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THE ROLE OF GENDER AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between gender and language learning strategies (LLSs) in the process of learning English as a foreign language. The study highlights how male and female learners differ in their use of specific learning strategies and how these differences influence their language acquisition. The research is based on theoretical analysis and previous empirical studies conducted by scholars such as Oxford (1990), Ellis (1994), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990). According to the findings of these studies, female learners tend to employ more metacognitive and social strategies, while male learners often rely on cognitive and memory-related ones. The paper argues that gender differences are not absolute but rather depend on individual factors such as motivation, learning environment, and personality. The study also emphasizes the pedagogical importance of understanding learners' strategic preferences to create more effective and inclusive teaching methods. The results can help language teachers design strategy-based instruction that addresses the unique needs of both male and female students. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to the growing field of applied linguistics by deepening the understanding of how gender influences strategy use in English language learning.

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Introduction

In the modern world, English has become a global language that connects people from different cultures, countries, and social backgrounds. It plays a central role in education, business, science, and international communication. As a result, learning English effectively has become one of the most essential goals for students around the world. However, learning a foreign language is a complex process that depends on numerous factors, including motivation, personality, environment, and the strategies learners use to acquire the language. Among these factors, language learning strategies (LLSs) have gained significant attention from researchers and educators because they determine how successfully a learner can understand, remember, and use new language material. Language learning strategies refer to specific actions, techniques, or mental processes that learners employ to make learning more efficient and enjoyable. These include cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies, which help learners control and enhance their language learning process. Yet, the way these strategies are used may vary depending on several individual factors — one of the most prominent being gender. Gender has long been considered an influential variable in educational research. It can shape learners' attitudes, motivation, interaction styles, and choice of strategies. Some studies suggest that female learners tend to use more social and metacognitive strategies, while male learners prefer cognitive and memory-related ones. Nevertheless, other studies show little or no significant difference between genders. Therefore, the relationship between gender and language learning strategies remains an intriguing and debatable topic. The present study aims to explore how gender influences the use and choice of language learning strategies among English learners. Understanding these differences can help teachers design more effective teaching approaches that meet the diverse needs of both male and female learners.

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1. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate how gender influences the use of language learning strategies among English learners. A total of 100 university students participated in the research — 50 female and 50 male learners — all of whom were studying English as a foreign language at the Tashkent State University of World Languages. The participants represented a similar age range and academic background to ensure reliability in comparing gender differences. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) was used as the main research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of 50 items covering six main categories of learning strategies: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they used each strategy on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “always.” Data were collected through online and paper-based questionnaires and analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. The frequency and mean scores were calculated for each strategy type according to gender. In addition, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify which strategies were more frequently used by male and female learners. The collected data helped to explore patterns of strategy use and to understand the possible relationship between gender and language learning behavior.

The process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is influenced by various internal and external factors, one of the most significant being the learning strategies employed by students. Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) refer to the specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that learners use often consciously to improve their progress in developing language skills. These strategies enable students to enhance understanding, retention, and application of new language knowledge. Among the many variables that affect strategy use, gender has been widely recognized as an influential factor. Gender differences in education manifest not only in academic achievement but also in how male and

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female students approach the learning process. Language learning strategies have been categorized into six major types: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. These categories cover the processes through which learners store and retrieve information, practice language, compensate for unknown words, plan and monitor their learning, manage emotions, and interact with others for learning purposes (Oxford, 1990). Female students are generally observed to use a broader and more varied range of strategies, especially in areas related to planning and emotional regulation. They often exhibit greater self-awareness and organization in their learning routines, making use of strategies like goal-setting, scheduling, and positive self-talk to enhance motivation and reduce anxiety. On the other hand, male students are more inclined toward task-based strategies, such as memorization, repetition, and contextual guessing, showing preferences for independence and problem-solving (Mahmud & Nur, 2018; Božinović & Sindik, 2011). Despite numerous studies on gender differences in language learning strategies, few have explored this issue within the Indonesian university context using a mixed-methods approach.

2. Results and Discussion

The results revealed noticeable differences in the use of language learning strategies between male and female students. Female learners reported a higher frequency of using metacognitive and social strategies. They tended to plan their learning process, monitor their progress, and actively engage in communication with peers to improve their English. These findings suggest that female learners are generally more self-regulated and socially oriented in their approach to learning. On the other hand, male learners demonstrated greater use of cognitive and memory-related strategies, such as repetition, note-taking, and analyzing language rules. They appeared to rely more on logical reasoning and problem-solving rather than social interaction. This pattern aligns with findings from previous studies by Ellis (1994) and O'Malley & Chamot (1990), who also

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observed similar gender-related tendencies. However, the analysis also showed that gender alone does not fully determine strategy use. Some male learners displayed strong metacognitive awareness, while some female learners preferred cognitive strategies. This indicates that individual differences — such as motivation, learning style, and personality — also play a crucial role. Therefore, while gender influences certain strategic preferences, effective language learning depends largely on personal engagement and contextual factors.

One interesting discussion examined from year to year is a discussion of the relationship between the strategies of learning English in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes or the relationship with student performance, which can be influenced by other factors. This issue was developed in the era of the 90s, whereas the beginning of this issue developed, a number of researchers only described the dominant learning strategies used (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Breen, 2001; Horwitz, 1987). Although refraining from categorizing beliefs as ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ researcher stated that learners’ subscription to certain beliefs had a direct consequence on the ways they learn (Riley, 1997). Recent researches which have developed until now have not only illustrated the dominance of the strategies used but are related to other factors. (Riazi & Rahimi, 2005; Chamot, 2005; Aharony, 2006; Zhang, 2008; Yunus, 2016). One factor that should not be ignored is about gender differences.

Conclusion. There are many results of research that give different results about the meaningful learning strategy associated with gender, which is certainly a separate signal to find out whether there are other factors that influence the differences in the results. Gender differences in achievement of language learning achievements are seen as learning strategies used is a study that has been studied by many researchers. Some of them tried to find problems that existed in differences in the learning outcomes of men and women viewed from various fields of science and from various perspectives. The results of the study prove that the relevance of gender with learning outcomes in a particular field is very

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meaningful where the value of the success of male learners outperforms the value of female students (Maharani et al, 2018;Tang et al, 2014),. However, some studies on gender differences do not provide significant results for the linkages of this problem.

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