INVESTIGATING GRAMMAR LEARNING STRATEGY EMPLOYED BY STUDENT ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate grammar learning strategy used by students in grammar class. It employed a survey design as part of a quantitative research methodology. The participants were students enrolled intermediate grammar class. The instruments used was questionnaire proposed by Oxford (1990), modified by Kemp (2007) and Bayou (2015). There were 32 questions divided into six strategies. The form of response was a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing never and 5 representing always. The result showed that meta-cognitive and compensation were two strategies frequently employed by the students.

Keywords: English Study Program; Learning Strategies; Grammar Learning Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a set of rules which contains meaningful structures and patterns to form sentences to convey the meaning in a language. (Larsen Freeman, 2001; Thornbury, 1999). Learning grammar is a part of learning English. It connects the language components one to another. Having good grammar will impact to the students communicative skills. The students mastering the grammar will be able to build abilities in forming the sentences and understanding the meaning according to the rules in English so that the students will be able to communicate in English (Cook, 2000; Bower in Mandasari, 2002; Purwanto& Agustin, 2022). Moreover, according to Larsen Freeman (2001) grammar is one from three elements that should be learned by students in order to produce production and reception in language. Grammar tells students the structures of the language that should be supported by semantic (meaning) and pragmatics. Briefly, knowing grammar is important since it is a means of achieving linguistic accuracy the more accurately a message is conveyed, the less the opportunities for misunderstanding in communication. Whereas, if there is a lack of grammatical competence, communicators do not participate willingly and fully so that communication breaks down (Muncie, 2002).

Having grammatical competence is beneficial for EFL students since it helps the students understand the language easily. Grammar inputs help our students to learn a language. Even grammar has significant part in learning English, most students defines grammar as a difficult subject because of its inherent "complexity" of the feature. It has numerous set of pattern for difference tenses, subjects, or different kind of sentence. It will be more difficult if the students should connect it with other elements such as semantics and pragmatics. For examples, form of the English passive is easy to learn, but its use is more difficult. (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Larsen-Freeman, 2003a, 2003b). Moreover, studying English grammar is quite frustrating for EFL learner because of the different between their L1 grammar and English grammar. Therefore, students should know their learning strategy in learning grammar in other that they can learn grammar easily.

Learning strategies are specific techniques, steps, actions, or behaviors used by students to make learning easier, more effective, efficient, and enjoyable. Each student has different learning strategy. For instance, some introvert students will learn a new language by drilling the grammar and analyzing the sentences. Meanwhile, students who are extrovert will learn language through social conversation in English with their partners (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Ghani, 2003).

Knowing their own learning strategies has been proven essential to help students' success in their learning process (Oxford, 2003). Some scholars have found that designing, adapting, or applying learning strategies play important roles in achieving their objective learning and improving their autonomous learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Oxford, 2003). There are two main units of learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1990). Those are direct and indirect strategies that have some subunits or taxonomy. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation. For indirect strategies, it includes metacognitive, affective and social.

In memory strategies, students learn grammar by relating new information to existing ones or relating one grammatical rule or word to another in order to create association in memory without involve deep understanding. In cognitive strategies, students learn grammar by practicing the rule meaningfully in a context such as practicing in their conversation, reading a book, listening, or writing something. Whereas in compensation, students learn grammar through the gap that occur when the students try to understand or use grammar rules In metacognitive strategies, students will evaluate their own grammar learning pattern and coordinate the learning process. In affective strategies students learn grammar by controlling their emotion such as anxiety, motivation, attitudes, and values. The last in social strategies, the students learn grammar by seeking support, interaction with their friends to learn about the grammar (Oxford in Bayou, 2015). By knowing students learning strategies, the lecturer or the teacher can provide suitable lesson and variation in teaching grammar (Rubin and Thompson,1994). As Briewin, *et al* (2013) stated that teachers need to indentify the needs of students in oredr to be successful in teaching and learning a language. One way to know the students' need is by indentifying their learning strategy.

METHOD

This study employed a survey design as part of a quantitative research methodology. According to Creswell (2014) a survey study is designing to map or describe current issues by studying a sample of population and the result will be in a form of numeric description. The subject of this study was students of English study program in IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro who were studying intermediate English grammar. There were twenty four students. The original questionnaire used to collect the data is from Oxford (1990), modified by Kemp (2007) and Bayou (2015) to narrow the context to learning grammar. The questionnaire contains 32 statements regarding grammar learning strategies used by the students. Those statements are divided into direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation) and indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective, and social). The form of response was a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing never and 5 representing always. The data were analyzed by using SPPS Application.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The following is the result of the calculation which strategy is used very often by the students in learning grammar. The data were calculated by using SPPS Application and the result is as follows:

Table 1. The Mean score of Cognitive strategy

No	Cognitive Strategy	Mean	SD
1	When I learn a new grammar structure, I try to classify it under a group of similar things (e.g. verbs, tenses, etc.)	3,50	,780
2	When I learn a new grammar structure, I try to associate it with other structures in English that I already know	3,79	,588
3	When I learn a new grammar structure, I compare it with my own language by thinking of its equivalent in my native language.	3,37	,824
4	I underline, use different colors or capital letters to emphasize the important parts of grammar rules and explanations.	3,75	1,113
5	I read different texts and watch TV shows and/or movies in English to learn how to use correct grammar (e.g. magazines, newspaper, fictions, etc.)	4,04	,955
6	I do grammar exercises at home.	3,33	,637

Table 1. shows that the highest mean is 4,04 for no. 5 and the lowest is 3,33 for strategy no.6. It mean that most students choose to read different text or watching TV shows rather than do grammar exercises. The second strategy is strategy no.2 that students try to associate a new grammar rule with other rules that they've already known.

Table 2 The Mean score of Meta-cognitive strategy

No	Meta-cognitive Strategy	Mean	SD
1	I pay attention to the rules provided by the teacher or reference books.	3,96	,624
2	I try to notice the new grammar structures that appear in listening or reading text.	3,71	,464
3	I preview the grammar subjects that will be covered before coming to class.	3,50	,590
4	I try to notice my grammatical mistakes and try to look the difference with the correct version.	4,21	,721
5	I try to find out ways how to become better learner of English grammar.	4,17	,637
6	I look for people that I can talk to in English in order to improve my grammatical proficiency.	3,67	,868

Table 2 shows that strategy no.4 has the highest mean from other meta-cognitive score. The mean is 4, 21. It means that many students will do the exercises and check the answers on the answer keys. It will help them to understand why the answer is correct or incorrect. While, for the lowest mean is for strategy no 3. Previewing the material before the class sometime is applied by the students.

Table 3 The mean score of Affective Strategy

No.	Affective Strategy	Mean	SD
1	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using ungrammatical sentences.	3,63	,576
2	I encourage myself to use the rules I learnt in my grammar even when I am afraid of making mistakes.	3,71	,806
3	I give myself a reward when I do well in English grammar	3,67	,868

4	I notice if I am tense/nervous when I am studying grammar.	3,63	,711
5	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning grammar such as teacher, friend, and relatives.	3,54	,884
6	I ask my teacher questions about his/her corrections of my grammatical mistakes.	3,50	1,103

From the result of the table 3, it can be seen that the mean from the sixth affective strategy almost get the same score. The highest mean is 3,71 for strategy no.2. It means that students used this strategy more often that other strategy such as ask the teacher about the correction of their mistake.

Table 4. The Mean score of Memory Strategy

No	Memory Strategy	Mean	SD
1	I think of the relationship between the grammar structures what I have already known and new structures I learn in English.	3,75	,532
2	I use new structures in a sentence to remember them well.	3,96	,624
3	I try to remember English grammar information by using their location on the page in the text book.	3,75	,794
4	I review grammar lessons regularly.	3,54	,833
5	I try to remember a new structure that I learnt by making a mental picture of a situation in which the form might be used.	3,58	,929

From table 4 shows that the highest mean is 3,96 for no.2. The students use new structure to remember them rather than review grammar regularly which has the lowest mean 3.54.

Table 5. The mean score of Social Strategy

No	Social Strategy	Mean	SD
1	If I do not understand my teacher's explanation of a new structure, I ask him/her to repeat.	3,63	,770
2	If I do not understand my teacher's explanation of a new structure, I ask my friend for help.	4,04	,690
3	I study grammar with a friend or a relative.	3,75	,608
4	I listen to any feedback that the teacher gives me about the structure I use.	4,08	,654
5	I ask good speakers of English to correct my grammar when I talk.	3,63	,970
6	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a grammar mistake.	3,83	,565

From table 5, it can be seen that the highest mean is 4,08 and the lowest mean is 3,63. The social strategy used is listening to the feedback from the teacher, then followed by asking their friend for teacher's explanation. Meanwhile, the strategy that has the lowest mean is no.1 and no.5 which meant that the students rarely ask the teacher to repeat the explanation and asking for correction toward their grammar.

Table 6. The Mean of Compensation Strategy

No	Compensation Strategy	Mean	SD
1	I try to discover the underlying grammar rules of different sentences based on all clues.	3,83	,702
2	If I am not sure of using one structure in my speech or writing, I try to use other structure to deliver my message clearly.	3,71	,751
3	I try to improve my grammatical mistake when someone gives me corrections.	4,33	,761

From the result in table 6, it shows that the highest mean for compensation strategy is 4,33. The students try to improve their mistakes when someone gives the correction. For the lowest mean is 3,71 for no.2. The students try to find another structure if they are not sure if the rules are correct.

Table 7. The Mean Score of Six Grammar Learning Strategies

No	Learning Strategy	Mean	SD
1	Cognitive	21,79	1,956
2	Metacognitive	23,21	2,064
3	Affective	21,67	2,745
4	Memory	18,58	2,263
5	Social	22,96	2,236
6	Compensation	23,21	3,451

From table 7, it can be found that the highest mean is meta-cognitive and compensation and the lowest is memory strategy. From the mean score, the students apply meta-cognitive and compensation strategy more often than other strategy. They rarely apply memory strategy in learning grammar.

Discussion

From the finding above, it is discovered that the popular cognitive strategy used by students to learn how to use correct grammar is reading different texts and watching tv shows. Lee, Schallert & Kim (2015) found that extensive reading shows positive gains in grammar knowledge from pretest to later tests. Besides, Vijayakumar,*et al* (2020) state that watching tv shows give some good impact to the students' English acquisition. The students will learn new words, phrases, or sentences. Watching them with subtitles improves the quality of understanding. Knowing the advantages of watching tv series and reading different.

The most popular metacognitive strategy is trying to notice their grammatical mistakes and trying to look the difference with the correct version. By checking the correctness, it can help students to understand the good grammar and learn how to use it correctly. Moreover, the students rarely used to preview the materials for the upcoming subject even this strategy can help them in understanding the materials.

The next most popular of affective strategy is to encourage themselves to use the rules they have learnt. The ability to encourage themselves to implement what they have learnt includes in regulation of motivation and emotions as a part of self-regulation (Blau, *et.al*, 2020). By having good self-regulation, the students will be able to learn independetly and manage their learning which can effect to their achievement (Assakina,*et.al*, 2022). In line with Lee & Heinz (2016), they found that may be one of crucial factors in succesfull foreign language learning is learner autonomy reflected in self-regulated learning activities. Meanwhile, the unpopular strategy from affective is asking the teacher's correction on the grammar mistakes. It could be happened because the students felt afraid of asking it and there was no time in the class for having discussion about the correction of the mistake.

The following of the most popular in memory strategy is using new structures in a sentence to remember them. By using them in a sentence, it gains a positive effect on writing performance (Al-Jarf, 2022). Moreover, Chatterjee & Halder (2023) found that if grammar input is intrinsically linked to the demands of the writing being taught, a significant positive impact on writing results. It can be concluded that the strategy use by the students can give positive impact to their writing skill.

The fifth most popular in social strategy is listening to any feedback that the teacher gives about the structure used by students. Hattie & Timperley (2007) state that feedback is one of the most powerful influence on learning and achievement. It can effect to the students attitude toward the learning. Therefore, teachers should give positive feedback that can effect to the students' learning. The last strategy is compensation. The most popular is trying to improve grammatical mistake when someone gives the corrections. In line with the previous strategy, the students will try to learn from correction of the mistakes given by the teacher or their friends. By giving positive feedback can influence the students learning achievement.

Those strategies are interconnected one to another. Cognitive strategies enable students to use grammar in a meaningful context; memory strategy helps students to store and call the information related to grammar used; metacognitive strategies help students to control and regular their grammar learning; affective strategies deals with students' feeling and emotion; compensation strategies, on the other hand, are employed when learners need to keep communication going despite a gap in their linguistic knowledge (Oxford in Rahimi, 2008).

Among the six strategies, metacogntivie and compensation were frequently mentioned as grammar learning strategy used by students. The students will try to notice their grammar mistake and try to find the different from the answer key. Even the most popular strategy is checking their own mistakes in the answer keys, the students will also try to improve their grammar knowledge when someone give the correction. It related to compensation strategy.

CONCLUSION

The result confirms that students applied different learning strategies in learning grammar. Therefore, the lectures suggested incorporating grammar-learning strategies in the teaching contents to assist their students to master the English grammar. Besides, It is better if the language learners are able to conjoin both inductive and deductive learning strategies in order to get a better result (Harun, et al, 2020).

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