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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE GRAMMAR LEARNING STRATEGIES OF HIGH RANKING AND LOW RANKING STUDENTS OF JIREN SECONDARY SCHOOL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this comparative study was to assess the English grammar learning strategies of high ranking and low ranking students. To achieve this objective, the three modes of learning namely implicit learning, explicit-inductive learning and explicit-deductive learning were studied in relation to the stated basic questions. For the study descriptive survey method was used. The extreme or deviant case sampling technique was employed to select the subjects for the study. Questionnaire and focus group discussions were used as data collection instruments. The data obtained through questionnaire were then analyzed by using SPSS version 16 in terms of mean score, standard deviation and t-test. For the focus group discussion open-ended questions were used and the data were analyzed by using content analysis technique. In general the findings of the study reveal that there were significant differences on the three modes of learning, particularly in memory and compensation strategies related to implicit learning, cognitive strategies related to explicit-inductive learning and also to explicit-deductive learning. As the overall mean values indicate the high ranking students used English grammar learning strategies at a higher level than the low ranking students in all classifications except social strategies related to implicit and explicit deductive modes.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Research on language learning and language teaching has a long history. In the beginning researchers aimed at finding the best way of teaching language and they discovered various methods and approaches such as the Direct method, the Audio-lingual method, the Total physical response, the Lexical approach, the whole language and different versions of communicative language teaching. Nevertheless, none of the methods and approaches could yield the intended result. This is partly because they were based on different theories of language and theories of learning and partly because the needs or reasons people learn languages changed from time to time. Likewise, Scott Thornbury (1999:14) puts, "The history of language teaching is essentially the history of the claims and counterclaims for and against the teaching of grammar.

Differences in attitude to the role of grammar underpin differences between methods, between teachers, and between learners". Unfortunately, researchers totally ignored to take into account any points about the language learners. Michael Grenfell and Ernesto Macaro (2007) note that in 1970s there was a shift of focus and language teachers and researchers started to have interest in knowing about what makes learners different. They aimed at identifying characteristics of good language learners: the techniques, approaches and tricks they employ, the degree of their motivation, etc. In other words, they tried to investigate the study skills of good language learners. The most famous researches of the time were "The good language learner" by Joan Rubin in 1975 and by Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco in 1978. Gradually, researchers tried to see whether the strategies used by good language learners could be transferred to poor language learners or not. Grenfell and Macaro also note researchers geared to studying the psychological character of the learners, they tried to discover the language processing nature of learners. They attempted to study the cognitive character of learners using think aloud protocol and interview. Language learning strategies were also studied in relation to such variables as

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motivation, proficiency level and affective condition of learners. During those years researchers were not based on theoretical frameworks derived from cognitive psychology. The absence of metalanguage, which is aspect of the framework, resulted in failure to use terms unanimously. Until now there is no consensus on the definition of the terms. Michael Grenfell and Ernesto Macaro (2007:20) summarize the shortcomings of language learning strategies as “the lack of consensus as to the nature of a strategy, its size and location, whether external learner behavior could correctly predict cognitive operations, how they could be described and classified.” Likewise, Brown (2007) demands researchers to confirm or disconfirm the adequacy of categorizing strategies into cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective; the physiological assumptions underlying the postulation of strategic options; the relationship of strategy research to current language teaching paradigms; Interrelations among, and relationships between, the many strategies that have been identified; and the adequacy of various measures of strategy use and awareness. So researches have continued attempting to solve the above problems and find out new discoveries or contents. Grenfell and Macaro summarize the claims which have been made by language learning strategy researchers concerning researches on learning strategies:

- Strategies could continue to be identified under broader categories, despite the difficulties this entailed;
- Strategy research offered a radical new conceptualization of the language learning process, shifting the emphasis onto the individual learners;
- The learning context, nevertheless, was a major influence on the way that individuals and groups used strategies;
- Strategies were value-neutral, not in themselves good or bad, but were used either effectively or ineffectively by individuals and by groups;
- Strategy research continued to offer insights into the complex operations that constituted the process of language learning; and
- Strategy use and achievement were inextricably linked (2007, P.24).

Statement of the Problem

Language learning strategy researches have been conducted since 1970 but equal attentions haven't been given to all language skills and aspects of language. One of the aspects of language, grammar, is ignored by strategy researchers. But experts observe that grammar is being emphasized. Madsen (1983: 34), for example, writes “Much ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching has been based on grammar”. To mention another example, in grades 10 and 11 textbooks of English New Ethiopia, different study skills are discussed (Bailey, 2011; Webb, 2011) and textbook writer of grade 10 Donna Bailey (2011:42) remarks and advises, “Children's books are great for looking at how basic grammar is used. Investing in a good quality English dictionary is a good way to improve your knowledge, and your understanding, of English grammar”. The other textbook writer Barbara Web (2011:291-2) provides some strategies for improving students grammar and asks learners which ones they use, which ones they think are useful and which other strategies they use.

Another evidence is that although grammar is part of the lesson in English for Ethiopia textbooks (including Grade 8 and below), the teacher training manuals for Grades 1-8 (three booklets) present strategy based instructions for listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary development. But they do not have grammar strategy instruction. This may imply lack of studies in grammar learning strategies. And still evidence is the researches' observation and discussion with English teachers of tutorial classes.

In Jimma, as in many other towns, business tutorial classes are common for students of second cycle elementary schools and high schools. English is one of the subjects taught. And in English classes what is mostly taught is grammar. This may imply students' high value for grammar and of course their dissatisfaction with the regular lessons. Regarding to the tasks of strategy researchers and teachers Skehan (1989:73) writes, “We are concerned, that is, with the choices that the learner makes, and with the possibility that the efficiency with which the learner's capacities are used can be changed”. From the above statement we see that there are two key points. The first one is identifying the learner's strategy preference and the second one refers to the teachability of strategies. It is to contribute to grammar learning strategy research that this study is carried out. And it attempts to answer the question “Is there a difference in grammar strategy deployment between high ranking and low ranking students?”

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at investigating English grammar learning strategies used by high ranking students by comparing to those used by low ranking students and suggesting possible recommendations. Specifically, the research has investigated the extent to which the students use English grammar learning strategies, the similarities and differences between the high ranking and the low ranking groups in using English grammar learning strategies and, the nature of English grammar learning strategies of the two groups.

The findings from this research are expected to be valuable to those who are involved in teaching learning activities, in designing and preparation of materials, in teacher training and in research on grammar learning strategies. Text book designers and material producers could also use the findings in the preparation of grammar lessons in English text books. Parallel with this teacher training expertise could include English grammar learning strategies in their manual. There is also an expectation that researchers will use this study in general and the findings in particular as a reference. As limitation, the basic problems of this study arise from using new framework i.e. the taxonomy employed to classify individual grammar learning strategies. As this framework is new, it hasn't received any critics. The shortcomings of the frame, if any, haven't been identified. Moreover, there is lack of adequate literature in this area of strategy. This is because grammar strategies haven't been the focus of researchers and hence many studies haven't been done so far. The other problem is that the study was carried out on students of a particular school so the result can hardly be generalizable.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research describes the grammar learning behavior or characteristics of two different groups of learners; therefore, it is a descriptive research. As Adler and Clark (2006: 26) put it, "In a descriptive study a researcher describes groups, activities, situations or events with a focus on structure, attitudes or behavior". The study used the comparative design as it compared two natural groups. In this comparative study the differences and similarities of the two groups in using English grammar learning strategies are investigated. For the purpose of this study, mixed method is employed to investigate the English grammar learning strategies of two groups. The reasons for choosing mixed method is to complement the information obtained from quantitative method with the information obtained from qualitative method and to avoid the risk of using only one method. According to Sandelowski (as cited in Dornyei, 2007), the purposes for combining methods are to achieve a fuller understanding of a target phenomenon and b) to verify one set of findings against the other. Creswell and Clark (as cited in Creswell 2009:4) add, "Mixed methods research is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data, it also involves the use of both approaches in a tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research".

The Participants

In order to conduct the study some grade ten students of 2011/12 were selected from Jiren Secondary School, which is one of the three first cycle secondary schools in Jimma town of the Oromia Regional State. Half of the population consisted of those students who stood first to third in the twenty-two sections of grade nine in 2010/11 and the other half consisted of those students who were promoted to grade ten standing with the last three ranks. The reason why these students were chosen is that they could represent two extreme levels /cases of students in using English grammar learning strategies which supplied inputs for this research. First the researcher referred to academic achievement records of the twenty-two sections of grade nine of 2010/11 and listed 132 students from 643 students who were promoted to grade ten. Following this the researcher identified the subjects' tenth grade sections from the registration lists as the school has only fourteen 10th grade sections in 2011/12. Next, to make sure that these students were truly extremes in their grammar knowledge the researcher gave grammar test which was prepared based on grade nine grammar lessons to only 114 students as some students dropped out their study and others were absent from school when the test was given. The two groups took the test in different rooms at the same time in their own sessions.

Of the 114 students who took grammar test the 61 were high ranking students and their score ranged from 30% to 96% and the mean was 62.6%. The remaining 53 students were low ranking students and their score ranged from 22% to 53% and the mean was calculated to be 35.5. The mean score of the grammar test was calculated to be 51.85%. And then the researcher accepted those students who scored one standard deviation above the mean (i.e. 66% and above) and one standard deviation below the mean (i.e. 36% and below).

Finally rejecting those respondents whose responses had missing values, seventy-four students were chosen for the final result. When the students took the grammar test, a pen was given to each candidate. And when they responded the questionnaire and joined the focus group discussion, they were given sweets so that they would feel responsible and give genuine responses.

Instruments of Data Collection

Two different data gathering tools were used in this research. These are questionnaire and focus group discussion. There are two main reasons for choosing these techniques. The first reason is they are the common instruments in strategy researches (Chaudron, 1988:110-11). And the other reason is to validate the research findings, in White, Schramm and Chamot's (2007:94) words, "Researchers generally combine methods to investigate and analyze strategy use in order to provide interpretive clarity and to avoid the criticism that the method determines the results obtained".

Data Collection Procedure

As mentioned above, the tools which were used in this research are questionnaire and focus group discussion. In order to collect the data with the tools several procedures were followed. The questionnaire which was used to collect data on grammar learning strategies was one developed by Oxford and Lee (Cohen and Macaro, 2007). The individual strategies were translated into the first language of the participants of: the Oromo and the Amharic languages. Participants then were given the chance to choose either of the versions to fill in. This is to help them feel free and concentrate on the strategies and to reduce the challenges of English. The questionnaire was translated into the Amharic and the Oromo languages by two different persons. And then the researcher discussed each item with the translators and crosschecked the works. Next the three versions of each item were put together for easy reference and were given for comments to two Jimma Teacher Training Collage instructors of English and to two Jimma University English lecturers who are proficient in the languages and whom the researcher trusts.

Then pilot study was conducted on two sections of grade ten students of 2011/12 at SetoSemero Secondary school which is also in Jimma. The grammar test was piloted to check the reliability of the test and to select suitable items for the main study. To measure the reliability of the grammar test split-half technique was used. The split-half reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.78 and 0.77 which were defined to be reliable. The translated versions were piloted on the same students of Seto Semero Secondary school to make sure there is no misunderstanding and check the reliability of the questionnaire. To ensure that each questionnaire item is clear respondents were informed in the introduction to ask any point that is not clear to them. And they were also told as they were replying. Based on the questions they raised, few words were substituted by others but the most important improvement made after piloting was each questionnaire item is specified to English grammar learning strategy rather than to second or foreign language in general. To measure the reliability of the questionnaire split-half technique was applied and .887

Cronbach's Alpha was obtained. The other instrument used is focus group discussion. From this instrument qualitative information was obtained. The two big groups were regrouped into smaller groups of eight students. The questions for discussion revolved around three main points. First the English grammar learning strategies they actually use. Second the relationship of their grammar learning strategies with the four language skills. The third, the feelings students' have in grammar lessons.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 16 based on the following procedures. The responses gathered from the questionnaire were tallied and tabulated then analyzed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. Similarities and differences were clearly described. Moreover, the mean differences were examined whether they are significant or not. The information obtained from focus group discussion was used to crosscheck the results obtained from the questionnaire and also to add some more facts about English grammar learning strategies of the two groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation and Analysis of Data through Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion

As mentioned earlier the data gathered from the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS. This study aims at revealing the relationship between two groups of learners and their English grammar learning strategy. So, to measure the level of strategy use employed by both groups of participants, the mean which falls within the range of 1.0 to 5.0 is calculated. The standard deviation is also shown to indicate the spread of the points from the mean. The average for each item showed which strategy was more favored by the groups. For the purpose of analysis based on the average value (3.00) of the rating scale, mean values were interpreted as: 4.50 to 5.00 as very high strategy use, 3.50 to 4.49 as high strategy use, 2.50 to 3.49 medium strategy use and 1.0 to 2.49 as low strategy use. In general the mean value measures the levels of the strategy use of high ranking and low ranking students. Moreover, to assess whether the mean differences are significant or not independent samples test was employed. Prior researches on strategy behavior and language proficiency, strategy use and success at a task, and strategy use and rate of progress also studied relationships (O'Malley and Chamot 1990:107; Cohen and Macaro 2007:280-281).

Presentation and Analysis of Responses to Implicit Learning

The grammar learning strategies related to implicit learning fall in to five second/foreign language learning classifications: memory strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies and cognitive strategies. With regards to memory strategies related to implicit grammar learning, as table 1 above, high ranking students were found to be high grammar learning strategy users with overall mean

value of 3.66 whereas the low ranking students were found to be medium grammar strategy users with overall mean value of 3.29. On items 1, 2, 3, and 4 the high ranking students employed high level of grammar learning strategy use with the mean values of 3.68, 3.95, 3.89 and 3.63 respectively while the low ranking students practiced medium level of grammar learning strategy use with the mean values of 3.19, 3.32, 3.16 and 3.49 respectively. On item 5 [I notice (remember) structures that are repeated extremely frequently in a short time period (input flooding)] both high ranking and low ranking students were found to be medium grammar learning strategy users with the mean values of 3.35 and 3.11 respectively.

As opposed to on items 1-4, on item 6 [I notice (remember) a structure that which, when I encounter it, causes me to do something, like check a box or underline the structure] the low ranking students (mean: 3.51) were found to be high level grammar learning strategy users while the high ranking students (mean: 3.46) medium level grammar learning strategy users. This may indicate that low ranking students recognize their grammar deficiency and try to make them ready for certain activities or they study grammar for doing exercises. The assessment of the degree of differences between the use of grammar learning strategy and the two groups of learners shows that the highest gaps between the groups' means are seen on items 1, 2 and 3 with the mean difference of 0.49, 0.63 and 0.73 respectively. The high ranking students exceeded the low ones. These variations may account for the difference in their achievements. The results of the above findings coincide with what Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:12) mentioned as characteristics of good language learners under 'active task approach', "GLLs were active in their response to learning situation, they intensified efforts where necessary and they identified problems".

To determine the significant level of the mean differences, independent samples test was applied. According to the t-test results the mean differences between the two groups on items 2 and 3 are statistically significant because of P being below 0.05 (P=.032 and .017 for items 2 and 3 respectively) but on other strategies (items 1, 4, 5 and 6) it is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 (P=.100, .570, .452 and .852 respectively). In conclusion, there is a relationship between the level of the use of the two English grammar strategies (items 2 and 3) and the rank of students. The results obtained from focus group discussion for the question 'when do you mostly recognize/remember English grammar rules?' supported the above result. The high ranking students replied that they recognized English grammar rules when they read any text; moreover, they said that they were careful when they spoke and wrote so as not to make mistakes. The low ranking students responded that they paid more attention to vocabulary than grammar rules when they read and listened. As seen in the above table, high ranking (mean: 3.41) and low ranking (mean: 3.11) had medium level grammar learning strategy use on item 7 [When I don't know the gender of a noun, I quickly consider clues like sound, meaning and form] but on item 11 [I notice when someone gives me a corrected version of what I said, listen to how that version differs from my own, and try to improve what I said] the high ranking students (mean: 4.11)

achieved high level of grammar learning strategy use while the low ranking students (mean: 3.46) remained at medium level users. The assessment of the degree of difference in using grammar learning strategy on item 11 shows that the high ranking students exceeded the low ranking students by 0.65. This wide variation in the mean may show that high ranking students had strong determination in achieving success in learning grammar as they complete several activities: making new sentences using new structure, taking feedback attentively and attempting to reproduce the sentences correctly.

In conclusion, there is a relationship between the level of the use of the English grammar strategy (item11) and the rank of students. The above finding relates to the top ten strategies Stern (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:11) listed as characteristics of GLLs that is GLLs had "a personal learning style or positive learning strategies and technical know-how about how to tackle a language". For 'how do you consider teachers' corrections to your grammar mistakes?' the high ranking students replied that to avoid making the same mistakes they listened attentively and practiced immediately.

Table 1. Implicit Learning Memory strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
1	I notice (remember) structures that cause me problems with meaning or communication	3.68	1.107	3.19	1.391	1.664	.100
2	I notice (remember) structures that are highlighted in the text by italics, underlining, starring, circling, color-coding etc	3.95	1.079	3.32	1.355	2.183	.032*
3	I notice (remember) structures that are repeated often in the text	3.89	1.286	3.16	1.280	2.446	.017*
4	I notice (remember) structures that emphasized orally, through pitch, loudness or repetition	3.65	1.296	3.49	1.146	.570	.570
5	I notice (remember) structures that are repeated extremely frequently in a short time period (input flooding).	3.35	1.338	3.11	1.430	.756	.452
6	I notice (remember) a structure that which, when I encounter it, causes me to do something, like check a box or underline the structure	3.46	1.325	3.51	1.170	-.186	.852
Overall		3.66	1.238	3.29	1.295	1.239	.337

*Significant at 0.05 levels Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 2. Implicit Learning: Compensation Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
7	When I don't know the gender of a noun, I quickly consider clues like sound, meaning and form	3.41	1.166	3.11	1.197	1.082	.283
11	I notice when someone gives me a corrected version of what I said, listen to how that version differs from my own, and try to improve what I said	4.11	0.906	3.46	1.169	2.668	.009*
Overall		3.76	1.036	3.29	1.183	1.875	.145

*Significant at 0.05 levels Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 3. Implicit Learning: Metacognitive Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
8	I pay attention on how more proficient people say things and then imitate	3.65	1.252	3.24	1.300	1.366	.176
12	I compare my speech or writing with that of more proficient people to see how I can improve	3.41	1.363	3.27	1.305	.436	.664
Overall		3.35	1.307	3.26	1.302	.901	.420

Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

According to the t-test results the mean difference between the two groups on item 11 is statistically significant because of P being below 0.05 (P= .009) but on other strategy (item7) it is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 (P=.283).

The low ranking students confessed that they didn't often benefit from this strategy as they did not normally participate in production activities. As indicated above, the low ranking students secured medium level use on both grammar strategies with mean of 3.24 and 3.27 whereas the high ranking students

employed high level use on item 8 and medium level use on item 12 with mean values of 3.65 and 3.41 respectively. The assessment of the results in the degree of difference of the above table reveals that there is much more difference in using the strategy [I pay attention on to how proficient people say things and then imitate] i.e. Item 8 than item 12 with the mean difference of 0.41. This also shows how high ranking students exceeded their counterparts in directing their attention. This finding is likely to have similarity to the strategy Naiman *et al.* (as cited in Cohen and Macaro, 2007:12) listed under 'active task approach', 'They [GLLs] turned everyday life experiences into learning opportunities'. According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on both items is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=0.176$ and $.664$ for items 8 and 12 respectively). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variations in the use of the above English grammar learning strategies.

As to working with others to reconstruct the input text in a 'dictagloss' activity, the results of both groups of learners show that they were medium level users of this grammar learning strategy with the mean of 2.68 for the high ranking and 3.03 for the low ranking students. The assessment of the data in table-4.5 shows that the low ranking students exceeded the high ranking students by 0.35 and this may indicate that the low ranking students benefit from working with others. According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on the above item is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=0.266$). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variation in the use of the above English grammar learning strategy. In response to the question 'how do you like studying English grammar?' the high ranking students replied that if there were active students in their group, they would like to work together; otherwise, they preferred working alone. The low ranking students replied to the above question by saying that they would prefer to work with others because they wanted to learn from them. The data in the above table shows that both groups of students exerted medium level of grammar learning strategy use: the high ranking (mean: 3.27) and the low ranking students (mean: 3.24). As can be seen, there is great similarity between the two groups in using the cognitive strategy [I keep a notebook of new structures that seem very important or frequent].

According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on the above item is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=0.935$). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variation in the use of the above English grammar learning strategy. The grand mean of the twelve strategies related to implicit grammar learning (listed in tables 4.3-4.6) for the high ranking students is 3.54 which measures high level use of grammar strategy and for the low ranking students is 3.26 which falls in medium level use. In short, the data in this section show that the two groups of learners exerted English grammar learning strategies at similar level as in table 4.6 with the means of 3.27 and 3.24 for the high ranking students and the low ranking students respectively but in other instances they employed wide range of use as in table

4:3 with the means of 3.76 and 3.29 for the high ranking students and the low ranking students respectively. The overall means of the four classifications (Tables 4.3 – 4.6) reveal that the high ranking students practiced the strategies much more than the low ranking students in all classifications except in social strategy in which the low ranking students exceeded the high ranking students by 0.35. For the question 'how do you care for English Grammar notebooks?' the high ranking students confessed that they didn't have a separate grammar notebook rather as part of English exercise book and they rarely added new grammar notes yet they kept it for reference for several years. On the contrast, the low ranking students replied that they seldom remembered where they put their exercise books after final examination.

Presentation and Analysis of Responses to Explicit-inductive Learning

In the questionnaire, grammar learning strategies related to explicit-inductive learning fall into three language learning classifications. These are compensation strategies, social strategies and cognitive strategies. As indicated in the table above, the overall means of the two groups come in medium level use but on item 13 the high ranking students (mean: 3.62) employed high level use whereas the low level students (mean: 3.11) remained the same. In assessing the degree of difference between the two groups one can see that there is a wider difference on the strategy "based all possible clues, I try to discover the underlying rules" with the mean variation of 0.51 for the high ranking (mean: 3.62) and the low ranking students (mean: 3.11) than on item 17. The above result is similar to what Naiman *et al.* (as cited in Cohen and Macaro, 2007:12) listed under 'realization of language as a system' good language learners "made guesses and inferences about language; responded to clues and systematized language". According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on both items is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=0.092$ and $.447$ for items 13 and 17 respectively). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variations in the use of the above English grammar learning strategies.

The information from the above table reveals that low ranking students had medium level of grammar learning strategy use for all items i.e. items 14, 19, 20 and 22 with the mean values of 3.32, 2.78, 2.62 and 3.32 respectively. On the other hand, the high ranking students had high level of grammar learning strategy use on the items 14 and 22 with mean of 3.57 and 3.95 respectively and medium level use on items 19 and 20 with means of 2.78 and 3.08 respectively. Of the four social strategies in table-4.8, item 22 [I listen carefully for any feedback the teacher gives me about structures I use (meta-linguistic feedback)] carries the highest degree of difference (mean: 0.63) between the high ranking (mean: 3.95) and the low ranking (mean: 3.32). The response for item 22 shows that there is consistency between responses. As it has been discussed under table-4.3 for item 11 [I notice when someone gives me a corrected version of what I said, listen to how that version differs from my own, and try to improve what I said] the high ranking students (mean: 4.11) exceeded the low

ranking students (mean: 3.46) by 0.55. According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on the four items is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 (P=.448, 1.00, .113 and .057 for items 14, 19, 20 and 22 respectively). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variations in the use of the above English grammar learning strategies.

grammar learning; nevertheless, the low learning students with overall mean 3.07 were found to be low level users. The assessment of the degree of differences between the two groups shows that item 16 [I keep a notebook of any structure for which I am trying to discern the rule] and item 21 [After discovering a rule, I try to apply it as soon as possible in a meaningful context] have the two greatest variations on the mean i.e. 0.73 and 0.89 respectively.

Table 4. Implicit Learning: Social Strategy

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
9	I work with others to reconstruct the input text in a 'dictagloss' activity	2.68	1.334	3.03	1.364	-1.120	.266
Overall		2.68	1.334	3.03	1.364	-1.120	.266

*Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 5. Implicit Learning: Cognitive Strategy

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
10	I keep a notebook of new structures that seem very important or frequent	3.27	1.427	3.24	1.402	.082	.935
Overall		3.27	1.427	3.24	1.402	.082	.935
Grand (For items 1-12)		3.54		3.26			

*Significant at 0.05 levels Mean Levels of the strategy use, (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 6. Explicit-inductive Learning: Compensation Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
13	Based all possible clues, I try to discover the underlying rules	3.62	1.233	3.11	1.350	1.709	.092
17	I create my own hypotheses about how target structures operate and then check my hypotheses	2.59	1.343	2.81	1.076	-.764	.447
Overall		3.11	1.288	2.96	1.213	.472	.269

* Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 7. Explicit-inductive Learning Social Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
14	I participate in rule-discovery discussions in class	3.57	1.385	3.32	1.355	.764	.448
19	I participate in written brain storming about possible underlining rules	2.78	1.134	2.78	1.336	.0	1.00
20	I check with others who are more proficient to make sure my rule interpretation is correct	3.08	1.233	2.62	1.233	1.603	.113
22	I listen carefully for any feedback the teacher gives me about structures I use (meta-linguistic feedback).	3.95	1.311	3.32	1.454	1.931	.057
Overall		3.35	1.266	3.01	1.344	1.074	.404

*Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 3.9 depicts both groups of students were medium level users of grammar learning strategy on items 15, 16 and 18 with mean values of 3.38, 3.46 and 3.19 respectively for the high ranking students and 3.11, 2.73 and 3.38 respectively for the low ranking students. On item 21, there is a difference in the level of grammar learning strategy use; the high ranking students are high level users (mean: 3.97) but the low ranking are medium level users (mean: 3.08). From the overall mean we can see that high ranking students (mean: 3.50) are high level users of cognitive strategies related to explicit inductive

On both items the high ranking students exercised more than the low ranking ones. These strategies were also identified as characteristics of GLLs by Stern (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:11) when he writes GLLs used, "strategies of experimentation and planning with the objective of developing the new language into an ordered system and/or revising this system progressively" and by Naiman et.al. (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:12) under the main strategy 'realization of language as means of communication', "GLLs looked for communication opportunities".

Table 8. Explicit-inductive Learning: Cognitive Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
15	I write down structures on note cards so that I can think about how they work	3.38	1.163	3.11	1.286	.948	.346
16	I keep a notebook of any structure for which I am trying to discern the rule	3.46	1.282	2.73	1.262	2.468	.016*
18	I notice when the teacher leads me into an overgeneralization error, and then I think about what went wrong (garden path technique)	3.19	1.371	3.38	1.277	-.614	.541
21	After discovering a rule, I try to apply it as soon as possible in a meaningful context	3.97	1.166	3.08	1.256	3.166	.002*
Overall		3.50	1.245	3.07	1.270	1.491	.226
Grand (for items 13-22)		3.36		3.03			

*Significant at 0.05 levels Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 9. Explicit-deductive Learning: Metacognitive Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
23	I preview the lesson to identify the key structures to be covered	3.00	1.312	3.19	1.351	-.611	.543
24	I pay attention to the rule that the teacher or the book provides	3.59	1.343	3.14	1.512	1.382	.171
32	I schedule my grammar reviews by massing them closely at first, then spreading them out	3.30	1.244	3.03	1.343	.898	.372
Overall		3.29	1.299	3.12	1.402	.556	.362

*Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 10. Explicit-deductive Learning: Cognitive Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
25	I try to apply the rule carefully and correctly in specific sentences	3.51	1.283	2.89	1.100	2.237	.028*
26	I make up new sentences using the rule	3.41	1.212	2.81	1.221	2.102	.039*
33	I paraphrase rules I am given, because I understand them better in my own words	3.35	1.438	3.00	1.333	1.090	.279
34	I make grammar charts	2.35	1.457	2.97	1.384	-1.881	.063
36	I use newly learnt rules/structures in a context as soon as possible	3.14	1.110	3.43	1.324	-1.047	.299
Overall		3.15	1.300	3.02	1.272	.500	.141

* Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 11. Explicit-deductive Learning: Social Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
27	I check my new sentences (or ask for help) to see if I understand the rule	2.95	1.353	3.22	1.357	-.858	.394
31	I work with a study partner to apply grammar rules.	3.03	1.323	3.46	1.260	-1.440	.154
Overall		2.99	1.338	3.34	1.308	-1.149	.273

*Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

Table 12. Explicit-deductive Learning: Memory Strategies

Item No	Individual Grammar Learning Strategy	Respondents				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		High Ranking (N=37)		Low Ranking (N=37)			
		Mean X ₁	Std. Dev.	Mean X ₂	Std. Dev.		
28	I memorize rules about frequently used linguistic forms/structures (for example, verb endings, singular/plural noun-pronoun agreement, subject-verb agreement)	3.51	1.096	3.49	1.170	.103	.919
29	I memorize how structures change their forms (for instance, from a noun to an adjective, from an adjective to an adverb).	3.51	1.261	3.03	1.093	1.774	.080
30	I color-code different grammar categories in my notebook	3.35	1.358	3.43	1.191	-.273	.786
35	I remember grammar information by location on a page in the book	3.03	1.067	2.92	1.341	.384	.702
Overall		3.35	1.195	3.28	1.198	.497	.621
Grand (for items 23-36)		3.22		3.14			

*Significant at 0.05 level Mean Levels of the strategy use (2-tailed) 4.50 - 5.00 = very high, 3.50 - 4.49 = high, 2.50 - 3.49 = medium, 1.00 - 2.49 = low

According to the t-test results the mean differences between the two groups on items 16 and 21 are statistically significant because of P being below 0.05 ($P=.016$ and $.002$ respectively) but on the other strategies (items 15 and 18) they are not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=.346$ and $.541$ respectively). In conclusion, there is a relationship between the level of the use of the two English grammar learning strategies (items 16 and 21) and the rank of students. The grand mean of the ten English grammar learning strategies (listed in tables 4.7-4.9) related to explicit-inductive learning for the high ranking students is 3.36 and the low ranking students is 3.03 both of which measure medium level use. In short, the data in this section show the least difference between the two groups in using compensation strategies with the means of 3.11 and 2.96 for the high ranking and the low ranking students respectively. On the contrary, the highest difference between the two groups is seen in using cognitive strategies with the means of 3.50 and 3.07 for the high ranking and the low ranking students respectively.

Presentation and Analysis of Responses to Explicit-deductive Learning

The explicit-deductive learning subsumes four learning strategy classifications. These are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, social strategies and memory strategies. Concerning the use of the metacognitive strategies of explicit deductive learning both groups secured medium level with overall mean 3.29 for the high ranking and 3.12 for low ranking students. The only individual strategy the high ranking students employed at high level use is item 24 [I pay attention to the rule that the teacher or the book provides] with mean value of 3.59. And the assessment of the degree of difference between the two groups in grammar learning strategy use indicates that the high ranking students (mean: 3.59) and low ranking students (mean: 3.14) made variation of 0.45 on item 24. The responses of the participants show consistency in the matter related to paying attention e.g. Items 8 and 22 in tables-4.4 and 4.8. According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on the three items are not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=.543$, $.171$ and $.372$ for items 23, 24 and 32 respectively). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variations in the use of the above English grammar learning strategies.

During the focus group discussion in answer to 'how do you plan your grammar review?' the high ranking students said that they did not have program for revision except revising immediately after the grammar lesson and before tests and exams. On cognitive strategies of explicit deductive learning both groups of learners were found to be medium level users with the overall mean of 3.15 and 3.02 for the high ranking and the low ranking students respectively. The low ranking students had medium level use on all strategies in this group of cognitive strategies. The same is true for the high ranking students on items 26, 33 and 36, but this group had high level use (mean: 3.51) on item 25 and low level use with mean of 2.35 on item 34. This may indicate that the high ranking students practiced strategies which require application of new structure rather than reformulating the rules. In assessing the

degree of differences between the means in using cognitive strategies in the above table, we can see that the high ranking students exceeded the low ranking students by 0.62 and 0.60 on items 25 and 26 respectively. The results of the above findings also coincide with what Stern (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:11) wrote in ten top strategies: "GLLs have willingness to practice and willingness to use language in real communication" and what Naiman et.al. (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:12) wrote under 'active task approach', "They [GLLs] practiced regularly".

According to the t-test results the mean differences between the two groups on items 25 and 26 are statistically significant because of P being below 0.05 ($P=.028$ and $.039$ respectively) but on the other strategies (items 33, 34 and 36) it is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=.279$, $.063$ and $.299$ respectively). In conclusion, there is a relationship between the level of the use of the two English grammar strategies (items 25 and 26) and the rank of students. The results in the above table reveal that both groups of students used the social strategies at medium level. Yet the means of the high ranking students are smaller than the means of the low ranking students. This may indicate that the high ranking students felt confidence in the mastering of English grammar and developed independent learning.

A close examination of the degree of difference in the above social strategies shows that the low ranking students' mean on item 31 exceeded high ranking students mean by 0.43. This may indicate that the low ranking students need the support of other learners. According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on both items is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=.394$ and $.154$ for items 27 and 31 respectively). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variations in the use of the above English grammar learning strategies. As to the above memory strategies, the overall means for both groups indicate that they were medium level strategy users with the mean of 3.35 for the high ranking and 3.28 for the low ranking students. Of course, on items 28 and 29 the high ranking students secured mean value of 3.51 which is close to the lower limit for high level grammar learning use. On item 30, the low ranking students had a mean slightly higher than the high ranking students. This shows that these students were more concerned with basic rules. The assessment of the degree of differences between the use of grammar learning strategies and the two groups of learners show that the high ranking students exceeded the low ranking students by 0.48 on item 29 [I memorize how structures change their forms (for instance, from a noun to an adjective, from an adjective to an adverb)]. The above finding also has some relation with one of the strategies of GLLs Stern (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:11) listed i.e. "constantly searching for meaning".

According to the t-test results, the mean differences between the high ranking students and the low ranking students on the four items is not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 ($P=.919$, $.080$, $.786$ and $.702$ for items 28, 29, 30, and 35 respectively). In conclusion, the two groups of students did not show great variations in the use of the above English

grammar learning strategies. The grand means of the fourteen English grammar learning strategies (listed in tables 4.10 - 4.13) related to explicit-deductive learning show the least difference between high ranking students (mean: 3.22) and low ranking students (mean: 3.14) of the three modes of learning. The reasons for this little difference are first the differences in each strategy classification are slight: 0.17, 0.13 and 0.07 in metacognitive strategies, in cognitive strategies and in memory strategies in which the high ranking students had higher means than the low ranking students. The second reason is that the low ranking students (mean: 3.34) exceeded the high ranking students (mean: 2.99) in using social strategies related to explicit-deductive learning. This is the second instance where the low ranking students had higher English grammar learning strategy use than the high ranking students at classification level for social strategies in this research.

Presentation and Analysis of Data on the Added Strategies

As it has been seen earlier the information gathered from focus group discussion was discussed with that of the questionnaire. But some strategies that students apply during English grammar learning, especially those related to controlling their emotions are not included in the questionnaire. So the researcher has raised few questions to the subjects in the focus group discussion and the responses are presented below. In reply to 'how do you feel during English grammar lessons?' both groups of students said that they felt the low ranking students relaxed during the discussion time but during the practice time said that they became tense while the high ranking students responded that they were eager to show the teacher their understanding of the lesson. This may indicate that the low ranking students had the fear of making mistakes and hence they do not take risk. On the contrary, the high ranking students practiced new structures constantly. The response the high ranking students provided to the question 'how do you feel when your teacher tell you that you were mistaken in sentence construction?' is quite different from the low ranking students. They said that they thought what had made them give wrong answers and tried to learn from their mistakes. This goes with what Naiman et al. (as cited in Grenfell and Macaro, 2007:12) wrote, "GLLs realized that learning a language involves emotional responses which they take on board as part of their learning". But the low ranking students replied that they took it as a normal pattern and ignored thinking about their mistakes.

Conclusion

From the data presented, the analysis given and the convergent summary of findings, it has been clear that both high ranking and low ranking students use English grammar learning strategies. Therefore, it can be concluded that both groups of learners have awareness of the way they learn English grammar. From the angle of the strategy classification based on the three modes of learning i.e. implicit, explicit-inductive and explicit-deductive learning, the high ranking students (mean: 3.22) and the low ranking students (mean: 3.14) use strategies related to explicit-deductive learning nearly in equal amount. In conclusion, it can be said that both groups of learners depend on the traditional mode of instruction and

hence learning almost equally. On the contrast, the high ranking students (mean: 3.36) and the low ranking students (mean: 3.03) use of grammar strategies related to explicit-inductive learning shows the highest difference. From this it can be concluded that the high ranking students apply the discovery learning more often than the low ranking students and this may contribute to success in their study.

From the view of the strategic classifications used for SILL i.e. cognitive, metacognitive, memory, social and compensation strategies, the high ranking students (mean: 3.14) and the low ranking students (mean: 3.11) use social strategies nearly in equal amount and these means are also found to be the least. In conclusion it can be said that both groups of students lack interaction in learning English grammar so they do not benefit from working together and hence develop their communicative competence. On the other hand, the high ranking students (means: 3.43, 3.54) and the low ranking students (means: 3.12, 3.27) use compensation and memory strategies at different levels. It can be concluded that these two types of strategies could yield the difference in the success of learning English grammar. The t-test results show that there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the two groups of students on seven strategies. Of the seven strategies, four are cognitive strategies, two are memory strategies and one is compensation strategy. In conclusion, it can be said that cognitive strategies have the highest relation with the students' achievement.

Recommendation

The study found that the high ranking students use memory strategies and compensation strategies at a higher level than the low ranking students. Thus, the low ranking students are recommended to use these two strategies more often than they have been using them. The research also found that the high ranking students had less interest and interaction in group work than the low ranking students. This affects the result of most of the learners. Therefore, the researcher suggests that high ranking students should develop the skills of working with others and support their classmates. The results of the t-test show that seven of the thirty-five mean differences are statistically significant. In all of them the high ranking students had higher means than the low ranking students. Therefore, the low ranking students are strongly recommended to apply those seven strategies more often than they have been using them.

The study identified that all of the students do not use all grammar learning strategies. To change this condition it is recommended that both groups of learners should develop their awareness of grammar learning strategies and should be told to report the strategies that work best for them. Moreover, material producers, particularly English textbook and supplementary reading material writers should design texts in the way that students could develop implicit learning. English teachers should also be trained in strategic instruction and should orient their students about grammar learning strategies. Researches on English grammar learning strategies should continue so as to identify strategies that are used by successful learners and that can be taught to other learners.

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