band score almost used all the learning strategies before taking the exam.

As described in www.idpielts.com that those who have got 7 as their overall band scores are categorized as good users. Furthermore, participants who have received 8 as their overall band scores are classified as very good users. In fact there are 12 participants with 7.5 and 3 participants with 8.0 as their overall band scores. In short, all of the participants who have taken the survey are grouped as *more than good* users. Gani et al. (2015) revealed their research results that high speaking performance students usually employed all types of learning strategies. Oxford (1989) added, “Direct strategies and indirect strategies support each other, and that each strategy group is capable of connecting with and assisting every other strategy group (p.26).” It is supported by the fact that the more successful language learners the greater consistency in using more effective strategies (Gharbavi&Mousavi, 2012, & Pei-Shi, 2012 in Gani et al., 2015). Ellis (2015) added that studies that have been conducted using similar approach to this study ‘generally report that higher-proficiency learners use more strategies than lower proficiency learners (p.69).’

Data from Interviews

Two participants who were chosen to be the interviewees were *Participant 3* and *Participant 9*. Here is the detailed band score of the participants.

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall Band Score
Participant 3	8.5	8.5	7.5	8	8.0
Participant 9	8	8.5	7	8	8.0

These two participants have the highest overall band scores among all participants and learning strategies used most are metacognitive strategies. Every participant had their own motivation for taking IELTS test and made their own ways to achieve their targets. Participant 3 is an IELTS teacher and learner, therefore, she realizes that making great efforts is needed in doing IELTS test preparation. Participant 3 took the IELTS test because her previous IELTS certificate is already out of date. In her opinion, it is necessary for an IELTS teacher to regularly assess her skill. Therefore, without realizing that setting goals and objectives for language learning (Oxford, 1989) is a metacognitive strategy, Participant 3 set the highest target of band score, nine, for every skill. Before taking the IELTS tests, both of the participants did some preparation.

Participant 3 prepared the reading and listening test by looking for the most recent and trustworthy references which provide IELTS listening and reading questions as Oxford (1989) stated that one of the metacognitive strategies is ‘checking one’s own linguistic resources’ (p.139). Tavakoli (2014) highlighted his implication in his research about metacognitive strategy awareness in reading that materials developers need to understand the importance a wide variety of reading strategies which can appear through the tasks and exercises designed so they create a number of practice opportunities for users that learners can employ strategies autonomously. Participant 3 practiced reading and answering questions many times and checked the incorrect answers more thoroughly to analyze the reasons as ‘noticing one’s own mistakes (Ortega, 2009)’ is one of metacognitive strategies too. In fact, Oxford (1989) stated that strategies for practicing are the most essential

cognitive strategies but not all language learners realize it. Next, a similar thing was done to prepare the IELTS writing test. After finishing writing the essay, Participant 3 meticulously checked the essays and self-corrected them for punctuation, run-on sentences, etc.

To prepare the speaking test, Participant 3 asked a friend to be the questions giver and follow the protocol for the whole speaking test, especially when making a practice of part 2 in IELTS speaking test. This can be categorized as a social strategy as Leaver et al. (2005) said, “Appealing for assistance from a teacher or a peer is just such a social strategy (p.85).” Moreover, Participant 3 practiced all of the skills during a long break and did the practice based on the test actual time allocated. Besides, Participant 3 used to have a regular schedule practice for at least two exercises every Saturday evening. Sometimes Participant 3 also made a practice of at least two exercises too. Participant 3 sees her schedule effective because she was able to fully concentrate in her exercises.

Apart from the positive energy gained from the high motivation, Participant 3 also had an obstacle which she solved. Participant 3 mentioned that her obstacle was time management, especially when working on reading exercises. She solved it by answering all of the questions 30 minutes earlier and it costed her some avoidable mistakes. In the end, Participant 3 evaluated her work especially in writing by acting as an examiner for her essay. Participant 3 knows approximately how to assess IELTS writing, thus, she is able to put some feedback on her own writing. Furthermore, she likes to do everything in English every day, watch English daily night shows, and chat with her native friend in written and spoken.

Next, Participant 9 is not an IELTS teacher but she had strong spirit in preparing her IELTS test. What motivated Participant 9 to take an IELTS test because she would like to join Chevening Scholarship and she aimed to get 7 as the band score for every skill. By employing a metacognitive strategy, ‘having clear goals for improving one’s own skills’ (Ortega, 2009, p.210), therefore, Participant 9 started her preparation since 4 months prior to the official IELTS test. She analyzed every part of IELTS test instrument every day until she got better comprehension of them. Moreover, Participant 9 practiced listening, reading and speaking complete tests twice a week but practiced writing 4 times a week. Nevertheless, she admitted that she still needed to face a time management issue. In Gani et al. (2015), Oxford (1990) believe that actually all language learners employ learning strategies ‘but more successful learners use them more consciously, more appropriately, more purposefully and more frequently (p.26).’ Therefore, Participant 9 fully realized that only being committed herself to IELTS practice was the only solution to do it persistently.

By having such motivation, Participant 9 had her specific actions in learning strategies for listening and reading test. She used to make herself familiar with the level of difficulty of reading passages. She studied the questions types in IELTS reading tests and endeavored to find the most effective ways in answering such questions. Moreover, she sought opportunities to read English academic texts as many as possible. Next, she practiced answering the reading test questions per type and continued to answer questions per section. What she did to practice for listening section was not really different from the previous one. She familiarized herself with various English accents by listening to podcasts or audios of people conversing or delivering speech in British, Australian, Canadian, Chinese, African, and Indian

accents. She also examined the gradual change of level difficulty started from section 1 to section 4 of listening test. Then, she learned the types of listening test questions and worked on the exercises regularly by applying some tips and strategies obtained from several reliable sources on the internet.

Several deliberate actions were also done to prepare IELTS writing and speaking tests. As what was found by Gani et al (2015) that high speaking performance students show more awareness of their language needs. They combined strategies which helped them ‘master the target language through practicing, reasoning and analyzing, as well as strategies that allow them to control their own learning through planning strategies and evaluating results’ (p.26). She studied rubrics of IELTS writing and speaking and comprehended them to investigate how she should write and speak in order to get 7 as the band score. She also examined the types of questions in IELTS both writing task 1 and writing task 2 so that Participant 9 realized that every task has different ways of developing them. Besides, she identified some 7-band-score-writing and speaking samples and examined them with the scoring criteria. In cognitive strategies, analyzing and reasoning strategies are commonly applied by adult language learners (Oxford, 1989). To get to know how good her writing ability is, she worked on each of writing types and questions and checked the results using the scoring criteria. Furthermore, she asked some help from her friends who were IELTS teachers to give feedback on her writing. On the other hand, Participant 9 improved her speaking skill by practicing each part of speaking test and recording it. Then, she analyzed what she lacked on her speaking and made it better. Also, she conducted a self-speaking simulation test and asked a friend who was an IELTS teacher to grade it and provide some feedback. In this case, what Participant 9 has done is categorized as one of social strategies in which asking more proficient users for help is important (Oxford, 1989). In short, Participant 9 used to evaluate her speaking and writing skill by having regular practice and working hard. In fact continuously evaluating self-progress is one of the most essential metacognitive strategies but often forgotten by learners (Oxford, 1989). She was glad that eventually her speaking and writing skills showed a positive progress. In addition, she was actually self-assured in those active skills.

Conclusion

Almost all participants used all learning strategies mentioned by Oxford (1989). The most frequent learning strategies used were social and metacognitive strategies. It shows that learners obviously had high awareness to coordinate their own learning in preparing the IELTS test persistently and they got more advantageous by making the learning process successful with others’ help. On the other hand, affective strategies were the least learning strategies used. Only 60% of the participants employed these strategies. Discussing more specifically about Participant 3 and 9 who are labelled as very good users, metacognitive strategies employed by them are paying attention, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating. Those strategies comprise several actions such as determining specific and clear goals since the beginning, making practice as their routines, observing their own progress, looking for solutions to improve their skills and noticing their errors or mistakes and correcting them. Based on the interviews,

some other strategies are also clearly employed such as social and cognitive strategies. As Flavell (1979) said that cognitive strategies make cognitive progress and metacognitive strategies monitor it.

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