

# Learning from Debaters: Insights Into Their Learning Strategies

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## ABSTRAK

**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze English debaters' learning strategies in improving their debate skills. The researcher used descriptive qualitative in the form of in depth interview in which three successful English debaters were involved in this study. The result reveals that debaters habituate themselves to read a lot, watch debate videos and practice by using a wide variety of language learning strategies. Those strategies are seeking practice opportunity, using resources, overviewing materials, asking for correction, using synonym or circumlocution, self-evaluating, practicing naturalistically, taking note, summarizing, using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation and cooperation with peers.

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa strategi belajar para ahli debat bahasa Inggris dalam mengembangkan kemampuan debatnya. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dalam bentuk interview mendalam dengan melibatkan tiga ahli debat yang sukses. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa para ahli debat membiasakan diri untuk banyak membaca, menonton video debat dan berlatih dengan menggunakan berbagai macam strategi pembelajaran bahasa. Strategi-strategi tersebut adalah mencari peluang untuk praktek, menggunakan sumber belajar, meninjau materi, meminta koreksi, menggunakan sinonim, mengevaluasi diri, berlatih secara natural, mencatat, meringkas, menggunakan relaksasi progresif, pernapasan dalam atau meditasi dan kerja sama dengan teman sebaya.

The use of debate is widely known as a good technique to improve communicative skill as well as critical thinking skill. Various studies have already asserted that debate can develop the students' communication skills efficiently and effectively as well as their critical thinking (Hall, 2011; Rai, 2011; Healey, 2012; Yang & Rusli, 2012; Aclan & Aziz, 2015; Othman, Zulkefli, Hashim, & Mohamad, 2015; Arung, 2016; Husnawadi & Syamsudarni, 2016). As debates need involvement of language skills as well as critical thinking, debaters need to have a good-content speech, strong argument, and ability to deliver the speech fluently. In Indonesia, the trend of intercollegiate English debating championships has developed since 1998s, inspired by some debating championships in South-Asian regions. In 2008, Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of National Education administered National University Debating Championship (NUDC), the debate tournament between varsities debaters. Since then, it has become an annual national program. The trend of academic debate and intercollegiate debating activities in Indonesia for the active and critical learning bring positive effects to English language pedagogy especially in speaking skill (Sueb, 2014; Agustina & Bahrani, 2016)

Debaters are the products of rigorous debate training both debate skill as well as language skill. By often practising debates, a debater can be a better speaker in all situation-public and private as it improve their speaking skill and boost their confidence as well (Rybold, 2006; Fauzan, 2016; Malasari & Purwanti, 2018). Besides fluency, debates also help debaters improve their communication strategies which are used to overcome the difficulties in explaining ideas in debates. Tuan & Mai (2015) states that not all language learners after many years of studying English can communicate fluently and accurately because they lack of background knowledge and learning strategies. Even the high achieving students still have difficulty in communication using the language in their real-life situation (Alemi, Daftarifard & Pashmforoosh, 2011; Abrar, Failasofah., Fajaryani, & Masbirorotni, 2016; Anggitasari, 2016). Delivering complex ideas, convincing audiences in timely manners concisely is the challenge to public speaking now. There are no concrete rules to achieve that; however, one of the sources to learn and master the skills can be obtained from successful debaters' learning experience.

The above-mentioned statement is in line with Rubin's research entitled "What the 'Good Language Learner' Can Teach Us." In his research, Rubin (1975) defined the characteristics of a good language learner. He mentioned that good language learners are accurate guessers and have a strong drive to communicate. They are willing to practice and even make mistakes in order to learn. They also constantly look for patterns in the language by monitoring his own and the speech of others. Moreover, those language learners always try to get language exposures from any sources and tend to be autonomous in doing self-study. Rubin then proposes an idea that it is necessary to learn from good language learners, specifically their learning strategies. In common with Rubin's statement, Griffiths (2015) also conducted a study entitled "What Have We Learnt from 'Good Language Learners'?" The result revealed that it is essential to learn the strategies because successful language learners frequently use many different kinds of strategies. Therefore it is suggested for teachers to assist the students in choosing the effective strategies for them in the learning process. There are many things that we can learn from good language learner to improve our language skills. For communicative and critical thinking skill, we can learn it from skilled and successful debaters' learning experience. Learning from skilled debaters is worth investigating since it will provide more fruitful information and positive perspectives about their learning strategies since debate is one of the good techniques to improve communication and critical thinking skills.

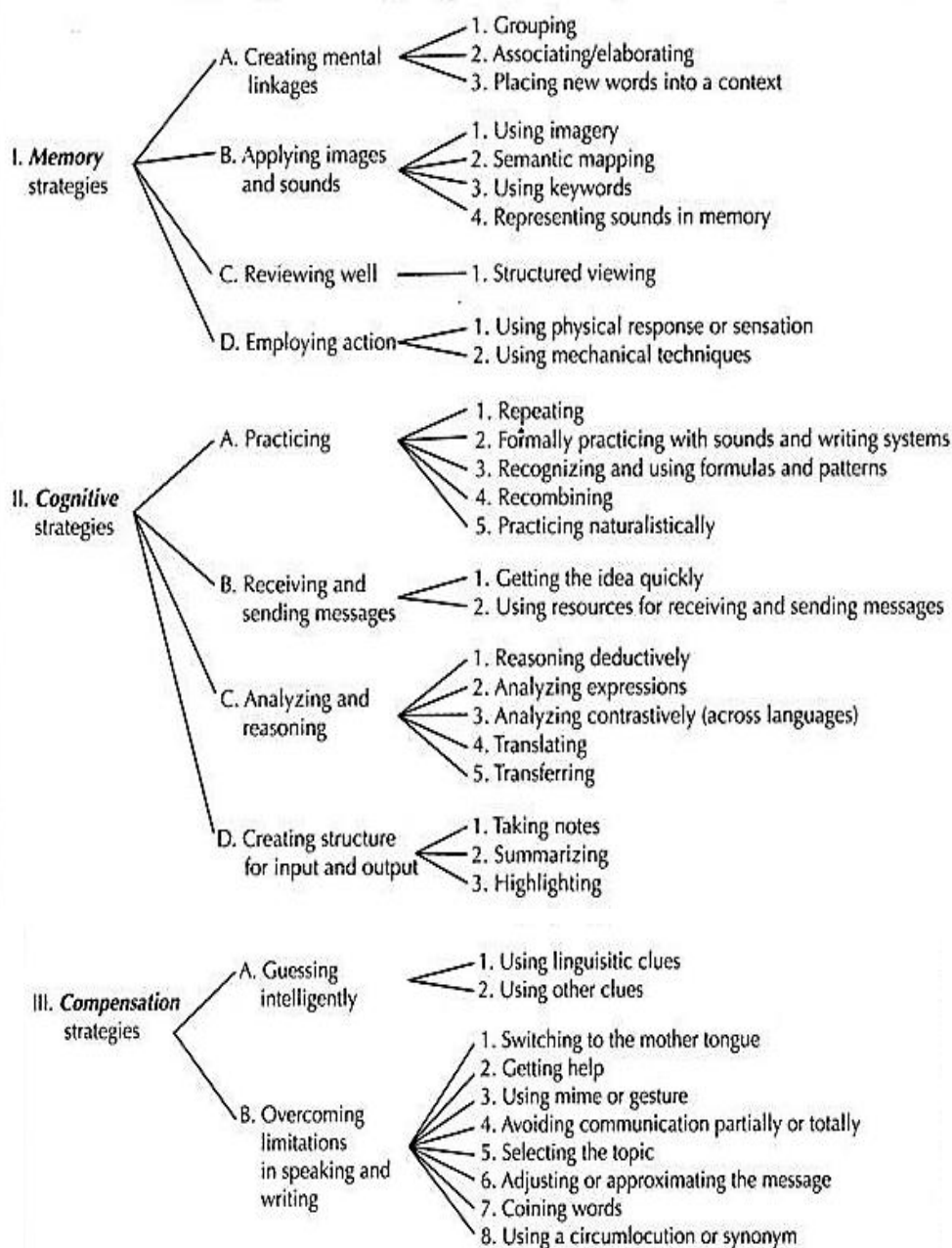
From the above-mentioned statement, we can conclude that the role of language learning strategies is indispensable in facilitating the development of language skills. Learning strategy is claimed to be one of the main factors and determinants in foreign language learning (Nunan, 1991). Language learning strategies have been classified by many experts. Rubin (Hismanoglu, 2000), for instance, classified those into two categories: cognitive learning strategies and metacognitive learning strategies. Breaking them down, there are clarification/verification, guessing/inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, monitoring as subcategories of cognitive; and planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-managements as subcategories of metacognitive. Furthermore, O'Malley (Hismanoglu, 2000) also divided language learning strategies into three main categories: metacognitive (i.e. advance organizer, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, and self-evaluation), cognitive (i.e. repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note-taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, keyword, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, and inferencing), and socio-affective strategies (i.e. cooperation and question for clarification). In addition to those two experts, Oxford (1990) divides learning strategy into direct strategies and indirect strategies. To make it clearer, the classification of learning strategies created by Oxford is described in the following figures.

Based on the classification of those aforementioned experts, the researcher decides to choose the classification proposed by Oxford as it is the most comprehensive one. To add, in comparison with the other learning strategies, Oxford's taxonomy is the most complete one as it covers others' taxonomies as well.

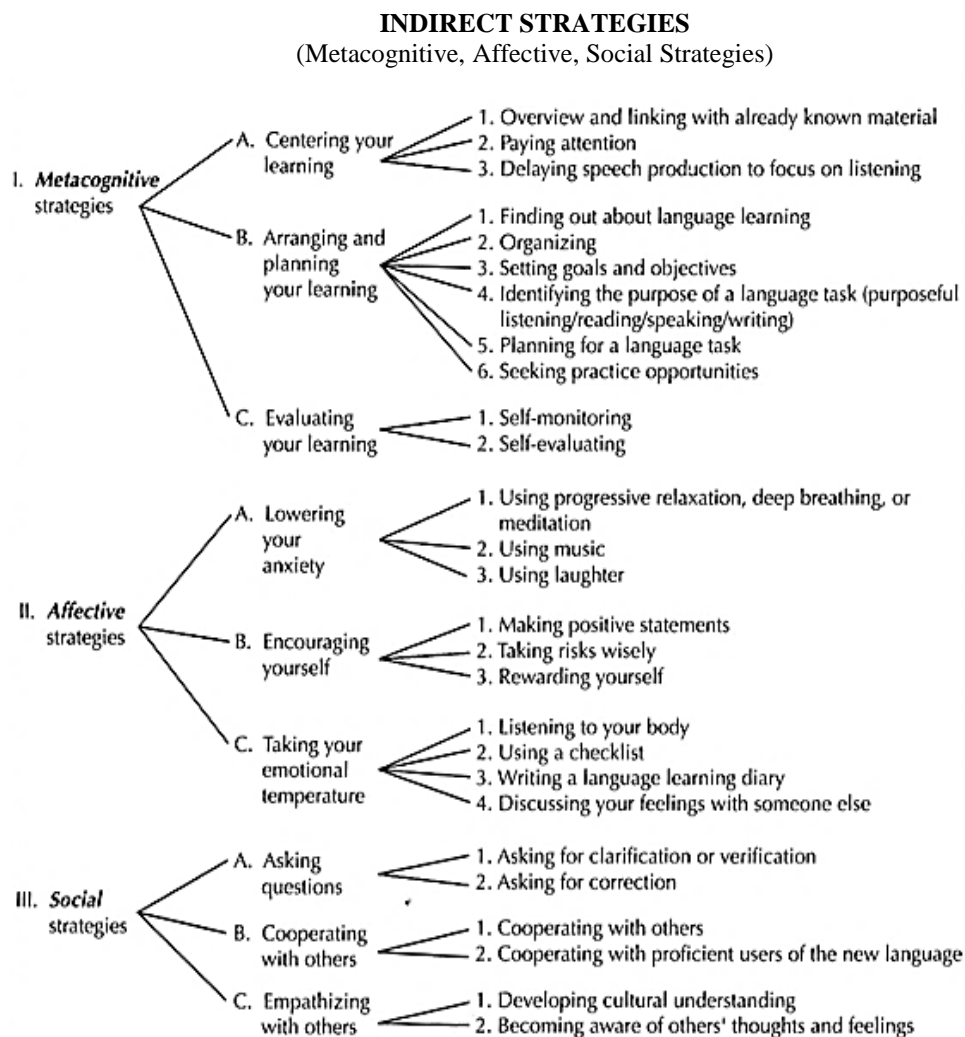
As learning is strongly related to strategies or approaches adopted to facilitate one's comprehension and production of the target language, some key figures in the field have previously conducted studies on learning strategies. To begin with, Fewell (2010), Zare (2012), and Salahshour, Sharifi, & NedaSalahshour (2013) conducted a study on language learning strategies. The result showed that advanced language learners have reported to employ language learning more frequently than elementary language learner. The employment of language learning strategies facilitate and improve language learning and assist language learners in different ways. Then, Suwanarak (2015) investigated experience in language learning strategies used by Thai adult learners and factors affecting their strategy use. The research findings indicated that the adult learners selected strategies based on the given learning conditions: internal factors such as personal and professional goals, motivation, feelings, and anxiety while external factors are social interaction and teachers. In Indonesian context, several studies on learning strategies have been carried out in various levels of education such as studies by Kusumaningrum (2010), Rachmawati (2013), Rahman (2014), Mistar, et al. (2014), Gani, Fajrina & Hanifa (2015) and Alfian (2016). The result of the study showed that learning strategies gave great contribution to students' learning process and successful learners used many kinds of strategies more frequently than less successful learners.

In relation to debate, there have been some studies on the implementation of debate in language pedagogy. Syamdianita (2011) investigated the effectiveness of British Parliamentary Debate System (BPDS) on students' critical thinking ability. The results showed that the application of BPDS has positive effect on students' critical thinking ability. Similar to Syamdianita, Yanda (2013), Yulia & Aprilita (2017), Lestari & Awalludin (2018) also conducted research to investigate the effectiveness of debate in the speaking class of English Department. The findings revealed that BPDS could improve the students' oral performance. Furthermore, Kennedy (2009) and Zare & Othman (2015) carried out a study to find out students' perception on the use of debate. The result showed that students gave positive attitude toward the use of debate as it helped them to improve their knowledge, critical thinking skill and oral communication skill. The previously-mentioned studies provide convincing evidence that debate is very advantageous in elevating students' communication skill and critical thinking skill. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, so far there have been no studies conducted to understand in-depth how debaters learn to master debate competence successfully. Different from the previous studies which investigated the implementation of learning strategy and debate, in this research the researcher intends to have an in-depth study to gain comprehensive perspectives concerning the learning strategies of English debaters in developing their debate competence. For this purpose, the current study attempts to have a close look at the learning experience of 3 skilled English debaters.

**DIRECT STRATEGIES**  
(Memory, Cognitive, Compensation Strategies)



**Figure 1. Direct Strategies (Source: Oxford, 1990)**



**Figure 2. Indirect Strategies (Source: Oxford,1990)**

## METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative research methodology and used in-depth interview as the technique of data collection. This study fulfilled the characteristics of qualitative research as described by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen (2010). First, the researcher played a role as a human or key instrument in the research. The researcher herself collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data. Second, this inquiry dealt with descriptive data in the form of words—the opinions, statements, and or the information concerning the research subjects' learning strategies. From the abovementioned statement, descriptive qualitative was considered as the most suitable research design for this study. The subjects of this research were three skilled debaters who had several achievements in winning and being involved in at least 30 debate competitions both national and international. The selection of these subjects was done based on 4 criteria: being involved in at least 30 debate competitions, having several achievements in winning competitions both national and international, being delegates of Indonesia in World University Debating Championship (WUDC) and being awarded as the best speakers in some competitions, adjudicator and coach. Based on the abovementioned criteria, 3 debaters were selected as the subjects of this study: 2 debaters were runner up of NUDC 2017 while the other was runner up of NUDC 2018. The detailed information of debaters are described as follows:

The first subject, LR, is an English Department student of Universitas Negeri Malang. She has been an active English debater since she was in senior high school. She has joined many debate competitions from local, national to international scale. In 2015, she was chosen as the best speaker of National English Education Debate competition. As a result of being the first runner up in NUDC, she was one of the representatives from Indonesia in WUDC in 2017. Besides, she also becomes debate coach in some institution such as MAN 2 Malang, Politeknik Kesehatan Malang and adjudicator in many debate competitions.

The second subject, FK, is an Electrical Engineering student of Universitas Negeri Malang. Since his last year of senior high school up to the present time, he has been active in debate activities. He also joined and won a lot of English debate competitions and his highest achievement was awarded as EFL 9th best speaker of WUDC Mexico in 2017. Due to his achievement in debate, he was also invited to be adjudication core in several prestigious debate tournament such as NUDC 2018, Ganesha Open ITB, EJVED (East Java Varsities English Debate) and so forth. Moreover, he has become a debate coach in Universitas Negeri Malang and Universitas Surabaya to recently. The last subject, AK, is a Chemistry student of Institut Teknologi Bandung. Parallel to LR and FK, AK has also been active as English debater since he was in senior high school. Various experience in debate competitions made him crowned as WUDC 2018 grand finalist and 6th EFL best speaker of WUDC in Capetown. Highly veteran as an adjudicator, he is often invited to judge many debate competitions either in local or national scale. He also becomes a coach in Institut Teknologi Bandung and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The outstanding achievement in debate, as well as the experiences, were taken as the consideration in choosing them as subjects of this study.

Although in qualitative study the researcher is the key instrument of their research (Creswell, 2014), she also created an interview guide as the additional instrument to collect the data. Before generating the instrument, the researcher made a blueprint of the interview guide. After that, she asked an expert on debate field to judge and give feedback on the instrument. The data of this study were collected through several steps. First, the researcher took the data of debaters from NUDC (National University Debating Championship) champion's document obtained from the official website of Directorate General Academic and Student Affairs, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education. Next, the researcher informally contacted the potential research subjects through their social media to ask about their availability to be the case of the study and gave further explanation of her intention in conducting the research. After getting approval from the research subjects, the researcher made an appointment to arrange the interview based on the agreement from both parties. The first interview was carried out on April, 13<sup>th</sup> 2019, with LR. The second interview was done with FK on April, 19<sup>th</sup> 2019. The last interview was done with AK on May, 12<sup>th</sup> 2019. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder under their consent. Before starting the interview, the researcher had an informal conversation with the subjects to build rapport so that they felt comfortable sharing their personal stories or experience with the researcher.

After obtaining the data, the result of interview was transcribed verbatim and analyzed using three stages: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The first stage of data analysis was data reduction. For the first step, the researcher created coding and sub-coding of the interview to find pattern of how the learning was conducted. After that, the researcher looked for connection between code and started to group them into categories. The coding and categorization of the data gathered through interview series were carried out after each of the recorded interviews was transcribed verbatim. The researcher read and reread the transcripts of the interviews to confirm the right labelling. Then, the data with similar or closely related labels were integrated or grouped and summarized. The second stage of data analysis was data display. The researcher transcribed the data descriptively and presented the findings and discussion in the same chapter. Raw data in the form of direct quotation was used to support the analysis under the specific condition such as unusual or unique cases which was described by the research subjects. The findings of this study were explained and interpreted by using the theory of language learning strategy. The last stage is the conclusion drawing and verification. Based on the title and the focus of this study, the conclusion drawing was directed to answer the research questions.

## FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of this study based on the data gathered from the interview. It deals with 3 debaters' learning strategies in developing their debate competence. When the researcher asked LR about her debating strategy or process of learning debate, LR stated that she must habituate herself to read a lot of news article, practice and watch debate videos. Here is the answer provided by LR to the question concerning her debate process.

So, in debating we do not do like special preparation before competition, I mean it is not like one specific method for one specific competition. We always do the same thing again and again. We do the habituation of reading news article to the issue and environment and create understandable arguments (Interview 2: 12/LR)

Practice and watching debate video of advanced debater from foreign university or outstanding debater from Indonesia. From watching debate, we can learn the depth of argument, issue that they explain, how they explain, learn the issue because nothing is passive or stagnant in debate, there will always be new things to learn (Interview 2: 14/LR)

Thus, in order to be able to debate, she spent hours to read various news articles and keep up to date to the information because an issue that was just discovered a week ago can be a motion or topic in the competition. The news or article in the debate competition is not generally read by common people since those debaters are at advanced level. For what she observed with her debating friends, understanding the topic is important as it will affect their flow of speaking.

Choosing the right sources is crucial for debaters as they should provide facts and credible information. LR has to filter carefully and think critically to find credible or reputable sources. Besides, she usually compares things or looks up to what other people share whom she considered as credible sources like following her experienced debating seniors on their social media since they often share things or news. She also subscribed various news website since every news has its own pattern of news presentation. When LR wants to make judgment about certain issue, she will see it from different perspective because sometimes media can be bias.

She suggested some English news article which can be easily understood and considered credible such as BBC, CNN, Jakarta Post, New York Times and so forth. She preferred them because they mostly contain facts and according to her are unlikely driven by political interest. For Indonesian news, she actively follows *Tirto* on her social media since it covers a lot of issues and provides deep analysis which is not discussed by common media. She assured that the habit of reading definitely expands her knowledge to know various terms and make her skillful at giving argument.

Secondly, LR usually has regular practices with her debating friends. This practice aims at habituating herself to think and analyze issue quickly, build argument and deliver the speech concisely. During the simulation of debate, she listens to the opponent's argument and uses summary method when taking note. She prefers to use English because she cannot translate quickly. However, when she wants to speak, she writes every detail things beforehand to avoid stuttering which makes her speech not run smoothly. She said to the researcher: "... I will write my argumentation like a lot because I do not want to miss a thing when I speak" (Interview 2: 47/LR)

If she has difficulties in delivering ideas such as forgetting the terms, she will define the terms that she wants to say. Before starting to speak, she stops for a while to inhale, calm down, clear her mind and organize her speech until she feels comfortable. Her ability in using words spontaneously comes naturally as she usually talks to her debating friends using English. In daily life, when they wanted to have an informal conversation, they mixed up the language and it somehow subconsciously affects the fluency as well. To practice her pronunciation, she usually watches movies without subtitle. When she finds difficult words or new words, she will imitate the words after the character on the movies said it. Also, she asked her friends whether or not they understand what she said. She stated:

I try to speak a lot and I try to make sure that people understand what I mean. When I speak with my friends I really need them to evaluate my speaking, so if they do not understand they have to say it. I told them like "you really need to say it if you do not understand what I mean or if I made a mistake" (Interview 2: 72/ LR)

When it comes to attacking or rebutting opponent's arguments, she usually tries to listen carefully and see the flow of the opponent's arguments in order to find their weakness. Though their arguments sound perfect, she will keep in her mind and say to herself, "this is not true". Consequently, when she sees it in detail, she will figure out the flaws such as incoherent argument that make it impossible to happen. After that, she will imagine what will happen in the future and compare it with her own arguments. She said: "I forced my brain to think that all the things that my opponent say should be wrong and of course by providing relevant facts, data to support my idea and try to flip their idea" (Interview 2: 74/LR). As we can see from this process, critical thinking skill plays a role in building argumentation. LR stated that she reads and practices a lot for enhancing her ability to think and analyze critically.

Last but not least is watching debate videos. To prepare the competition, LR usually watches debate videos of advanced debaters from foreign university or outstanding debaters from Indonesia in youtube. She can learn many things from the video such as the depth of argument, the issue that they explain and the way they explain the issue because nothing is stagnant in debate and there will always be new things to learn. Eventhough she focuses on the main idea, she can also practice her listening skill through this video. LR has the habit to spend 30 minutes a day to watch movies, web series and Netflix without putting subtitle which indirectly improves her listening skill. Besides, LR learns to convince the audience by using gesture and making firm intonation. Though she likes to watch debate video, LR never checks the video of her own performance as she felt that it is something awkward to do.

The second subject, FK, stated that his preparation for competition is quite similar to daily practice. Similar to LR, he usually has general sparring with debating friends and reading news articles. To face the competition, along with his friends, FK debates the topics that were debated before, tries to make arguments based on the previous topic in the other competition and discusses the issues that might become the topic for next competition. Thus, to tackle the motions in debate FK reads and keep up to date to news every day, watches debate videos and practice the sparring.

To begin with, reading is the fundamental thing in debate to obtain knowledge, data, or information in order to support opinion. In finding the information, FK stated that he should be initiative and creative to research the topic since the Internet provides abundant information unless he gives specific terms. When he gets access to the information or news, he will try to understand it and think critically toward the information presented as he realizes that not all information in the internet is true. According to FK, critical thinking ability is the foundation of every knowledge. Therefore being critical thinker is important not only for debate but also for the entire aspects of life. To enhance critical thinking skill below is the suggestion from FK:

when you hear information or you hear other people's speaking or you read the news, I think to increase your critical thinking when you receive those information is by always planting your skepticism in your mind "is that so? is it true? why is that? how is it?". Not only questioning but you also have to find the answer (Interview 2:48/FK)

When he finds inconsistent information between one information to other sources, he tries to research further the questionable statement on the news. He will do facts checking and compare the information on that news outlet to other news sources. Though sometimes it is hard to find reputable information, FK suggested some English news outlet such as The Economist, Al Jazeera, and BBC since they are comprehensive and reputable. Besides, both The Economist and Al Jazeera have fact-checker where the reader can raise their objection if the news sites contain wrong or fake news. Building reading habit along with critical thinking skill as reflected above is important for FK because he needs to provide factual analysis on his arguments in debate competition.

The second preparation is watching debate videos. In line with LR, FK usually watches many debate competition videos available in youtube in order to have more insight from the other debaters in the other parts of the world. In addition to debate videos, he also watches news on youtube because there are many media outlet start to deliver their news in the form of video and audio to make people become more interested. Apart from debating materials, FK spends many hours on youtube since he listens to vlog videos of English native speaker YouTuber, talkshow and news everyday. Different from LR, FK always checks the video of his own performance when it is recorded for the purpose of evaluation. He will watch the video to see what he lacks and what he needs to improve in debate. Besides, he also asks for feedback and suggestions from the judge after the competition. However, he never did a recording by himself purposely.

The last preparation is practice or sparring. In this activity, FK and his debating friends have actual debate by doing simulation. Having multitasking skill, i.e. listening, thinking and writing simultaneously is what makes FK good at giving argument and able to point out the opponent's flaws. Take an example, he can provide counter-arguments while listening to his opponent's argument and at the same time taking note of the key ideas. FK prefers to write down his argument in English because he can easily use the correct terms instead of translating it during the speech. Besides multitasking skill, FK's knowledge and persistence significantly help him to attack his opponent's arguments. When he listens to the opponent's arguments, FK needs to be persistent to defend his stance and keeps in his mind that there must be a flaw in his opponent's argument.

According to FK, practicing speech is equally important to know the time estimation for each part in debate such as background, argument and conclusion so that the speech becomes concise. Due to the fact that he has been practicing debate for 4 years, FK does not have the problem with limitation of time in debate. However, when he got stuck in speaking, he will stop for a while, clear his mind and compose what he wants to say. Similar to the two subjects above, AK's preparation for debate are watching debate videos, reading a lot and practice. He further explained:

I primarily watch debate videos and I take away the good ideas from the speakers from video and try to apply it in competition... I also read stuff because oftentimes the motion is impromptu. Third, I do practice session and discuss issues with my coach and friends. Individual speech to habituate myself to speak (Interview 2:14/AK)

Firstly, AK watches various debate videos in order to learn from the more skilled debaters and try to employ good ideas or strategies in the next debate competition. Besides, watching the video makes his analytical becomes wider and concise. AK used to habituate himself to watch 1 video per day and focus on the main idea instead of the pronunciation or delivery. Besides debating videos, he also watches videos like The Economist, Fox News, The Atlantic and so on for the purpose of gaining knowledge. Being individually competitive makes AK wants to keep improving himself. As a result, he often checks the video of his past performance to evaluate the specific area that he missed during debate competition. After that, he drills the things that he thinks he lacks in. To illustrate, he gave an example: "...if I think that my wording is inefficient so I try to drill myself to have wording that is shorter or if I still have non-sophisticated wording I will find sophisticated wording" (Interview 2:74/AK). Unlike FK, AK often purposely record himself and check his own performance.

Secondly, AK reads as many news articles as possible to face the competition. He realized that his biggest potential lays on his content or knowledge. Though he likes reading since he was a child, it does not guarantee that AK likes all genres of reading texts. Due to the fact that debater should be knowledgeable about various topics, he even forces himself to read materials that he is not really interested in, i.e. music. To get himself exposed to different ideas and perspectives, he spends around 2 hours to read 20 articles a day. AK carefully selects the reputable sources of information that he got from the internet to avoid hoax. He will make sure whether or not the news website is objective, not exaggerating and also attach reporter's profile. *Tirto*, *Republika* and *Kompas* are the examples of Indonesian news that he thought are trustworthy while for English news article, he preferred to read BBC, CNN, NBC and so forth. After doing individual reading, AK discusses the issue with his debating friends and coach so that they can exchange their opinion. Furthermore, when AK still has problem in understanding the concept, he will not feel reluctant to ask for help from his seniors and have more discussion. He thought that his critical

thinking increases significantly because debating community consists of people with data beliefs. He reads from various sources and discusses them with his seniors or friends to enhance his critical thinking

The final preparation is practice. This practice session is divided into two namely individual practice and group practice. For individual practice, AK usually habituates himself to speak by doing monologue whenever there is no one in order to improve his fluency in speaking. To deal with time limitation, he tries to speak quicker and use some more concise wording. Using the right diction somehow quite challenging as it is neither hard nor easy, hence, AK observes native speaker and googles the word or terms everytime he feels like he does not understand. When it comes to pronunciation, he usually imitates what the native speakers say in movies or videos.

To add, AK also has group practice by doing debate simulation with his debating peers. When he listens to his opponent arguments, he focuses on the main idea, takes notes and summarizes. At this point, AK does not purposely intend to practice his listening skill since he already had the intentional practice to listen when he was a child. The main intention is to get what the opponent said. Unlike LR and FK, AK preferred to write down the summary in both languages, English and Indonesia because he thinks that it is the most comfortable one for him to not forget his ideas. Related to his ability to see the opponent's weaknesses, AK stated that he usually identifies whether their arguments fit into the category of convincing arguments or not. He further explained:

There is supposed to be a minimum bar requirement in order for the argument to be convincing. The most basic thing is AREL: assertion, reasoning, evidence/example, and link back. In the most basic level, even argument that does not possess one of those four things automatically become not very convincing and I think that instinctually I will identify whether or not the arguments possess those 4 things so I think that is the first approach. The second approach is somewhat quite instinctual in a sense that I know that argument is not factual or there is a problem. I know that their lack of logic is jumpy and there is no process analysis and so on and so forth (Interview 2: 26/AK)

Based on those 2 approaches above, AK successfully identifies and notices his opponent's weaknesses. After that, he will attack or refute his opponent's argument by comparing it with his own argument and providing different data from what the opponent said before. Also, he will try to perform better as he learned from his opponent's mistakes. Apart from watching video, reading, and practice, AK describes a slightly special treatment before competition as he sacrifices other activities, i.e. chemistry Olympiad and focuses only on debating.

All of 3 debaters do not have special preparation for debate competition instead of continuously doing their routine. Based on the findings, in general, they have similar habit to learn debate such as reading news article, watching debate videos and also having practice. The strategies employed by all debaters are quite homogeneous. When it comes to reading, all the subjects stated that they always update and read news article everyday to be knowledgeable about issues around the world. These subjects mostly searched their learning materials on the internet since it offers various learning materials. Previous data showed that all debaters carefully select credible sources by being skeptical and critically analyze the information. They preferred to do these steps: doing critical reading, do fact-checking and then compare the result. Amidst various credible news sites that they mentioned before, all of them suggested BBC as it is credible and comprehensive while for Indonesian news site 2 out of 3 debaters preferred to read *Tirto*.

Another interesting finding was found as all those great debaters still continuously learn from other debaters as well. It can be seen from the data that the 3 debaters watch debate competition videos of outstanding debaters from both Indonesian and foreign country to learn and employ the strategies for improving their skills. Besides, 2 out of 3 subjects also do self-evaluation by checking the videos of their past performance in debate.

Regarding the strategies used in debate practice, the researcher obtained various response from the subjects. Although all debaters use summary method when they listen to opponents' arguments, however, 1 out of 3 subjects prefer to take note by using both Indonesian and English. Nevertheless, in order to overcome their limitation in speaking, they do several strategies such as defining the terms or using the words which approximately have the same meaning, switch to mother tongue, skip the words or write everything beforehand. Some of them will stop for a while, inhale and clear their mind when they want to deliver the speech. Habituating to speak English is also a strategy used by the subjects in this study. Usually, they do a monologue or communicate English with their debating friends. To add, the 3 debaters often imitate native speakers' speech when they watch movies or youtube videos to improve their pronunciation. One of them also tries to check their friends' understanding and ask for feedback on her pronunciation.

In terms of attacking opponents' arguments, they will listen carefully, see the flow, plant skepticism in their mind that the opponent's argument is wrong, analyze critically, imagine the situation and compare it with their own arguments. To enhance their critical thinking skill, all of them habituate themselves to always question and read a lot from various sources. Besides, one of them likes to also have further discussion. Finally, asking for correction is also done by all the subjects to monitor their learning progress.



Overall, we can see that all subjects learn debate through 3 things namely reading articles, watching debate videos and practice. To maintain their ability in debate, they employ many strategies such as seeking practice opportunity, using resources, overviewing materials, asking for correction, using synonym or circumlocution, self-evaluating, practicing naturalistically, taking note, summarizing, using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation, cooperation with peers and so on.

## DISCUSSION

All debaters' mastery in debate does not come instantly. It developed incrementally. They need a long process to master each aspect of debate i.e matter, manner and method. The 3 debaters generally report that they do a regular activity such as reading, watching debate videos and practice by employing several kinds of strategies to develop their competence. Though they employed different strategies, those strategies finally were found to be effective ways for them because they empowered them to manage their own learning. Oxford (1990:8) define learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make the learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situation.

Based on the research findings, we can see that great English debaters always read a lot everyday. They could spend many hours to do this routine. Although it sounds boring, it somehow helped them in debate to get knowledge of issue and enhance their critical thinking skill. All debaters habituate themselves to read articles from various sources in order to expose themselves to different points of views. It is in line with Indah & Kusuma (2016) and Mbato (2019) stated that to enhance critical thinking, one should be aware of the importance of reading habit, time management and exploring sources from internet. They prefer to browse the information on the internet as it offers up-to-date information of the world's most recent issue. However, all debaters carefully select reputable sources because there are so many information presented on the internet. Online resources can furnish valuable information for debaters' speech, but they must be sure of the reliability of the source and the accuracy of the information they choose to use Fedrizzi & Ellis (2011). This activity shows us that they used the so-called resourcing strategy. Related to resources, the subjects in this study used non-printed materials such as articles and newspaper. Resources like dictionaries, wordlists, grammar books, journal or other written articles downloaded from the internet might be valuable to help learners to produce messages on the new language (Oxford, 1990). Using resources is one of the strategies in receiving and sending messages. Resources are not only needed by the subjects in reading, but they can also make use of any spoken or oral materials for reference for learning.

In addition to that, watching debate videos of other advanced debaters is often used by 3 debaters in debate as they can learn many things such as pronunciation, building argumentation, speech delivery and so forth. The fact that 3 debaters always watch videos of other outstanding debaters showed that they also learn from good language learner. It implies that learning from experience is one of source of knowledge. According to Ary et al. (2010), experience is a familiar and well-used source of knowledge in which the ability to learn from experience is a prime characteristic of intelligent behavior. Learning from good language learner can be fruitful sources for them to be successful debaters. They can learn and employ good strategies in debate competition. There are various strategies used by debaters in watching video such as repeating and using resources. In this case, video is one of media for debaters in using resources strategy. Imitating native speaker is a repeating technique used in speaking which all debaters used in learning speaking. By doing this kind of activity, learners can improve their pronunciation, and their use of structures, vocabulary, idioms, intonation, gestures, and style (Oxford, 1990).

Last but not least, practice is one of the most important aspects in learning debate. As one of cognitive strategies, practicing is a natural part of learning process which is highly beneficial and has special value for learners. Without practicing nothing can be properly learned and remembered. According to Fedrizzi & Ellis (2011) using time during practice sessions will not only help debaters with their speaking style, but it will also help them see the strengths and weaknesses of their resource materials. By finding the areas that need improvement before the tournament, they will have a much easier time while competing.

More practice is usually needed to become proficient in the target language and if done properly, the more they practice the proficient they will be. Oxford stated that (1990) if language learners wanted to be proficient speaker of a language, they have to find chances to practice the language and have to realize it up by searching for these occasions because classroom activities cannot usually provide adequate practice. Therefore, seeking practice or even creating opportunity is necessary instead of waiting for the chance to come. It also shows one of the characteristics of good language learner. As Rubin (1975) states that good language learner practices. He may practise pronouncing words or will seek out opportunities to use the language.

In this study, all subjects employed practice by repeating and practicing naturalistically strategies. The main purpose of practice naturalistically is developing learners' communicative competence. This strategy requires learners to be able to expose what they have already stored in their mind by using it in authentic communications for practicing naturalistically, not only in a classroom but also outside the classroom. Debating friends, coach, lecturer, joining debate club were also the valuable sources of input to enhance their speaking ability. Repeating strategy includes watching movies in English, listening to English songs and trying to imitate native speaker that provides an effective way to improve their listening comprehension as well as their speaking skills.

Based on the result, we can see that the subjects always used English whenever they had the opportunity to speak; either in the form of having conversation with their debating friends and coach or doing individual speech or monologue. Nonetheless, there were subjects who have extra opportunity to use it outside the school, such as speaking English with their

family members. Their ways of seeking practice opportunity are not only communicate English with others but also listen to English songs, watch movies, debate videos and read news articles as these were also ways of practicing the language. Debaters make use of the strategy as effective ways to improve their listening, pronunciation and enhance their knowledge in debate. Cahyani (2010) added that successful language learners are overall, well-motivated and self-initiating, taking responsibility for their learning, and creating their own learning opportunities.

Moreover, two subjects tended to do individual practice and also check their own past performance or even recorded themselves. In this study, self-evaluating was used to have an evaluation on their weaknesses. They also employ asking for correction strategy to have feedback from more expert individual by directly asking the others to correct their mistakes. As part of reflection, self-evaluating and self-monitoring are one of metacognitive strategies proposed by Oxford to manage the learners' own learning. It is in line with Fedrizzi & Ellis (2011) that successful debaters constantly evaluate and change their speeches as they learn from their mistakes and experiences. Applying reflection becomes the crucial aspect of learning process to make the subjects are aware of their weakness and strength in learning. Consequently, when they know their weakness, they try to find a solution for the improvement of their weakness. This related to Reinders' (2010) statement that in reflection stage, the students must be able to think about what went well in their learning and what did not go well, which aspect needs improvement.

All subjects reported to listen to what their opponent said and catch the main idea of what the opponent wants. As debaters mentioned that they liked to make a summary of the information that they heard or read in English. This is in line with Oxford (1990) who said that strategies like taking notes, summarizing, and highlighting are helpful in preparing the use of language for speaking and writing". There are various strategy used by debaters in taking note based on their preference. Most of them write it down in English but only 1 subject write in both language.

Different from note-taking skill, for speaking, all subjects preferred to transfer English directly rather than translate it first into their mother tongue as they think that the term in English has no equivalent when it is translated to Indonesian. However, when they found difficulty in speaking, compensation strategies are strategies used by debaters to make up for the limitations of their knowledge. The strategies include using synonym or circumlocution and switching to mother tongue. Based on the preceding research findings, there are 2 subjects employed circumlocution or synonym and 1 subject employed switching to mother tongue. According to Oxford (1990), circumlocution or synonym strategy is a roundabout expression involving several words to describe or explain a single concept. This strategy helps a learner to convey an intended meaning of a single word or concept that he does not know or forget so that the conversation can be maintained. This was mostly used by the subjects when they could not find the exact word used in speaking. Besides, switching to mother tongue was strategy that they mentioned to use. When learners feel difficult in explaining the word in English, they will switch the difficult words into their mother tongue or Indonesian. In this study, we can see 1 subject used this strategy, however, some preferred to use synonym or circumlocution.

Feeling anxious when speaking in public is something natural. If we examine from the findings, we can see sometimes debaters feel anxious when they want to deliver their speech. They usually take a deep breath and clear their mind before they speak. The subjects employ deep breathing as it can soothe them, create relaxation and can build positive energy before delivering their speech in public. Oxford (1990) stated that deep breathing brings greater calmness almost immediately. During the interview, all subjects acknowledged the difficulties of debate especially when the first time they were introduced to build argumentation in debate. In solving difficulties in debate, debaters use cooperating with peers or proficient users strategy. They tended to share their learning problems by discussing with friends or seniors. Peer assessment is one of the effective ways to improve EFL learners' self-confidence (Sadeghi, Hassani, & Mohammadloo, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

In terms of learning strategies, 3 debaters have similar ways of being successful in debate by choosing learning strategies that suit best to them. There are various types of learning strategies used by the subjects in this study. All subjects learn debate by consistently habituating themselves to read most recent articles, watch debate videos and practice. To maintain their ability in debate, they employ several strategies such as seeking practice opportunity, using resources, overviewing materials, asking for correction, using synonym or circumlocution, self-evaluating, practising naturalistically, taking note, summarizing, using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation, and cooperation with peers.

It is suggested for those who want to learn debate understand various aspects and implement learning strategies used by the successful debaters so that they are able to regulate their own learning. English teachers can adapt and promote debaters' learning strategy to assist their students to learn effectively since debate is widely known as good technique to improve communicative and critical thinking skills, it is suggested that they. Future researchers who want to conduct similar studies about learning strategies can focus on different subjects such as learning from the perspective of coach or teachers about debate.

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