

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) at undergraduate level raises significant challenges related to grammar mastery. The ability to understand and apply English language structures is the main foundation. Language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing (Muthoharoh, 2017). In this context, attention to the grammar learning strategies used by EFL students is important. The most common and least frequently applied strategies by students, with a focus on four main categories, namely cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

According to Gagne, as explained in Salim (2017), cognitive strategies can be defined as organized internal abilities that help students in various aspects of the learning process, thinking, solving problems and making decisions. This cognitive strategy is the highest ability in the cognitive domain, which is in accordance with Gagne's taxonomy or Bloom's taxonomy which includes analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

On other hand, when learning grammar, cognitive techniques aid pupils in comprehending and internalizing a language's rules and patterns. According to this approach, students who actively interact with the language and make connections between new and old material are better at learning a language. According to Carlo (2017), cognitive grammar learning methodologies facilitate significant language

engagement and lay a solid foundation for future language growth. In order to determine the best methods for enhancing grammatical proficiency.

Metacognition is awareness of thinking about what is and what is known and unknown. In the learning context, students know how to learn, know their learning modalities and know the best learning strategies for effective learning. Metacognition is very important because it involves students' self-understanding of their own learning process (Hayati, 2011). The students have a strong awareness of how they learn and how they can learn better, they can develop more effective strategies for overcoming learning challenges.

However, affective domain focuses on attitudes, feelings and emotions, which relate to the personality and behavior of the students. According to Yusuf et al. (2023), affective domain encourages students to be more engaged in their tasks that can lead to better performance. Therefore, affective learning strategies focus on the emotional and motivational aspects of language learning.

Social grammar learning strategies entail acquiring grammar skills within a social context, involving interaction with others and utilizing language in real-life situations. These strategies assist language learners in enhancing their communication abilities and cultivating a more profound comprehension of the grammar rules and structures inherent in the language (Zakaria, et al., 2019).

Moreover, the realm of grammar extends to the application of grammatical principles in the construction of sentences and paragraphs. A grasp of information organization and text structure is imperative for effective writing. The process involves planning, modifying, and editing the text to ensure clarity and coherence.

The component that involves comprehending and applying grammar rules in sentence and paragraph formation commonly referred to as the grammar component. This encompasses the adept use of suitable word choices, sentence structures, and punctuation, as highlighted by Graham (2019).

One of the issues that arises is the extent to which EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in Aceh use cognitive strategies to understand and internalize the rules and patterns of the English language. Although cognitive strategies considered the highest ability in the cognitive domain, it still needs to identify to what extent the use of these strategies influences the understanding and mastery of grammar by students in Aceh.

Additionally, other issues related to the affective domain are of concern. How attitudes, feelings, and emotions of students in Aceh relate to their personality and behavior in the context of learning English grammar. Whether affective learning strategies can encourage the involvement of students in Aceh in their tasks and how this can influence their performance in understanding and mastering grammar.

Furthermore, issues also arise in the social domain in Aceh. How students in Aceh can develop their grammar skills in social contexts, involving interactions with others and using language in real-life situations in Aceh. How social learning strategies can help students in Aceh improve their communication skills and understand more deeply the rules of grammar and structures inherent in the English language.

Numerous researchers have delved into the correlation between language proficiency levels and the utilization of grammar learning strategies. Findings from Haryani (2018) indicated that high-achieving language learners exhibited a preference for metacognitive strategies over other language learning approaches. Metacognitive strategies involve pre-study preparations, and adept language learners often engage in self-preparation and self-monitoring, fostering a propensity for utilizing metacognitive strategies in their language-learning endeavors.

Next, in a study conducted by Mohammad et al (2023) This research investigated the grammar learning strategies (GLS) used by Malaysian ESL undergraduate students. It also examined the mean differences in the GLS used based on students' proficiency levels. Quantitative research using a survey design was conducted to gather the data. A set of questionnaires was randomly distributed via Google Forms to Malaysian ESL undergraduate students enrolled in a grammar course. 80 students responded to the questionnaire, thus becoming the participants of the research.

Both descriptive and inferential analyses were used to interpret the data. The findings indicated that taking notes while listening to their teacher's explanations, finding out the reasons for their mistakes, encouraging themselves to practice grammar, and asking friends for help were the most common strategies used in cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies respectively. Social strategies were found to be the most common strategies used by the students. Finally, the research also revealed that high proficient students used all strategies more than low proficient students.

The findings of the research can be useful for teachers as they can vary their teaching approaches to match the students' grammar learning strategies. In addition, less proficient students can also learn the strategies used by the more proficient students so they can also benefit from using the strategies in learning grammar.

Haryani (2018) and Mohammad et al. (2023) delve into the correlation between language proficiency levels and the utilization of grammar learning strategies. Haryani's study highlights the prevalence of metacognitive strategies among high-achieving language learners, emphasizing their preference for self-preparation and self-monitoring in language learning endeavors. In contrast, Mohammad et al. (2023) investigates a broader spectrum of grammar learning strategies employed by Malaysian ESL undergraduate students, examining cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Despite their differing focuses, both studies employ quantitative research methods, utilizing surveys/questionnaires to gather data, and employ descriptive and inferential analyses to interpret findings.

The results from both studies indicate that proficient language learners tend to utilize grammar learning strategies more effectively than their less proficient counterparts. Furthermore, the implications of these findings suggest potential adjustments in teaching approaches for language instructors to align with students' grammar learning strategies, facilitating more effective language learning experiences.

In this context, the research title "Grammar Learning Strategies Used By Efl Students In Aceh" chosen for strong reasons. This title not only reflects previous

findings, which show the importance of metacognitive strategies in language learning, but also wants to know three other strategies, namely cognitive, affective and social, especially for students in Aceh. Thus, this title is not only relevant to previous literature but also provides a clear focus on the context of this research in Aceh.

1.2 Research Problem

What are the most common and the least common sub-grammar learning strategies used by Acehnese EFL undergraduate students under cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies?

1.3 Objective of the Research

Identify the most common and least common sub-grammar learning strategies within cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social categories among Acehnese EFL undergraduate students.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This study focuses on EFL undergraduate students in Aceh, examining cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social grammar learning strategies. It assesses language proficiency levels and explores variations in strategy usage among students. The investigation identifies common and less common sub-strategies within each category, emphasizing real-life application of social strategies. The findings aim to inform language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in Aceh about effective approaches to enhance grammar instruction and language learning strategies in EFL undergraduate programs. The

study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between language proficiency levels and the adoption of specific grammar learning strategies.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research holds significance in several aspects. Firstly, it offers valuable insights into effective grammar learning strategies for EFL undergraduate students in Aceh, informing educators and improving English language education programs. Additionally, the study addresses a specific research gap by focusing on Acehness students, contributing to the limited literature on grammar learning strategies in this regional context. The findings can guide tailored teaching approaches, allowing educators to adapt methods to students' preferences. Policymakers can utilize the research to make informed decisions about language education policies, potentially leading to improvements in curriculum design. Moreover, the study explores the correlation between language proficiency levels and the adoption of specific strategies, providing depth to the research. Ultimately, the outcomes aim to enhance global competence by refining language learning strategies, particularly relevant in the context of English as a global language and fostering improved communication skills