การศึกษาการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษ
ในการเรียนออนไลน์ของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยชาวไทย
Exploring English Grammar Learning Strategies in
Online Learning Used by Thai University Students

ปวีณา จารุธีรพันธุ์[1*]
Paweena Jaruteerapan[1*]

[1] สาขาวิชาภาษาตะวันตก คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยทักษิณ จังหวัดสงขลา 90000

[1] Western Languages Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thaksin University, Songkhla, 90000

*Corresponding author: E-mail address: jpaweena@tsu.ac.th

บทคัดย่อ

　　　　การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1. สำรวจระดับการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษในการเรียน
ออนไลน์ของผู้เรียนระดับมหาวิทยาลัย 2. ศึกษาความแตกต่างระหว่างการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์ของผู้เรียน
ที่มีระดับความสามารถทางไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษที่ต่างกันและ 3. ศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการเลือกใช้กลวิธี
การเรียนไวยากรณ์ของผู้เรียน ผู้วิจัยเก็บข้อมูลกับนิสิตเอกภาษาอังกฤษชั้นปีที่ 1 จำนวน 30 คน ในรายวิชาไวยากรณ์
2 โดยแบ่งออกเป็น 3 กลุ่มตามผลสัมฤทธิ์การเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในรายวิชาไวยากรณ์ 1 ได้แก่ กลุ่มเก่ง
(เกรด A, B+) กลุ่มปานกลาง (เกรด B และ C+) และกลุ่มเบื้องต้น (เกรด C, D+, และ D) เครื่องมือวิจัยที่ใช้
ได้แก่ แบบวัดกลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์ และการสนทนากลุ่ม ผู้วิจัยใช้สถิติพื้นฐานวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ได้แก่ ร้อยละ
ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน การวิเคราะห์ความแปรปรวนเพื่อวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ และการวิเคราะห์
แก่นสาระเพื่อวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้เรียนใช้กลวิธีเพื่อช่วยในการเรียนไวยากรณ์
ด้วยตนเองในระดับสูง โดยใช้กลวิธีทางสังคมมากที่สุดและกลวิธีที่นำไปสู่ความสำเร็จน้อยที่สุด นอกจากนี้
การวิจัยพบว่าความสามารถทางไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษไม่มีผลต่อระดับการใช้กลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์ของ
ผู้เรียน อย่างไรก็ตามผลจากการวิเคราะห์การสนทนากลุ่มกลับพบปัจจัยด้านอื่นที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการใช้กลวิธีการ
เรียนไวยากรณ์ ได้แก่ แรงจูงใจ รูปแบบการเรียนรู้ สถานการณ์การเรียนรู้ และครูผู้สอน

คำสำคัญ: กลวิธีการเรียนภาษา กลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษ แบบวัดกลวิธีการเรียนไวยากรณ์

Abstract

　　　　The objectives of this study were: 1 to explore the extent to which the university
students employed English grammar learning strategies (GLS) in online learning; 2. to examine
the differences between the use of GLS among the students with different English proficiency
levels; and 3. to investigate factors which have an impact on the application of GLS. Data
was collected from a class of thirty First-Year English major students enrolling in the course
called *Grammar 2*, using the GLS and focus-group interviews. They were classified into three
groups with different grammar proficiency levels, measured by their grade obtained in a
grammar course last semester, namely higher-level learners (A, B+), intermediate-level learners
(B, C+), and basic-level learners (C, D+, and D). The quantitative data was statistically analyzed
by frequency, percentage, means, standard deviation, and ANOVA. Thematic analysis was
used to analyze data from focus-group interviews. The findings showed that the students
used GLS in general at a high level. The social strategies were used the most while
metacognitive strategies were found to be used the least. Moreover, the comparison of GLS
use among the three groups revealed no significant differences in their strategy use. Therefore,
learners' grammar proficiency did not have a direct effect on GLS use among the students
in this study. Instead, focus-group interviews further revealed a range of factors mediating
GLS use namely motivation, learning styles, learning situations, and teachers.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, English Grammar Learning Strategies, Grammar
　　　　　　　Learning Strategy Inventory (GLSI)

Introduction

Over the past several decades, the field of language learning strategies (LLS) has grown significantly after Rubin [1] identified the characteristics of good language learners and provided a list of strategies that they used to contribute to their learning success. Since its start, language learning strategies have been the subject of a large body of empirical research and publications [2-10]. Research attention on LLS has focused on a wide range of scopes and topics. For example, a number of studies investigated mediating effects of individual differences (ID) on strategies use [11] such as age, gender, learning style, ethnic background, and language proficiency [12, 5, 13]. These include the relationship between strategy use and successful second language learning [14-16]. Despite the widespread research interest in LLS, research on grammar learning strategies (GLS) is surprisingly scarce. GLS is defined as, "Teachable, dynamic thoughts and behaviors that learners consciously select and employ in specific contexts to improve their self-regulated, autonomous L2 grammar development for effective task performance and long-term efficiency" [8]. Oxford [8] referred to the lack of research attention on GLS as "Second Cinderella" after the first-named Cinderella, listening strategies [17]. Reflecting on this situation, Pawlak [10] commented that, "In light of how robust LLS research continues to be, it was a major surprise to discover how little research existed on strategies that learners apply to learn grammar, or GLS, when I was planning my first study in this area." As Oxford [8] explained, the lack of attention to GLS is partly due to the predominance of communicative approaches. Some researchers have misconception that GLS does not fit communicative language teaching and, therefore, hesitate to study GLS. This situation has led researchers to call for more research that explores GLS in wider aspects and in various contexts to strengthen the potential of GLS and push the field forward [8, 10].

Although the field of GLS is still in its infancy, the empirical investigations of GLS show how its potential has been noted [10]. Of particular interests are attempts to provide the definition of GLS [8], classification of GLS, and measurement of GLS [9]. By drawing on the taxonomy of LLS, Pawlak [9] proposed a classification of GLS into four categories: metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective strategies. These categories are used as indicators to specify characteristics of GLS in a data collection tool called Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory, or GLSI [9]. However, he noted that the GLSI should not be considered as comprehensive or final because this device is still underway and needs to be modified to suit particular contexts. He, therefore, called for an additional approach that can complement findings from the macro-perspective in the study of GLS. Data collection tools that provide the micro-perspective such as interviews, diaries, or narratives would provide more insight into context-specific and individual variables of learning strategies employed by learners.

Notwithstanding the infancy and limitation of GLSI, it provides a basis for constructing an instrument for the measurement of GLS. The classification of GLS [9] has four main categories as follows:

1)Metacognitive strategies are employed to supervise and manage the learning of grammar through the processes of planning, organizing, monitoring, and self-evaluating.

2)Cognitive strategies involve in the process of learning grammar that includes the subcategories, namely, GLS used to assist the production and comprehension of grammar in communication tasks; GLS used to develop explicit knowledge of grammar; GLS used to develop implicit knowledge of grammar; and GLS used to deal with corrective feedback on errors in the production of grammar.

3) Affective strategies are used to self-regulate emotions and motivations when learning grammar.

4)Social strategies involve cooperation or interaction with the teacher, proficient language users, or other students, aimed at enhancing the process of learning grammar.

Overall, the classification of GLS described above allows researchers to tap into reported use of strategies for learning grammar and understand specific actions taken by the learners in particular contexts. We need a generalized definition that can be used to specify common characteristics of GLS, particularly for research purposes. Generally, many studies that explored types or patterns of GLS use drew on these four main categories. On the whole, however, the findings from previous research [18-20] are far from conclusive because they revealed divergent results (e.g., the most and least frequently used strategies), making it difficult to capture predominant patterns of GLS use.

The investigation of factors influencing GLS use is also another important line of inquiry in GLS research. However, previous research that focuses on variables influencing GLS use is scant [10]. The few existing research has focused on factors such as age, gender, and proficiency, with dissonant findings [21-22]. For example, studies reported that learners with higher proficiency levels used more helpful strategies than the lower-level ones [15-16, 23]. On the contrary, some research found no relationship between learners' proficiency and the use of GLS [19-20]. These conflicting results led Pawlak [10] to call for more research attention to find ways of establishing a "clear-cut link between GLS use and attainment". Another important aspect relevant to this study involves contextual factors such as online learning environment. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional in-person classrooms are transitioned online. As teaching and learning activities were different from normal classrooms, many students encountered challenges adapting to this sudden and unplanned shift to online instruction [24-25]. There is evidence showing that students used learning strategies

to assist their learning and cope with difficulties that arose during this abrupt transition [15, 26]. Examining how students employ GLS in the online learning contexts help us to anticipate and be prepared for the effects of this sudden transition.

As our current knowledge of what actually happens in the field of GLS is continuously expanding, we still need more research inside various contexts describing what is really happening when learners employ GLS, especially during the time of online learning. This is particularly true in Thailand because there is little research on GLS in the context of Thai higher education where in-person classrooms are abruptly shifted to online learning during the pandemic situation. Also, it is where GLS is not widely explored, as is the case in most other language skills such as listening, speaking, and vocabulary. In response to the call for more GLS research, this current study, therefore, explored the extent to which a class of thirty university students employed GLS in their online learning. This includes investigating factors that the students reported having influenced their use of GLS. The study would provide deeper insights into how the students constructed and applied GLS as well as the affordances and constraints that shaped the uptake of GLS. These key insights are important since they help to identify mediating factors in the application of GLS so that we are able to provide more effective strategy training in language classrooms.

Objective

The objectives of this study were: (1) to explore the extent to which the university students employed English grammar learning strategies (GLS) in online learning; (2) to examine the differences between the use of GLS among the students with different English proficiency levels; and (3) to investigate factors which have an impact on the application of GLS. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent did the students use GLS in their online learning?

RQ2. Were there any differences between the use of GLS among the students with different English proficiency levels?

RQ3. What factors did the students report to have influenced their GLS use?

The methodology adopted to carry out the research will be presented in the next section.

Methodology

Research context and participants

This exploratory research took place at a university in the south of Thailand. For this study, participants were selected by using purposeful sampling as they were those from which the most could be learned. The participants were a class of thirty-two students who enrolled in an 18-week course called *Grammar 2.* This course was compulsory for the First-Year

students in the English major program. It aimed to provide students with knowledge of complex English grammar. Key topics included sentence structure, types of clauses, compound, and complex sentences. Pedagogical approaches adopted in the class were lectures, group, and class discussions. Although thirty-two students were enrolled in the course, two students were absent on the day the post-course GLSI (Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory) was administered. Therefore, the total number of participants was 30 (N=30). The participants were aged 18 to 20 and most of them were female. They were classified into three English proficiency groups following their grade in the pre-requisite course, *Grammar 1,* in which they had taken previously. Therefore, there were three groups namely basic-level learners (D, D+, and C), intermediate-level learners (C+, B) and high-level learners (A, B+). It should be noted that there is a big difference in the number of members between the high-level group (24 students) and the other two groups (3 students each). This is because more than three quarters (25 students) had a high level of academic achievement (GPA 3.51-4.00) and high grades in *Grammar 1*. Therefore, the comparison of these variables must be interpreted with caution.

Procedures

Before participating in the study, all students were informed of the research objectives, the procedures, their rights, and obligations. They were then given consent forms to sign. For the focus group interviews which were one week after the course had finished, the participants were recruited on a voluntary basis through the post-course GLSI. At the time the research was undertaken (The year 2021), the course was initially held in the classroom for four weeks and then was conducted through the online platform in accordance with the protective measures of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each week, the students attended the online class through Cisco WebEx Program for three hours. After a gradual easing of lockdown measures, the students returned to the physical classroom during the last two weeks and completed the post-course survey or GLSI at the end of the course. In the week after that, fourteen students participated in the online focus group interviews where they were asked to elaborate more on their use of grammar learning strategies. Research instruments, GLSI, and focus group interviews, will be discussed in the next section.

Instruments and data analysis
Questionnaire

The purposes of the questionnaire were to investigate the extent to which an entire class of students in this research used GLS during the transition to online instruction. This includes comparing the use of GLS by the students with different grammar proficiency levels.

The questionnaire had two main sections: demographic information and Grammar Learning Strategies Inventory (GLSI) adapted from Pawlak [9]. The GLSI consisted of seventy statements representing different grammar learning strategies (GLS) which were classified into four main categories: metacognitive strategies; cognitive strategies; affective strategies; and social strategies. The questionnaire was translated into Thai by the author and was validated through several approaches. To achieve the accuracy of the translation, peer feedback was sought from a Thai specialist in the field of translation followed by a test of content validity using the index of item-objective congruence or IOC [27]. Three Thai instructors of English language teaching rated each statement whether it represented and measured GLS. The result showed that all items had the IOC scores ranged from 0.67-1, which were more than 0.50. Therefore, the questionnaire was valid and ready for the pilot test The Thai translation of the questionnaire was pilot tested with a class of 28 year-1 students in the Bachelor of Arts program. The students were asked to express levels of agreement towards each item using a 5-point Likert scale. The author was physically present while conducting the pilot session to answer questions and take comments from the participants. Revision was made on adding words for clarity and better understanding. After the final revision, the Thai version of a seventy-item questionnaire was ready for data collection.

The data from the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated to examine demographic data and the use of GLS. To investigate the level of GLS use in each category and as a whole, the average scores of each category and the whole inventory were calculated. The results were then interpreted using the criteria proposed by Oxford [28]. The average scores falling between 1.0-2.4 indicate low use of strategy while the range of 2.5- 3.4 means moderate strategy use. If the number is between 3.5-5.0, it signifies high strategy use. To investigate differences in GLS used among the three different proficiency groups, the ANOVA test was used. As the result from the ANOVA test can determine whether or not there are any statistical differences between the means of three or more independent groups, it is, therefore, relevant to the objectives of this study.

Focus group interviews

The focus group interview was used to gain insights into factors influencing GLS use. One week after the course had finished, the author conducted focus group interviews with four groups of students separately via an online meeting program. The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis through an invitation included in the consent forms provided at the beginning of the course. According to the returned consent forms, 17 students agreed

to take part in the interviews. However, due to technical circumstances, three of them did not attend the interviews. Thus, the total number of participants was 14 (N= 14). The composition of the focus group was based on levels of English proficiency. As the recruitment was based on a voluntary basis, it was not always possible to have an equal number of members in each English proficiency group. Therefore, the number of participants in each group varied from two to five members. There were 2 groups of high-level learners, 1 intermediate-level group, and 1 basic-level group. The interviews were conducted in Thai and lasted around 20 to 30 minutes. During the focus group interviews, the author emphasized that the purpose of the focus group interview was to get real perspectives from the students. Therefore, they did not need to agree or please me with answers. In the baseline interview for each group, the students were asked to share their learning experiences in the course, *Grammar 2*. They also talked about problems and issues that had occurred during the online class over the semester. Then, the author asked follow-up questions related to how the students actually employed GLS in their learning. The author tried to keep the role to a minimum by asking questions and allowing the groups to discuss them. This included refraining from expressing personal opinions about GLS in order not to influence their responses.

The qualitative data from the focus groups was analyzed using thematic analysis [29]. The recorded interviews were transcribed by the author, and the transcripts were then sent to all participants for member checking [30]. All fourteen respondents responded within two days and verified the transcripts. The analysis involved an iterative process in which the author searched for repeated keywords relating to factors influencing GLS use. Initial codes were then assigned to the transcripts. After that, the codes had been sorted together meaningfully into potential themes. Finally, these themes were reviewed and refined before being labelled. The results from the analysis of the questionnaires and the focus group interviews are presented below.

Results and discussion

This section presents findings according to the research questions. Each of these findings is discussed in turn below.

1. To what extent did the students use GLS in their online learning?

In response to RQ1, this section presents findings on the use of GLS by the class of thirty students during the online learning situations as represented by mean scores on the post-course survey or GLSI. Table 1 below presents the mean scores of overall GLS use across four strategy categories.

Table 1 Overall GLS use across four strategy categories

No	Category	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	S.D.	Level of use
1	Metacognitive strategies	3.61	0.89	High
2	Cognitive strategies	3.66	0.92	High
3	Affective strategies	3.71	0.91	High
4	Social strategies	3.84	0.77	High
	Total	**3.67**	**0.91**	**High**

Remark: N=30, 1.0-2.4 = low, 2.5- 3.4 = moderate, 3.5-5.0 = high

The table above shows that the class of thirty students reported using GLS at a high level, as indicated by the overall mean score of 3.67. This result is understandable in a sense because these students encountered the sudden shift in learning situations due to crisis circumstances. It is possible that they adopted a more proactive and strategic approach in order to cope with challenges during online learning. This is confirmed by the group interview data when the students reported adopting some strategies that enabled them to take more responsibilities for their own grammar learning during the rapid shift to online learning. This finding demonstrates that when the students in this study faced with contextual constraints, they were more likely to employ GLS to handle the situations. A closer observation reveals that the use of GLS in each category is also high, ranging from 3.61 to 3.84. Among the four categories, social strategies (3.84) were employed the most, followed by affective strategies (3.71), cognitive strategies (3.66), and metacognitive strategies (3.61), respectively. This result suggests that the students were more likely to draw on indirect strategies (i.e., social and affective strategies) which involve general management of learning. Possibly, social and affective strategies were often used as they are not complicated processes and can support and manage language learning without directly involving learning contents or the target language [28]. When learners ask teachers, peers, or more proficient learners questions for clarification, they engage in social interactions and develop a better understanding of learning contents. The result from this study supports early research that highlighted the importance of the social and affective dimensions of online learning [31]. To support students suffering in isolation, the social and affective dimensions should be taken into account when planning and delivering online learning [25].

On the other hand, direct strategies, such as cognitive strategies, were reported using less often. This is because cognitive strategies directly involve mental processing (i.e., manipulating and transforming) of the target language, which could be challenging for the students. Thus, they might not heavily draw on the cognitive strategies. It is also important to note that metacognitive strategies, which constitute indirect strategies, were the least employed by the students. A possible explanation for this result is because these students

had only just begun their first year of study at the university. They might not develop the full potential to self-regulate their own learning as metacognitive strategies require learners to control their own learning such as self-evaluating learning, setting goals or objectives, and monitoring progress. They, therefore, demonstrated less application of such strategies. This assumption is consistent with other studies that highlighted the relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies and factors such as level of students [25] and age [26]. For example, Oxford [26] mentioned that when learners are getting older, they are able to utilize more complex strategies such as metacognitive to control their own learning.

2. Were there any differences in the GLS use by students with different English proficiency levels?

In response to RQ2, the author compared the mean scores of GLS used by three English proficiency groups. This includes testing the hypothesis whether it is rejected or not. There are two hypotheses in this study:H0 (Null hypothesis): There is no difference in the GLS use between students with different English proficiency levels.

H1 (Alternative hypothesis): There is the difference in the GLS use between students with different English proficiency levels

Table 2 below presents the mean scores of GLS used by three English proficiency groups.

Table 2 The GLS used by three English proficiency groups

Strategies Level of students proficiency		N	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	F	Sig. (p-value)	Level of use
Metacognitive strategies	High	24	3.60	0.94	0.205	0.816	High
	Intermediate	3	3.75	0.68			High
	Basic	3	3.54	0.66			High
Cognitive strategies	High	24	3.70	0.93	0.771	0.473	High
	Intermediate	3	3.68	0.88			High
	Basic	3	3.27	0.78			Moderate
Affective strategies	High	24	3.71	0.88	0.30	0.971	High
	Intermediate	3	3.76	1.18			High
	Basic	3	3.67	0.86			High
Social strategies	High	24	3.90	0.77	0.923	0.410	High
	Intermediate	3	3.60	0.63			High
	Basic	3	3.60	0.83			High
All four strategies	High	24	3.71	0.92	1.084	0.353	High
	Intermediate	3	3.69	0.88			High
	Basic	3	3.36	0.79			Moderate

Remark: N= 30, p< 0.05

The analysis shows the mean scores of GLS used by three English proficiency groups. The mean scores of the GLS used in each category by all groups are high except the score of cognitive strategies used by the basic group, which is moderate (3.27). Thus, all three groups similarly employed GLS at a high level except the cognitive strategies, which were used at a moderate level by basic learners. This data suggests that there were not many differences in the adoption of GLS by the students with different English proficiency. This is confirmed by the analysis of the ANOVA test. As seen in Table 2, the p- values of the GLS use in each category (p= 0.816, 0.473, 0.971 and 0.410, respectively) and as a whole (p= 0.353) are greater than the significance level of 0.05. The result accepts the null hypothesis and concludes that there were no differences in GLS use among the three different proficiency groups.

This finding accords with the points made by Pawlak [21], Tilfarlioggu and Yalcin [22], and Zhou [32] that there was a negative correlation between GLS and English grammar achievement. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, previous studies on GLS reported inconsistent conclusions about whether there is a significant relationship between learners' proficiency and the use of GLS or these two factors are not correlated. A possible explanation for this contrasting result can be explained by the fact that those studies have different research contexts, methodological choices, and data collection tools. For example, many studies constructed, adapted, or adopted tools to gauge the employment of GLS. Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) [28] is an instrument used in general research about LLS and is the most widely used until today [33]. However, Pawlak [9] pointed out that the SILL was not primarily designed to assess GLS. As he put it, "Oxford, the SILL's creator, never encouraged employing the SILL to assess grammar strategy use, at least without drastic adjustments (personal communication, June 12, 2018)". Therefore, adopting different data collection tools that are not inclusive classification of GLS could possibly yield different results. Another important issue involves the criteria used to classify levels of English proficiency. It was found that many studies have different ways of operationalizing learners' proficiency. Diverse measures of proficiency were used such as GPA, course grades, test scores, or learners' self-assessment. As the distinguishing criteria were operationalized in different ways, it is not surprising that results from these studies were mixed and inconsistent. As mentioned previously, this issue led Pawlak [10] to call for more research attention to find ways of establishing a "clear-cut link between GLS use and attainment". Possibly, this remedy could provide a strong rationale for teachers to use pedagogic interventions in a language classroom.

In sum, the level of proficiency was not a key indicator for determining the use of GLS by the students in this study. To further investigate which aspects had influenced their GLS use, focus group interviews with four groups of students were carried out. The factors influencing the students' use of GLS will be discussed in the following section.

3. What factors did the students report to have influenced their GLS use?

Table 3 below summarizes the themes and factors that the students reported to have influenced their use of GLS.

Table 3 Factors influencing the students' use of GLS

Themes	Subthemes	Factors
A. Internal	Learners	Motivation
		Learning styles
B. External	Contexts	Learning situations
		Teachers

The analysis of focus group interviews reveals four key factors which have influenced the adoption of GLS. These factors are put into two main groups: external and internal factors. As seen in Table 3, the internal factors are from the learners themselves, namely motivation and learning styles. The interview data showed that two students who were in the high-level group had positive attitudes toward English grammar and exhibited strong motivation to learn English. For example, Rita reflected that "I can learn grammar well because I like it. I think it has something to do with how I think of it. If I like English, I will find some ways to help myself learn English better". [Rita, Group1] Another student, Tay, supported this view.

> I agree with Rita that it comes from our satisfaction. If we like it, it can motivate us to learn. Then, when we learn grammar, we will try to use different ways to improve our learning and help us understand better...Another thing is that I have always liked to study grammar since I was in a high school. It was so cool when my friends came for help if they had problems with grammar and stuff. I was the one that they looked for. [Tay, Group1]

The above comments suggest that these students realized the mediating effects of their positive attitudes towards English on the motivation to learn. Especially, Tay developed self-confidence as a result of her good knowledge of English grammar. Rita and Tay talked about their learning experiences in the way which suggested that motivation influenced their desire to learn and find ways or strategies to help their learning.

Such a result is probably best reflected in Gardner et al.'s causal model of learner characteristics and language achievement [34]. As the model stated, "language attitudes were seen to cause motivation" and "motivation caused both self-confidence and language learning strategies" [34]. The finding in this study also reflects Dörnyei and Skehan's point [35] that highlighted the important role of motivation in language learning. When learners

are highly motivated, they will put in effort, time, and cognitive resources to complete learning tasks. In the same vein, Griffiths [5] also pointed out the positive relationship between motivation, successful learning and language learning strategies.

However, it is worth noting that making a strong link between motivation and strategy use warrants caution. Macaro [6] argued against a strong claim made about the link between motivation and strategy use. As he argued:

If we were to find that there was too strong a link in the direction: motivation leads to strategy use, then to attempt to bring about change in strategy use would be barking up the wrong tree learners who are not motivated are those who refuse, and will probably always refuse, to use a range of effective strategies [6].

Alternatively, he suggested a more optimistic conclusion that "learners become demotivated when their lack of strategy use blocks their progress (p.29)'. Regarding this causality, it might be possible for researchers to demonstrate how successful strategy use leads to successful learning and then to motivation. Research needs to show such a relationship in order to make strategy training acceptable in a language classroom.

Another important factor underlying GLS use includes learning styles. The interview data reveals that the students have different learning style preferences. And these style preferences have the potential for influencing GLS use as evidenced by the students' references to their learning that reflected GLS use. For example, Nida got used to learning grammatical rules from rote memorization. She realized that the memorized information would be forgotten over time, especially with disuse. Thus, she had to write down things she wanted to remember in a study note using her own words to make it easy for memorizing. Jai talked about her learning in the way that suggested that she preferred the lessons that started with the presentation of grammar rules and followed by examples and practice exercises. This suggests that Jai was more comfortable with rule-driven learning. Also, Mam mentioned that after classes she would summarize the lessons and revise them with her classmates later. Having chances to explain and ask questions helped her to understand the lessons more. In addition, Nan admitted that she was not good at English grammar. Sometimes she could not catch up with the lesson as she needed clear directions and step-by-step explanations. Therefore, she would spend time reviewing the lessons and doing many exercises to practice grammar.

The evidence above suggests that the types of GLS that the students used were related to their learning styles. This was best illustrated by Nida who preferred memorizing grammatical rules and then used a memorization strategy to process and retain information. The finding reflects Wong and Nunan's point [36] that students can take advantages of their

learning styles by matching learning strategies with their styles. As Cohen [2] put it, language learning strategies are "directly tied to the learner's underlying learning style preferences". This study, therefore, supports early research by scholars who reported that learning styles influence learners' choice of GLS [8, 36-37]. The finding also emphasizes Richards and Reppen's point [38] that students have their preferred ways of learning grammar. Therefore, it is important to take this aspect into account when it comes to approaches to teaching grammar. Teachers should try to accommodate multiple learning styles within their classrooms [39]. In the same vein, Cohen and Henry [40] also encouraged teachers to use the learning tasks in the way that "brings the best out of particular learners with particular learning style preferences".

With regard to the external factors, learning situations and teachers are also the factors to be considered. As mentioned earlier, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a sudden shift away from the classroom, many students reported having challenges that resulted from unconducive learning environment. For example, learning at home was rather difficult for Tay because there were many family members around. She had to study outside of her house. Still, it was noisy because of traffic noise. Other students similarly talked about their difficulty concentrating in the online class due to distractions such as noisy working spaces, phone calls, message notifications, temptation to do other digital activities, fatigue, mind wandering, and daydreaming. This included technological obstacles such as unreliable internet access. In response to the challenges, the students mentioned adopting some strategies that enabled them to take more responsibilities of their own grammar learning during the online learning situations. They were, for example, searching for additional materials on the internet, reviewing grammar lessons to remember the rules, doing many exercises to practice grammar, summarizing and writing down the rules in students' own words, learning grammar from YouTube videos, and asking more proficient peers for help.

The focus group interview demonstrated that when the students faced with contextual constraints, they were able to use GLS to handle the situations. Thus, the finding suggests that learning conditions in which the students encountered could influence their likelihood of adopting the strategy. This is confirmed by research reporting the significant role of contexts on strategy use[13, 41-42]. As Griffiths [5] pointed out, learning conditions contribute to learners' strategy selections. Clearly, a distant learner who is physically distant from teachers, classmates and library resources may have different learning strategies from a student who studies in the face-to-face classroom setting. Furthermore, White [42] found that successful learners in distance learning were those who frequently used metacognitive strategies to direct and manage their own learning.

Apart from learning conditions, teacher is another factor supporting the use of GLS, especially the social strategy which involves students having "cooperation or interaction with the teacher" [9]. The students mentioned that when the teacher made them feel relaxed, comfortable, and connected, they would enjoy the class and pay more attention to learning. They further added that a good student-teacher rapport also encouraged them to ask for assistance when they had difficulty understanding grammar points. As Jai explained, "...when learning grammar if the teacher is more relaxed, friendly and does not push the students too hard, the students will not feel stressed. They will have courage to ask questions whenever they are in doubt". Similarly, Suda also reflected that, "...if the teacher understands the students and always gives them moral support, they will feel close to the teacher".

Therefore, in light of the above comments, this study concludes that teachers also play an influential role in promoting the use of GLS, particularly in social strategies. Positive relationship between the teacher and the students can influence, the students' adoption of GLS which consequently leads to a more dynamic classroom and therefore promotes motivation in learning.

In conclusion, the evidence presented in the study shows that three proficiency groups used GLS at a high level. However, the level of proficiency was not found to be a key indicator for determining the employment of GLS. Instead, by drawing on the interview data, the study identified factors which appeared to have contributed to their adoption of GLS, including motivation, learning styles, learning situations, and teachers. These factors played a catalyzing role in initiating the application of GLS, which consequently assisted the students in handling challenges during the sudden shift of teaching to online learning or Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) [43].

Conclusions

This study has provided some useful insights into how the application of GLS is influenced by internal and external factors such as learners and contexts. Although the study exhibits positive results of the students' adoption of GLS, the comparison and interpretation of these results warrant caution as they are drawn from a small-scale study conducted in the class having a big difference in the number of participants in English proficiency groups. Notwithstanding the limitation, the students in this study showed some potential of adopting GLS at a certain level, notably through an awareness that they needed to better understand grammar lessons and to overcome difficulties encountered during the online learning. This awareness, consequently, led to their adoption of GLS. As Pawlak [44] pointed out, appropriate use of GLS can foster learning autonomy and potentially lead to successful grammar learning.

However, in reality, not all learners know how to use learning strategies and which ones work best for them [36]. In line with previous research [45-47], this study, therefore, advocates the incorporation of strategy training or explicit strategic teaching into language classrooms to enhance learning opportunities for students to practice using 'learning- to-learn skills'. Possibly, this can be done through an approach such as strategy-based instruction or SBI. Notably, the potential value of SBI has been noted in many different contexts [48-51]. However, Pawlak [10] argued that studies on the efficacy of SBI should not only explore changes in strategy use but also look at the extent to which "changes in strategy use translates into achievement". This kind of investigation would have practical value as it would inform pedagogical interventions that aimed to provide effective strategy training and could suggest implications for training teachers. This study proposes that SBI be integrated as a part of teacher education or future professional development. More detailed studies on effective strategy training practices and how teacher trainers attempt to introduce SBI to teacher education would be of greater value. These investigations will help to advance the practice of SBI and contribute to the LLS research literature.

Acknowledgements

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