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Still Another Look at EFL Grammar Learning Strategies: Frequency, Semester Differences, Gender Dynamics, and Rationale

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Abstract

Grammar learning strategies (GLS) play a crucial role in successful language acquisition; however, this area remains understudied in the Asian English as a foreign language context. To address this gap, this mixed-methods study explored the English GLS employed by Asian (Indonesian) undergraduate participants (N = 194), examining differences in frequency of use (most and least used), as well as gender, semester, and the rationale for implementation. Participants completed the Grammar Learning Strategies Inventory (GLSI), a 70-item, closed-ended, five-point Likert scale questionnaire, followed by semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that participants were high users of social strategies, followed by metacognitive, cognitive, and affective strategies. The exploration also identified various rationales for the high use of strategies, including understanding and avoiding grammar mistakes, correcting errors, improving grammar usage, sharing knowledge, and enhancing comprehension. In contrast, rationales for the low use of affective strategies included stress hindering focus, lack of motivation, insufficient practice, low confidence, fear of making mistakes, neglect of self-rewards, limited feedback, failure to maintain a learning diary, and infrequent self-reflection. The article concludes by discussing the study's limitations and offering suggestions for further research. These findings enhance the understanding of the social strategies used by English language learners and, consequently, inform pedagogical practices while contributing to the scholarly literature.

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Keywords: Gender, Grammar Learning Strategies Inventory (GLSI), grammar teaching, social strategy, strategy use frequency (most, least used).

1. INTRODUCTION

Investigations into language learning strategies (LLS) have made considerable progress since [Rubin \(1975\)](#) provided the impetus by delineating the traits of effective language learners ([Pawlak, 2020](#)). Since then, there has been a growing amount of research on what [Oxford \(1989\)](#) described as “behaviors or actions learners use to make learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable” (p. 235), explaining that learners actively manage their learning processes through various behaviors, encompassing social, metacognitive, cognitive, and affective strategies. Specifically, they utilize (a) social strategies, such as posing questions and cultivating cultural awareness, (b) metacognitive strategies, including attention management, self-evaluation, and self-monitoring, (c) cognitive strategies for the direct application of new language, and (d) affective strategies, encompassing anxiety reduction and self-encouragement to regulate emotions and attitudes.

Drawing on [Oxford \(1989\)](#), others have interpreted and applied this work in various ways across multiple domains, including grammar learning, as grammar learning strategies (GLS) help facilitate learning of new languages ([Zekrati, 2017](#)). However, this area has received less attention. To address this lacuna in the literature, [Pawlak \(2018\)](#), drawing on [Oxford \(1989\)](#), introduced the Grammar Learning Strategies Inventory (GLSI). An instrument that, accepting that results are not necessarily consistent across regions or groups, has been used for a narrow, yet growing, variety of purposes and settings. These explorations have included investigations into how GLS are used within various contexts ([Pawlak, 2021](#)), with a growing focus on the overall frequency of use, as well as the most and least often employed strategies. There has, however, been limited attention to gender, and attention to semester enrollment is noticeably underexplored, as is the rationale for use. Additionally, findings have not been consistent, sample sizes have been small ([Pawlak, 2018](#)), and all of these variables have not been addressed in a single study focusing on a specific context.

Accepting the contextual, situated nature of GLS ([Pawlak, 2020](#)) and that individual contexts should be subjected to more intensive investigation ([Pawlak, 2021](#)), this investigation aims to explore four areas in the context of an Indonesian university with undergraduate English majors: What the GLS are used in terms of (a) overall frequency of use regarding (b) gender, (c) semester, and (d) rationale for using the most and least strategies. To address these issues, this exploration examined EFL students’ use of GLS in terms of frequency, gender, semester, and the rationale behind employing the most and least frequently used strategies. To operationalize these aims, four research questions were posed.

1. What GLS are used in terms of the overall frequency of use?
2. What GLS are used regarding the semester of enrollment?
3. What GLS are used in terms of frequency of use by gender?
4. What is the rationale for using the most and least used strategies?

It is hoped that the detailed examination of students’ use of grammar learning strategies (GLS), exploring the frequency, gender-based differences, shifts across academic semesters, and the rationale behind their choices, will provide valuable insights into the patterns and motivations that influence how EFL learners engage with these strategies. We anticipate that these results will not only enrich the academic literature on language learning but also inform practical pedagogical applications, ultimately facilitating more effective teaching and learning of grammar locally and across a variety of global EFL contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Most Frequently Used Grammar Learning Strategies

Grammar learning strategies (GLS) are widely recognized as a [vital](#) component of successful language acquisition ([Mulugeta & Bayou, 2019](#)). Social strategies, in particular, have been frequently reported as the most commonly used GLS by various researchers ([Juniar & Carissa, 2020](#); [Supakorn et al., 2018](#); [Syarfuni et al., 2025](#); [Yunita et al., 2025](#); [Zarrinabadi et al., 2021](#)). However, this finding is not universal, as some research presents contrasting results, identifying social strategies as the least used ([Zhou, 2017](#)). This disparity highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of language learning behaviors research, suggesting that the frequency of strategy use can vary due to different factors (e.g., groups of learners).

In contrast to social strategies, affective strategies have been consistently recognized in previous literature as the least frequently used GLS ([Mulugeta & Bayou, 2019](#); [Zarrinabadi et al., 2021](#); [Zhou, 2017](#)). This consistent finding suggests that language learners tend to place limited emphasis on the affective domain in their learning practices. Affective strategies, which include managing anxiety, building self-confidence, and maintaining motivation, are crucial for overcoming psychological barriers to learning. The low reported usage of these strategies may indicate that learners are not fully leveraging these tools, potentially hindering their progress in mastering grammar.

2.2 Grammar Learning Strategies Used by Students in Terms of Semester Level

Previous works have demonstrated a frequent use of social strategies among language learners ([Juniar & Carissa, 2020](#); [Supakorn et al., 2018](#); [Zarrinabadi et al., 2021](#)). However, some research, such as that by [Al Abri et al. \(2017\)](#), places greater emphasis on the significant role of metacognitive strategies. Many of these studies have focused on populations of middle or secondary school students ([Al Abri et al., 2017](#); [Juniar & Carissa, 2020](#); [Mulugeta & Bayou, 2019](#); [Supakorn et al., 2018](#); [Zhou, 2017](#)) or those in language schools ([Zarrinabadi, 2021](#)). In contrast, only a limited number of studies have specifically targeted undergraduate populations ([Alnufaie & Alzahrani, 2024](#); [Cahyani et al., 2022](#); [Mohamad et al., 2023](#)).

A number of studies have explored the relationship between grammar learning strategy (GLS) use and language proficiency. Some research indicates a consistently high use of strategies across all proficiency levels ([Alnufaie & Alzahrani, 2024](#)), but often with little measurable difference in how these groups apply them ([Alnufaie & Alzahrani, 2024](#); [Cahyani et al., 2022](#); [Mohamad et al., 2023](#)). Results are sometimes inconsistent, highlighting a complex relationship. For instance, [Khalil \(2024\)](#) reported that higher-achieving students frequently used all types of GLSs, whereas their lower-achieving peers showed only moderate use. This suggests proficiency might influence strategy choice, a concept that extends to potential dissimilarities based on a student's semester level—an area that remains largely unexplored.

2.3 Grammar Learning Strategies Used by Gender

Some research has explored gender differences, yielding varied results. For instance, [Zarrinabadi et al. \(2021\)](#) found that both male and female learners primarily utilize social strategies, highlighting a shared preference for collaborative learning and peer interaction. Conversely, other studies have reported notable gender-based distinctions. [Mulugeta and Bayou \(2019\)](#) observed that males tend to favor affective strategies—those focused on managing emotions and reducing anxiety—while females showed a clear preference for metacognitive strategies, which involve planning, self-monitoring, and evaluating their own learning process.

Further supporting the notion of gender-based differences, [Fitri et al. \(2023\)](#) reported that males tend to prefer cognitive strategies. In contrast, females generally favored social strategies, reinforcing the idea that they might be more inclined toward collaborative learning environments. These variations in strategic preference suggest that gender can indeed influence a learner's

approach to language acquisition. Such differences could be attributed to inherent variations in learning styles or to societal and contextual factors that shape how males and females are encouraged to learn.

2.4 Rationale for Implementing the Most and Least Used Strategy

The literature consistently highlights the role of social strategies in grammar learning, encompassing a range of interactive behaviors, such as seeking help from others, accepting correction, and actively practicing with both lecturers and peers (Pawlak, 2018). Research indicates that this kind of interaction and feedback is crucial for enhancing grammar comprehension, facilitating effective error correction, and fostering critical thinking skills (Novi et al., 2022; Wulandari & Sumarwati, 2019; Yulia et al., 2022). Furthermore, active participation in these exchanges boosts learners' awareness and confidence, while also encouraging a valuable exchange of ideas beyond formal interactions with lecturers (Holidazia & Rodliyah, 2020; Nissa & Putri, 2021; Novi et al., 2022).

Conversely, research also points to the reduced or even avoided use of certain strategies, particularly those in the affective domain. These strategies, which are meant to manage the learner's emotional state, are often neglected. Learners frequently struggle with stress, which can impair their ability to focus on grammatical concepts (Fatma & Noviarni, 2022), and report low motivation and a persistent fear of making mistakes (Astuti & Pusparini, 2019). The limited use of affective strategies is also linked to unfamiliarity with techniques such as self-reward and a lack of constructive feedback (Nissa & Putri, 2021; Wulandari & Sumarwati, 2019), as well as a general neglect of reflecting on their own learning process.

3. METHODS

A mixed-methods approach was employed to explore the research questions, incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods within a single research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the first phase, participants completed a quantitative survey designed to capture the frequency and type of GLS used. This was followed by a qualitative phase, in which a smaller number of participants were invited for interviews to provide deeper insights into the rationale behind their strategy use. The integration of both phases allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of not only what strategies students used but also why they employed them.

3.1 Participants

The participants for the quantitative portion of the study initially consisted of 202 undergraduate students from the English Study Program at Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia. These students were enrolled in the 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters and represented a diverse range of ages and genders. Following data cleaning to remove unengaged responses, a total of 194 valid responses were retained for analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants.

Semester	N	Age	N	Gender	N
2 nd	59	17-18	32	Female	146
4 th	35	19-20	105	Male	48
6 th	78	21-22	54		
8 th	22	23-24	3		

From the 194 responses, eight participants were for the most frequent use of the strategy, and eight were for the least frequent use of the strategy; these users were subsequently interviewed. The 16 participants consisted of two males and six females, who used the most frequent strategies (social), and eight who used the least frequent strategies (affective strategies),

comprising three males and five females from the 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th grades, aged between 18 and 23 years (Table 2). Each participant was interviewed for approximately ten minutes.

Table 2. Demographics of interviewees.

Demographics	The most used strategies (social)								The least used strategies (affective)							
Informant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Gender	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	M	M	F	F	F	F	M	F
Age	19	19	20	20	21	21	22	23	18	19	20	20	21	21	23	22
Semester	2	2	4	4	6	6	8	8	2	2	4	4	6	6	8	8

Note: F=Female, M=Male

3.2 Instruments

Quantitative data were gathered through [Pawlak's \(2018\)](#) GLSI (70-item closed-ended five-point Likert questionnaire), grouped into four strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social. To gain a more holistic perspective, semi-structured interviews explored the rationale for applying the most and least frequently used strategies. The questionnaire and interview questions were translated using a back-translation procedure and presented in the students' L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) to minimize language misunderstandings.

3.3 Procedures

The research was conducted in three stages: preparation, implementation, and reporting. During the implementation stage, data were collected through a questionnaire administered directly in the classroom and distributed via Google Forms. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and interpreted in accordance with [Oxford's \(1990\)](#) guidelines, which addressed the first, second, and third research questions. At the same time, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews following [Creswell and Creswell's \(2018\)](#) explanatory sequential research design. Participants ($n = 16$) from the quantitative phase were selected through purposive sampling, with four representatives from each grade level: two from the highest and two from the lowest strategy users.

To ensure adherence to ethical standards, several measures were taken to protect participants. Access to classes was obtained from the university, and participants received invitations and informed consent forms in their L1. Participation was strictly voluntary, and no coercion was applied ([Cresswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). The participants were also told that their participation or non-participation would not affect their grades or their relationship with either the researcher or the course instructor.

The qualitative data were analyzed using [Miles et al.'s \(2018\)](#) iterative coding process, which included data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Interview recordings were transcribed and reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy and depth of understanding. The coded results were organized into tables to identify rationales for using GLS, with findings categorized according to the factors influencing the use of both the most and least frequently employed strategies. Once the data were displayed, conclusions were drawn, and an expanded interpretation of the qualitative data was developed.

4. RESULTS

The results are presented according to the four areas addressed by the research questions: (a) the overall frequency of grammar learning strategy use, as well as usage in relation to (b) gender, (c) semester, and (d) students' rationale for using the most and least frequently used strategies.

4.1 Most and Least Often Used Grammar Learning Strategies

The analysis showed that participants applied GLS with varying levels of frequency (Table 3). Among the four strategy types (social, metacognitive, cognitive, and affective), social strategies emerged as the most frequently used, while affective strategies were the least employed. This pattern suggests that students tend to prioritize interactive and reflective approaches to grammar learning over emotion-related strategies.

Table 3. Most and least often used grammar learning strategies.

GLSI	M	SD	Category	Interpretation
Social	3.91	0.56	High	Often
Metacognitive	3.88	0.41	High	Often
Cognitive	3.69	0.40	High	Often
Affective	3.67	0.51	High	Often

Table 3 shows that the most frequently used GLS was the social strategy, with a mean score of 3.91. The second most utilized strategy was the metacognitive strategy (3.88), followed by the cognitive strategy (3.69) and the affective strategy (3.67). It can be concluded that students applied all four strategy types at a high level, with the social strategy being the most employed and the affective strategy being the least utilized.

4.2 Grammar Learning Strategies Used in Terms of the Semester

Regarding the use of grammar learning strategies by semester of study, the strategies employed varied across different semesters. Students in the second, sixth, and eighth semesters most frequently utilized social strategies, while those in the fourth semester most commonly used metacognitive strategies. The least utilized strategy for participants in all semesters was the affective strategy (Table 4). These findings suggest that students' choice of strategies may shift slightly depending on their stage of study. However, the overall pattern of favoring social strategies and least relying on affective strategies remains consistent.

Table 4. Grammar learning strategies were used throughout the semester.

GLS		2 nd Sem	4 th Sem	6 th Sem	8 th Sem
Social	M	4.0	3.91	3.80	4.0
	SD	0.54	0.53	0.53	0.68
	<i>f</i>	High	High	High	High
	Interpretation (use)	Often	Often	Often	Often
Metacognitive	M	3.92	4.01	3.77	3.91
	SD	0.33	0.4	0.4	0.58
	<i>f</i>	High	High	High	High
	Interpretation (use)	Often	Often	Often	Often
Cognitive	M	3.75	3.71	3.63	3.7
	SD	0.38	0.39	0.37	0.55
	<i>f</i>	High	High	High	High
	Interpretation (use)	Often	Often	Often	Often
Affective	M	3.73	3.68	3.63	3.63
	SD	0.53	0.52	0.44	0.44
	<i>f</i>	High	High	High	High
	Interpretation (use)	Often	Often	Often	Often

4.3 Grammar Learning Strategies Used Based on Gender

The quantitative analysis also examined the use of GLS in relation to gender. Data from 146 female and 48 male participants indicated that gender differences influenced the selection and frequency of strategy use (Table 5). Specifically, both male and female students favored social strategies, although variations in the use of metacognitive and affective strategies were also observed across genders.

Table 5. Grammar learning strategies based on gender.

GLS	Female				Male			
	M	SD	Category	Interpretation	M	SD	Category	Interpretation
Social	3.91	0.58	High	Often	3.91	0.55	High	Often
Metacognitive	3.77	0.42	High	Often	3.91	0.40	High	Often
Cognitive	3.62	0.47	High	Often	3.71	0.37	High	Often
Affective	3.57	0.63	High	Often	3.70	0.46	High	Often

According to Table 5, the use of GLS varied slightly by gender. Females most often used social strategies, with a mean score of 3.91, followed by metacognitive (3.77), cognitive (3.62), and affective strategies (3.57). In contrast, males employed social strategies slightly more frequently (3.91), followed closely by metacognitive (3.905), cognitive (3.71), and affective strategies (3.70). However, females and males exhibited a similar pattern in their least utilized strategy, the affective strategy. Overall, both females and males applied all GLS with different frequencies, but each used the most and least strategies with similar frequency.

4.4 Rationale for Most and Least Strategy Use

Semi-structured interviews were employed to further explore the rationale behind the most and least frequently used strategies. These interviews followed the quantitative phase and involved 16 informants who had consented to participate. The participants were divided into two groups based on their reported strategy use: those who employed the most frequently used strategies (social strategies) and those who reported the least used strategies (affective strategies).

4.4.1 Most frequently used grammar learning strategy (social strategy)

Four primary rationales emerged regarding students' use of GLS. These included: (1) to understand and avoid mistakes in the use of grammar, (2) to find and correct mistakes in grammar usage, (3) to provide improvement in using grammar, and (4) to share and enhance understanding (Table 6). These rationales reflect students' active engagement in refining their grammatical competence and supporting peer learning.

The first rationale for employing the most frequently used grammar learning strategy (social strategy) was to understand and avoid grammatical mistakes. When students encountered difficulty with the learning material, for instance, they sought clarification from the lecturer, asking for repetition or explanation of grammatical points because they thought the lecturers were more proficient and had simpler ways of understanding the grammar. The results from informant 8 supported this:

- (1) 'Because more proficient teachers or students usually have specific methods that are sometimes simpler and easier to understand'. (I8)

The second rationale for student participation was to identify and correct grammatical errors. Students expressed that they wanted corrections because, for example, when they receive them, they feel it is easier to remember the grammar point. This finding was further supported by informant 8:

- (2) 'Usually, after being corrected, I find it easier to remember the grammar'. (I8)

The third rationale for student participation was to "provide improvement in using grammar." Students believed that by helping classmates who did not understand specific grammar concepts, they were also enhancing their own grammar mastery. This reciprocal learning dynamic was articulated by informant 4.

- (3) 'Because in my opinion, when we have understood the grammar material and there are friends who do not yet understand the grammar, it will be good to help them as it will help us in improving our grammar mastery'. (I4)

The fourth rationale was ‘to share and enhance understanding.’ Students stated that sharing their knowledge of grammar helps them enhance their understanding. This process allows them to reinforce their own learning when teaching others. This was illustrated by informant 7:

- (4) ‘[To] share knowledge [...] and become a means to reinforce one’s understanding of grammar’. (I7)

4.4.2 *Least used grammar learning strategy (affective)*

The interviews also elucidated the rationale for employing the least strategy, the affective strategy. The results showed five rationales: (1) stress makes it difficult to focus on learning, (2) lack of motivation, practice, confidence, and fear of making mistakes, (3) unaccustomed to acknowledging one’s gains, (4) concern about not getting feedback, and (5) rarely keeping a learning diary or reflecting on one’s learning (Table 6).

The first rationale for students employing affective strategies as the least used approach was that “stress makes it difficult to focus on learning because, when students feel stressed, their ability to concentrate on and absorb new information is negatively affected. This insight was provided by informant 12:

- (5) ‘When I have trouble understanding grammar, I tend to panic, which makes it difficult for me to think or act calmly’. (I12)

The second rationale centered on “lack of motivation, practice, confidence, and fear of making mistakes in learning grammar.” These factors were identified as significant barriers for students, discouraging them from actively engaging with and practicing grammar concepts. This finding was supported by informant 11:

- (6) ‘Because I’m afraid of making mistakes when trying to use a grammar pattern that I’m not confident in’. (I11)

The third rationale involved students being unaccustomed to rewarding themselves. This is because many students are not in the habit of celebrating their small successes, which can lead to a lack of motivation and a failure to recognize their own progress in learning. This was evidenced by informant 14.

- (7) ‘Because I don’t consider things like rewarding myself for doing well on a grammar test to be important, so I don’t do it’. (I14)

The fourth rationale pertained to worrying about not receiving feedback from others. Students who employ affective strategies as the least-used approach are often concerned that they will not get the necessary corrections and guidance and will be judged negatively when they do. This was illustrated by informant 13.

- (8) ‘There is no one else to talk to and I’m afraid of being judged’. (I13)

The final rationale for the least-used strategies stemmed from students not keeping learning diaries and rarely reflecting on their own learning. This lack of self-assessment and documentation results in missed opportunities to track progress and identify areas needing improvement. This was exemplified by informant 9.

- (9) ‘I’ve never kept a diary like that; I’ve never thought about it. I usually just write down things I happen to know or what I’ve learned in a notebook. It’s simply to record the new material, without any commentary. I don’t think adding comments is necessary. (I9)

Table 6. Rationale for the most (social strategy) and least frequently used grammar learning strategy (affective).

Most Used: Social (n = 4)	Least Used: Affective (n = 5)
• To understand and avoid mistakes in the use of grammar • To find and correct mistakes in grammar usage • To provide improvement in using grammar • To share and enhance understanding	• Stress makes it difficult to focus on learning • Lack of motivation, practice, confidence, and fear of making mistakes in learning grammar • Unaccustomed to rewarding themselves • Worrying about not receiving feedback from others • Not keeping a learning diary and rarely reflecting on one's learning

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated students' use of GLS across four key areas: frequency of use (identifying the most and least frequently used strategies), gender, semester, and rationale. The purpose was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how students engage with GLS in diverse contexts. By examining these aspects, the results provide deeper insights into the patterns and motivations underlying strategy use among EFL learners.

5.1 Most Frequently Used Grammar Learning Strategies

Regarding overall frequency, it was found that all strategies were applied at a high level, with social strategy being most often employed, followed by metacognitive, cognitive, and affective strategies. This aligns with research showing recognition of GLS as an essential part of learning (Mulugeta & Bayou, 2019). The most widely used strategy was found to be the social strategy, a finding which aligns with the literature reporting that social strategy is most prominently employed (Juniar & Carissa, 2020; Supakorn et al., 2018; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021) but contrasts with those findings that it is the least-used strategy (Zhou, 2017). Regarding the least-used strategy, the affective strategy was identified, aligning with existing research (Mulugeta & Bayou, 2019; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021; Zhou, 2017), a finding that highlights students' limited emphasis on the affective domain when employing language learning strategies.

5.2 Grammar Learning Strategies Used by Students in Terms of the Semester

Concerning the application of GLS per semester of study, there was variability of usage across semesters. Students in the 2nd, 6th, and 8th semesters predominantly utilized the social strategy, whereas those in the 4th semester primarily employed the metacognitive strategy. The least employed strategy across all semesters was the affective strategy. These findings correspond with previous research demonstrating the prevalence of social strategy use (Juniar & Carissa, 2020; Supakorn et al., 2018; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Additionally, there is consistency with studies such as Zhou (2017), which reported a lower frequency in strategy use, and Al Abri et al. (2017), which highlighted proficiency as a significant factor in metacognitive strategy utilization. The findings are in line with those of Zarrinabadi et al. (2021), who observed that the affective strategy is the least utilized.

5.3 Grammar Learning Strategies Used by Gender

Regarding gender, GLS use was varied. Both females and males applied the social strategy the most and the affective strategy the least. Our findings align with Zarrinabadi et al. (2021), who found that males use the social strategy most often, but are inconsistent with Mulugeta and Bayou (2019), who identified males as employing the affective strategy most often, while females preferred the metacognitive strategy. Our findings are also similar to those of Zarrinabadi et al. (2021) and Fitri et al (2023), who found that social strategy is also the most widely employed by females.

5.4 Rationale for Implementing the Most and Least Used Strategy

Several rationales emerged from the interview data regarding the most and least frequently employed strategies (e.g., social strategy, 4; affective, 5). Four rationales were identified for social strategy use: (1) to understand and avoid mistakes in the use of grammar, (2) to find and correct errors, (3) to provide improvements in the use of grammar, and (4) to share and improve understanding. The primary rationale for employing the social strategy was to understand and prevent grammatical mistakes. This involved several sub-indicators, such as requesting lecturer clarification, seeking help for grammar difficulties, being open to correction, and practicing with lecturers and proficient peers (Pawlak, 2018).

Similarly, classroom interaction between students and lecturers is crucial for grasping grammar concepts. This corresponds with Novi et al. (2022), who stated that a deep understanding of learning material is indicative of success in learning and that communication and collaboration denote positive learning development. The second rationale, to identify and correct errors, acknowledges that students often seek corrections to understand and reduce the recurrence of mistakes. This agrees with Wulandari and Sumarwati (2019), who emphasized the importance of feedback in streamlining correction activities. Additionally, it corresponds with Yulia et al. (2022), which highlights the development of critical thinking through feedback from friends and lecturers.

The third rationale, learning and practicing, can positively impact achievement, initially fostering an understanding and later developing a heightened awareness. This is similar to Nissa and Putri (2021), who asserted the significance of student participation in creating active, creative, and enjoyable learning environments. The final rationale, to share and increase understanding, is related to helping friends or others who are experiencing difficulty, as this can deepen understanding. This concurs with Holidazia and Rodliyah (2020), who explained that studying with friends is more interesting as it facilitates language use confidence, and Novi et al. (2022), who found that interacting with friends can help students exchange ideas with each other apart from lecturers.

The least used strategy was found to be the affective strategy. Five related rationales were noted: (1) excessive stress reduces focus, (2) lack of motivation, practice, confidence, and the fear of making mistakes, (3) unaccustomed to acknowledging one's achievements, (4) feedback scarcity concerns, and (5) not keeping a learning diary or reflecting on one's learning. The initial rationale is that excessive panic can reduce focus, understanding, and cognitive function (e.g., concentrating, remembering, forming concepts, and solving problems, concurring with Fatma and Noviarni (2022). The second, lack of motivation, practice, confidence, and fear of making mistakes, aligns with Astuti and Pusparini (2019), who noted that low self-confidence may occur when learning a new language.

The third, students feeling unaccustomed to rewarding themselves, relate to the idea that appreciation can increase enthusiasm when facing subsequent challenges in learning. The fourth rationale, worrying about not receiving feedback from others, aligns with Nissa and Putri's (2021) explanation that receiving and paying attention to feedback are essential for achieving positive outcomes. In contrast, the absence of feedback is negative, making it challenging to comprehend previously misunderstood material (Wulandari & Sumarwati, 2019). The final rationale, neglecting a learning diary and reflection, is unfortunate, as it hinders study and memory.

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, the results provide insights into grammar learning strategy use across frequency, gender, semester, and rationale. Specifically, while all four strategy types were used frequently, social strategies were the most common, and affective strategies were the least. Moreover, social strategies were particularly prevalent in the 2nd, 6th, and 8th semesters, whereas metacognitive strategies were more common in the 4th. In terms of gender, females tended to favor metacognitive strategies; conversely, males preferred social strategies. Regarding rationale, social

strategies were employed to enhance grammar understanding and promote collaboration. In contrast, affective strategies were avoided mainly due to stress, low motivation, fear of mistakes, limited feedback, and a lack of reflection. Recognizing the crucial role of GLS in successful language learning and acknowledging the understudied nature of this area in Asian EFL contexts, the findings offer insights into the GLS of Indonesian students, including differences in frequency of use (both most and least used), gender, semester, and the rationale for implementation.

In the spirit of sharing what we have learned (Baker, 2023), it is hoped that these findings will further enhance our practical insight into the social strategies employed by students in English language learning contexts, thereby facilitating pedagogic practices and enriching the literature on this topic. Following these results, several pedagogical implications emerge. Educators may choose to tailor instruction to focus more on social strategies during the first three semesters, with a greater emphasis on metacognitive strategies in the fourth semester. Moderate attention can also be given to other strategy types, while affective strategies may require the least focus. Additionally, activities can be selected keeping gender in mind, as male students tend to prefer social strategies, while females more often use metacognitive ones. Rationale patterns also offer valuable insights: Instruction can prioritize social strategies when the focus is on grammar understanding, error correction, and collaboration, while minimizing activities that heavily depend on affective strategies, as these are often linked to stress, low motivation, fear of mistakes, and limited self-reflection.

While the results provide important insights into the use of grammar strategies, a limitation exists that offers opportunities for further research, i.e., the relatively homogeneous sample. This is attributed to the study's focus on a specific geographical context (Indonesia), educational setting (university), and major-specific context (English), which may potentially constrain the generalizability of the findings to other settings (H. M. Pham et al., 2021; N. Y. V. Pham et al., 2024). Consequently, future research could investigate the applicability of the observed patterns in diverse environments within Indonesia and conduct comparative explorations across different cultures to ascertain the extent to which cultural factors influence these phenomena. Ultimately, broadening the scope of inquiry to include varied contexts and participant backgrounds will deepen our understanding of grammar learning strategies and strengthen their pedagogical applications across global EFL settings.

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