

CHAPTER II

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN LISTENING SKILL

A. The Nature of Language Learning Strategies

1. Definition of Language Learning Strategies

As studies about language learning strategies have become more popular among researchers, more definitions of language learning strategies emerged as the results. Starting from the very general definition, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 1) defines learning strategies as "...the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information." From the very same year, a more specific definition is given by Oxford (1990: 8) where she states that learning strategies are "specific actions taken by the student to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations." In contrary to the two earlier definitions, Lee argues that learning strategies are learning skills, learning-to-learn skills, thinking skills, problem skills or, in other words the methods which students use to intake, store, and retrieve during the learning process (Lee, 2010: 134). In short, Lee sees language learning strategies as skills.

However, Chamot tends to define the learning strategies in much simpler way where learning strategies cover the whole things students do to reach the goal of the learning (Chamot, 2004: 14). In contrary to Chamot, Cohen explores the aspect of student consciousness by emphasizing that learning strategies are the actions or steps used by students which are

consciously selected in order to learn the language, the use of it, or even both (Cohen, 1998: 280). To simplify, Richards says that strategy itself can be thought as the ways in which a student approaches and manages a task (Richards, 2008: 11). Though definitions of language learning strategies may vary, there are similarities which pointed out that language learning strategies are used to help the students to enhance their language learning by taking actions consciously or unconsciously to accomplish language learning competences or goals.

To conclude, language learning strategies are actions or behaviours including consciously selected steps taken by students in order to learn the language, the use of it or even both, and how they approach and manage a task so that it will help students in having a more enjoyable and self-directed learning..

2. Classifications of Language Learning Strategies

Many different definitions of language learning strategies are offered by some experts, as well as the classifications of the strategies. Oxford (1990: 18-21) describes and classifies them into six classes which are divided into two major classes, direct and indirect strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 46) on the other hand classify them into three different types, metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies.

Oxford's two major classes are divided based on their involvement into the target language itself. Memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and

compensation strategies which are involved directly into the language are classified as direct strategies, while metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies are the indirect ones.

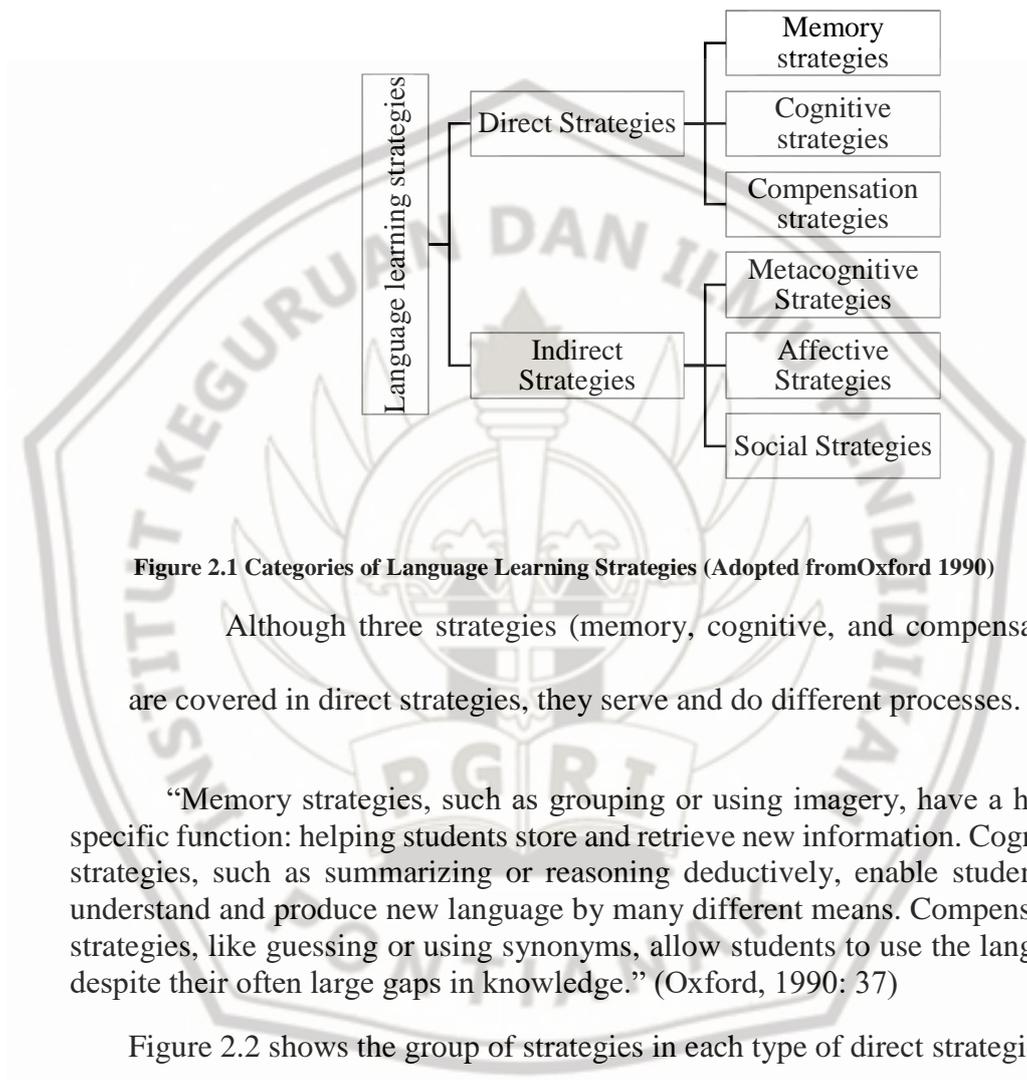


Figure 2.1 Categories of Language Learning Strategies (Adopted from Oxford 1990)

Although three strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) are covered in direct strategies, they serve and do different processes.

“Memory strategies, such as grouping or using imagery, have a highly specific function: helping students store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies, such as summarizing or reasoning deductively, enable students to understand and produce new language by many different means. Compensation strategies, like guessing or using synonyms, allow students to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge.” (Oxford, 1990: 37)

Figure 2.2 shows the group of strategies in each type of direct strategies.

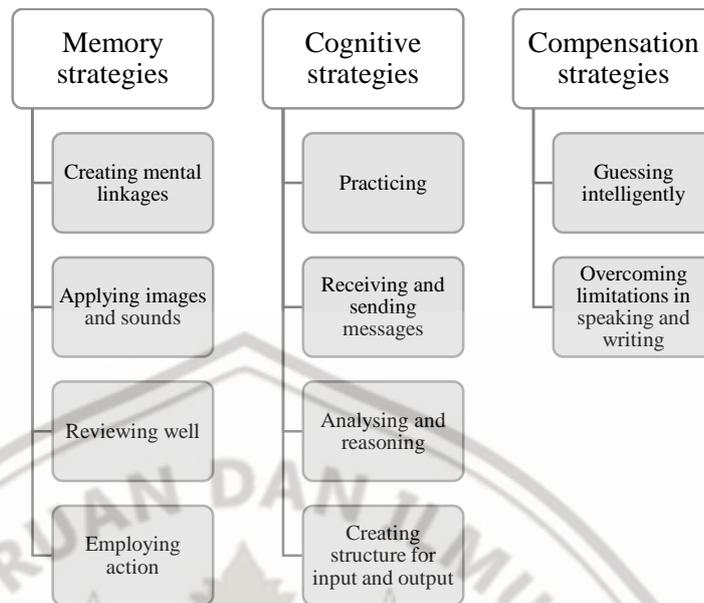


Figure 2.2 Direct Strategies (Adopted from Oxford 1990)

In the contrary of direct strategies, indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, and social strategies) do not directly deal with the target language but rather supporting and managing the language learning. Oxford (1990: 135) explains indirect strategies as such:

“Metacognitive strategies allow students to control their own cognition—that is, to coordinate the learning process by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning and evaluating. Affective strategies help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes. Social strategies help students learn through interactions with others.”

Figure 2.3 shows the group of strategies in indirect strategies.

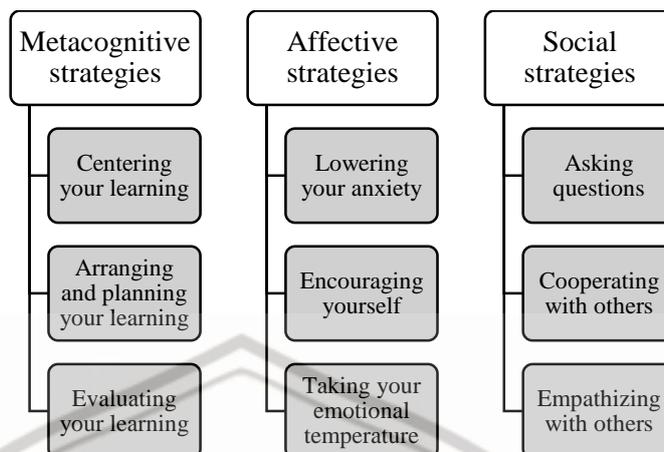


Figure 2.3 Indirect Strategies (Adopted from Oxford 1990)

Figure 2.3 shows the group of strategies in indirect strategies. It can be seen that language learning strategies are divided into different class or categories. However, Oxford emphasizes that strategies are supposed to work hand in hand with one another (Oxford, 1990: 135). In short, strategies does not work separately, it can be combined in order to achieve the goal of learning..

While Oxford draws clear lines between strategies into six types (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies), O'Malley and Chamot's classification seems to be much simpler. In their strategies classification, memory and compensation strategies are covered in cognitive. Affective and social strategies are also combined or considered the same. Figure 2.4 shows the classification by O'Malley and Chamot (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 46):

Metacognitive Strategies	Selective attention: focusing on special aspects of learning task
	Planning: planning for the organization of either written or spoken discourse
	Monitoring: reviewing attention to a task, comprehension of information that should be remembered, or production while it is occurring
	Evaluation: checking comprehension after completion of a receptive language activity, or evaluating language production after it has taken place
Cognitive Strategies	Rehearsal: repeating the names of items or objects to be remembered.
	Organization: grouping and classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their semantic or syntactic attributes.
	Inferencing: using information in text to guess meanings of new linguistic terms, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts.
	Summarizing: intermittently synthesizing what one has heard to ensure the information has been retained.
	Deducing: applying rules to the understanding of language.
	Imagery: using visual images (either generated or actual) to understand and remember new verbal information.
	Transfer: using known linguistic information to facilitate a new learning task.
	Elaboration: linking ideas contained in new information, or integrating new ideas with known information.
Social/affective Strategies:	Cooperation: working with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check notes, or get feedback on a learning activity.
	Questioning for clarification: eliciting from a teacher or peer additional explanation, rephrasing, or examples.
	Self-talk: using mental redirection of thinking to assure oneself that a learning activity will be successful or to reduce anxiety about a task.

Figure 2.4 Language Learning Strategies (Adopted from O'Malley & Chamot 1990)

Now that the language learning strategies have been classified, this study will use the classifications as a base in determining strategies implemented by sample of this research. Therefore, the researcher will focus on six strategies: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

3. The Importance of Language Learning Strategies

In order to know and to understand the importance of language learning strategies, it is necessary to know the features the language learning strategies first. Oxford (1990:9) mentions some interesting and helpful features to help in understanding the language learning strategies on the first place. See figure 2.5.

Features of language learning strategies

- Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
- Allow students to become more self-directed.
- Expand the role of teachers.
- Are problem-oriented
- Are specific actions taken by the student.
- Involve many aspects of the student, not just the cognitive.
- Support learning both directly and indirectly.
- Are not always observable
- Are often conscious.
- Can be taught.
- Are flexible
- Are influenced by a variety of factors.

Figure 2.5 Features of Language Learning Strategies (Adopted from Oxford 1990)

As seen from the figure 2.5, there are twelve features of language learning strategies offered. The first feature which is “contribute to the main goal, communicative competence” will help the language student to achieve the goal or competence of language learning, in the case of this study for example is to help achieving the competence of listening comprehension. The second feature will help the student to be more independent and take responsibility of his/her language learning. Oxford also explains that the “self-regulated students” are those who tend to implement more strategies than common language student because they take serious actions regarding their language learning (Oxford, 1999:109). Not only helping to reach the goal of language learning, strategies also help student to manage him/herself in learning the language.

To show how complete the language learning strategies are, Oxford (1990) shows that language learning strategies cover the matter of teaching the language itself by its third feature. Language learning strategies are intended to help the process of teaching the language by expanding the role of teachers in language learning. In this case, teachers will no longer simply delivering material to learn in the target language but also exploring more into the effective ways in teaching the language.

Language learning strategies will also help student solving the problems encountered in the process of learning because they are problem-oriented. They give ways to the student to choose the actions to do in order to solve the problems. Thus, the strategies will cover many aspects of the

student, not just cognitive but also many others so that there will be more options for the student are opened to be employed in the language learning. Therefore, they can be considered helping the student both directly and indirectly.

Language learning strategies are also flexible, student may choose the strategies based on the need. Nevertheless, the strategies are not always observable. They can be visible such as in asking questions or asking for repetitions, but also invisible such as in mind mapping and making plan. Last but not least, the strategies can also be taught to the language student. This feature will later be discussed more in the part of implementing language learning strategies in listening comprehension.

The features of language learning strategies can be considered as helping tools for the student. They will provide great helps especially for EFL students who learn English as the language which is 'foreign' to them. While they are so helpful, the language learning strategies can also be a matter of determining good and common language student. Rubin (1975:42-43) states that "...we need to isolate what the good student does, what his strategies are, and impart his knowledge to less successful students." Her statement shows that there is indeed a difference between good language student and common language student in terms of strategies employed.

To tell the difference of good language student, it can be described as follows:

“(1) The good language student may be a good guesser, that is, he gathers and stores information in an efficient manner so it can be easily retrieved. He may listen to a phrase, pick out the words he understands and infer the rest. He may actively look for clues to meaning—in the topic, setting, or attitudes of the speakers. His guessing strategy may be stratified from the more general to the specific so that he gets the most information from each question or sentence. (2) He is often willing to appear foolish in order to communicate and get his message across. (3) He will try out his knowledge by making up new sentences, thus bringing his newly acquired competence into use.” Rubin (1975:45)

From the description of good language student given by Rubin, we can see that the good language student does employ various types of language learning strategies. This reminds us to the feature of strategies which allows the student to be more ‘self-directed’. The ‘self-directed’ student employs more strategies than common language student means that the ‘self-directed’ student himself is the good language student from Oxford’s and Rubin’s explanations.

In addition to the theory of good language student by Oxford and Rubin, a study by Wong & Nunan (2011) shows in the context of a good language student, the amount and type of strategies, and even self-awareness are different from a common student. By means of self-awareness here are explained by Jones et. al. (1987:14) as:

“Awareness refers not only to knowledge of specific cognitive strategies but also to knowledge of how to use them and when they should be used Control refers, in part, to the capability to monitor and direct the success of the task at hand, such as recognizing that comprehension has failed, using fix-up strategies, and checking an obtained answer against an estimation.”

Nevertheless, to say that every higher level student reports using more strategies more frequently than every lower level student, is not right—in

any situation involving real and infinitely complex human beings the reality is never that simple (Griffiths, 2010:890). Furthermore, Cohen emphasizes that students' own active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of individualized student strategies as an important cause for most students to excel (Cohen,2010:164). To sum up, studies of good language students over the years have indicated the fact as mentioned about relations of students and strategies.

Finally, to help the student understanding the importance of language learning strategies and how to implement them in learning a language, in her recent study Oxford explains that they can indeed help students improve their own perception, reception, storage, retention, and retrieval of language information, if some conditions are present. Conditions meant by Oxford are the strategy relation with the task (the strategy relates well to the task at hand), the effectiveness and relevance of the strategy (the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies for doing the task), and the coordination of strategy with the other aspect in learning (the strategy coordinates with the student's general learning style preferences to one degree or another) (Oxford,2003:274).

Without the presence of those three conditions, language learning strategies will not be effective nor help the students in learning the target language.

B. The Nature of Listening Skill

1. Definition of Listening Skill

Before discussing about the definition of listening, Rost (2011:2-4) has provided various orientations of listening related to its functions. He mentions four orientations to help us understanding listening from different points of view, receptive, constructive, collaborative, and transformative orientation. Figure 2.6 shows the definitions of listening based on each orientation.

Transformative Orientation

Listening = creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy

- Listening is being involved with the speaker, without judgement.
- Listening is creating a connection between the speaker and the listener.
- Listening is showing empathy with the speaker.
- Listening is seeking synchronicity with the speaker.
- Listening is imagining a possible world for the speaker's meaning.
- Listening is the process of creating meaning in the speaker.
- Listening is the intention to complete the communication process.
- Listening is feeling the flow of consciousness as you pay attention to things.
- Listening is entering the flow created by the cognitive environment of both the speaker and the listener.
- Listening is taking to heart, being moved and appreciating.

Receptive Orientation

Listening = receiving what the speaker actually says

- Listening means catching what the speaker said.
- Listening means getting the speaker's idea.
- Listening means decoding the speaker's message.
- Listening means unpacking the speaker's content.
- Listening is harvesting what is in the speaker's mind.
- Listening refers to the selective process of attending to, hearing, understanding and remembering aural symbols.
- Listening is receiving the transfer of images, impressions, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions from the speaker.

Collaborative Orientation

Listening = negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding

- Listening is co-ordinating with the speaker on the choice of a code and context.
- Listening means responding to what the speaker has said.
- Listening is the process of negotiating shared information or values with the speaker.
- Listening means acting interested while the speaker is talking.
- Listening is signalling to speaker which ideas are clear and acceptable to you.
- Listening is sharing the climate of the speaker.
- Listening is the acquisition, processing, and retention of information in the interpersonal context.

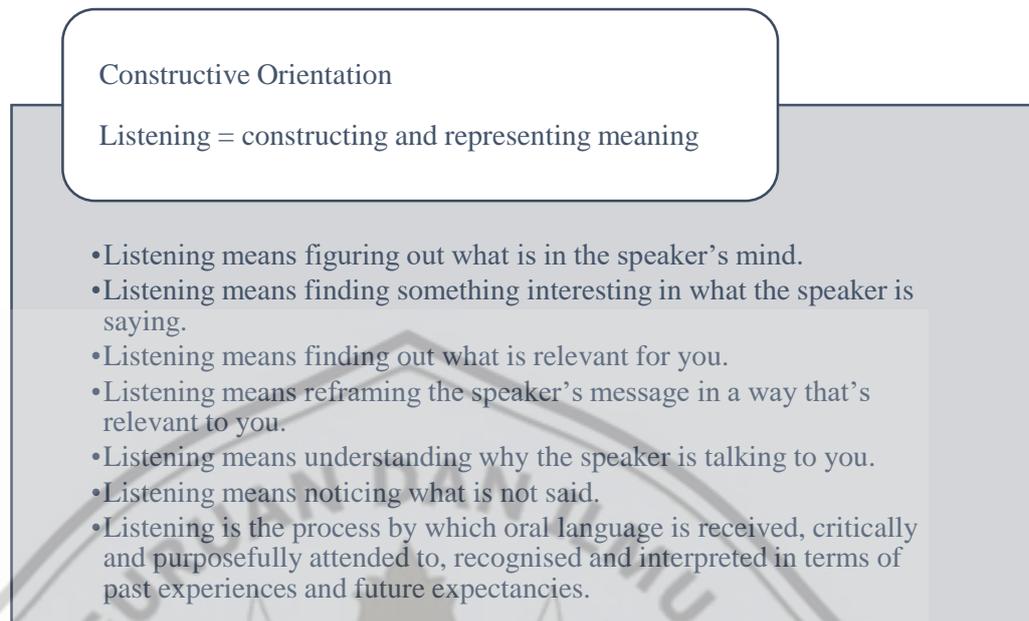


Figure 2.6 Definitions and Orientations of Listening (Adopted from Rost 2011)

The orientations of listening by Rost give clear understanding that there can be no simple definition to describe listening completely, because it is not simple, nor narrow to be easily defined. Listening covers all aspect in the spoken communication, including understanding, emotion, and respect to the speaker. Thus, definition of listening will vary depend on the context of the listening itself.

In the context of language learning, Vandergrift defines listening as:

”... a complex process in which listeners play an active role in discriminating between sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting intonation and stress, and finally, making use of all the skills mentioned above, interpreting the utterance within the sociocultural context.” Vandergrift (1999:168)

Thus, both theories by Rost and Vandergrift point out one similarity, which is the complexity of listening.

However, to conclude the definition of listening, it can be inferred that listening is a language aspect in which the listener needs to understand and comprehend the message delivered orally by the speaker, by paying attention to every aspects of the message itself.

2. The importance of Listening Skill

Understanding listening means understanding the base of language learning. The theory of listening in language learning is essentially related to the theory of listening in language acquisition. Language acquisition and language learning are two different theories in which language acquisition is a term meant for human acquiring the native language, and language learning is for a deliberate process usually in language classroom settings to learn second or foreign language (non-native language) (Darjdowidjojo, 2010: 225). Despite the difference, both theories hold a very same key—listening. In both conditions (acquisition & learning), listening is the natural precursor to speaking and both are dependent on listening (Nation & Newton, 2009: 37). Moreover, listening is the most frequently used communication skill (Goh, 1999: 44). Thus, listening is considered as important skill.

The present situation of listening in language classroom shows that listening is a skill which the importance has been taken for granted, and arguably the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the language classroom (Nation & Newton 2009: 37). This situation could only means that many teachers

and schools are not aware of how listening is important in language classroom.

In terms of the importance of listening, Gilakjani& Ahmad explains in their study that, “listening plays a significant role in daily communication and educational process” (2011: 977). For EFL students specifically, Nation & Newton explains that listening is a source of information from which to build up the knowledge necessary for using the language (Nation & Newton 2009: 38). Furthermore, to help students activate their learning in listening is also the most fundamental and important way to equip students with EFL communicative competence (Chen, 2013: 81). Needless to say, listening has a big impact in language learning.

Underlining the relation between listening and other skills in foreign language learning, Vandergrift explains that listening is a highly integrative skill playing an important role in the process of language learning, facilitating the emergence of other language skills (speaking, reading, writing) (1999: 170). A study by Gilakjani& Ahmad supports the theory by pointing out and suggesting that EFL students need to focus more on the listening so that they can acquire a useful tool to raise their English comprehensive competence because level of listening ability affects the capacity for improvement in other language skills (2011: 986). The same idea suggesting a positive relationship between listening ability and foreign language proficiency is also shown in the previous study by Feyten (1991:

178). Specifically, the result of his study shows listening ability affects the overall foreign language oral proficiency skills.

To conclude, it is now generally recognized that listening is an important skill and it plays a key role in facilitating the emergence of other language skills in language learning (Vandergrift, 1999: 168; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012: 4). It also provides much of the input and data that students receive in language learning (Richards, 2008: 1). It is a resource of knowledge for students in learning English language.

3. Listening in the Context of EFL

Some research have pointed out that listening is complex, frustrating, and problematic for EFL students (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011; Al-Qoraghooley and Al-Bermani, 2010; Lynch and Mendelsohn, 2010; & Goh, 1999). On the EFL university level, Gilakjani and Ahmadi underline that students' serious problems in listening are due to fact universities pay more attention to English grammar, reading and vocabulary (Gilakjani & Ahmad 2011: 978). Furthermore in the EFL classroom, teachers either did not teach listening at all, or attempted to teach it, but did so rather ineffectively that students who learned to comprehend the spoken language did so 'in spite of the teaching', not because of it (Lynch and Mendelsohn, 2010: 194). Thus, teaching listening is taken lightly despite its complexness.

Regarding its complexity, listening has some problems or difficulties. Goh in her study determines three major problems occurring in EFL listening, they are: perception, parsing, and utilisation problems (Goh, 1999: 59). Perception problems including: how students do not recognise words they know, how they neglect the next part when thinking about the meaning, how they cannot chunk streams of speech, missing the beginning of texts, and how they concentrate too hard or even unable to concentrate while listening. The problems like quickly forgetting what is heard, unable to form a mental representation from words heard, and do not understand subsequent parts of input because of earlier problems are all considered and covered in parsing problems. For the utilisation problems, students are likely to understand words but not the intended message, or even get confused about the key ideas in the message.

There are many reasons and factors causing difficulties and problems of EFL students in listening such as what have been mentioned above, one of them is because the teaching setting and the real setting are completely different. In learning foreign language, students learn in a classroom where the situation is arranged to be as conducive as possible, they learn from a teacher who speak as clear as possible so that he/she can be easily understood, and students learn from text book where the sentences begin with capital letters and end with full stops, while in real setting or life, native/ordinary speaker simply speak clear enough to make themselves

understood in a certain context (Brown, 1990: 2). Those problems are only some of the basics in causing difficulties in listening.

The other factor which is likely to cause problems and difficulties is the fact that listening is not a written discourse like reading where students may relook or reread. Spoken discourse on the other hand, is quite complicated because of the characteristics it has. Figure 2.7 shows the features of spoken discourse by Flowerdew & Miller (2005: 48).

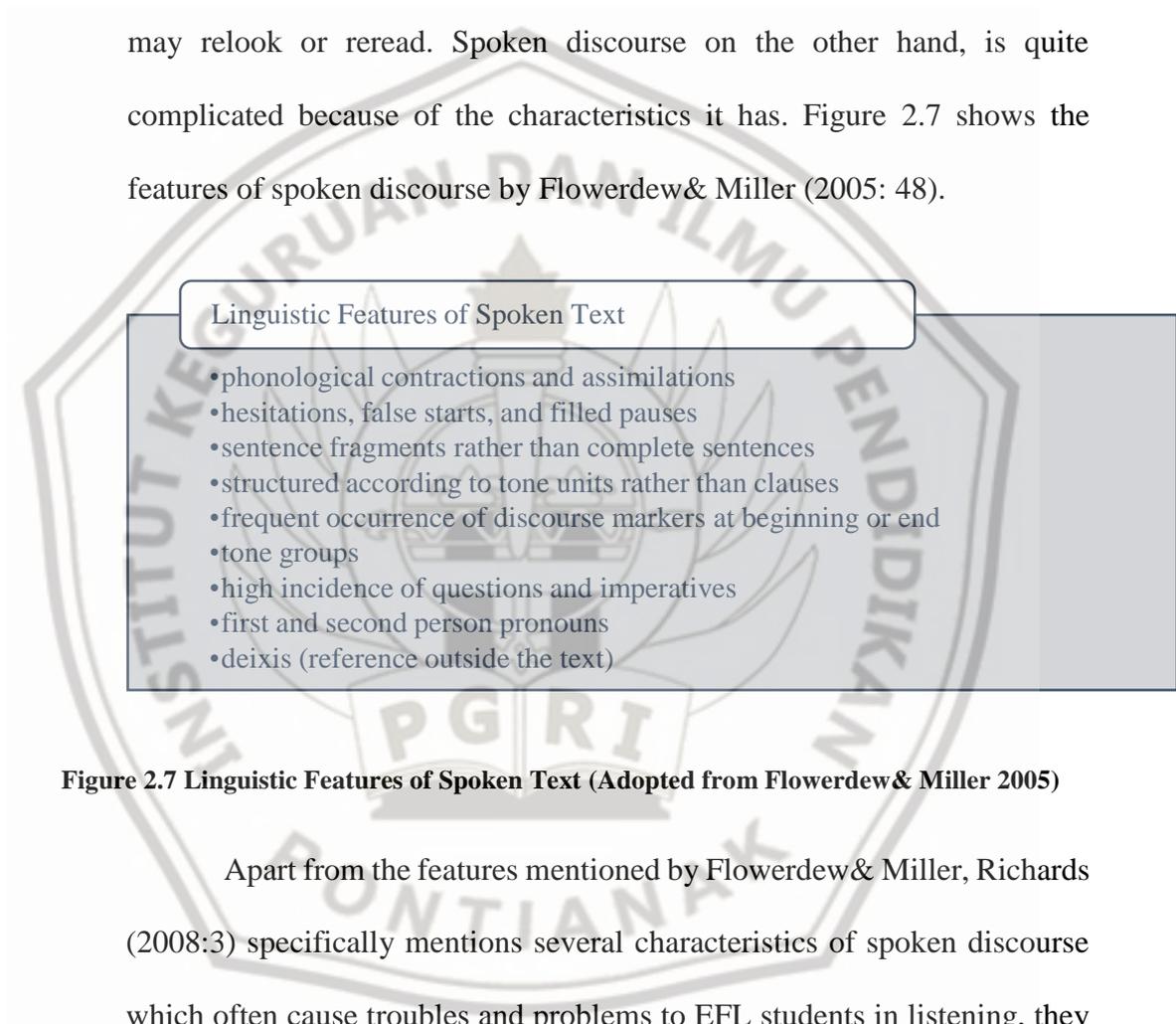


Figure 2.7 Linguistic Features of Spoken Text (Adopted from Flowerdew & Miller 2005)

Apart from the features mentioned by Flowerdew & Miller, Richards (2008:3) specifically mentions several characteristics of spoken discourse which often cause troubles and problems to EFL students in listening, they are: spoken discourse is usually instantaneous and listeners must process it “online” with seldom chance to listen it again; its speech rate often considered as too fast for EFL students; it is usually delivered one clause at a time while written discourse one sentence; it is also context-dependent and personal, assuming shared background knowledge; it may be spoken or

delivered different ways, such as different accents, standard and non-standard, native and non-native, regional and so on; and lastly it is described as having a linear structure while written having a hierarchical structure.

Moreover, the sub-skills of listening are also problematic for EFL students. As a bundle of processes are occurred in listening, the skills needed for it are also complex.

“In relation to listening, students need skills in segmenting the stream of speech into meaningful words and phrases; the ability to recognise words, phrases and word classes; ways of relating the incoming message to one’s own background knowledge and identifying the rhetorical and functional intent of an utterance or parts of an aural text; skills in interpreting rhythm, stress and intonation to identify information focus and emotional/attitudinal tone; the ability to extract the gist/essential information from longer aural texts without necessarily understanding every word.” (Nunan,1991:6)

To master such skills, continuity in learning is needed to support as practices and to make students getting used to the skills. The problem is that current teaching and learning of listening do not support and provide much of such opportunities. And as the result, the complexity of skills needed become a problem for EFL students.

Furthermore, adding the severity of problems in listening for EFL students, some other factors affecting listening are from the components involved in the listening itself. Rubin (1994: 199) summarizes five major factors affecting listening, including the text characteristics, the interlocutor characteristics, the task characteristics, the listener characteristics, and also the process characteristics. The text characteristics cover aspect such as the variation in a listening passage/text or associated visual support. The task

characteristics on the other hand, cover aspect such as variation in the purpose for listening and associated responses. More on the task characteristics, Anderson & Lynch (1988 cited in Nunan 24-25:1991) in their series of experiments found that the difficulty of listening tasks was particularly influenced by the organisation of information, students' familiarity of the topic, how information is presented (explicitness and sufficiency of the information), the type of referring expression used (e.g. use of pronouns rather than complete noun phrase), and whether the text described "static" relationship (e.g. geometric figures) or dynamic relationship (e.g. a road accident). Humans' characteristics cover the variations of interlocutor and listener characteristics, e.g. variation in the speaker and listener personal characteristics. Last but not least, characteristics of the process as one of components in listening which can cause problem such as variation in the listener's cognitive activities and the nature of the interaction between speaker and listener.

In conclusion, many factors can be causing troubles for EFL students in listening. It is due to fact that as foreign language, English is not the main medium for communication and most of the environments are not supportive for student to develop the language proficiency. The teaching and learning which neglect and unaware of the importance of listening can also disadvantage the students development. In short, everything tends to be more difficult and problematic for EFL students because they are not used to it.

C. The Importance of Language Learning Strategies in Listening Skill

In the previous parts, it has been explained and known that listening is a problematic skill for EFL students, while language learning strategies are helping tool in achieving the goal of language learning. When the two aspects are present (problem and helping tool), logically one will be used to solve the other so that the goal can be achieved. Utilizing and maximizing the use of language learning strategies in this case is the best way for EFL students to help them in listening and achieving a better language proficiency. Thus, it is better to relate to the current views of listening which emphasize the role of listener, who is seen as an active participant in listening, employing strategies to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate his or her listening (Richards,2008:1). Therefore, it is necessary to use strategies in solving problems in listening.

To realize how important implementing strategies in listening will change the orientation of the language learning. Siegel &Haswell (2010: 27) point out that mostly students and teachers in are product-oriented. It means that they care more to the result or outcome such as grade and score than to the process of the learning itself. They also added that sole attention to the outcomes of language learning results in the neglect of the process involved in the language skill. Regarding this matter, Richard states that successful listening can also be looked at in terms of the strategies the listener uses when listening (Richards, 2008:11). Thus, strategies implementation is one of the neglected process and aspect in listening which need more attention from both teachers and students since.

Yet, in order to achieve the goal of language learning by utilizing and maximizing the strategies it is important that students acquire several dimensions of information about the strategies they use clearly: students need to know what the strategy is (declarative information), how to apply it (procedural knowledge), as well as when and where to use the strategy (conditional knowledge) (Jones et. al 1987:41). Still and all, Cohen suggests that students also need to see that different tasks may call for different strategies, rather than attempting to use the “one strategy fits all” approach (Cohen, 2003:290). He also added that teachers may benefit from varying the nature of tasks as much as possible so as to allow students with different style and strategy preferences to do their very best.

