GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL)

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the learning strategies used by English as a foreign language (EFL) students and gender differences in the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) in Indonesia. To gather the data, this study employed quantitative descriptive methods with a Google form-based questionnaire involving 110 college students, and the data were analysed using SPSS 25. The fifty items of the questionnaire were divided into six strategies: memory strategy, cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, compensation strategy, emotion strategy, and social strategy. Findings of the study indicate that the students use all the strategies in learning English, and all these strategies are in a high level of use except for memory strategy which is in a moderate level. Gender differences data show that most male students preferred the social strategy (36%), whereas most female students preferred metacognitive strategy (56.47%) suggesting that male and female students have different learning styles. The results of this research shed light on the importance of raising teachers' awareness of their students' diversity in learning strategies. Thus, teachers should improve their repertoire of teaching techniques and strategies to meet students' different learning styles in the classroom.

Key Words: gender; language learning strategies; SILL

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki strategi pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh siswa bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) dan perbedaan gender dalam inventarisasi strategi untuk pembelajaran bahasa (SILL) di Indonesia. Untuk mengumpulkan data, penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan kuesioner berbasis Google form yang melibatkan 110 mahasiswa, dan data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS 25. Lima puluh item kuesioner dibagi menjadi enam strategi: strategi memori, strategi kognitif, strategi metakognitif. strategi, strategi kompensasi, strategi emosi, dan strategi sosial. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa menggunakan semua strategi dalam belajar bahasa Inggris, dan semua jenis strategi berada di tingkat tinggi kecuali strategi memori yang berada di tingkat sedang. Data perbedaan gender menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa laki-laki lebih menyukai strategi sosial (36%), sedangkan sebagian besar siswa perempuan lebih menyukai strategi metakognitif (56,47%) menunjukkan bahwa siswa laki-laki dan perempuan memiliki gaya belajar yang berbeda secara signifikan. Hasil penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya meningkatkan kesadaran guru tentang keragaman siswa mereka dalam strategi pembelajaran. Dengan demikian, guru harus meningkatkan repertoar teknik dan strategi pengajaran mereka untuk memenuhi gaya belajar siswa yang berbeda di kelas.

Kata Kunci: jenis kelamin; strategi pembelajaran bahasa; SILL

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INTRODUCTION

Learning strategy provides English teachers and students with the tools they need to develop their knowledge of the English language in the classroom, making it an essential component of English language teaching (Khansir et al., 2021). Similarly, adapting teaching approaches to meet students' various learning style preferences is one way to improve student motivation and performance (Wehrwein et al., 2007). English as an international language is becoming increasingly important to learn because it is required for communication and success in education or the workplace. Acquiring these language skills becomes a requirement for most university students, but it is also required for the general public. Before presenting the to-be-learned information, teachers ask students to make a prediction about a fact or outcome (Brod, 2021). The English language, on the other hand, has provided the country with a great deal of contact with the international world (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019). As a result, language proficiency is an important aspect of competing in this globalisation era.

In the teaching and learning context, unfortunately, students are often bored or unmotivated to learn a foreign language, so appropriate learning strategies are required (Ames & Archer, 1988). Furthermore, learning strategies play an important role in influencing learners to have good language proficiency. Learners exposed to common instruction procedures achieve varying degrees of success in language learning, and the concept of language acquisition as the spontaneous development of language even in the absence of instruction has shifted researchers' attention away from methods and products of language teaching and toward processes in language learning known as language learning strategies (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021).

As a result, those learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that individuals employ in order to achieve a learning goal (Ansari et al., 2021). Extensive research identified the learning strategies used by students of a variety of second and foreign languages, and a slightly smaller body of research documented the effectiveness of helping less successful language students improve their performance through learning strategy instruction.

Another factor that can affect learning strategy is gender (Korlat et al., 2021). Gender is referred to as sex differences in this study, either a boy or

a girl, man or woman, and in this study students are referred to as male and female. It is usual to discover that one individual to another has a distinct learning approach to master their topics, particularly English subjects as a foreign language in Indonesia, and there is evidence that some preferences are established based on gender disparities.

A survey of the literature on learning strategies reveals five key characteristics (de Andrés Martnez, 2012).

a. Strategies are crucial in second or foreign language learning because they promote and assist language acquisition.

b. Learners are the actual agents in their use and selection of techniques because they are immediately affected by them.

c. Language acquisition, like all learning, must be internalized, and strategies are problem-solving procedures or techniques employed by learners to cope with the complex learning process.

d. Learning tactics aren't always visible to the naked eye. This explains why, in general, foreign language teachers are unaware of them.

e. Strategies are adaptable, therefore it stands to reason that they may be taught and learners trained in their administration. As a result, strategy training or learner training can be defined as the approaches employed by teachers to make learners aware of the existence of their strategies and train them in their application.

Ansari et al. (2021) defines learning strategies as any combination of procedures, steps, plans, or routines employed by the learner to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and utilisation of information. Meanwhile, according to Inglés et al. (2017), learning strategies are purposeful behaviours and thoughts that learners utilise throughout learning to better grasp, learn, or recall new information.

Furthermore, Haelermans (2022) states that when students are engaged in a learning activity, they have multiple resources that they employ in various ways to finish or accomplish the assignment, which may be referred to as the process of learning strategy. Learning strategies are unique acts made by learners to improve the efficiency of their learning. Ames and Archer (1988) suggested that learning strategies are procedures that learners deliberately choose, and which may result in activities performed to

improve the learning or use of a second or foreign language through storage, retention, recall, and reinforcement and application of information about that language. Additionally, O'Malley et al. (1987) define learning strategies as unique ideas or behaviours that individuals utilise to help them absorb, remember, or retain new information. Based on all criteria, learning strategies can be defined as students' distinct ways of processing information that promote comprehension, learning, or retention of the material.

Grenfell and Harris (2002) divide learning strategies into four major types: metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective. According to O'Malley et al. (1987), learning strategies pertain to learners' planning their learning, thinking about the learning process, monitoring their comprehension or output, and assessing the consequences of their learning. Cognitive strategies are key activities that the learner employs in order to gain information and understanding of the linguistic system. A learner who identifies a difficult word in a book and successfully infers its meaning from the context is employing a cognitive technique. Utilising Oxford's strategy inventory of language learning (SILL) in Bessai (2018), strategies are generalising, making comparisons between languages, forming linkages between words, practising as well as analysing and reasoning. Meanwhile, Cervin-Ellqvist et al. (2021) describe cognitive strategies as mental processes directly concerned with information processing.

Moreover, Cervin-Ellqvist et al. (2021) elaborates that cognitive methods are more constrained to specific learning tasks and require more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. Among the most significant cognitive methods are repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note-taking, deduction, recombination, imaging, auditory representation, keyword, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, and inference. O'Malley et al. (1987) explains metacognitive as an executive function, which is, strategies that involve planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it occurs, observing one's own production or comprehension, correcting one's own mistakes, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. In addition, Cervin-Ellqvist et al. (2021) indicate that metacognitive methods include awareness of what one is doing and the strategies one is employing, as well as knowledge about the actual learning process.

Social strategies, meanwhile, are the social behaviours that learners use

when learning a language. Social techniques include relying on friends for assistance, participating in group discussions despite not completely comprehending what is being discussed, and working with others (Bateman, 2021). Furthermore, according to Collins et al. (2021), socio-affective tactics are closely related to social-mediating activity and engaging with others. Cooperation and explanation questions are two of the most important socio-affective techniques.

As previously noted, metacognitive methods are strategies employed by students to supervise, regulate, or self-direct language learning. Prioritization, goal setting, planning, and self-management are all part of the tactics (Rubin, 2011). Oxford's et al. (1989) distinguished two types of learning strategies: direct and indirect. Memory, cognitive, and compensatory techniques are examples of direct strategies, whereas metacognitive, affective, and social strategies are examples of indirect strategies. The first form of direct approach is memory methods, which include making mental associations, using visuals and sounds, studying thoroughly, and deploying actions. Cognitive methods, such as summarising or reasoning deductively, are the second type of direct approach, allowing learners to grasp and produce

new language in a variety of ways. Learning a new language necessitates the use of cognitive methods. It is divided into four sections: practise, receiving and sending messages, evaluating and reasoning, and establishing a structure for input and output (Snow et al., 2021). The third sort of direct method is compensating tactics, such as guessing or employing synonyms, which allow learners to utilise the language despite significant knowledge gaps (Oxford et al., 1989).

In contrast, indirect strategies are defined as techniques used to promote and manage language learning without being directly involved in the target language. They are classified into three types: metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Fabricius & Wellman, 2021; García-Ros et al., 2018). The first type of indirect strategy is the metacognitive strategy, which means "beyond, alongside, or in addition to the cognitive" as it allows students to synchronise their learning process. The affective strategy is the second sort of indirect approach, and it refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. Social strategy is the third form of indirect approach. It promotes learner-to-learner interaction (Grenfell & Harris, 2002).

Three previous studies are worth discussing for their relevance to the

present study. Mega et al. (2019) researched EFL students' learning strategies for learning English and discovered a number of techniques employed by successful and unsuccessful senior high school students, as well as the most often used strategy by successful and unsuccessful senior high school students. This study included 40 students, 20 of whom were successful and 20 of whom were unsuccessful. SILL questions based on Oxford (1990) were employed in this study. The findings revealed that successful students utilised the metacognitive learning technique the most, whereas failing students used the cognitive strategy.

Meanwhile, Viriya & Sapsirin (2014) analyse gender variations in language learning styles and tactics. The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) was used to determine the learning styles of the pupils. This study employed the Oxford Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to determine language learning techniques (1990). The study's participants were 150 students from Thailand's Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The study's findings show that gender has an effect on language learning style but has no effect on language learning tactics.

Furthermore, Ho and Ng. (2016) conducted research on gender-based differences in language learning strategies among undergraduates at a Malaysian public university with the goal of examining the language learning strategies used by the undergraduate students and investigating the relationship between language and gender. Respondents included 534 male and 1173 female students from Malaysian public universities. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford is the study's tool (1990). The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, the t-test, one-way ANOVA, and chi-square. According to the findings of the study, students utilised metacognitive techniques the most, while affective methods were used the least. Furthermore, there was a considerable gender difference in language acquisition strategies.

Slightly different from previous studies above in terms of research focus, the present study investigates students' learning strategies and how gender plays a role in their use of learning styles and strategies in learning English at the English and Literature Department of a public university in Makassar. In particular, this study is intended to answer the following research questions: 1) What learning strategies do the students use

in learning English at the English and Literature Department at a public university in Makassar? Is there any difference in terms of language learning strategies based on gender?

METHOD

This research applied the descriptive quantitative method (McFadden, 2021). The participants were 85 females and 22 males from the sixth-semester students' class of 2019 who were studying the English Proficiency Test. The SILL questionnaire, popularised by Oxford 1989, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL), with 50 items, was utilised in this study. The SILL is a five-point scale that ranges from 'never, typically not, sometimes, usually, and always'. The average reveals how frequently the student employs learning tactics. The averages for each section of the SILL show which strategy groups the learner employs the most frequently (Oxford, 1990). SPSS 25 was used to analyse the data, which showed the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of students' self-evaluation of their self-reported strategy use (Leavy & Patricia, 2017).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Students' Learning Strategies in Learning English

107 participants were given the questionnaire. The questionnaire is used in the form of a language learning strategy inventory (SILL). The questionnaire's fifty items were classified into the following strategies: memory strategy, cognitive strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, compensatory strategy, emotion strategy, and social communication strategy.

SILL uses surveys to determine the sorts of learning tactics used by respondents. There are six categories of learning strategies that are used as a foundation for categorising learning techniques based on input. The mean score from the statistical analysis of the respondents' responses is used to determine the level of criterion for each technique. The following are mean scores from each of learning strategies for each level:

a. Memory Strategy with the mean score of 29.51 which is categorized as moderate;

b. Cognitive Strategy with the mean score of 50.00 which is categorized as high;

c. Compensation Strategy with the mean score of 21.11 which is categorized as high;

d. Metacognitive Strategy with the mean score of 35.96 which is categorized as high;

e. Emotion Strategy with the mean score of 20.36 which is categorized as high; and

f. Social Strategy with the mean score of 21.07 which is categorized as high

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that in general, all types of learning strategies the students possess are in the high category except for the memory strategy, where students are considered to be in the moderate level. As Oxford (1990) argued that the more variations the language strategies used by the students, the greater the chance of success in language learning. Furthermore, Ellis (2006) also stated that the application of language learning strategies is one of the factors that contribute the to the success of students in acquiring a second or foreign language.

Students' Differences in Learning English based on Gender

The number of students who became respondents consisted of twenty-two male students and eighty-eight female students.

Male Students Categorization Tables

Table 1. Memory Strategy

Criteria	Memory Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	2	9,0
High	9	40.91
Moderate	11	50
Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0

From the table 1, it can be seen that of twenty-two students, there are two students (9%) who got a very high classification and eleven students (50%) get a moderate classification. Thus, the male students are classified as moderate criteria in-memory strategy.

Table 2. Cognitive Strategy

Criteria	Cognitive Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	4	18,18
High	15	68,18
Moderate	3	13,63
Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0

The results in the table 2 indicate that there are fifteen students (68.18%) who are in high classification, nine students (21.3%) who agree, sixteen students (43.3%) disagree, and six students (16.2%) strongly disagree. It can be said that most of the students are categorized as high in cognitive strategy.

Table 3. Compensation Strategy

| Criteria | Compensation Strategy | |
	Frequency	%
Very High	4	18
High	12	55
Moderate	6	27
Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0

The table 3, shows that there are twelve students (55%) who are in high classification, four students (18%) who as very high criteria. It means most participants are at a high level in their use of compensation strategy.

Table 4. Meta-Cognitive Strategy

| Criteria | Meta-Cognitive Strategy | |
	Frequency	%
Very High	8	36
High	13	59,5
Moderate	1	4,5
Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0

The result of this item shows that there is only one student (4.5%) who gets moderate criteria, thirteen students (59.5%) agree, and eight students (36%) are in very high criteria. It can be concluded that most male students get high and very high levels in meta-cognitive strategy.

Table 5. Emotion Strategy

| Criteria | Emotion Strategy | |
	Frequency	%
Very High	1	4,5
High	8	36
Moderate	9	41
Low	3	13,7
Very Low	1	4,9

The table 6 of emotion strategies indicates the various criteria filled by

male students. There are nine students (41%) who are in moderate criteria, eight students (36%) are in high criteria and one student (4.9%) is in very high criteria. The lowest criteria are also filled by one student (4.9%). Therefore, the result shows that most male students are having moderate to highest level in their use of emotion strategy.

Table 6. Social Strategy

| Criteria | Social Strategy | |
	Frequency	%
Very High	8	36
High	8	36
Moderate	5	23,1
Low	1	4,9
Very Low	0	0

This table 6, shows that there are eight students (36%) who get high and very high criteria. One student (4.9%) has been in low criteria and the rest are in moderate criteria. It means that most of the students are having high and very high level in their use of social strategy.

Table 7. The Highest Percentage Recapitulation for Male Students

No.	Strategy	Frequency	(%)	Category
1	Memory Strategy	11	50	Moderate
2	Cognitive Strategy	15	68,18	High
3	Compensation Strategy	12	55	High
4	Meta-Cognitive Strategy	13	59,5	High
5	Emotion	9	41	Modera

	Strategy			te
6	Social Communicat ion Strategy	8	36	Very High
		8	36	High

From table 7, the recapitulation for male students above indicates that the social communication strategy used by male students is in the high and very high level with 36%. This shows that the number of students 'always' apply social communication strategy in their learning process. While 11 students (50%) applied memory strategy, and 9 students used emotion strategy (41%), both in a moderate level. This indicated that the number of students 'sometimes' apply the memory strategy and emotion strategy.

Female Students Categorization Tables

Table 8. Memory Strategy

Criteria	Memory Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	4	4,71
High	30	35,29
Moderate	40	47,01
Low	10	11,76
Very Low	1	1,18

This table 8, the result of this item shows that there is only one student (1.18%) who gets the lowest criteria while moderate criteria are filled by forty students (47.01%). Thus, it can be concluded that most female students get a moderate to very low level in their use of memory strategy.

Table 9. Cognitive Strategy

Criteria	Cognitive Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	15	17,64
High	48	56,47
Moderate	20	23,52
Low	1	1,18
Very Low	1	1,18

The result in the table 9 indicates that there are forty-eight students (56.47%) who are in high classification, fifteen students (17.64%) are in very high criteria, while low and very low criteria are filled by only one student (1.18%). It can be said that most of the students are categorized as high level in their use cognitive strategy.

Table 10. Compensation Strategy

Criteria	Compensation Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	14	16,47
High	43	50,59
Moderate	26	30,59
Low	2	2,35
Very Low	0	

The table 10 shows that forty-three students (50.59%) are in high criteria, followed by moderate criteria in 30.59%, and fourteen students (16.47%) are in very high criteria. Thus it is concluded that most female students are categorized as high criteria in their compensation strategy.

Table 11. Meta-cognitive Strategy

Criteria	Meta-Cognitive Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	48	56,47
High	30	35,29
Moderate	5	5,88
Low	2	2,35
Very Low	0	0

This table 11 shows that there are forty-eight students (56.47%) who get very high criteria and high criteria in 35.29%. Only two students (2.35%) are in low criteria. It means that most of the students are having highest criteria in meta-cognitive strategy.

Table 12. Emotion Strategy

Criteria	Emotion Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	8	9,41
High	32	37,65
Moderate	34	40
Low	11	12,94
Very Low	0	0

The emotional strategy table 12 shows that thirty-four students (40%) get moderate criteria. Thirty-two students (7.65%) are in the high criteria and eight students (9.42%) are in the very high criteria. Therefore, most students are in high and very high level in their use of emotion strategy.

Table 13. Social Strategy

Criteria	Social Strategy	
	Frequency	%
Very High	16	18,82
High	35	41,18
Moderate	26	30,59
Low	5	5,88
Very Low	3	3,53

The result of this item shows that a total of almost 60% of students are at high and very high level of their use of social strategy. It can be concluded that social strategy is widely used among female students.

Table 14. The Highest Percentage Recapitulation for Female Students

No.	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Memory Strategy	40	47,01	Moderate
2	Cognitive Strategy	48	56,47	High
3	Compensation Strategy	43	50.59	High
4	Meta-Cognitive Strategy	48	56,47	Very High
5	Emotion Strategy	34	40	Moderate
6	Social Strategy	35	41,18	High

The table 14, show of recapitulation for female students above indicates that metacognitive and cognitive strategies are in the same percentage of 56.47% as high and very high criteria. This finding means that 48 female students 'always' apply the metacognitive strategies and 48 students 'usually' apply the cognitive strategy. While emotion and memory strategy are in a moderate level by with 40% and 47.01%. This finding indicates that 34 students from the total of 85 respondents 'sometimes' apply the emotion and memory strategy.

Discussion

Overall, this study indicates that both male and female students use emotion and memory strategies in learning the English language with a moderate level. However, the difference lies in the most used strategy. Female students prefer cognitive and meta-cognitive as most widely used strategies, whereas male students use social strategy as their most preferred strategy in learning the English language.

These findings show that sixth-semester female English and Literature Department students are aware of their own cognitive and metacognitive abilities. According to Rubin (2011), metacognitive information is critical for learners in assisting them in selecting and activating their learning techniques. Furthermore, Zhang and Graham (2020) suggested that establishing metacognitive techniques allows learners to understand their learning process and to understand which methods help them succeed. Accordingly, learners who use these methods are more eager to control a variety of learning strategy options and applications, as well as how they use these strategies. These findings are consistent with those of a prior study by Ho & Ng. (2016) and Mega et al. (2019).

Meanwhile, sixth-semester male students favoured social strategy, indicating that they knew they could not learn the language alone and that they needed to make an effort to receive supports from others and work collaboratively. This finding confirms Bateman's (2021) statement that some instances of social strategy include relying on friends for assistance, participating in group discussions, and cooperating with others.

Finally, this study confirms that language learning strategy is a crucial factor in assessing students' learning potentials. Facilitating students' use of the most suitable learning strategies to match their own learning styles is of great importance in promoting effective language learning including English as a foreign language learning. Indeed, the use of appropriate learning strategies by the students can help them become effective learners in achieving ultimate success in language learning (Mega et al., 2019). It is, however, necessary for the students to practice more about how to use learning strategies effectively to improve their actual and most productive use of language learning strategies relevant to their own learning styles.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research has examined language learning strategies as used by sixth-semester students of the English and Literature Department class of 2019 of a public university in Makassar. The research revealed that students applied all types of learning strategies in learning English. These learning strategies were analysed and found to be in a high category of use by both male and female students except for the memory strategy. However, differences in English learning strategies are clearly identifiable when gender is considered. Most male students (36%) favoured the social strategy, whereas most female students (56.47%) preferred the metacognitive strategy in their English learning respectively. It is therefore highly recommended that English teachers should vary their classroom instruction by incorporating various teaching techniques and strategies to meet students' different learning styles and strategies.

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