

## GRAMMAR LEARNING STRATEGIES APPLIED AT THE CHINESE DEPARTMENT OF BINA NUSANTARA UNIVERSITY

Yetty Go<sup>1</sup>; Sofi Zhang<sup>2</sup>; Titi Rahardjanti<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Chinese Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University  
Jl. Kemanggisan Illir III No. 45, Palmerah, Jakarta 11480, Indonesia  
<sup>1</sup>sheth\_wrf521@yahoo.com; <sup>2</sup>sofi\_tandyjs@yahoo.com; <sup>3</sup>titi.leimeihui@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

*The aims of this research were to investigate the Chinese language learning strategy used among students of Chinese Department class of 2021 Binus University, the relationship between gender and language learning strategy use, the relationship between language learning strategy and learning achievement, and also the language learning strategy used by students with high learning achievement in the subject of Grammar. This research used Oxford's language learning strategy questionnaire that was "Strategy for Language Learning (SILL)" to investigate the students' language learning strategy. This research finds out that the language learning strategy employed by the most students are metacognitive strategy and strategy to be used by high learning achievement students in grammar subject are also metacognitive strategy. It also finds out that female students use more language learning strategies compared to male students, although the difference is not too significant. Results of Pearson Correlation's test indicate no significant relationship between the students' language learning strategy and learning achievement. This research shows that there is no dominant language learning strategy used by Chinese Literature students.*

**Keywords:** language learning strategy, Mandarin language, learning achievement

### INTRODUCTION

At present, the age of international politics and the economy become one. Furthermore, the international communication is increasing day by day that has become a common demand and expectation for people to master and be experts in using at least one kind of foreign languages (Jiang, 2014). China is a country with the fastest growing economy in the world and Mandarin, the mother tongue of China and Taiwan has become one of the official languages in the United Nations (UN). Nowadays, there are many Chinese and Taiwanese companies or branch offices are opened in Indonesia. So, mastering and having a good Mandarin skill is important in which it can help to achieve success and able to compete with the others. Since 2000, Indonesian people have been able to learn Mandarin freely. At present, Mandarin becomes a popular language besides English. Many schools have already included Mandarin subject in school curriculum. Language courses provide not only English but also Mandarin lessons, and not a few of universities already have Chinese Department, including Binus University. Binus University Chinese Department had been established since 2006. The students do not only study Mandarin, but also study Chinese history, geography, and culture.

The basic of Chinese language includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To master these four basic abilities well, the students are expected to have a good grammar knowledge. Students who master rich grammar knowledge will be able to express their opinions in more complex sentences; therefore it is very important to master Chinese grammar (Wang, 2013). A lack of grammar knowledge can hamper the students' ability to express their proper and correct opinions in both writing and speaking. Grammar is an important component of a language because besides phonology and vocabulary, it is a rule in the use of language. If the students do not learn grammar properly, it will be difficult for others to understand, because the words that they say are not systematic (Heriyawati & Rusdiyanti, 2011).

In the process of learning the language, each student shows differences in learning achievement. This is due to students use their own method to overcome their learning difficulties. In language learning, there are not only individual differences among students, like ethnicity, culture, mother tongue, and gender, but also ability, motivation, interest, and attitude in learning the language. These differences lead to different learning speed and learning style of the student while mastering the field. These individual differences

have an important influence on the development of the students' ability from the teachers' teaching. Therefore, it is hoped that the teacher acts not only as a guide, but also pays close attention to the individual differences between students while teaching (Zhou, 2006). There is no good and bad learning strategy; the most important thing is that the teachers can teach according to the class conditions and characteristics of the students (Nurhayati, 2008).

Recently there are many pieces of research published about the individual differences in learning among students. Some investigate more towards the students' learning motivation, learning strategies, learning styles, and other factors related to the students' learning achievement. The results of these researches prove that all the elements stated have a direct and indirect influence on students' learning achievement in learning the language. According to Oxford (2003), language learning style and strategy can help the student determine how and how well they can learn a second or foreign language. Rubin (1975) has investigated the learning strategies of successful students and has found that language learning strategies can help unsuccessful students to improve. Moreover, according to him, the good language learners have this seven characteristics, there are; (1) they are accurate guesser. (2) they have a strong drive to communicate, or willingness to learn from a communication. (3) they are often not inhibited. (4) they are prepared to attend to form. (5) they are willing to practice. (6) they are can monitor their own and the speech of the others, and (7) they are prepared to attend to meaning.

In language learning strategy, most of the research is fixated on learning strategies that are focusing on listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary learning strategies. There is very little research on grammar learning strategies (Vicenta, 2002).

The participants of this research are 63 students of Chinese Department class of 2021 Binus University. They have already studied Mandarin for two semesters. This research aims to determine the learning strategies used by students and the learning strategies used by the student with high learning achievement in grammar subject, and also to ascertain the relationship between gender and learning strategy and also the relationship between learning strategy and students' learning achievement. This research uses Oxford (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire 7.0 version as an instrument to determine the students' learning strategy. The original questionnaire is in English, and for research purpose already translated in Bahasa Indonesia also has been tested, that has a good reliability. Through the results of this research, it is hoped that teachers can understand the individual differences between students and they can teach accordingly, enhancing the effectiveness of their teaching, and ultimately not only improving the students' learning achievement but also help them to find the best way in using language learning strategies.

Brown (2007) has defined strategies as the specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, and planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. Oxford (2003) has defined strategies as specific behaviors or thoughts that learners use to enhance their language learning. Chamot (2004) has defined learning strategies as the thoughts and actions that learners use to accomplish a learning goal. According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992) in Oxford (2003), learning strategies are defined as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques used by students to

enhance their own learning.

For research purposes, many earlier researchers make a classification of language learning strategies based on their own observation. O'Malley dan Chamot (1990) have divided learning strategies into three major categories, they are; metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, and socio-affective strategy. Rubin (1987) in Zare (2012) has also divided the learning strategies used by learners into three categories such as learning strategy, communication strategy, and social strategy. This research uses Oxford (1990) learning strategies classification that has divided language learning strategies into two main categories: direct strategies (strategies that involve the new language directly) and indirect strategies (indirect support for language learning by employing different strategies).

These are also subdivided into six classes, there are memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and social strategy. Memory strategies include creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action. Cognitive strategies include practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating a structure for input and output. Compensation strategies include guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. Metacognitive strategies include organizing, setting goals and objectives, planning for the task, looking for practice opportunities, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating. Affective strategies include lowering anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking an emotional temperature. While, social strategies include asking questions, cooperating, and empathizing with others.

It is important for teachers to know how the students learn. The research of Wikarti (2015) has stated that teachers are expected to consider the students' background and ability when searching and implementing an appropriate and effective learning pattern. Furthermore, teachers are suggested to help students understand the importance of language strategies or provide exercises that can help them apply it in learning activities (Ayuningtyas, 2013).

## METHODS

The participants for this research are 63 students of Chinese Department class of 2021 Binus University, with 18 male students and 45 female students. Students are divided into three groups based on the average grades of their grammar subject mid-term and final-term test in the second semester. This research uses the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990) Version 7.0 as the instrument to determine the Chinese Department students' language learning strategies. Almost 30 years ago, Oxford (1990) published SILL questionnaire, but this questionnaire remains a useful learning evaluation instrument, and until now it is the most popular instrument in language learning research (Amerstorfer, 2018). This SILL questionnaire is a 50-item Likert-type questionnaire with five-scale responses; point 1 means "never true of me"; point 2 means "rarely true of me"; point 3 means "sometimes true of me"; point 4 means "usually true of me"; point 5 means "always true of me". SILL questionnaire is divided learning strategies into 6 assessment sub-sections that can be seen in Table 1.

SILL questionnaires are distributed to the subjects in regular class time. Before filling the questionnaire, the researchers give some guidance to all the participants on

how to complete the SILL. Students are given 30-45 minutes to complete it. The questionnaire is 100% collected back. This research uses the SILL questionnaire not just because it is a popular language learning strategy instrument, but also because it has high reliability and validity. According to the results from previous research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the SILL questionnaire is between 0,67 and 0,96 that shows good internal consistency (Hair et al., 1998; Landau & Everitt, 2004). The SILL questionnaire has a high level of reliability and validity (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

Shuang (2008) has proved that the total value of the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire is greater than 0,93 and the reliability coefficient for sub-items of different test groups are above 0,6. This shows that the SILL questionnaire has stable and high reliability. This research has also tested the SILL questionnaire reliability test after being translated into Indonesian and got the alpha coefficient from this questionnaire is Cronbach's  $\alpha$ .892, which means the SILL questionnaire in Indonesian has good reliability.

Table 1 Distribution of Learning Strategy Items According to the Six Strategy Category

Strategy Types	Items	Number
Memory Strategy	9 items	1-9
Cognitive Strategy	14 items	10-23
Compensation Strategy	6 items	24-29
Metacognitive Strategy	9 items	30-38
Affective Strategy	6 items	39-44
Social Strategy	6 items	45-50
Total	50 items	

Student's learning achievement is based on the second semester average score of mid-term test and final-term test of the Grammar Subject. The groups are the high score group with a score around 85-100, the medium score group with a score around 70-84, and the low score group with a score around 0-69.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are 63 students who participate in this research, they are 18 male and 45 female students. Students are divided into three groups based on the average grades of their grammar subject mid-term and final-term test in the second semester. The groups are the high score group with a score around 85-100, the medium score group with a score around 70-84, and the low score group with a score around 0-69. The score grouping is based on Binus University's grading system. Table 2 shows the students grouping based on their score and gender. Table 2 shows that from 63 students, there are 27 students in the high score group, 15 students in the medium score group, and 21 students in the low score group.

Through the average calculation results (Mean) in Table 3, it shows that Chinese Department Students' Chinese language learning strategy that most commonly used by students are metacognitive strategies ( $m = 3,92$ ), followed by social strategies ( $m = 3,66$ ), cognitive strategies

( $m = 3,39$ ), strategies compensation ( $m = 3,32$ ), affective strategy ( $m = 3,17$ ), and the least is memory strategy ( $m = 3,14$ ).

From this result, it can be known that Chinese Department students used learning strategies with medium frequency. The results of these findings are in similar to Min's (2012) findings on high school students in China where students used language learning strategies at a medium frequency level. In SILL's research in Asia on students studying English, it is known that the frequency of using the six learning strategies is at the medium or low level (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

Table 2 The Participants Data

Group	Score	Man	Women	Total
High	85-100 (A+, A)	6	21	27
Medium	70-84 (B+, B, B-)	7	8	15
Low	0-69 (C, D, E)	5	16	21
Total		18	45	63

Table 3 Chinese Department Students' Chinese Language Learning Strategy

Learning Strategy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory Strategy	63	3,1481	0,69159
Cognitive Strategy	63	3,3968	0,55990
Compensation Strategy	63	3,3201	0,67488
Metacognitive Strategy	63	3,9224	0,55971
Affective Strategy	63	3,1746	0,63530
Social Strategy	63	3,6640	0,58925

For gender and language learning strategy use, through the results of the independent samples t-tests as shown in Table 4, it is revealed that male students use more memory strategy than female students. It is also revealed that other than the memory strategy, female students use the other five strategies more than male students. However, it must be noted that the difference in overall strategy use between male and female students is not statistically significant. The results of this research are similar with the results of Alhaysony's (2017) research, where the female students use more learning strategies when compared to male students, although the difference is not too significant. Other research also shows that from all the category of Oxford learning strategies, female students use more learning strategies than male students (Min, 2012; Ma & Zhang, 2011).

For the relationship between language learning strategy and learning achievement, based on the results of the Pearson correlation test in Table 5, the correlation between language learning strategy and grammar score are memory strategy 0,103; cognitive strategy 0,230; compensation strategy 0,175; metacognitive strategies 0,193; affective strategy 0,043, and social strategy 0,071. The number of correlations between score and the six learning strategies is below 0,5. This means that the strength of the correlation between variables is less strong; none of the six learning strategies has a significant correlation with the score.

This shows that Chinese Department students do not

use one of the learning strategies dominantly in learning Mandarin. The results of this research are similar to the research result of Simatupang (2008) that shows that none of the strategies are significantly related to student's learning achievement. This reveals that none of the strategies are more prominently used by students in learning the language. It can be said that good or bad learning achievement has no relationship with the learning strategies used by the students. Vann and Abraham (1990) have revealed that learners who are successful and who are unsuccessful use the same language learning strategies.

As shown in Table 6 and Table 7, it can be known that the language learning strategy used by the 27 students of Chinese Department with a high score in grammar courses is metacognitive strategy and the language learning strategy used by the 21 students with a low score in grammar courses is also metacognitive strategy. It shows that the language learning strategy used by students with a high score and low score in grammar courses is the same.

Although the high score students and low score students use the same language learning strategies, according to Setiyadi (1999) from the results of his research has stated

Table 4 Gender and Language Learning Strategy Use

Learning Strategy	Gender	Student Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	t
Memory Strategy	Male	18	3,2037	0,67559	-0,172
	Female	45	3,1259	0,70416	
Cognitive Strategy	Male	18	3,3333	0,46614	-0,620
	Female	45	3,4222	0,59622	
Compensation Strategy	Male	18	3,3148	0,51095	-1,404
	Female	45	3,3222	0,73547	
Metacognitive Strategy	Male	18	3,8457	0,44954	-1,029
	Female	45	3,9531	0,59999	
Affective Strategy	Male	18	3,0278	0,56375	0,456
	Female	45	3,2333	0,65847	
Social Strategy	Male	18	3,6111	0,69074	0,367
	Female	45	3,6852	0,55074	

Table 5 Relationship between Language Learning Strategy and Learning Achievement

		Score
Memory Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0,103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,421
	N	63
Cognitive Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0,230
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,070
	N	63
Compensation Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0,175
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,171
	N	63
Metacognitive Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0,193
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,129
	N	63
Affective Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0,043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,741
	N	63
Social Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0,071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,579
	N	63

Table 6 Grammar Course High Score Students' Language Learning Strategy

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev
Memory Strategy	27	86,11	3,1893	0,76721
Cognitive Strategy	27	94,07	3,4841	0,57905
Compensation Strategy	27	89,50	3,3148	0,78356
Metacognitive Strategy	27	107,33	3,9753	0,63256
Affective Strategy	27	85,50	3,1667	0,66827
Social Strategy	27	96,67	3,5802	0,68620

Table 7 Grammar Course Low Score Students' Language Learning Strategy

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev
Memory Strategy	21	63,33	3,0159	0,58929
Cognitive Strategy	21	68,29	3,2517	0,52954
Compensation Strategy	21	66,50	3,1667	0,58214
Metacognitive Strategy	21	80,22	3,8201	0,48620
Affective Strategy	21	65,50	3,1190	0,58723
Social Strategy	21	75,00	3,5714	0,41356

that metacognitive strategies are the learning strategies that are most often used by successful learners. It can be said that the students with good learning achievement really think through their progress in learning the language and always try to find the best way to improve their language skills. As for unsuccessful learners, maybe they still not find the best way of learning language yet. According to Oxford dan Ehrman (1995), it might be a good idea to train students in the effective use of metacognitive strategies such as planning, organizing, and evaluating their language learning, so they can improve their skills in learning and become successful learners.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research show that language learning strategy that is most often used by the students' of Chinese Department class of 2021 Binus University is metacognitive strategy and the finding of the language learning strategy used by 27 students of Chinese Department with a high score in grammar courses is the metacognitive strategy as well.

The results of the Pearson correlation test shows that there is no correlation between the language learning strategy and grammar score. From this finding, it can be known that students do not use any of the learning strategies dominantly in learning Mandarin and reveals that the success of learning the Chinese language is not dependant on the students' language learning strategy. This result is similar to previous pieces of research by Simatupang (2008) and Vann and Abraham (1990). This research also finds that high score students and low score students use the same language learning strategies. So teachers have to equip themselves with proper instrument of language learning, so they are able to determine their students' language learning strategy. Moreover, they have to make sure that students are

able to use their strategies to mastering any new learning situation (Chuin & Kaur, 2015).

Student's language learning strategies are not factors that can determine their language learning achievement neither good or not. There are other factors that can affect it, such as learning motivation, age, study time, mother tongue, background, and maybe because of the students still do not find the best ways to use their language learning strategies properly. These factors can be further investigated to determine which factors are more correlated with students' learning achievement. Teachers are expected to be able to understand and help based on the individual differences between students to find their own language learning strategies, in order to help students develop and improve their individual learning achievements and become a successful learner.

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