

EFFECT OF GRAMMAR LEARNING STRATEGIES (GLS) IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: CASE STUDY ON VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DETERMINING PROFICIENCY LEVELS

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ABSTRACT

The current study looked into the grammar learning techniques (GLS) employed by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang students. In particular, it looked at the mean variations in the GLS dependent on the students' competence levels. The data was gathered through a survey-based quantitative research design. Undergraduate grammar course students at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang were randomly given a set of surveys via Google Forms. Forty students answered the questionnaire, making them research participants. To evaluate the data, both descriptive and inferential analysis were performed. The results showed that the most frequently employed cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies were, in that order, taking notes while listening to their teacher's explanations, figuring out why they made mistakes, pushing themselves to practice grammar, and asking friends for assistance. It was discovered that students most frequently employed social strategy. The study also showed that more high proficient students than low proficient students employed all strategies. For future research, teachers might adapt their teaching strategy to align with students' grammar learning strategies by using the research findings. Less skilled students can also pick up the strategy employed by the more skilled students, allowing them to gain from using the strategies in their own learning grammar.

Keywords: *Grammar Learning Strategies, Proficiency level, Language Learning.*

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INTRODUCTION

Learning grammar can be challenging for students as grammar can be complex with its rules, exceptions and abstractions. The students find it difficult to understand and apply in practice when there are inconsistencies with, for example, sentence structures, verb tenses, word order (Agustinasari et al., 2022). Lack of context, lack of exposure to authentic language and negative perceptions towards learning grammar can also contribute to the challenges. Therefore, students do not have any motivation and interest in learning grammar effectively (Purwanto & Al Firdaus, 2023). There were studies which examined the challenges faced by students in learning grammar. One of the studies was

conducted by Bambang & Ariya Agustin (2022), reported that the challenges faced by Indonesian students in learning grammar were the complexity of grammar structures and rules, sentence patterns, and displacement of tenses. They also found motivation and inappropriate learning strategies were regarded as challenges as well. The linguistic factor was also found in (Bambang, 2017) study as the students reported that they had difficulties in understanding the complex structures and also English had different structures from their mother tongue. In minimising the challenges, Astirini Swarastuti et al. (2024) suggested that students should have their own language learning strategies that are appropriate for them to master the language.

The core problems happened in grammar learning at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang. Most of students who became as sample got the serious problems in learning English grammar. Students are very confused in applying tenses in language learning and in applying language skills the results are very poor. In learning to write, for example, writing made by students, there are still many errors in choosing the dictions, tenses, using verbs to be, language features, etc. so that this is a serious obstacle for high vocational students who should be well prepared English to face the world of work.

Here Grammar learning strategies who were derived and introduced by (Oxford, 1990), It is expected to be an effective strategy in improving the quality of English learning at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang. This strategy divided into three categories which are implicit learning with focus on form, explicit inductive learning, and explicit deductive learning. Grammar learning strategies that include a focus on form are recognising grammatical structures that could prevent misunderstanding and miscommunication, noticing how more proficient people say things and imitating, noticing correction of inaccurate utterances (Azar, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Thompson, 2013). Grammar learning strategies that are applicable to explicit deductive learning (using the rules presented by the teacher in a variety of activities), are previewing the lesson to identify the important grammatical structures to learn, paying attention to rules provided by the teacher or the coursebook, memorising how structures change their form, and so on. However, Pawlak (2021) lamented that the framework was incomplete, thus, he developed a finer classification which was Grammar Learning Strategy (GLS). There are four categories in this strategy; metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar Learning Strategy

English is so complicated, it can be challenging to learn, retain, and apply logically. We require the concept in order to converse with others. You can learn all of the theories, rules, and regulations associated with language, just like you can learn to drive. Every language has a unique grammar. Grammar, according to (Gerot & Wignell, 1994), is the study and application of the rules that govern how words change forms and are joined to produce sentences. According to Pawlak (2018), For all language study phrases (aside from word meanings in detail), grammar is the branch of language research that focuses on word forms and structures (morphology) and how words are frequently arranged in phrases and sentences (syntax). These days, it is usually kept apart from the study of

phonology (pronunciation) and semantics (word meanings). The system of word arrangements and patterns used in a certain language at a given period of time is known as its grammar.

There are issues with the ways that GLS were measured and classified in specific studies, in addition to the apparent fact that the research findings discussed in the previous section are still incomplete and hazy, which amply illustrates the urgent need for additional empirical investigations in this field. It is evident, for instance, that the majority of research to date has relied on broad taxonomies of language learning strategies—most frequently the (Oxford, 1990) taxonomy—and data collection instruments made to facilitate their use—usually the SILL—with only modest modifications made to better support grammar learning (Gabaardi & Sánchez, 2015; Karminah et al., 2017; Panggabean, 2015; Zhou, 2017). The work on comprehensive taxonomies of GLS and related data collection tools is still in its early stages, so this approach is somewhat justified. However, it is clear that adopting a general categorization of LLS as a point of reference has drawbacks, as some techniques may be difficult to apply to the learning of grammar structures, and some strategically employed devices may simply be omitted (Purwanto & Agustin, 2022). Additionally, if the data are collected using a variety of different study instruments, such as open-ended questions, diaries, and interviews, it is challenging to make meaningful comparisons between the findings of various studies or to integrate these findings, to various Likert-scale surveys, which, however, differ as well as a consequence of being developed on the basis of competing classifications.

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive methods were categorized into three groups by Sato & Dussuel Lam (2021): organizing, planning, and centering learning. The goal of centering learning is to help learners gain focus so that their attention can be focused on particular language-related tasks or abilities. Learning should be planned and organized to help students make the most of their time and energy. Assessing learning assists students in addressing issues such as tracking mistakes and appraising their own development (Chiang, 2009; Wang et al., 2021; Yulianti, 2018). Through the planning, organizing, monitoring, and evaluation of this process, it is used to consciously supervise and manage the acquisition of grammar. Examples of GLS include looking for opportunities to practice grammar structures in various contexts, setting clear goals and objectives, and scheduling reviews of the structures covered in class.

Cognitive Strategies

The four categories of cognitive strategies are: practicing; sending and receiving messages; analyzing and reasoning; and structuring input and output. The most crucial thing for this group to do is practice, which may be done by employing patterns, noises, and repetition (Martinsen & Furnham, 2019). When students attempt to locate the key idea by skimming and scanning, they employ the tools for sending and receiving signals. Adult learners frequently employ reasoning and analysis techniques. These are employed to comprehend the target language's expression and meaning (Martinsen & Furnham, 2019; Oates &

Grayson, 2014; Tarman & Kuran, 2015). It symbolizes the mental processes and procedures involved in picking up and applying grammatical structures.

Affective Strategies

The affective domain is concerned with attitudes, feelings, and emotions that are connected to students' personalities and behaviors. Affective domain, according to Mulyono & Saskia (2021), helps students to be more involved in their assignments, which can result in improved performance. Consequently, the emotional and motivational components of language learning are the main emphasis of affective learning methodologies. These techniques support language learners in cultivating favorable attitudes and feelings around grammar acquisition, which can enhance their engagement, motivation, and learning results (Kimura, 2000). It seeks to control the feelings and incentives associated with grammar study, such as attempting to calm down when having trouble comprehending or applying this subsystem, pushing oneself to practice structures that present significant challenges, or keeping a journal with annotations on grammar acquisition; Waluyo & Bakoko (2022) looked into how grammar learning strategies were used by EFL students in Cambodia and discovered that affective tactics—like motivation, lowering anxiety, and emotional control—were frequently employed by both low and high proficiency students. According to the study, students should be given the opportunity to actively participate in tackling the challenge of learning grammar both within and outside of the classroom.

Social Strategies

Social strategies are a general category that includes ideational control over affect or interpersonal interaction (Laland, 2004). They are generally seen to be suitable for a broad range of jobs (Yang & Wang, 2015). Learning social emotional skills is crucial since language is a tool for communication, and communication happens between individuals.

Grammar Learning Strategies and Proficiency Levels

Many investigations also focused on the association between language competency levels and the use of grammar learning strategies. Sak (2020) discovered, for instance, that students with higher proficiency levels employed metacognitive techniques more frequently than students with lower competence levels. Nonetheless, the students in these two groups employed emotive and cognitive techniques equally. High proficient students utilized more grammar learning strategies than low proficient students, according to (Bellil, 2020) investigation of the use of these tactics among students with varying proficiency levels. Nam (2010) found that proficient language users employed metacognitive strategies more frequently than other language techniques. Metacognitive methods involve preparing before studying, and proficient language learners typically prepare themselves and self-monitoring skills that encourage them to use metacognitive strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a survey design as part of a quantitative research methodology. National & Pillars (2012) state that social science researchers

frequently employ this kind of study to look into events or phenomena that have an impact on people. It involves a scientific investigation that collects numerical data that is precisely measurable and quantifiable. Additionally, because respondents can complete the survey whenever it's convenient for them, employing a survey design is less invasive than doing observations or interviews. Students at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang who attended a grammar course were randomly sent a 20-item questionnaire via WhatsApp Messenger and a link to a Google Form. Just forty students answered the questionnaire, and these individuals were the study's participants. There were five sections on the questionnaire. The demographic profile was covered in Section A, while the sections on cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies were covered in Sections B, C, D, and E. The questionnaire's GLS items were taken from Pawlak (2020). The form of response was a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing never and 5 representing always. The results of the students' final exams were used to calculate their competence levels. Students with a high proficiency level were defined as those who scored 75% or higher. Average people were those who scored between 60% and 74%, and poor proficient people were those who scored less than 60%. Following that, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The Most Common and The Least Common Sub-Grammar Learning Strategies

Table 1. Mean and standard deviations of cognitive strategies used by students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang

No	Cognitive Strategies	Mean	SD
1	I attempt to connect newly learned language structures with those I am already familiar with	3.86	.92
2	I attempt to categorize new grammatical structures into groups of related concepts as soon as I discover them. (verbs, tenses, etc.)	3.89	.93
3	When I study a new grammar structure, I consider how it would be equivalent in my original tongue and compare it to mine	3.89	.93
4	I write the rules of a new grammatical structure using my own language.	3.25	1.26
5	When my teacher introduces a new grammar structure, I make notes about it, noting its meaning as well as how it should be used.	4.00	.95

Table 2 illustrates that cognitive strategies had the means which were in the range between 3.5 and 4.0. The most usual strategy used was item No. 5, "When my teacher introduces a new grammar structure, I make notes about it, noting its meaning as well as how it should be used (e.g. I write down the meaning and the usage of the structure)" with the mean of (4.00). This was followed by item No. 2 and 3, I attempt to categorize new grammatical structures into groups

of related concepts as soon as I discover them. verbs, tenses, etc.)” which shared the same mean at (3.89), Item No. 3, *“When I study a new grammar structure, I consider how it would be equivalent in my original tongue and compare it to mine”* (3.89), then followed by item No. 1, *“I attempt to connect newly learned language structures with those I am already familiar with with”*, the mean of (3.86) and item No. 4, *“I write the rules of a new grammatical structure using my own language”* (3.25). for all result it was found the highest of the means (4.00), and the lowest (3.25) of the cognitive strategies which indicate that the ESL undergraduate students sometimes used these strategies when learning grammar.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of meta-cognitive strategies used by students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang

No	Meta-cognitive Strategies	Mean	SD
1	I plan ahead for grammar check-ups	3.91	.92
2	Before class, I review the topics that will be taught in grammar	3.83	.93
3	I look for more efficient approaches to acquire grammar	3.75	.93
4	When I hear or read a new grammar structure, I make an effort to take note of it	3.26	1.26
5	When learning grammar, I have certain objectives and goals in mind	3.89	.90

Under metacognitive strategies as shown in Table 2, the range between 3.5 and 4.00. This shows that students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang usually used these strategies when learning grammar. The highest mean (3.91) in No. 1, *“I plan ahead for grammar check-ups”*, then 5 got the mean (3.89), *“When learning grammar, I have certain objectives and goals in mind”*, it is followed by No. 2, *“Before class, I review the topics that will be taught in grammar”*, got the mean (3.83), then No. 3, got mean (3.75), *“I look for more efficient approaches to acquire grammar”*, and the lowest mean No 4 (3,26), *“When I hear or read a new grammar structure, I make an effort to take note of it”*.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of affective strategies used by students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang

No	Affective Strategies	Mean	SD
1	When I am aware of my weaknesses with a framework, I motivate myself to work on my grammar	3.91	.92
2	Even when I am concerned about making grammatical errors, I still practice speaking English.	3.80	.93
3	Grammar rules are easier for me to understand when I play grammar games.	3.88	.93
4	When I'm having trouble comprehending or using language structures, I try to unwind.	3.83	.86
5	Even when I'm not sure if a grammar structure is appropriate, I still try to utilize it.	3.80	.90

Under affective strategies as shown in Table 3, the range between 3.5 and 4.00. This shows that students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang usually used these strategies when learning grammar. The highest mean (3.91) in No. 1, “*When I am aware of my weaknesses with a framework, I motivate myself to work on my grammar*”, then 3 got the mean (3.88), “*Grammar rules are easier for me to understand when I play grammar games*”, and followed by No. 4, got mean (3.83) “*When I’m having trouble comprehending or using language structures, I try to unwind*” and the lowest mean by No. 2 and 5 (3.80) “*Even when I am concerned about making grammatical errors, I still practice speaking English*”, and “*Even when I’m not sure if a grammar structure is appropriate, I still try to utilize it*”.

Table 4. Means and standard deviations of social strategies strategies used by students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang

No	Social Strategies	Mean	SD
1	When I speak, I ask proficient English speakers to fix my grammar.	3.99	.92
2	I try to help anyone who are experiencing problems with grammar or understanding it	3.98	.95
3	When I’m confused about a grammar rule, I ask the teacher to explain it to me or repeat it	3.91	.93
4	I can understand grammar better when I study it with a friend or family member	4.00	.96
5	I ask fluent English speakers to correct my grammar when I talk	3.87	.90

Table 4 shows that all social strategies had the means which were in the range between 3.5 and 4.0. This indicates students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang usually used all these strategies when learning grammar. The highest scoring got in No. 4 (4.00), “*I can understand grammar better when I study it with a friend or family member*”. It was followed by No. 1 (3.99) “*When I speak, I ask proficient English speakers to fix my grammar*”, then No. 2, (3.98) “*I try to help anyone who are experiencing problems with grammar or understanding it*”, the fourth level No. 3 (3.91) “*When I’m confused about a grammar rule, I ask the teacher to explain it to me or repeat it*”, and the lowest mean was No. 5 (3.87) “*I ask fluent English speakers to correct my grammar when I talk*”.

Table 5. Means and standard deviation of overall grammar learning strategies used by students of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang

Grammar Learning Strategies	Mean	SD
Social Strategies	4.00	.96
Affective Strategies	3.91	.92
Meta-Cognitive	3.91	.92
Cognitive Strategies	4.00	.95

The findings in Table 5 show that all the grammar learning strategies had the overall means between 3.5 and 4.5 which indicate that ESL undergraduate students usually used all the strategies when they learnt grammar. The social and

cognitive strategies were the most used with the mean of 4.00. They were then followed by metacognitive strategies (3.91), and affective strategies (3.91).

Discussion

It was discovered that the most popular cognitive approach employed by ESL undergraduate students was taking notes while listening to the teacher explain things. Ivone & Renandya (2019) asserts that taking notes while listening has a positive impact on students' comprehension achievement; for this reason, this tactic is regarded as an effective way for students to comprehend the grammatical principles they have learned. However, the least effective method for learning grammar was to make charts. Despite the fact that drawing can help students improve their memory and their ability to conceptualize visually, students are not very willing to use drawing as a teaching tool. This approach is thought to show transient benefits that don't justify the time and effort required to produce the illustrations (Nadimah, 2018; Sok & Shin, 2022).

The most popular metacognitive technique was discovered to be trying to figure out why they made the mistakes they did. According to Yulianti (2018), one metacognitive activity that aids students in starting self-regulated learning and promotes their involvement with the context and learning environment is learning from mistakes. Meanwhile, the least effective metacognitive technique was planning grammatical reviews in advance. Despite the fact that creating a study schedule is regarded as a healthy study habit, the majority of students still don't adhere to it or have one to help them with their learning (Afini et al., 2023). In order to enable students to manage their own grammar learning process, metacognitive GLS involves having them monitor their cognitive processes. This includes organizing and planning their learning as well as controlling and assessing it. If the tactics are no longer effective, students will also have the option to switch them out (Hidayad et al., 2023; Nasar et al., 2023; Umar et al., 2023). Additionally, students look for opportunities to practice grammar structures in a variety of contexts, identify their strengths and weaknesses in grammar, pay attention to grammar structures in their own speaking and writing, and have specific goals and objectives when learning grammar, all of which are based on the results of the GLS questionnaire. This is probably due to many distractions such as social media and online games which could put students at a disadvantage.

The results demonstrated that the two most popular emotional techniques employed by the high-vocational students were learning grammar and speaking English. Wu (2018) argues that intentional and extensive practice can optimize language acquisition. Despite the findings of Chen & Chang (2004) that journal writing improved students' confidence in their writing and their understanding of grammar, the present study revealed that maintaining a language learning diary was the least favored affective method. This is presumably due to the fact that high vocational students do not typically keep diaries. Students that use affective GLS do better as a result of overcoming obstacles in their online English grammar learning. According to Tsai & Wu (2011), affective strategies are linked to the students' own ideas of how they will benefit from a course, including their motivation to learn based on their learning objectives, their positive attitude toward using the Internet for learning, their reduction of anxiety when using the

Internet for learning, and the online learning environment itself. Through the use of affective GLS, the author discovered that students attempt to use grammar structures even when they are unsure of their accuracy, become aware of when they feel tense or nervous when studying or applying grammar structures, talk to others about their feelings when learning grammar, push themselves to practice grammar when they are aware that they are having difficulties with it, and attempt to relax when they are having difficulty understanding or applying grammar structures. The results showed that the most popular social tactic employed by high-vocational students was requesting peers for assistance. This is consistent with the findings of Suryanto et al (2021) study, which also revealed that students frequently employed this tactic when they were having trouble comprehending the teacher's explanation. Conversely, encouraging proficient English speakers to fix their grammar while they spoke was the least frequently employed strategy. According to Yang & Wang (2015), students perceive that receiving corrections for grammatical, lexical, or pronunciation faults during a conversation disrupts the flow of their conversation. Therefore, they would rather not receive this feedback. They will also become unmotivated and lose concentration on what they want to say.

Among the three strategies, social strategies were shown to be more frequently employed by high-vocational students. This approach speaks to the learners' interactions with speakers of the target language. This strategy is crucial because learning a language always requires interaction with other people. It is a social behavior that includes things like asking for help when needed, practicing grammar rules with other students, and trying to help others who are having trouble understanding or applying the language. Studies have indicated that consistent reciprocal feedback might improve motivation and self-efficacy (Laland, 2004). Wahjuningsih (2019), who also found that students favored social tactics when learning grammar, corroborated the findings. It's interesting to note that adult students were found to employ social tactics at higher rates than younger students. On the other hand, research by (Gabuardi & Sánchez, 2015; Krashen, 1981; Lee & Heinz, 2016) found that younger pupils mostly utilized metacognitive, cognitive, and compensatory methods. This study discovered that students with high proficiency levels utilized all grammar learning techniques, in contrast to students with low proficiency levels, in terms of the influence of students' competency on the usage of grammar learning strategies. The results appear to be at odds with the findings of study by Lee & Heinz (2016). that found that proficient students only employed more metacognitive methods than low proficiency students. Additionally, Pawlak (2020) found no discernible variations in the application of grammar learning methodologies according to students' language proficiency.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The study's findings seem to confirm that when it comes to learning grammar, SMK Negeri 6 students have a preference for specific cognitive, metacognitive, emotional, and social strategies. Grammar teachers need to know what effective and realistic teaching strategies to use while helping their students learn grammar. Since teachers are the ones who encourage learning, they can

assist students in using effective grammar practices that may enhance their proficiency. Teachers of grammar need to be more aware of the techniques their students employ and modify their lessons accordingly. The students may therefore pick up English grammar more quickly. Since students seem to use social technique the most, teachers could use a buddy system to encourage students to engage more fully in their peer-led learning. Using this buddy strategy, low proficient students can learn grammar from high proficient students.

Suggestion

This study, like many studies, has its limitations. First off, the study's results could not be applied to the entire student body because the small sample was drawn from a single state vocational school. Second, a cross-sectional survey was the only quantitative research approach used in this study. Lastly, because this study used Pawlak (2018) GLS, it did not contain compensation or memory techniques. It is suggested that larger samples from different high-vocational schools in Palembang be used for future research. For a more thorough explanation of the phenomenon, a mixed methods research design longitudinal study can also be conducted. Future scholars can also think about employing a quasi-experimental study to look into the connection between grammar performance and the use of GLS. Examining the methods teachers use to teach grammar and the function of the buddy system in grammar learning are two more novel study approaches.

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