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# TEACHER'S STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL FOR AUTONOMOUS LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN PENANG - MALAYSIA

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# Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate strategies used by the teacher in teaching English, speaking competency, for autonomous learners at English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia, an English class program for Indonesian migrant workers. Specifically, it was conducted to identify whether the strategies were proper to be applied in teaching students whose profession as migrant workers. The qualitative method and case study approached were applied in conducting this research. Thirty workers and a teacher were selected as the participants. A series of interview, classroom observations, and video- recordings are done by the researchers to collect the data. Then they were analysed by using Miles and Huberman's framework of qualitative analysis. The result of the study shows that to arrange proper strategies in teaching Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, teacher had to understand their characteristic first. In this study, the researchers found that most of the students had the characteristics of autonomous learners as follows; responsive [AL-BR], independent [AL-BI], well-motivated [AL-BWM], and self-aware [AL-BSA]. Based on these four characteristics, the teacher was able to arrange the strategies that proper to be practiced in the classroom. The strategies used by the teacher in teaching English speaking skill for Indonesian migrant workers were interactive techniques, grammar translation method, cooperative learning, direct instruction, and diary- writing. Students' activities in class as a result of the teacher's strategies were related to and consistent with the teacher's beliefs about autonomous learners and their characteristics. In other words, the strategies are effective, compelling, and appropriate for use in a class with autonomous learners.

**Keywords:** Teacher's strategies, teaching English, speaking skill, autonomous learners, Indonesian migrant workers

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Henri Holec, the inventor of the autonomous learner, described autonomous learner as the ability to take charge of one's learning (Thanasoulas, 2000). Meanwhile, Benson and Voller described it in five ways; (a) for situations in which learners study entirely on their own; (b) for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning; (c) for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education; (d) for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning; (e) for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning (Benson & Voller, 2014). Regarding this definition, the autonomous learner play an active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing himself of learning opportunities, rather than simply reacting to various stimuli from the teacher (Nunan, 2012). In teaching learning process, there are many methods to teach, or in this case, to facilitate and guide autonomous learners in learning language. Metacognitive strategy is one of the right ways to teach autonomous learners. Metacognitive knowledge includes all facts that learners acquire during their own cognitive processes. It occurred as they are applied and used to gain knowledge and acquire skills in many different situations (Wenden, 1991). Hypothetically, metacognitive strategies are used for planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning activity; The strategies are about learning rather than learning strategies (Cook & Cook, 1993).

In Penang, Malaysia, English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia is an English course that implemented learner autonomy model to the needed students. It is well known for their reputation as a decent English course to learn specific English skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking. The teachers are known for their professionalism in English language teaching and have attracted many different kinds of students. From a conversational interview conducted with the teacher of English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia before the research started, most prospective students were indicated as autonomous learners derived from their characteristics when they did the pre-activity consultation. This is also likely based on the students' background as migrant workers so that the conditions and characteristics of the students are different from normal students. Based on the background of study above, autonomous learners are solitary and independent in learning a language. They prefer that the learning activities are adjusted to them, not vice versa. Teacher is supposed to supervise their progress and facilitate what they need, but the fact is autonomous learners are ignored in class due to their teacher unawareness, making them to be unmotivated and uncomfortable in learning English, especially in speaking subject. Proper strategies are needed to create better learning activities for such students. In this study, the researchers are eager to investigate what strategies do the teacher applied to teach Indonesia migrant workers class that indicated as autonomous learners in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia which may involve different strategies.

Based on these problems, in a study conducted in Turkey, Balcikanli found that the learners and teacher comprehend the autonomous learning and the role of students in the learning process (Balçikanli, 2010). Predominantly, they concurred with the possibility that students should take a part in the decision making process concerning the targets of the course, class management, assignments, and the selection of learning entity. The results show a strong preference for a more autonomous learning process. When it comes to the humanities of learning, both students and teachers seem to think that students should be placed at the center of learning and practice. Unlike other studies on teachers' perspectives on learner autonomy, these students and teacher felt very comfortable while asking students to make decisions. However, the present study is different from the previous study because it focuses on investigating strategies and methods used by a teacher in teaching speaking for autonomous learners, and it is coonducted on autonomy learners in the English class for Indonesian migrant workers at English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia.

In their research article, Kloppenburg & Peters (2012) defines Indonesia migrant workers as a great number of Indonesians who are working abroad or out of Indonesia's territory. Then, the majority of the migrant workers are known as 'TKI' or 'Tenaga Kerja *Indonesia*'. This abbreviation has been conjoined with Indonesians having lower-level jobs in foreign nations. They include domestic assistant, child-care, nuns, plantation workers, drivers, construction labourers, and fisher. If the term is considered generally, the 'TKI' should include all Indonesian workers in foreign countries including the academicians, medical doctors, researchers, businessmen, or entertainers (Khalid & Yacob, 2012). Stand on the data collected by the Chairperson of the Republic of Indonesia's Overseas Election Working Group - Wajid Fauzi, in 2018, more than 1 million Indonesian immigrant workers were in Malaysia (Rizgo, 2018). Moreover, based on the interview results conducted with 10 Indonesian immigrant workers as the member of students in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia, they state that lousy treatment are often experienced by them from their fellow workers from other nations and some people of Malaysia. This condition are also experienced and known by several activists and members of the Non-Government Organization registered in Malaysia, 'Pertubuhan Masyarakat Indonesia (PERMAI)' or the Indonesian Community Association in Penang- Malaysia (Putri et al, 2023). As a matter of fact, there are some antecedents triggering this condition. One of them is the worker's poor English communication competency, which is generally considered as an elite language among the working community. Thus, Establishing English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia is hoped to be one of the solutions to deal with that condition. Moreover, a better skill in English also has an impact on their professional careers (Hakim et al, 2020). The results of analysis by the human resources department of some companies in Penang, Malaysia, showed that Indonesian workers performed much better than Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching

workers from other countries, but their English proficiency was very low. Due to this problem, the Permai Penang altogether with the Indonesian Postgraduate Students' Academic Forum at University Sains Malaysia (USM) initiated an English language-training program known as English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia. This program is carried out twice a week with three different time schedule (9-11 am; 3-5 pm; and 8-10 pm). It is done by considering the different working hours of the migrants' workers who registered as student in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia. The program started in November 2017 and was implemented by three main tutors. According to the data obtained by the trainer, as of August 2023, more than 400 Indonesian migrant workers have joined the program since the program was launched. Some workers have completed this five to six month study program, and returned to their hometown in Indonesia. Then, the can find a higher-paying job, being promoted, and raise their living standard, obtained admission to a reputable higher education institution (Hakim et al, 2020).

Furthermore, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide more knowledge regarding strategies that are suitable for typical autonomous learners, especially those with a background as migrant workers, so that they can be used as a reference by other EFL teachers.

# Learner Autonomy

Over the last two decades, the concepts of learner autonomy and independence have gained momentum, the former becoming a buzzword within the context of language learning (Teng & Teng, 2019). It is a truism that one of the most important spin-offs of more communicatively-oriented language learning and teaching has been the premium placed on the role of the learner in the language learning process (Wenden, 1998). It goes without saying, of course, that this shift of locus of responsibility fro teachers to learners does not exist in a vacuum, but is the result of a concatenation of changes to the curriculum itself towards a more learner-centered kind of learning. What is more, this reshaping, so to speak, of teacher and learner roles has been conducive to a radical change in the age old distribution of power and authority that used to plague the traditional classroom.

# **Teaching Speaking**

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task modes of operation for achieving a particular and planned design for controlling and manipulating certain information (Brown & Lee, 2015). In addition, Lai et al (2022) states that technique and strategy are interchangeable and they refers to an action performed by either a language teacher (or language learner) to achieve a language teaching (or language learning) objectives. While teaching strategy refers to a pattern of teaching acts that serves to attain certain outcomes, a

teaching strategy is a purposefully conceived and determined plan of action. Teaching strategy is important for smoothed transaction of curriculum.

What is meant by teaching speaking according to Sharipova (2023) explained that the aim of teaching English language learners are to; (1) Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns; (2) Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language; (3) Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter; (4) Organize their thoughts in meaningful and logical sequence; (5) Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments; (6) Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. In those meanings of teaching speaking above, the teacher must pay attention of some important aspect include producing sentences, intonation, rhythm and stress. Those sound productions must be meaningful because it must be produced logically from thoughts.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

# **Research Design**

The method used in this research is a case study. According to Stake, a case study is a work of art that can see what other people have not yet seen, using the best explanatory power of researchers and even relying solely on its integrity that can encourage researchers to understand and describe things in particularity and complexity of a single case, and understand its activities in important situations (Stake, 2013). This case study aims to understand autonomous learning as a whole and use it as a document that can be identified as a case study seeking theory. Yin said that the case study is a comprehensive research strategy (Yin, 2009). In other words, case studies are not defined by the various methods that can be used, but by a concentrated investigation of specific situational cases of internal interest. This research project examines a case of learner autonomy that occurred at English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia in Penang which consists of 1 teacher and 30 participants whose backgrounds are Indonesian migrant workers with age range between 18 to 35 years old. To determine the participants of this study, the researchers used a purposive sampling to help the writer understand the phenomenon that being studied. According to Creswell (2020), intentional sampling aims to learn or understand core phenomena through deliberate selection of individuals and locations. To obtain the data, the researchers used three data collection techniques. Since the study is a case study, the researchers used the in-depth interview technique as the main technique, and then conducted classroom observations for validity check. Lastly, video- based fieldwork was done to involve the collection of naturally occurring data during classroom activities.

# **Interview**

Preparation before conducting the interview is important. Kasper (2015) recommends the importance of the preparatory phase to maintain a clear focus on how the interview is conducted in order to provide the greatest benefit to the proposed research, and to apply eight principles to the preparatory phase of the interview, including the following components: (1) choose a setting with little distraction; (2) explain the purpose of the interview; (3) address terms of confidentially; (4) explain the format of the interview; (5) indicate how long the interview usually takes; (6) tell them how to get in touch with you later if they want to; (7) ask them if they have any questions before you both get started with the interview; and (8) do not count on your memory to recall their answer. Then to support the research procedure, the authors also did semi-structured interview sections to the teacher and students to find problems and get the situation. The following questions were asked to the teacher related to teaching learning process in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia:

- How are the teaching and learning activities to autonomous learners in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia?
- Do you think autonomous learners have better proficiency in English speaking compare to non- autonomous learners?
- What are the causes and factors that can make a student to be autonomous?
- How is the performance of autonomous learners and non- autonomous learners in the class? Is there any different?
- If students are independent, so what is the teacher's role for the students?
- What are the strategies used in teaching speaking for autonomous learners?
- What is your suggestion to students who are still dependent on their teacher, notes, dictionary, and books? And what is your suggestion to autonomous learners?

# **Observation**

Another data collection technique is observation. According to Bungin (2017), observation is a data collection technique that collects research data through observation and testing. In this case, observations are made by observing the teaching strategies used in the teaching activities. The role of researchers in observation is not participatory. The researchers observed the subjects and activities of teacher in class from three different classes consisting of a teacher and thirty Indonesian migrant worker participants who studying English at the English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia-Penang. In three weeks, the researchers observed six meetings and each observation lasted approximately 90 minutes. This observation is used to investigate the strategies used by teachers in teaching speaking for autonomous learners.

#### **Video-Based Fieldwork**

Video-based fieldwork involve the use of cameras to collect naturally occurring data. This video is fundamental because it focuses on describing the structure of the interaction sequence, social and behavioral mechanisms, and the laws that people use to coordinate and organize activities with others: understanding and revealing the structure at work. (13). The use of video in this research was to record the on going interaction in speaking activities of English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia, including strategies the teacher used and interaction between teacher and participants.

#### **Data Reduction**

Data reduction is a form of analysis that classifies, orients, and organizes data which can simplify data validation. First, large amounts of data must be organized and reduced or reconfigured in some meaningful way. According to Miles and Huberman (2018), data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data. In reducing the data, the author chose which aspects of the data that appear in the interview records and field notes should be emphasized, minimized, or archived entirely for research purposes. Further, the writer put code on each meaningful unit based on the list of codes (table 1). Then, the researchers examined all the relevant data sources for description and themes which were used for the research findings.

**Table 1. List of Codes** 

Teaching Speaking for Autonomous Learners	Codes	
AL; Teacher's Belief	AL-B	
AL: Participants are responsive	AL-BR	
AL: Participants are independent	AL-BI	
AL: Participants are well- motivated AL-BWM		
AL: Participants are self-aware	AL-BSA	
AL: Participants' strategies	AL-S	
Pre- Class Activities		
AL: Interactive Techniques	AL-SIT	
During- Class Activities		
AL: Grammar Translation	AL- SGT	
Cooperative Learning	AL-SCL	
Direct Instruction	AL: SDI	
Post- Class Activities		
AL: Diary-Writing	AL- SDW	

# **Data Display**

Data visualization is the second stage of the qualitative data analysis model of Miles and Huberman (2018). This stage provides an organized and compressed set of information from which conclusions can be drawn. The data has been reduced, and then the data presentation has been completed. The presentation of data can be done in the form of short descriptions, graphics, and relationships between categories. In the past, the most popular form of data

visualization for qualitative research data was narrative text. Through the data screen, the data is organized and arranged in an easy-to-understand relationship pattern (Ezzy, 2013). The researchers show reduced data to facilitate data interpretation. It displayed in a table with the basic categories such as teachers beliefs toward autonomous learners and teachers' strategies in teaching speaking for autonomous learners in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia.

## **Conclusion Drawing and Verification**

Reaching a conclusion involves taking a step back to consider the implications of analyzing the data and assessing its impact on the research question. At this stage, the researchers extract meaning from the data on the screen. In addition, the robustness and confirmation of the data should be checked. The researchers checked the validity of the data using a triangulation strategy. According to Miles and Huberman (2018), triangulation is a strategy that uses multiple sources and patterns of evidence to verify or confirm findings. The researchers checks multiple sources as needed, such as interview responses, observational data, to obtain valid results from this research (Freeman, 1998).

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Findings**

The data gathered through an interview with the teacher using general interview guide approach to investigate teacher's beliefs toward autonomous learners, then it is continued with an open questions interview for each meeting (until 6<sup>th</sup> meeting) to investigate strategies used for teaching autonomous learners. The data were also collected by classroom observation. As the observer, it is necessary for the researchers to directly observe autonomous learners in the class. The table below are data displays compiled from the interviews and observations.

**Table 2. Teacher's Belief Toward Autonomous Learners** 

Teacher's Belief Toward Autonomous Learners [AL-B]	Details
Students are responsive [AL-BR]	Students are easy to comprehend teacher's objective; Students are fast to understand teacher's instruction.
Students are independent [AL-BI]	Students are able to control classroom activities; Students are able to arrange their own course; Students are able to choose their needed course; Students are not dependent to their teacher, books and notes.
Students are well-motivated [AL-BWM]	Students are active; Students are willing and wanting to do activities outside the class.
Students are self-aware [AL-BSA]	Students are able to correct their mistakes on their own.

The attitudes of teachers toward self-directed learners are displayed in Table 2. It demonstrates that the majority of her students were self-aware, motivated, autonomous, and receptive. The instructor began by saying that her students knew what went wrong, based on the results of their performance. When students made a mistake, they could fix it without the teacher having to explain it to them again. Pronunciation was the main area where these situations occurred. During the pronunciation portion of the lesson, students' self-awareness was very evident. The instructor expressed her satisfaction with her students' freedom as well. When instructed to do so, they managed the class well. Additionally, they did not rely on dictionaries to interpret words. In the classroom, students showed initiative and ensured that cooperative learning went smoothly.

Table 3. Teacher's Strategies in Teaching Speaking for Autonomous Learners

Meetings	Teacher's Strategies in Teaching Speaking for Autonomous Learners [AL-S]
1st Meeting	Opening Activities:
Interview	Greeting students [AL- SIT], playing vocabulary game [AL-SIT]
	While-Class Activities:
	Translating difficult words to Indonesian Language [AL-SGT], Asking students to read text [AL-
	SDI], Instructing students to role play characters from a text in front of the class [AL-SCL]
	Closing Activities:
	Asking students to write the diary given to them [AL-SDW]
2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting	Opening Activities:
Interview	Greeting students [AL-SIT], playing vocabulary game [AL-SIT]
	While-Class Activities:
	Translating difficult words to Indonesian Language [AL-SGT], Asking students to read text [AL-
	SDI], Instructing students to role play characters from a text in front of the class [AL-SCL]
	Closing Activities:
	Reminding students to write the diary [AL-SDW]
3 <sup>rd</sup> Meeting	Opening Activities:
Interview	Greeting students [AL-SIT], Describing the lesson of the day [AL-SIT]
	While-Class Activities:
	Translating difficult words to Indonesian Language [AL-SGT], Asking students to read text [AL-
	SDI], Instructing students to role play characters from a text in front of the class [AL-SCL]
	Closing Activities:
ul ·	Reminding students to write the diary [AL-SDW]
4 <sup>th</sup> Meeting	Opening Activities:
Interview	Greeting students [AL-SIT], Describing the lesson of the day [AL-SIT]
	While-Class Activities:
	Translating difficult words to Indonesian Language [AL-SGT], Instructing students to prepare an
	interview script [AL-SCI], Instructing students to interview their classmate [AL-SCL]
	Closing Activities:
Eth M. C.	Reminding students to write the diary [AL-SDW]
5 <sup>th</sup> Meeting	Opening Activities:
Interview	Greeting students [AL- SIT], Describing the lesson of the day [AL-SIT]  While-Class Activities:
	Translating difficult words to Indonesian Language [AL-SGT], Instructing students to prepare an
	interview script [AL-SDI], Instructing students to interview people in English Academy Bengkulu
	Malaysia and Permai Penang (strangers or acquaintance) [AL-SCL]
	Closing Activities:
	Reminding students to write the diary [AL-SDW]
6 <sup>th</sup> Meeting	Opening Activities:
Interview	Greeting students [AL- SIT], Describing the lesson of the day [AL-SIT]
merview	While-Class Activities:
	Translating difficult words to Indonesian Language [AL-SGT], Instructing students to prepare an
	interview script [AL-SDI], Instructing students to interview people in English Academy Bengkulu
	Malaysia and Permai Penang (strangers or acquaintance) [AL-SCL]
	Closing Activities:
	Collecting and analysing students' progress from diary, and then giving back to them [AL-SDW],
	reminding students to write the diary [AL-SDW]

Table 3 demonstrates the tactics employed by the teacher in the speaking class to train autonomous learners. The activities were divided into three phases by the teacher: opening activities, while-class activities, and closing activities. Tacher used participatory approaches in the opening activities. In the beginning, the teacher greets students by playing a game and generally showing or discussing the topic of the day. The teacher then used the grammar translation approach, cooperative learning, and direct instruction when asked about while-class activities. The tasks at English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia included interpreting words or passages, writing an interview script, doing an interview with a classmate, and conducting an interview with a stranger or acquaintance. Finally, the teacher explained that for closing activities, students were required to write their learning challenges in a diary provided by the teacher.

#### **Discussion**

The findings of this study recommended the teacher's strategy for teaching speaking to autonomous learners in the speaking class. It is also stated that those strategies were divided into three categories: opening activities, in-class activities, and closing activities. In the introductory exercises, the teacher usually used interactive approaches to rouse students from their passive state of only listening to a lecture. After greeting, the teacher mostly used three interactive techniques in the meetings; instructor storytelling, make them guess, and read aloud. This is supported by Ambele & Boonsuk (2021) who also said that in teaching English speaking, especially for students with a background of working as Indonesian migrant workers and autonomous learners, interactive teaching is very necessary because it can make the class atmosphere more comfortable. Furthermore, in while-class activities, the teacher usually gave or pointed out list of vocabulary of the subject that was needed to memorize by students. The teacher believed that translating the vocabularies one by one was effective to make them memorize the vocabularies better. According to An and Macaro (2022), the teacher did not encourage them to utilize a dictionary while translating words. Students were challenged without being burdened. Other findings which are also related to research results from Sawitri (2023) show that autonomous learners are basically independent learners, but teachers need to monitor their progress when learning inside and outside the classroom.

#### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This present study focuses on English speaking skill or subject in English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia and shows convincing strategies used by the teacher to teach autonomous learners. According to teacher's beliefs, there are four major attributes or characteristics of autonomous learners, they are:

responsive, independent, well-motivated and self- aware. These attributes are used as a reference for the teacher to arrange proper strategies to teach the students indicated as autonomous learners. The strategies are parted into three phases, they are: opening activities, while- class activities, and closing activities. In opening activities, teacher used interactive techniques to get rid of passivity and hesitation in learning. In while- class activities, the teacher used grammar translation method, cooperative learning, and direct instruction. All of them were applied to encourage students' autonomy. In closing activities, diary- writing is instructed, so that the teacher can track the students' progress in learning activities inside and outside the class. The actions of students performed in the class through teacher's strategies were related and coherent with teacher's beliefs toward autonomous learners and their attributes. In other words, the strategies are effective, convincing, and proper enough to be applied in a class with autonomous learners. Although this study was carried out with a small number of participants within a short period of time, the findings provide some useful information that can be used by both teacher and stakeholders to improve the quality of English teaching and learning, especially in a speaking class for autonomous learners.

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