

The Use Of Language Learning Strategies For Global Society: How Is It Different Between Females And Males?

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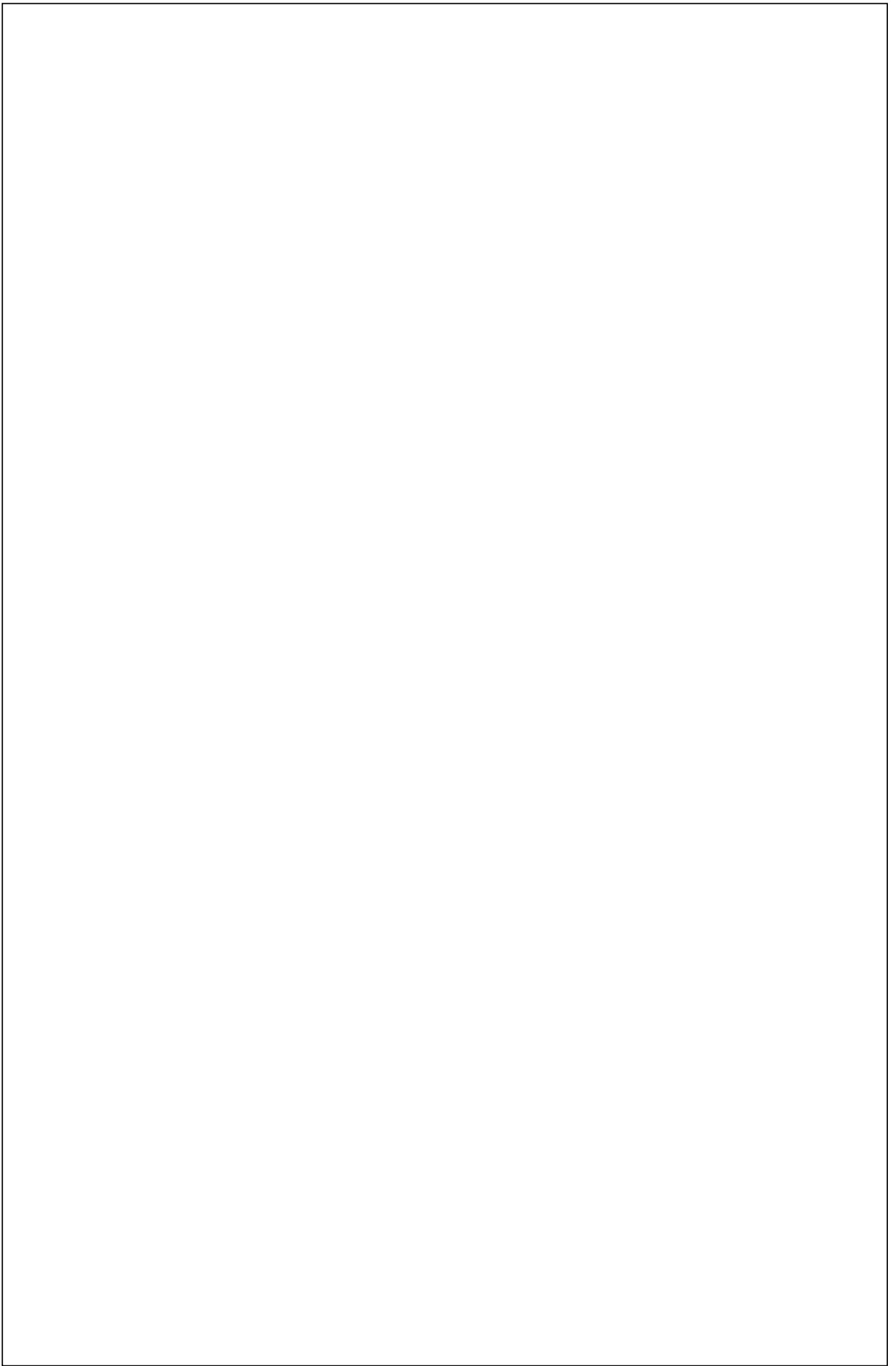
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The Use Of Language Learning Strategies For Global Society: How Is It Different Between Females And Males?

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Abstract

A good English ability is needed in the global society that is a part of the current globalisation era. With the opening of the global market, the job competition is greater than before and Indonesia must have reliable and competitive human resources prepared by universities, including the universities in Manado. This study aims to explore the relationship between student gender and their choice of learning strategies as well as the frequency of their use. The subject of this research is the university students in Manado and the main instrument used is the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning. The findings show the differences in the choices made regarding learning strategies and their frequency of use. Among the six categories of language learning strategies, gender differences tend to be seen in the use of compensation strategies and social strategies in favour of male university students.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, Gender Differences, University Students

El Uso De Estrategias De Aprendizaje De Idiomas Para La Sociedad Global: ¿Cómo Es Diferente Entre Mujeres Y Hombres?

Resumen

Se necesita una buena habilidad en inglés en la sociedad global que es parte de la era actual de globalización. Con la apertura del mercado global, la competencia laboral es mayor que antes e Indonesia debe contar con recursos humanos confiables y competitivos (19) parados por las universidades, incluidas las universidades de Manado. Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar la relación entre el género del estudiante y su elección de estrategias de aprendizaje, así como la frecuencia de su uso. El tema de esta investigación son los estudiantes universitarios en Manado y el principal instrumento utilizado es el Inventario de estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas. Los resultados (26) muestran las diferencias en las elecciones realizadas con respecto a las estrategias de aprendizaje y su frecuencia de uso. Entre las seis categorías de estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas, las diferencias de género tienden a verse en el uso de estrategias de compensación y estrategias sociales a favor de los estudiantes universitarios varones.

Palabras clave: estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas, diferencias de género, estudiantes universitarios

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of English as an international language is increasingly important in the current era of globalisation. The impact of global society, especially in the world of education and higher education specifically as a part of the provision of human resources, is very pronounced. Higher education institutions are required to produce highly competitive graduates. The ability (2) to speak good English is one of the demands of the workforce. It is now an added value to the success in the workplace because English has become very important as a language of communication around the world as an international language (2) (NICHOLSON, 2015). Thus, it has become a challenge to improve the quality of the human resources in order to face competition in the world of work in the global society. In the end there are many english Institutions that accommodate the community to improve the quality of resources by providing english teachers from local speakers and native speakers (ROESDIONO, SAPTANDARI & SUMI-

NAR, 2019). In terms of mastering the English language, there are many factors that need to be considered in the teaching and learning processes. One of them is the students' language strategies used when learning English. In other words, language learning strategies are one of the key factors in the success of one's language learning and different language learning strategies may lead to different outcomes. These strategies can help the students to develop their confidence and proficiency (RUSNADI, 2014; QIANGQUAN, CHATUPOTE, & TEO, 2008).

The importance of using a variety of language learning strategies and the factors that influence the choice of specific strategies has been emphasised in previous studies (eg. GREEN & OXFORD, 1995; OXFORD, 1990). The use of language learning strategies is generally different from one to another and this can affect one's language skills (NELSON et al., 2014; SALAHSHOUR et al, 2013). In other words, the students have a certain strategy for learning English that can improve their language skills. The problem is whether the strategies used by the students are used enough or if they are not aware of other strategies that can be used to improve their language skills even better. Many students do not realise their potential when mastering a foreign language because they do not know the best method that can be used. They may not develop optimal strategies (SIMATUPANG, 2008). Furthermore, there are gender differences in the use of language learning strategies among the students that may affect their learning. Several studies have investigated this in many parts of the world. For example, in Turkey by HAKAN, AYDIN, & BULENT, 2015), or more recently, in Indonesia by MAHMUD & NUR, 2018.

The study described in this article is part of a large study aiming to explore the relationship between student gender with the choice of learning strategies and the frequency of their use with their language proficiency. This is in order to find differences in the use of strategies between the two genders and their influence on their language skills. The research used a mixed methodology and the subject of the research was university students in North Sulawesi. Two important instruments used in this study for the data collection were the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) Prediction Score to assess the students' English skills and SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) developed by OXFORD, 1990 to assess the language learning strategies used by the students. However, the focus of this article is on gender differences in the use of learning strategies

measured by descriptive statistics. Therefore, it presents findings on the use of language learning strategies by the students that indicate their different uses by gender.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

As part of a larger study, this study used a mixed-method approach with the subject of research being university students in North Sulawesi. This research is descriptive and used quantitative techniques. The population in this study were all of the college students in North Sulawesi with the sampling technique being in the form of purposive sampling. Students at the third level of the English Language/Literature or English Education Department were sampled from each college because they were considered to be able to master English well after two years of being taught English and the related skills.

As for this particular study, it aims to describe and analyse university students' language learning strategies, the frequency of their use in improving their English language skills, and the differences of use between the genders in Manado. A descriptive research design (SHIELDS AND RANGARAJAH, 2013) was used alongside the survey as the chosen technique for collecting the data (CRESWELL, 2009). The samples were taken purposively from the third year English major students from a state university in Manado, North Sulawesi. There were 75 students comprising of 57 females and 18 males. The questionnaire instrument used in this study for the data collection was SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning), which is an instrument that was designed and developed by OXFORD in 1990 to assess students' language learning strategies. SILL consists of 50 questions that were translated into Indonesian to make it easier for the students to understand. The rating scale is based on a Likert scale with 5 frequency categories (rarely, rarely, sometimes, often, and always). There are six sections in this questionnaire based on the different categories, namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. At this point, simple statistical analysis was used to calculate the frequency and percentage of the language learning strategies use in general and between the genders.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1 Language and gender studies have evolved into discourse and gender studies. Language affects, and is influenced by, social practices, including matters relating to gender. Therefore language plays a big part in gender issues. Research on language, gender and theoretical changes is the result of changes in the existing world so as to produce differences in the academic perspectives on gender and language (CAMERON, 2005). Since the 1970s, sociolinguists have been attracted to the relationship between language and gender. They assume that all behavioural variations, including success in foreign language learning, can be explained by cultural factors such as the gender differences built by society (SUNDERLAND, 2000).

In terms of language learning strategies, there are two factors that are considered to be influential in the use of learning strategies which have not received proper attention: language skills and gender. There are two recent and highly relevant studies; the one (SALAHSHOUR et al, 2013) examining the relationship between the use of language learning strategies, the level of language skills, and the gender of learners at the Iranian high school level and the other by Nelson and their colleagues. They studied gender perspectives and language learning strategies in the EFL-grade colleges Ethiopia. However, both studies are still small and not comprehensive. It is believed that if the influence of language and gender factors is further investigated, then more insights will be found in relation to the learning process and more specifically, the learning strategies employed by different genders and the level of their language proficiency.

14 Language learning strategy is an important factor in the teaching and learning process because it can improve one's language skills. In an effort to master English as an international language so then the university graduates have high competitiveness in the labour market of global society, this study was conducted in North Sulawesi to answer the problem of what strategies the students used, the frequency of their use in improving their English language skills, and any gender differences in the use of the selected strategies.

The preliminary results of the study show that the students used different learning strategies among the sample population. The frequency of use for each strategy has been presented in the tables below.

Table 1.
Memory Strategies

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Never or almost never true	115	15
Usually not true	142	18
Somewhat true	216	28
Usually true	214	27
Always or almost always true	93	12

As can be seen from Table 1, 15% of the students never or almost never used the memory strategies, 18% usually did not use them, 28% sometimes used them, 27% usually used them, and 12% always used them. This indicates that more students used memory strategies less frequently by looking at the last two scale of 'usually true' and 'always or almost always true.

Table 2.
Cognitive Strategies

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Never or almost never true	88	9
Usually not true	170	17
Somewhat true	279	28
Usually true	254	25
Always or almost always true	223	22

As can be seen from Table 2, 9% of the students never or almost never used the cognitive strategies, 17% usually did not use them, 28% sometimes used them, 25% usually used them, and 22% always used them. This indicates that more students used cognitive strategies more frequently by looking at the last two scale of 'usually true' and 'always or almost always true.

Table 3.
Compensation Strategies

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Never or almost never true	36	8
Usually not true	71	15
Somewhat true	102	22
Usually true	118	25
Always or almost always true	141	30

As can be seen from Table 3, 8% of the students never or almost never used the compensation strategies, 15% usually did not use them, 22% sometimes used them, 25% usually used them, and 30% always used them. This indicates that more students used compensation strategies more frequently.

Table 4.
Metacognitive Strategies

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Never or almost never true	34	5
Usually not true	88	13
Somewhat true	161	23
Usually true	203	29
Always or almost always true	214	31

As can be seen from Table 4, 5% of the students never or almost never used metacognitive strategies, 13% usually did not use them, 23% sometimes used them, 29% usually used them, and 31% always used them. This indicates that more students used metacognitive strategies more frequently.

Table 5.
Affective Strategies

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Never or almost never true	71	15
Usually not true	84	18
Somewhat true	102	22
Usually true	109	23
Always or almost always true	102	22

As can be seen from Table 5, 15% of the students never or almost never used metacognitive strategies, 18% usually did not use them, 22% sometimes used them, 23% usually used them, and 22% always used them. This indicates that more students used affective strategies more frequently.

Table 6.
Social Strategies

Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Never or almost never true	20	4
Usually not true	56	12
Somewhat true	156	33
Usually true	136	29
Always or almost always true	100	21

As can be seen from Table 6, 4% of the students never or almost never used metacognitive strategies, while 12% usually did not use them, 33% sometimes used them, 29% usually used them, and 21% always used them. This indicates that more students used the social strategies more frequently.

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In terms of the differences between female and male students in the use of these language learning strategies, Table 7 below shows the differences according to gender.

Table 7.
Gender differences in the use of language learning strategies in percentage

Strategy	Female	Male
Memory	41%	35%
Cognitive	48%	47%
Compensation	53%	63%
Metacognitive	60%	60%
Affective	45%	48%
Social	58%	72%

As can be seen from Table 7, there are three strategies that are frequently used by both genders with the similar levels of percentage. They are compensation strategies (53% for female and 63% for male), metacognitive strategies (60% for both female and male), and social strategies (58% for female and 72% for male). The other three strategies can be considered less frequently used since their percentage is below 50%. There seems no difference between female and male students (memory strategies are 41% for female and 35% for male; cognitive strategies are 48% for female and 47% for male; and affective strategies are 45% for female and 48% for male). This shows that the gender difference that tends to be significant in the use of compensation and social strategies, and both are in favour of male students.

The fact that second language learners use different learning strategies that can influence the outcome of their learning has encouraged the growth of research in this domain since the 1970s (for example, O'MALLEY et al., 1989; ANDERSON, 1991). An interesting study was conducted by BACON, 1992 who looked at the relationship between gender and the different types of learning strategies. They found that the female and male students used different strategies. However, many external factors also influence the use of learning strategies that can contribute to the success or failure of learning

(WHARTON, 2000). The current study⁴ has supported the previous studies that indicate gender differences in the use of language learning strategies, particularly in the use of compensation strategies that favour male students as reported by HAKAN et al, 2015. However, this is also in contrast with other studies, particularly the most frequently used strategies by gender as reported by (MAHMUD & NUR, 2018). It is then important in language teaching, particularly in English language teaching, for a global society to expose and encourage students to use various language learning strategies in order to be successful.

4. CONCLUSION

Global society demands that universities to prepare their graduates¹⁶ with a good command of English as an international language. One key factor for the success of language learning is the use of language learning strategies. Different language learning strategies³⁰ may lead to different outcomes. This study has shown that students use language learning strategies⁷ with different frequencies. This study has also uncovered the differences in the use of language learning strategies between the genders. These differences in use may lead to different learning outcomes.

⁴ The results show that there were differences in the use of language learning strategies by the female and male students in the six learning strategy categories. Students, when learning English, use different strategies at different frequencies. However, it can be concluded that metacognitive, compensation, and social strategies are the most frequently used strategies, followed by a balanced used of cognitive, affective, and social strategies, which are the least used of the memory strategies. In terms of gender differences, compensation and social strategies seem to be used more frequently by the male students rather than the female students.

¹² Based on the results of the study, it can be suggested to look further at the correlation between learning strategies and the English ability

which is also associated with gender differences. In addition, cultural aspects in relation to the use of learning strategies can be used as one variable for other studies.

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