



STUDENTS' PREFERENCES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY BASED ON GENDER ROLES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of gender roles on the use of language learning strategies among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research addresses two main questions: 1) How do gender roles influence language learning strategies? and 2) What are the students' preferences in the use of these strategies? The study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology, incorporating interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires to gather data. The research findings reveal significant differences in the language learning strategies employed by male and female students. These differences are analyzed in relation to psychological factors, as discussed by Zoltán Dörnyei. The data reduction process, guided by Miles and Huberman's framework, includes condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis shows that while male students tend to favor more competitive and autonomous learning strategies, female students often prefer collaborative and communicative approaches. Additionally, the study highlights the role of cultural and social expectations in shaping these preferences. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between gender and language learning strategies, offering insights that can inform teaching practices and curriculum development. By examining the specific needs and preferences of male and female EFL students, educators can develop more effective, inclusive, and supportive language learning environments.

Keywords: *Language learning strategies, gender differences, EFL students, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Learning one language is a crucial thing to do due to the need of any activities are basically communication and in this modern world, English is known to be used by many people in every corner of the globe (Rao, 2019). Learning English has become a common thing among the students either it is as a second language or a foreign language. One of the factors in English language teaching which need to be taken



into account is about learning strategies. Thus, many researchers began to observe and investigate the language learning strategy (LLS).

Chamot (2004) defined Language Learning Strategies (LLS) as the conscious thought and action that learners take to achieve a learning goal. The definition shows that the students select particular strategies consciously and then make some efforts to attain their learning goals. Furthermore, language learning strategies can be inferred as a precise effort that the students make to create a less challenging, pleasant and more adjustable learning environment. Simply found, LLS is what students think and act to accomplish a learning goal in learning process. They can select the activity based on their preference in order to make learning becomes more enjoyable. Moreover, applying learning strategies influence students in terms of their independency and where they learn how to manage their learning in such various ways.

Every learning process required various methods or strategies in order to achieve the purpose of learning. Meanwhile, some strategies may be give many benefits to the students yet some others may not be very effective when it comes to each individuals. It seems obvious that there is no second language learning acquisition without learning strategies, either conscious or unconscious (Setiyadi, 2016). This happened because language learning strategy indirectly guides the students to become active learners that can provide their own needs and choose their preference in learning the language.

Various strategies are performed by learners in order to improve their skill and help them achieve their goal in learning. It aimed at identifying the strategies frequently used by language learners especially within the EFL students. A research by Rianto (2020) investigated the use of language learning strategies among 329 Indonesian undergraduate students in their English as foreign language learning and stated that metacognitive was the strategy category most used by the students and compensation was the least used one. Rosyanawati & Kaswan (2016) also stated that social strategy is the most one preferred by students. Thus, one learning strategy cannot be used by all students although those learning strategies are considered effective or efficient. Problems may be due to personal problems and any other factors, including gender differences (Park & French, 2011).

Recent researches which have developed until now have not only illustrated the dominance of the strategies used but are related to other factors. A study conducted by Martinez et al. (2016) investigated the use of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) by Spanish EFL students, as well as the relationship between that use and other learner variables such as the proficiency level, gender, motivation and the result showed proficiency level did not have a significant effect, while relation to gender, there were not statistically significant differences between male and female students. However, motivation had a paramount effect in the use of LLS. Thus, one factor that should not be ignored is about gender differences.

There are many outcomes of research that give different results about the meaningful learning strategy associated with gender, which is certainly a separate



signal to find out about the role of gender influence the students learning and skill mastery. Zoghi et al. (2013) discussed about whether students' gender can affect learning English as a foreign language or not and the study indicated there is a significant difference between males' and females' performance where the result showed the fact that female students outperform male students in their EFL achievement test. Meanwhile, the study researched by Al-Mahrooqi & Saidi (2012) also implied that males and females not only differ in terms of the numbers of language learning strategies they utilize, but also in terms of strategy variation. It was found that females exercise more numerous and varied types of language learning strategies.

Those studies have revealed that the role of gender has produced various findings in the use of LLS. However, research focusing on gender role on the choice of LLS among Indonesian students remains limited. This research was necessary because research exploring at learning strategies in EFL learning, especially in its differences because of gender role among Indonesian learners at the senior high school is scarce. Thus, such research is of key importance as it can help create an effective foreign language learning process. Moreover, the students of Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah in Palangka Raya learn English due to their education program, but they also have their goals in learning English. To achieve their targets, they make some efforts that can be considered as their learning strategies.

Initiated by those reasons, the interview was conducted with the English Teacher at MA Miftahul Jannah. The English teacher stated this phenomena about gender role in teaching and learning where most of female students more actively showed the used strategy used in learning than male students. For instance, the female students would diligently write the material and continued to discuss it with others while the male tend to socialize first and only then they would study the material. This finding lead to more question about the students' learning outcomes. The English teacher answered that the average students' score for each lesson shows that female students' scores are higher than the male. These are also the reasons on how the researcher chose the school to conduct the research regarding the language learning strategy based on gender role. The researcher intend to investigate the language learning strategy they used referring to their gender.

Learning English for EFL (English as Foreign Language) students also required to learn about four main skill, they are speaking, writing, reading and listening. EFL students at the level of senior high school also learnt all those main skill during the learning process in the classroom. According to the previous research that was done by Ajeng (2017) and Anwar (2023), they also investigated about the differences of the use in learning language strategy. However, both of them only intended to find out the strategy within the scope of English skill in general. Therefore, this study aim to investigate the language learning strategy used by the EFL students based on gender role within the focus of speaking skill.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Language Learning Strategy

The first studies on language learning strategies were conducted in the 1970s, when Rubin and Naiman tried to determine the strategies used by successful second language students. Rubin (1975) found that successful language students used contextual guessing. After a while, successful language students used carefully organized strategies for specific L2 tasks. Naiman, Frohlich, and Todesco (1978) agreed with other researchers about how important it is for learning strategies to be different. They identified a distinction between "good" and "poor" language students and found that "good" students showed to utilize more and variety of strategies than "poor" language students."

Many experts have defined "language learning strategies". According to O'Malley and Chamot (1993), "individuals who take a more strategic approach learn more knowledge rapidly and effectively than individuals who do not". Moreover, language learning strategies are defined by Oxford (1990) as specific behaviors or cognitive processes used by language students to facilitate their own language learning. According to Richards and Platt (1992), language learning strategies are purposeful behaviors and thoughts applied by students to comprehend, acquire, or maintain new information.

In conclusion, language learning strategies are actions or behaviors that help students learn the language and how to use it. They also assist the acquisition of language and utilize of information they received, retained, and retrieved

Characteristics of Language Learning Strategy

In learning a new language, communicative competence becomes the main goal and strategies involve in the way to accomplish it. Oxford (1990) defined some basic features of learning strategies emphasizing in strategies that are not only focused on the development of communication competence in foreign language learning that can be seen on bellow:

Table 1. Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies

No	Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies
1	Contribute the main goal, communicative competence.
2	Allow learners to become more self-directed.
3	Expand the role of teachers.
4	Are problem-oriented.
5	Are specific actions taken by the learner.
6	Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
7	Support learning both directly and indirectly.
8	Are not always observable.
9	Are often conscious.



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- 10 Can be taught.
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- 11 Are flexible.
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- 12 Are influenced by a variety of factors.
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Strategies influence students' habit in learning because it allows students to be independent students and learn responsibly. To make students learn independently and responsibly, teachers have the new roles to make it happens. Teacher is expected to be someone who can identify students' learning strategy and train them in learning strategies. In learning activities, many problems will occur where strategies, as a tool, contribute to solve them. Based on the problems that occur, students will also take specific actions or behavior in solving their problem to improve their learning. Language learning strategies are not only talking about cognitive aspect but also many aspects of learners, such as metacognitive, affective, and social. Those other aspects influence indirectly to students learning while a language itself affect directly and both have an equal position to support each other. Not all language learning strategies are visible. There are several strategies that cannot be seen even teachers observe them intensively, such as memorizing or some strategies are used outside the class.

When strategies are used, it is usually used consciously. To use appropriate strategies consciously, training of strategies are need to learn and apply the suitable strategies in any situation. Many strategies are used as much as situations happen. In applying strategies, there is no guaranteed to follow the steps for every situation. It depends on students' flexibility in the way their learning activities. In addition, language learning strategies are affected by many factors, inside and outside the learners like motivation.

The Function of Language Learning Strategy

As well as explained the classification, Oxford (1990) in her book also describe the function of each Language Learning Strategies. They are as follow:

1. Memory Strategy
Memory strategies involve creating mental links, applying imagery and sounds, reviewing material, and using actions. Techniques include grouping information, visualizing concepts, reviewing systematically, and using physical responses to remember language.
2. Cognitive Strategy
Cognitive strategies focus on practicing, processing, analyzing, and structuring the target language. Techniques include repetition, skimming text, applying language rules, and taking notes to understand and produce language effectively.
3. Compensation Strategy
Compensation strategies help communicate despite gaps in knowledge by guessing meanings and overcoming communication barriers. This includes



using gestures, asking for help, switching languages, and using synonyms or context clues.

4. Metacognitive Strategy

Metacognitive strategies involve coordinating learning processes through centering, planning, and evaluating. This includes linking new with known information, setting goals, planning tasks, and self-monitoring progress.

5. Affective Strategy

Affective strategies manage emotions and motivation. Techniques include relaxation methods to lower anxiety, motivational self-talk, rewarding oneself, and keeping track of emotional responses through diaries or discussions.

6. Social Strategy

Social strategies enhance learning through interaction. This involves asking questions for clarification, cooperative learning, and developing cultural understanding by empathizing with others' perspectives.

Psychological Factors in LLS

Understanding the psychological factors that influence language learning can greatly improve how languages are taught and learned. One notable researcher in this field, Zoltán Dörnyei (2015), provides extensive insights on various aspects that affect language acquisition. These insights highlight the complex nature of language learning and the need to consider multiple psychological factors.

1. Language Aptitude

Language aptitude is the natural ability to learn languages, influenced by age, intelligence, and working memory. Those with a strong working memory process and retain language better. Teaching effectiveness depends on matching methods to a learner's aptitude, like visual or auditory aids.

2. Motivation

Motivation varies, from cultural integration to job prospects. Dörnyei introduces the "Ideal Self" concept—visualizing oneself as a successful language user—to shift motivation from external to internal, enhancing sustained learning.

3. Language Learning Strategies and Self-Regulation

Language learning strategies range from basic (memorization) to advanced (summarizing). Self-regulation—setting goals, monitoring progress—is crucial for success. Training in these strategies should be integrated with regular teaching methods but is only moderately impactful.

4. Personality Trait

Personality traits such as anxiety, creativity, and self-esteem affect learning. Anxious students may struggle, while confident ones excel. Understanding these traits allows educators to create supportive environments that encourage all students.



METHOD

This study employed qualitative research with a case study method, which is appropriate for investigating gender roles in language learning strategies used by EFL students based on their experiences, and classifying their strategy preferences by gender. Qualitative research aims to provide a clear understanding of specific phenomena, beginning with assumptions, a worldview, the potential use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems to understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human issues (Creswell, 2013). The case study method, which generates in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of complex issues in real-life contexts (Crowe et al., 2011), allows the researcher to closely examine data within a specific context, facilitating a detailed and nuanced collection of data.

In relation to the research objective, this research would carry out the investigation which took place in Madrasah Aliyah Miftahul Jannah located in Jl. Pantai Cemara Labat, Pahandut Seberang, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan.

The participants of this research are XII grade students from MA Miftahul Jannah, selected through purposive sampling. This method involves the intentional selection of individuals who provide the most relevant information (Guarte & Barrios, 2007). The criteria for participants include: 1) students who use any strategy for learning English, 2) those who use language learning strategies in the classroom, 3) students actively participating in teaching and learning, especially in speaking activities, and 4) students who have shown improvement since applying these strategies.

The data collection used in this research are observation, questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire is structured in an open ended format, which means that the respondent must answer each statement by explaining or describing the answers. The observation and questionnaire are adapted from Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) while the interview used open-ended questions in an effort to dig information to be more detailed. According to Ary et al. (2010), interview is an instrument used to gather data from the participants about their opinions, beliefs, and feelings about situations in their own words. Thus, this instrument had given a chance for the researcher to ask the participant about the detailed experiences that related to the topic of the research.

In this research, analysis and preparation happen in parallel and include the following steps according to Miles and Huberman (1994). They define analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activities: Data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).



The researcher first reduced the collected data from questionnaire. In order to find out about the gender role in language learning strategy used by the EFL students, the researcher would have analysed the data while interview the participants. After getting the selected findings for the first research question in this study, the research reduced the collected data from interview in order to specify the findings of the first research question. The researcher also reduced the collected data from questionnaire and interview for the second research question in this study about the language learning strategy used by the students based on their gender preferences.

2. Data Display

The stage of the analysis is data display. Generically, a display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Looking at display helps the researcher to understand what is happening and to do something either analyze further or the action based on that understanding. In this study, the researcher displays the reduced data from the interview. The researcher displays it in the form of narrative text in order to make an easier analysis for the researcher in analyzing data that have been collected and reduced.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the last step in analysis of qualitative data is withdrawing conclusion and verification. Conclusion is only half of a Gemini configuration. Conclusion are also verified as the analyst proceed. After the process of the data display, the researcher drew conclusion for each finding from the collected data of interview. Finally, the result of data reduction, data display and the conclusion process were elaborated in the form of words, phrases, and sentences through a descriptive qualitative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this section, the researcher would present the data result about language learning strategy used by EFL students based on gender roles through the interview, classroom observation, and questionnaire. The results that are displayed based on the two research problem.

Gender Role in Language Learning Strategy

The result of the first research problem are displayed in relation to psychological factors that influence language learning on students (Zoltán Dörnyei, 2015). Gender is another important factor that affects strategy choice and its role have a big impact in language learning strategy. Based on the interview, most of the students said they felt anxious and afraid of what to say during learning English. The feeling of anxiety experienced by students is one of the factors that affect their effectiveness in learning. This was answered by the students with answers that were almost the same to each other. The students felt nervous if they were afraid of learning English

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because some students were anxious for fear of making mistakes when speaking English in front of their friends and this makes them depressed during the teaching-learning process.

A lack of confidence are also one of the inhabiting factors for students in learning English. From the result of interviews that have been carried out, students admit that the aspect that makes them less confident when learning English is they feel they cannot speak English properly so they feel less confident and are not accustomed to using English, it is recognized by students because they are used to it. Use the local language in their daily life and feel insecure in using English which they consider a foreign language. This lack of confidence can affect students' ability to communicate in English because they are accustomed to speaking in regional languages because English is a foreign language to them. In this case, the researcher found that students who had low achievement in speaking English, especially in speaking skills, felt that this made them lazy to learn to speak more. Students who lacked confidence and doubted their abilities felt that they could not compare to their classmates. Students are not confident in this ability, which makes them not confident in trying to speak English.

Nevertheless, students also stated that the cause of the lack of motivation in learning English is caused by the way the teacher teaches, and they feel bored because they do not understand the material taught in class. In addition, the lack of student motivation is also caused by a lack of support. In the school environment, there are no facilities or extracurricular in the field of English. From the results of interviews conducted, most of the students studied responded and acknowledged the same thing, namely they were not motivated because they felt unfocused and had difficulty understanding what the teacher was teaching and some other students did not like learning English, especially when asked to speak English, the students felt learning English is complicated easy to understand and find it difficult to use. According to the researcher, this is because English is a foreign language for students and is a new thing to learn in their daily life.

These responses then lead to interview question about specific strategies they used in language learning in order to overcome those obstacles. The researcher found out that the female and male students are difference in solving the issue. Both male and female students had a cognitive strategy that was cooperation strategies in speaking skill. They preferred to practice their speaking with their friends because they could share each other and also could measure their ability in speaking. But there was a difference in the activity, that male learner made discussion groups to share the idea, while one of the female students that used this strategy preferred to join debate community, because she thought that in debating she also could practice her critical thinking. The difference between male and female strategies in speaking skill was that one of the male learners has a social strategy that was self-talk, while one of the women has a cognitive strategy that was repetition. To practice his speaking, one of those male students usually talked to him because it could make him feel more confident if he practiced it before speaking



to other people. Meanwhile, female student imitated native speakers' utterances when she was listening something. She believed that this way helps her in improving her verbal skill.

Students' Preferences in the Use of Language Learning Strategy

This section displayed the result about second research problem through collecting the data by using classroom observation and questionnaire. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that students used variety of language learning strategy during the teaching-learning process. In this part, the researcher used Oxford classification as the main theory to classify the language learning strategy used by EFL students based on gender roles.

The classroom observation data result would be displayed in narrative form based on male and female students. Based on the classroom observation list, the female students showed more actively engaged in various language learning strategy than the male students. Out of 30 activities originate from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford, the females engaged 18 activities of language learning strategy. In the other hand, the males only engaged in 14 activities.

The females showed many gestures that represent the cognitive strategy more than other strategies. They would diligently skim an English passage then go back and read carefully or they would start the conversation in English where the males did not show an ounce of that activity. Contrary to that, the male students tend to engage more in compensation and social strategy. The males would try to guess what the other person will say next in English where the females tend to engage in affectionate strategy. The females would not bother to talk to others about how they feel when learning English. Prior to that, the male students attended the teaching-learning process applying the social strategy more actively. They vigorously asking help to the English teacher ask the teacher to correct them when they talk. Comparing to that, the females quietly agreed and followed what the male students suggested during the learning.

After conducting the classroom observation, the researcher spread out the questionnaire in order to dig more detailed information about the students' preferences in the use of language learning strategy. The questionnaire was adapted from SILL by having the form of question-type that needed long answer text. The results then materialized in the narrative descriptive after classifying the answers into male and female students.

Based on the responses in questionnaire, the researcher found several strategies in terms of speaking between males and females. Females preferred speaking strategies than males. The most frequently used strategy by female students was the affectionate strategy which they said "I encourage myself to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake". Females were more self-confident than males when speaking. Females preferred to choose speaking as the way to express their opinion in English to show mimic, intonation, and gesture through



speaking. Conversely, male students were not confident and afraid to make mistake with their English speaking skill. This could be due to their lack of vocabulary. Therefore, they were nervous and ashamed of practicing pronunciation and speak in new English words.

In terms of overall strategy, there are differences between male and female students. The highest mean reported by male students was in metacognitive strategy. While the highest mean reported by female students was in cognitive strategy. Most male students use metacognitive techniques that require them to pay close attention to someone speaking English, whereas the majority of female students use the cognitive strategies that require them to focus their emphasis on the sounds of English. Both male and female students enjoy watching television shows that are presented in English, but neither prefers to keep a diary. The reason why male and female students heavily into English language TV show as their language learning strategy is because the interesting presentation as well as how easy it is to get entertained by the shows.

To improve their vocabulary, both male and female learners had two cognitive strategies; those were keyword method and resourcing. Both of them memorized new vocabularies that they got, and also remembered its meaning. This way helped them in improving their vocabulary. They also had resourcing strategy where they read English textbook to enhance their vocabulary because they would find new vocabularies while reading. The more they read, the more vocabularies that they get. The difference between male and female learners in improving their vocabulary was that male had two cognitive strategies those were cooperation and translation, while female students had two cognitive strategies, those were imagery and note-taking, and one social strategy that was questioning for clarification. One of the males preferred to get involved in an English speaking community to improve his vocabulary because in the community he could share the idea and get many vocabularies, and another one of male learners preferred to translate new vocabularies that he got into Bahasa Indonesia to understand the vocabularies. In the other hand, one of the female preferred to play games to improve her vocabulary, because when she was playing games, she could get many new vocabularies. Another woman preferred to take a note when she got new vocabulary; by taking note, she thought that it would be easier for her to improve her vocabulary. The other one of female learners took the easiest way when she found new vocabularies; she asked her friend to understand the words.

DISCUSSION

This part presents the discussion of the research findings. After the data are processed in the form of description, the researcher explain the result with theories collected in chapter two about language learning strategy used by EFL students based on gender roles. The results of this research found the different strategies used by the male and the female students in their preferences of learning strategies. Male students used more metacognitive whereas female students used more

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cognitive strategies. The first strategy included monitoring and planning, and assessing their language learning experience while the second strategy covered practicing, reasoning and analyzing creating input and output structures such as note-taking.

Findings from this study shows that male and female students applied different learning strategies. A study by Jamiah et al (2015) had also found that male and female students chose different strategies of learning. The strategies selected by males were mostly compensation strategy while females preferred social strategy. Females students like discussing when learning English and they performed well in social thinking and interaction, which can be categorized as social strategy. Male students, on the other hand, were active in expressing their idea, logical and better in coordination, which is characterized as compensation strategy.

The findings revealed that metacognitive strategies were utilized predominantly by male students to develop learning strategies. They preferred metacognitive strategies to solve the problem by preparing the learning activity and monitoring their errors. The idea was confirmed by Arif (2022), male students use metacognitive strategies more than female students. The result of study conducted by Anum and Apriyanto (2019) also found that male students utilized often metacognitive strategies than female students in language learning. Another current research conducted by Budiarti (2022) found that male students used more frequently language learning strategies than female students especially in terms of metacognitive strategies. According to Oxford (1990) stated that metacognitive strategies are behaviors that help language students organize and plan their language study in an effective and efficient way.

The result of the interview revealed the main characteristics of male and female students in their learning strategies and the reasons for the differences. Some of the reasons were due to male and female characteristics in communication. The reasons for choosing the strategy to learn such as ways of expressing opinion, being active or not, and the management of reluctance to speak could be influenced by gender differences.

The result also showed that the most often used strategy by female students was cognitive strategies. Female students preferred to watch English programs such as YouTube, Podcasts, Music, etc. They can learn how to pronounce English words, increase new vocabulary and assist them to understand what the speaker said. According to Syehrudin (2017), cognitive strategies are direct strategies that allow students to comprehend and produce a new language. With these strategies, students were able to directly manipulate language materials. It was supported by the fact that Oxford (1990) stated that these strategies enable language students to utilize the language despite a lack of grammar and vocabulary. The strategy includes training, obtaining and taking notes, and summarizing. Then, these strategies enable users to utilize all their resources to overcome limitations and convey their intended message to listeners.



In conclusion, findings from this study emphasized that in a particular context of situation, male and female students might have different learning strategies. Based on the interview, gender differences can be an influencing factor, however, other factors such as familiarity and age differences may also influence. As revealed in this study, the learning strategies chosen by male and female students could be caused by their differences due to male and female characteristics. However, other factors may be influencing too. This is because these differences may be relative and influenced by other aspects. Therefore, teachers and students need to consider those differences and need to choose appropriate learning strategies. The strategies used by the participants were not too different between male and female learners, but even though they have the same strategies, some of the activities that they choose were different. In this study also found that male students used more metacognitive and social strategies than female learners, but female learners used more cognitive strategies than male learners.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to explore the gender role in language learning strategies and the differences in strategy preferences between male and female students. The findings highlight that gender differences significantly impact English language teaching, as students come from diverse backgrounds and exhibit varying characteristics, which influence their performance in learning English. These differences also suggest that male and female students may prefer different learning strategies. The study concluded that male and female students indeed have different strategy preferences, with both groups using metacognitive and cognitive strategies the most and memory strategies the least. However, male students favored metacognitive strategies, while female students more frequently used cognitive strategies. Additionally, it was found that female students generally applied strategies more frequently than their male counterparts.

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