

## **An investigation of English-majored Students' Strategies for Learning English Grammar at Thai Nguyen University of Technology**

**Thao Thi Phuong Vi**

Thai Nguyen University of Technology, Vietnam

**Thuong Thi Kim Nguyen\***

Thai Nguyen University of Technology, Vietnam

**Phuong Thi Ma**

Thai Nguyen University of Technology, Vietnam

### **Abstract**

In foreign language learning, grammar acquisition is becoming more and more important, especially in English, grammar is an inseparable part. From such a vantage point, this study mainly investigated English-majored students' grammar learning strategies. The study was conducted using the quantitative method at School of Faculty of International Training, Thai Nguyen University of Technology, with the participation of 26 students during K52-K55. The data were collected through two Google forms. The analysis of the quantitative data revealed that the students think learning English grammar is important and that they use a variety of learning strategies when they learn and use grammar structures. The findings showed that the students are aware of the importance of using grammar learning strategies and the majority of them know how to apply grammar learning strategies. Furthermore, the results indicated that there is a significant relationship between the use of grammar learning strategies and students' learning levels. Finally, the study showed that using grammar learning strategies is influential in grammar achievement.

**Key words:** English grammar, learning, strategies, acquisition, achievement

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, English has become one of the most popular languages in the world. In Vietnam, young people, especially students, are interested in learning English for many reasons such as studying at good universities, studying abroad and they consider it a key to success. In order to improve English competence, students have to master both grammar and vocabulary as well as other issues of the English language. Suffice it to say, grammar is the preliminary factor of a language.

Grammar plays an important role in the process of second language acquisition. Grammar names types of words and word groups that make up sentences not only in English, but any in language. David Crystal, ("In Word and Deed," TES Teacher, April 30, 2004) said that "Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English." Hence, we cannot deny that skills of language learning including listening, speaking, reading and writing cannot be successfully achieved without grammar. Thus, the study of grammar learning strategies is an important step in second language acquisition. Learning strategy is important for students to improve their English competence. Learning strategy is also a solution for students to cope with the students' difficulties and helps them to become an independent learner. Accordingly, applying grammar learning strategies is an effective way to study.

The ultimate goal of the study is to enhance English-majored students' proficiency, particularly in English grammar acquisition. This study aims to provide a definition of grammar learning strategies, and then sheds light on how such strategic device can assist the process of mastering grammar. Therefore, the specific goal of this study is to find out the students' awareness of the importance of grammar learning and their grammar learning approaches.

Here are the two research questions of the study:

1. To what extent do students understand the role of grammar in learning English?
2. How do students apply grammar learning strategies during their learning process?

This study was conducted to all of English-majored students at Thai Nguyen University of Technology in order to know to what extent they understand the role of grammar and what grammar learning strategies they apply during their learning process.

The study was conducted using quantitative method. The study included survey questionnaires for English-majored students at Thai Nguyen University of Technology.

After getting the results, the researcher used the tables and charts for presenting the data and made analyses.

Currently, at Thai Nguyen University of Technology, there are not many studies on learning approaches for English grammar. Thus, this research is very necessary for students, especially English-majored students as it helps students learn English grammar effectively and quickly. Instead, the research also offers some effective strategies to learn English grammar to help students firmly grasp the knowledge. Grammar plays an important role to form a sentence in English. It is the foundation for learners to form other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, especially in communication. If you are grammatically incorrect, other people will not understand what you are saying, the conversation will become boring. Not only that, grammar is the main factor for students to pass exams such as TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS... Therefore, learning grammar is extremely necessary. This study will help English-majored students at Thai Nguyen University of

Technology with useful strategies in learning English grammar. Learning strategies are important for students to improve their English proficiency. Learning strategies are a way for students to deal with their difficulties and a way to become independent learners. Then the result of the research by Supakorn (2018) indicated that the higher achievers practiced all of the strategies categories significantly more often than the lower achievers. On the basis of the idea above, this study helps to raise the students' awareness of the importance of grammar learning and useful learning strategies.

The study is divided into four chapters. Each chapter deals with an important aspect of the study.

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the study, which includes the rationale, aim, research questions, scope, significance of the study as well as the methods and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 is about grammar in language instruction and synthesizes the research into language learning strategies; presents the information about some basic concepts related to language learning strategies and Grammar learning strategies. In addition, the classifications of language learning strategies and Grammar learning strategies are reviewed to set up the theoretical framework for the investigation in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 includes the context of the study, research questions, participants, data collection instruments, procedures, data analysis and implications.

Chapter 4 summarizes the main issues of the whole study and gives the future directions for further research and limitations of the study.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter of the study, a brief review of learning grammar strategies is given; some basic concepts related to language learning and grammar learning strategies are also presented. In addition, the classification of language learning strategies in general and grammar learning strategies in particular are reviewed to set up the theoretical framework for the investigation in the next chapter.

### **2.1. Language learning strategies**

#### ***2.1.1. Background of language learning strategies***

There has been a prominent shift within the field of language learning and teaching over the last twenty years with greater emphasis being put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. This shift in focus from teachers to learners has led researchers and scholars to carry out different studies on the characteristics of the learner and of the learning situation (Bialystok, 1981). Thus, learners and their roles in learning process have become the primary concern in most research. In parallel to this new shift of interest, questions about how learners process new information have gained

importance and prompt researchers to investigate language learning strategies (LLS) of language second learners (Cohen, 1998; O' Maley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). As Nyikos and Oxford (1993) state "learning begins with the learner"; therefore, "learning how to learn should be considered as the key competence which learners need to be equipped" (Strakova, 2013, p.38).

Researches on language learning strategies have been conducted since the 1960s and welcomed by the pioneering works of Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) providing valuable insight into characteristics, strategies and behaviors of 'good language learners'. They indicated that good language learners employed more and better learning strategies than poor language learners. It has been observed by a number of language educators that some learners with particular cognitive and metacognitive behavior become more successful in the language learning process, whereas, some others fail to reach such success (Rubin, 1975). Wenden (1987) says "Learning strategies are various operations that learner use in order to make sense of their learning". Also, Williams and Burden (1997, p. 149) stated that developments in cognitive psychology influenced much of research done on language learning strategies.

### ***2.1.2. Definition of language learning strategies***

Many researchers and experts have defined LLS from different points of view. An early definition given by Rigeney (1978) defines LLS as the often-conscious steps or behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information. Oxford, Lavine, and Crookall (1989) have the same idea as Rigeney (1987) about LLS. They stated that LLS are used to enhance and facilitate language acquisition. They referred to LLS as "actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out target language conversation partners or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task- used by learners to enhance learning" (p.29).

According to Wenden (1987a), language learning strategies can be defined from the aspect of language learning behaviors, such as learning and regulating the meaning of a second or foreign language, cognitive theory, such as learners' strategic knowledge of language learning, and the affective view, such as learners' motivation, attitude, etc. It is argued that three points of views can improve language learning.

Rubin (1987) defined LLS as behaviors, steps, or techniques that language learners apply to facilitate language learning. Moreover, Oxford (1990) defines learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8).

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), "learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information" or in their other words learning strategies are the "special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1).

Richards and Platt (1992) stated that learning strategies are "intentional behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn, or remember new information." (p. 209). Faerch Claus and Casper (1983) stress that a learning strategy is "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language." (p.67).

As stated by Stern (1992) "the concept of learning strategy is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques" (p.261).

Ellis (1997) wrote, "the particular approaches or techniques that a learner employs to try to learn a language second" (p.76). He further explained that learning strategies can be behavioral or mental and are typically problem-oriented. Next, Ghani (2003) defined LLS as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students frequently use to improve their progress in language second developing skills; these can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of new language.

Obviously, learning strategies are defined in different words and from different perspectives such as cognitive, social, or pragmatic. Therefore, researchers worked out the taxonomy of learning strategies instead of defining them. This can be seen in the following part.

### ***2.1.3. Classification of language learning strategies***

Language Learning Strategies have been classified by many scholars. However, most of their attempts to classify LLS reflects more or less the same categorizations of LLS

without any radical changes. In that follows, Rubin (1987), O'Malley (1985), Oxford (1990), and Stern (1992) taxonomies of LLS will be handled.

O'Malley et al. (1985) divided language learning strategies into three main subcategories: Metacognitive Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Socio-affective Strategies (pp. 582-584). Metacognitive is a term to express executive function, strategies which require planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. Repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, keyword, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, inferencing are among the most important cognitive strategies. As to the socio-affective strategies, it can be stated that they are related to social-mediating activity and transacting with others. Cooperation and question for clarification are the main socio-affective strategies (Brown 1987, pp. 93-94).

Rubin (1987), who pioneered much of the work in the field of strategies, makes the distinction between strategies contributing directly to learning and those contributing indirectly to learning. According to Rubin, there are three types of strategies used by learners that contribute directly or indirectly to language learning. These are:

- Learning Strategies
- Communication Strategies
- Social Strategies

LLS are of two main types, being the strategies contributing directly to the development of the language system constructed by the learner:

- Cognitive Learning Strategies
- Metacognitive Learning Strategies

Cognitive Learning Strategies refer to the steps or operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Rubin identified six main cognitive learning strategies contributing directly to language learning:

- Clarification / Verification
- Guessing / Inductive Differencing

- Deductive Reasoning
- Practice
- Memorization
- Monitoring

Metacognitive Learning Strategies, these strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. They involve various processes as planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management. Communication strategies are less directly related to language learning since their focus is on the process of participating in a conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what the speaker intended. Communication strategies are used by speakers when faced with some difficulty due to the fact that their communication ends outrun their communication means or when confronted with misunderstanding by a co-speaker. Social strategies are those activities learners engage in which afford them opportunities to be exposed to and practise their knowledge. Although these strategies provide exposure to the target language, they contribute indirectly to learning since they do not lead directly to the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of language (Rubin and Wenden 1987, pp. 23-27).

Oxford (1990) saw the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence. Oxford divided language learning strategies into two main classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into 6 groups. In Oxford's system, metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning. Affective strategies are concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, while social strategies lead to increased interaction with the target language. Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, memory strategies are those used for storage of information, and compensation strategies help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue the communication (p. 9).

It can be seen that much of the recent work in this area has been underpinned by a broad concept of language learning strategies that goes beyond cognitive processes to include social and communicative strategies. In 1990, Rebecca and Oxford introduced strategies inventory for language learning. This invention described the various type of LLS that learners employ to help him/her to learn a new language.

According to Stern (1992), there are five main language learning strategies, (pp. 262-266). These are as follows:

- Management and Planning Strategies
- Cognitive Strategies
- Communicative - Experiential Strategies
- Interpersonal Strategies
- Affective Strategies

Management and Planning Strategies are related with the learner's intention to direct his own learning. A learner can take charge of the development of his own programmer when a teacher whose role is that of an adviser and resource person helps him. That is to say that the learner must:

- Decide what commitment to make to language learning
- Set himself reasonable goals
- Decide on an appropriate methodology, select appropriate resources, and monitor progress.
- Evaluate his achievement in the light of previously determined goals and expectations (Stern 1992, p.263).

Cognitive Strategies are steps or operations used in learning or problem solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. In the following, some of the cognitive strategies are exhibited:

- Clarification / Verification
- Guessing / Inductive Inferencing
- Deductive Reasoning
- Practice
- Memorization
- Monitoring

Communication strategies, such as circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrasing, or asking for repetition and explanation are techniques used by learners so as to keep a conversation going. The purpose of using these techniques is to avoid interrupting the flow of communication (Stern, 1992, p. 265). Interpersonal Strategies should monitor their own development and evaluate their own performance. Learners should contact with native speakers and cooperate with them. Learners must become acquainted with the target culture (Stern, 1992, pp.265-266). For Affective Strategies, it is evident that good language learners employ distinct affective strategies. Language learning can be



frustrating in some cases. In some cases, the feeling of strangeness can be evoked by the foreign language. In some other cases, foreign language learners may have negative feelings about native speakers of foreign language. Good language learners are more or less conscious of these emotional problems. Good language learners try to create associations of positive affect towards the foreign language and its speakers as well as towards the learning activities involved. Learning training can help students to face up to the emotional difficulties and to overcome them by drawing attention to the potential frustrations or pointing them out as they arise (Stern, 1992, p. 266).

#### ***2.1.4. Determination of Learning Strategies***

The research into learning styles and strategies began in the 1970s, following the developments in second language acquisition and cognitive psychology. This was also the time when the focus of second language learning moved from teaching processes to learning processes. Therefore, several researchers began to investigate learner differences and sought to find out why some learners are more successful than others in learning a foreign language.

Rubin's study of successful language learners is considered, in the literature, to be one of the earliest investigations into learner differences. Rubin observed language classes directly or on videotape and identified several strategies – rather techniques or devices – of good language learners. She suggested that the good language learner: (1) is a willing and accurate guesser, (2) has a strong drive to communicate, (3) is often uninhibited about his/her weakness in the second language and ready to risk making mistakes, (4) is willing to attend to form, (5) practices, (6) monitors his/her speech and compares it to the native standard, and (7) attends to meaning in its social context. Rubin also suggested that these strategies could also be learned to help less successful learners. Just about the same time Stern (1975), (as cited in Stern, 1983) identified ten strategies that were employed by successful learners. These strategies were:

1. Planning strategy: a personal learning style or positive learning strategy.
2. Active strategy: an active approach to the learning task.
3. Empathic strategy: a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and its speakers.
4. Formal strategy: technical know-how of how to tackle a language.
5. Experimental strategy: a methodical but flexible approach, developing the new language into an ordered system and constantly revising it.

6. Semantic strategy: constant searching for meaning.
7. Practice strategy: willingness to practice.
8. Communication strategy: willingness to use the language in real communication.
9. Monitoring strategy: self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use.
10. Internalization strategy: developing the second language more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it. (Stern, 1983, pp. 414-415).

In the preparation of the grammar learning strategies used in this study, the researcher benefited from the general language learning strategy definitions that were suggested by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990). In addition to the three major strategy categories of O'Malley and Chamot (i.e., cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective) compensation strategies from Oxford's taxonomy were used as the fourth category of the list used for this study. "Practicing", which is listed under memory strategies by Oxford, is included among cognitive strategies for this study since Oxford (1990) herself acknowledges the fact that memory strategies are occasionally considered to be cognitive strategies. The type of strategies that represent grammar learning strategies written for this study can be seen in Table 1. The strategies taken from Oxford are indicated with citations; all the others are from O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

**Table 1 - Categorization used for the grammar learning strategies of this study**

| LEARNING STRATEGY           | DEFINITION  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Cognitive Strategies</b> |   |
| Practicing (Oxford, 1990)   | Repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas, recombining, and practicing naturalistically. |
| Resourcing                  | Using target language reference materials (i.e. dictionaries, textbooks, etc.)  |
| Grouping                    | Classifying words, terminology, numbers, or concepts according to their attributes.   |
| Note Taking                 | Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form to assist performance of a language task.               |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Highlighting (Oxford, 1990)            | Using a variety of emphasis techniques (e.g. underlining, starring, or color-coding) to focus on important information in a passage   |
| Deduction/Induction                    | Applying rules to understand or produce the second language or making up rules based on language analysis.  |
| Imagery                                | Relating new information to visual concepts in memory via familiar, easily retrievable visualizations, phrases, or locations  |
| Elaboration                            | Relating new information to prior knowledge; relating different parts of the new information to each other; making meaningful personal associations to information presented; using mental or actual pictures or visuals to represent information |
| Transfer                               | Using previously acquired linguistic and/or conceptual knowledge to assist comprehension or production  |
| Inferencing                            | Using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information  |
| Analyzing expressions (Oxford, 1990)   | Determining the meaning of a new expression by breaking it down into parts; using the meanings of various parts to understand the meaning of the whole expression   |
| Analyzing Contrastively (Oxford, 1990) | Comparing elements of the new language with elements of one's own language to determine similarities and differences  |
| Translating (Oxford, 1990)             | Using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language   |

| <b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>                   |  |
|---|--|
| Advance Organization<br>(Planning)                | Previewing the main ideas and concepts of the material to be learned.  |
| Selective Attention                               | Attending to phrases, linguistic markers, sentences, or types of information   |
| Self-Management                                   | Seeking or arranging conditions that help one learn, such as finding opportunities for additional language or content input and practice |
| Self-Monitoring                                   | Checking one's oral or written production while it is taking place.  |
| <b>Social-affective Strategies</b>                |  |
| Cooperation                                       | Working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pool information, or model a language activity  |
| Question for Clarification                        | Asking a teacher or other native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation, and/or examples                                      |
| Self-talk   | Reducing anxiety by using mental techniques that make one feel competent to do the learning task.  |
| <b>Compensation Strategies<br/>(Oxford, 1990)</b> |  |
| Overcoming limitations in speaking or writing     | Avoiding communication partially or totally, adjusting or approximating the message, using circumlocution or synonym                     |

## 2.2. Grammar learning strategies

### 2.2. 1. Definition of Grammar learning strategies

Grammar learning strategies (GLS) are part of language learning strategies defined as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques, such as seeking out conversation partners or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task, used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992, as cited in Oxford, 2003, p. 2). Grammar learning strategies as one of the main strategies, which would help the successful learning of a new language, possess distinctive characteristics. According to Griffiths (2008) , (as cited in Pawlak, 2009) GLS possess distinctive characteristics, which she summarizes as follows: GLS are what learners do, which indicates an active approach, the application of GLS is partly conscious, they are optional which means that learners choose which strategies they will use, their use entails purposeful activity, learners apply them in order to regulate and control the process of learning and to facilitate the process of learning.

One of the first attempts to define GLS was provided by Oxford et al. (2007), who, basing on the classical definition of LLS proposed by Oxford (1990), characterized GLS as "actions and thoughts that learners consciously employ to make language learning and/or language use easier, more effective, more efficient, and more enjoyable." More recently, extrapolating from her new, extensive, and all-inclusive definition of language learning strategies, Oxford (2017) described foreign language grammar learning strategies as "teachable, dynamic thoughts and behaviors that learners consciously select and employ in specific contexts to improve their self-regulated, autonomous foreign language grammar development for effective task performance and long-term efficiency" (p. 244). However, given the focus of the present paper and the rationale that underlay the construction of the Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory, following Cohen and Pinilla Herrera (2010), GLS are understood here as "deliberate thoughts and actions that students consciously [employ] for learning and getting better control over the use of grammar structures" (p. 64). Apart from, like most other definitions of strategies, stressing elements of choice and awareness (although there are clearly different levels thereof), this definition brings to the fore the fact that the learning of foreign learning grammar involves not only getting to know and remembering relevant rules but also developing the ability to successfully employ them in different contexts in such a way that they are used if accurate, meaningful and appropriate (cf. Larsen Freeman, 2003).

### ***2.2.2 Classification of Grammar learning strategies***

Grammar plays a very important role in language learning, like the other aspects of the language, as learning grammar efficiently equips learners with a basis, which aids them to construct their knowledge, and empowers them to use the FL effectively (Ellis, 2006). Learners use certain strategies when learning grammar to enhance their grammar learning proficiency and to make language learning and language use easier, more effective, and more efficient as these strategies control and facilitate the learning process (Griffiths, 2008; Oxford et al., 2007).

### 2.2.3 Classification of Oxford (1990)

Oxford (1990) proposed a comprehensive classification system of language learning strategies using the two major groups proposed by Rubin's (1981) model; direct (memory, cognitive and Compensation strategies) and indirect (metacognitive, affective and social strategies).

**Table 2. Oxford's (1990, p. 17) taxonomy of LLSs**

|                     |                          |  |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Direct Strategies   | Memory Strategies        | Creating mental links                          |
|                     |                          | Applying images and sounds                     |
|                     |                          | Reviewing well                                 |
|                     |                          | Employing action                               |
|                     | Cognitive Strategies     | Practising                                     |
|                     |                          | Receiving and sending messages strategies      |
|                     |                          | Analysing and reasoning                        |
|                     |                          | Creating structure for input and output        |
|                     | Compensation Strategies  | Guessing intelligently                         |
|                     |                          | Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing |
| Indirect Strategies | Metacognitive Strategies | Creating your learning                         |
|                     |                          | Arranging and planning your learning           |
|                     |                          | Evaluating your learning                       |
|                     |                          | Lowering your anxiety                          |

|  |                      |                                   |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  | Affective Strategies | Encouraging yourself              |
|  |                      | Taking your emotional temperature |
|  | Social Strategies    | Asking questions                  |
|  |                      | Cooperating with others           |
|  |                      | Empathising with others           |

Memory strategies help learners to relate new information to existing ones or relating one grammatical rule or word to another in order to create association in memory but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. Whereas, cognitive strategies enable the learners to manipulate grammatical rules by practicing the grammar rule meaningfully in a realistic setting such as, by participating in conversation, reading a book or article, listening to a lecture, or writing a letter in the new grammar structure. Compensation strategies, on the other hand, serve as auto fillers in learning a language where information gaps occur in understanding or applying grammar rules (Oxford, 1990; 2003). In addition, Metacognitive strategies allow learners to evaluate their own grammar learning pattern and coordinate the learning process. Besides, affective strategies help learners gain control and regulate personal emotions, attitudes, and values. Moreover, social strategies are actions taken by learners so as to seek support or interact with other learners or more proficient speakers of the language (Oxford, 1990; 2003).

#### 2.2.3.1 Classification of Oxford et al. (2007)

One of the most serious attempts to propose a grammar learning taxonomy was made by Oxford, Rang Lee and Park (2007). The researchers tried to make a distinction between three categories of grammar learning strategies that can be linked with three main grammar teaching instructions. These categories are as follows (Oxford et al., 2007, pp. 127-129):

- (1) *Strategies for implicit learning which includes a focus on form* (i.e. attending to form in the course of meaning and message conveyance) such as paying attention to how more proficient people say things and imitating, noticing or remembering

structures that are emphasized orally, through pitch, loudness or repetition, or keeping a notebook of new structures that seem very important or frequent, etc.

(2) *Strategies for explicit inductive learning* (i.e. discovering patterns and rules on the basis of the input data) such as participating in rule-discovery discussions in class, creating hypotheses about how the TL operates and then verifying them, or checking with others who are more proficient to make sure that one's interpretation of a rule is correct, etc.

(3) *Strategies for explicit deductive learning* (i.e. employing the rules presented by the teacher in different types of activities) such as previewing a lesson to identify key structures to be covered, attending to rules that the teacher or the book provides, making up sentences using the rule, etc.

While the classification is without a doubt a useful point of departure for investigating grammar learning strategies, it is not free from limitations which have to be borne in mind when discussing and interpreting the findings of studies in which it has been utilized. Among other things, by categorizing GLS according to instructional modes, it adopts a teacher - centered rather than a learner - oriented perspective, it ignores the existing taxonomies of strategies, emphasizes cognitive devices at the expense of other strategy types, places a premium on noticing, understanding and remembering grammar structures without giving ample justice to the ways in which points of grammar are practiced, and includes quite a few techniques that are reflective of cutting-edge approaches to grammar instruction that may be alien to teachers and learners (cf. Pawlak 2008a, 2009a).

### 2.2.3.2 *Classification of Pawlak (2013)*

It was the lack of a classification of GLS that would be comprehensive and give justice to the actions and thoughts that learners actually engage in when trying to master target language (TL) grammar that prompted Pawlak (2009b, 2013) to develop his own categorization. This effort was guided by four overriding principles, namely: (1) the classification should be general and thus applicable to any TL rather than language-specific, (2) it should draw upon existing taxonomies of language learning strategies, (3) it should build on existing, comprehensive divisions of methodological options in teaching TL grammar, and (4) it should be informed by the findings of existing research on GLS and attempts to categorize such strategies, such as the one by Oxford et al. (2007).



Accordingly, Pawlak's (2009b) classification draws on the four-way taxonomy of language learning strategies into metacognitive, cognitive, affective and social, put forward by Cohen and Dörnyei (2003). It integrates the competing classifications developed by Oxford (1990), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990), by including memory strategies in the category of cognitive strategies, retaining the division into affective and social strategies, and scrapping compensations strategies as devices not directly involved in the process of language learning. The second crucial point of reference was the division of techniques and procedures in form-focused instruction initially introduced by Ellis (1997) and later modified by Pawlak (2006; see also Pawlak, 2014). It rests on a distinction between learner performance options, which require learners to use the targeted TL feature, and feedback options, which involve reliance on corrective techniques in case errors in the use of that feature occur. Learner-performance options are further subdivided into focused-communication tasks, where the use of the targeted TL form is necessary or helpful in the attainment of a communicative goal, and featured-focused activities, in which learners' attention is deliberately directed at a specific grammatical structure. Feature-focused activities, in turn, which "constitute the mainstay of foreign language pedagogy in the majority of educational settings" (Pawlak, 2014, p. 30), include consciousness-raising tasks, drawing on deduction (i.e. rule provision) or induction (i.e. rule discovery), or different types of language practice. The latter can be input-based (e.g., through visually highlighting a given form in written texts) or output-oriented, which can be more communicative, as in text-creation activities (e.g., telling a story using the past progressive), or more controlled, as in text-manipulation activities (e.g., filling in gaps). As for corrective feedback, it can be more explicit (as in provision of metalinguistic information) or more implicit (e.g., a recast that provides the correct form but preserves the original meaning), but also output prompting (e.g. as in a clarification request) or input providing (e.g., as in a recast). In designing the classification, insights gleaned from the research projects on GLS outlined in section 2 were taken into account, and some of the examples of GLS provided in the descriptive scheme by Oxford et al. (2007) were included of each category or subcategory correspond to the sections in the GLSI):

**Table 3. Based on Pawlak's (2013) classification**

|                      |                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cognitive Strategies | GLSs for the grammar in communication |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
|                          | GLSs for developing explicit knowledge of grammar:<br><br>GLSs used for deductive learning<br><br>GLSs used for inductive learning   |
|                          | GLSs employed to develop implicit knowledge of grammar:<br><br>GLSs for comprehending grammar and understanding form-meaning<br><br>GLSs for producing grammar in controlled and in communicative practice |
|                          | GLSs employed to deal with corrective feedback on grammar errors in a produced piece of work   |
| Metacognitive Strategies | Manage and supervise the process of Foreign Language learning grammar through the procedures of organizing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating   |
| Affective Strategies     | Self-regulating motivations and emotions when learning grammar   |
| Social Strategies        | Interaction with the FL proficient users or other peers to enhance the process of grammar learning   |

1. Metacognitive strategies, which are employed to supervise and manage the learning of language second grammar through the processes of planning, organizing, monitoring and self-evaluating; this category includes such GLS as paying attention to grammar structures when reading or listening, looking for opportunities to practice grammar structures in different ways;

2. Cognitive strategies, which are directly involved in the process of TL learning grammar and include the following subcategories:

a) GLS used to assist the production and comprehension of grammar in communication tasks, such as trying to use specific grammar structures in spontaneous

oral production or making comparisons between one's speech and writing and language production of more proficient TL users ;

b) GLS used to develop explicit knowledge of grammar, which can be subdivided into two groups :

- GLS employed for deductive learning, such as trying to understand every grammar rule;

- GLS employed for inductive learning, such as discovering rules by analyzing examples;

c) GLS used to develop implicit knowledge of grammar, which can be subdivided into two groups :

- GLS employed for comprehending grammar (i.e., understanding form-meaning mappings), such as listening to and reading texts containing many instances of a particular grammar structure;

- GLS employed for producing grammar, both in controlled practice, such as applying new rules to create sentences, and in communicative practice, such as using these rules in meaningful contexts;

d) GLS used to deal with corrective feedback on errors in the production of grammar, such as listening carefully for the feedback provided by the teacher on the use of grammar features, trying to notice and self-correct errors when practicing grammar, or trying to engage in negotiating grammar forms with the teacher;

3. Affective strategies, which serve the purpose of self-regulating emotions and motivations when learning TL grammar; examples of such GLS include making an effort to relax in the face of problems with understanding or using grammar, encouraging oneself to practice grammar points that pose a learning challenge, or keeping a diary where regular comments on the process of learning grammar are made;

4. Social strategies, which involve cooperation or interaction with the teacher, proficient TL users or other students, aimed at enhancing the process of learning grammar; the category includes such GLS as trying to help others who experience difficulties in learning or using grammar structures, practicing grammar structures with peers, or asking the teacher for assistance in understanding a point of grammar.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

#### Context of the Study

Nowadays, learning English is very important. At Thai Nguyen University of Technology, English-majored students have to be exposed to English in most subjects and exams, so having a good foundation of English knowledge will help students pass the exams successfully. In addition to listening, speaking, and reading skills, students also have to cultivate rich vocabulary and grammar to help improve their English level. This study set out to determine the role of grammar in learning English strategies. It would also investigate English-majored students' learning approach at Thai Nguyen University of Technology when they learn and use grammar structures. During the study, the researcher attempted to answer the following questions:

- (1) To what extent do students understand the role of grammar in learning English?
- (2) How do students apply grammar learning strategies during their learning process?

#### Participants of the Study

This study was conducted at Thai Nguyen University of Technology in July 2021. Twenty-six English-majored students during K52 - K55 of the Faculty of International Training have been chosen as the participants of this study. They age from 20 to 23. A large number of them have learned English for 7 years (4 years at secondary school and 3 years at high school). However, their English backgrounds are quite similar because most of their language knowledge has been influenced by the curriculum of English for high school students in the past, students did not have many chances to practice English skills. Thus, when entering Thai Nguyen University of Technology, their English levels were limited and they have to face up many difficulties in studying, especially in learning English grammar.

#### Research method

The study was conducted using quantitative method. The study included survey questionnaires for English-majored students at Thai Nguyen University of Technology.

In learning strategy research, various data collection instruments are used to assess language learners' use of strategies, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, think-aloud protocols, and journals. In this study, a questionnaire was used to assess the students' employment of strategies when they learn and use grammar structures. According to Dörnyei (2002), "questionnaires are easy to construct, extremely versatile,

and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable.” Furthermore, as Dörnyei (2002) points out, using a questionnaire provides the researcher with factual data, behavioral data, and attitudinal data about the respondents, which formed the basis of this study.

**Data collection**

The questionnaire used in this study was prepared by the researcher after reviewing the literature on both learning strategies and research methods. After the examination of the lists of learning strategies suggested by several researchers (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Pawlak’s 2013) in the literature, the strategies applied to grammar learning were adapted to prepare this grammar learning strategy survey.

The general language learning strategy definitions that inspired the researcher of this study in writing several of the items in this survey can be seen in Chapter 2. Survey questions are conducted by the researcher using Google form on the internet. The survey questionnaire included two forms as follows:

- The first form of questionnaires included 11 statements, background information about the participants was sought. Inquiries regarding gender and course level were elicited in this part in addition to a question which aimed to determine whether the participants valued grammar in language learning (“What do you think about the importance of learning English grammar?”). The attitudinal data gathered through this question also enabled the researcher to explore whether the perceived importance of grammar may account for any differences observed in strategy use.
- The second form of the questionnaire included 26 statements of possible strategies that learners could use when learning and using grammar structures. In order to respond to this part of the questionnaire, the participants were chosen methods which they use. For more detail, a table of grammar learning strategies in a survey questionnaire is provided below:

**Table 4: Grammar learning strategies in survey questionnaire**

|                             |            |                      |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Grammar learning strategies |            |                      |
| Group of strategies         | Strategies | Number of strategies |

|                             |       |    |
|-----------------------------|-------|----|
| Cognitive strategies        | 1→14  | 14 |
| Metacognitive strategies    | 15→20 | 6  |
| Memory strategies           | 21→22 | 2  |
| Social-affective strategies | 23→26 | 4  |

To guarantee the samples' reliability and validity, the questionnaires for learners were sent to each English-majored student during k52-k55 on the internet. Before asking the learners to do the survey questionnaire, the researcher briefly stated the purpose and significance of the study and clarified any misunderstanding about the survey questions. To respond to two forms of the questionnaire, the participants were expected to rate each item by ticking appropriate answers. In the end, 26 students voluntarily agreed to give responses to the survey questionnaires.

The questionnaire used in this study was prepared by the researcher after reviewing the literature on both learning strategies and research methods. After the examination of the lists of learning strategies suggested by several researchers (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990;) in the literature, those that might apply to grammar learning were adapted to prepare this grammar learning strategy survey. The general language learning strategy definitions that inspired the researcher of this study in writing several of the items in this survey can be seen in Chapter 2 (see table 1). Each strategy from the questionnaire was categorized according to the strategy types explained in the previous chapter. Cohen's (1998) distinction regarding "second language learner strategies" was also considered in the analysis of the questionnaire items, and they were further identified as either the strategies that enable the learning of grammar structures or those that enable the use of them.

#### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered through the survey questionnaire were coded for statistical analysis to investigate students' extent to understand the role of grammar in learning English; which grammar learning strategies are commonly used and how English-majored students at Thai Nguyen University of Technology use each strategy.

#### 4.1. Students' awareness of grammar learning strategies

The 11 items of the questionnaire on Google form 1 were delivered to the learners. The data are analyzed in this part of the study in the below charts which show the responses for the questions in the questionnaires. Besides, the first question in the questionnaires bring a result based on students' opinion.

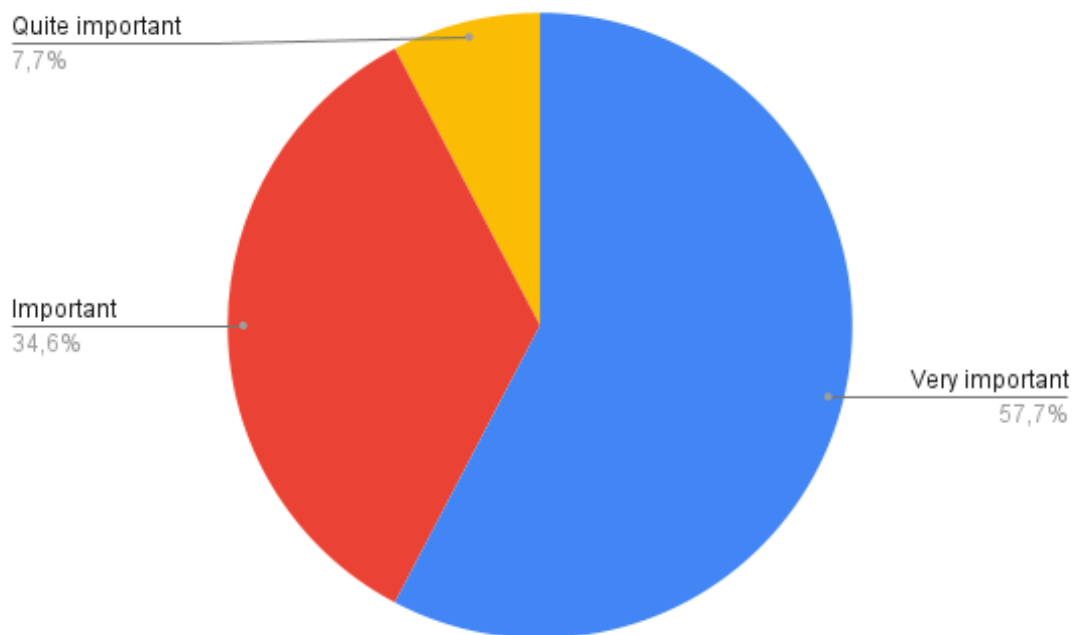
Almost all students who participated in the survey questionnaire have been learning English for more than ten years (57, 7%). Other learners have also studied English for five to ten years (30, 8%). Only (11,5%) of students have studied English for one to five years. This means that they started learning English since they were in primary school, so they have been exposed to English for a very long time and realized the importance of English not only in school but also in the fields of life and career.

Besides, the results survey show that English-majored students have different levels of English language from A1-C2. The number of participants (38,5%) considered their grammar level as B1. On the other hand, a ratio of (23,1%) of learners reported that their level in English is A2. 11,5% of the students respondents evaluated their level of English grammar as poor is A1. While only 3,8% of participants believed that they possess an excellent level that is C1 and the same proportions 3,8% of students at level C2. These results show the students' level of English from A1- C2. In general, students have a good foundation of English, most students are at intermediate level and very few students are at an advanced level.

Moreover, the survey results indicated that English-majored students have flexible time for learning English language, especially learning English grammar. The number of respondents learning English grammar for 1 hour to 2 hours per day accounts for 38,5% and the same proportions (38,5%) of the learners spend 10 to 30 minutes per day on learning English grammar. On the other hand, a ratio of 15,4% learners layout 30 minutes to 1 hour per day. Just a few 7,7 % of the students spend more than 2 hours learning English grammar. Through the data above, we can see that English-majored students show special concern about English grammar and partly understand the main role of grammar for four skills includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, students need to understand clearly the role as well as the strategies to learn English grammar effectively.

##### *4.1.1. The importance of learning English grammar*

It is very essential for each student to recognize the role of grammar learning. Figure below presents the information of this issue.



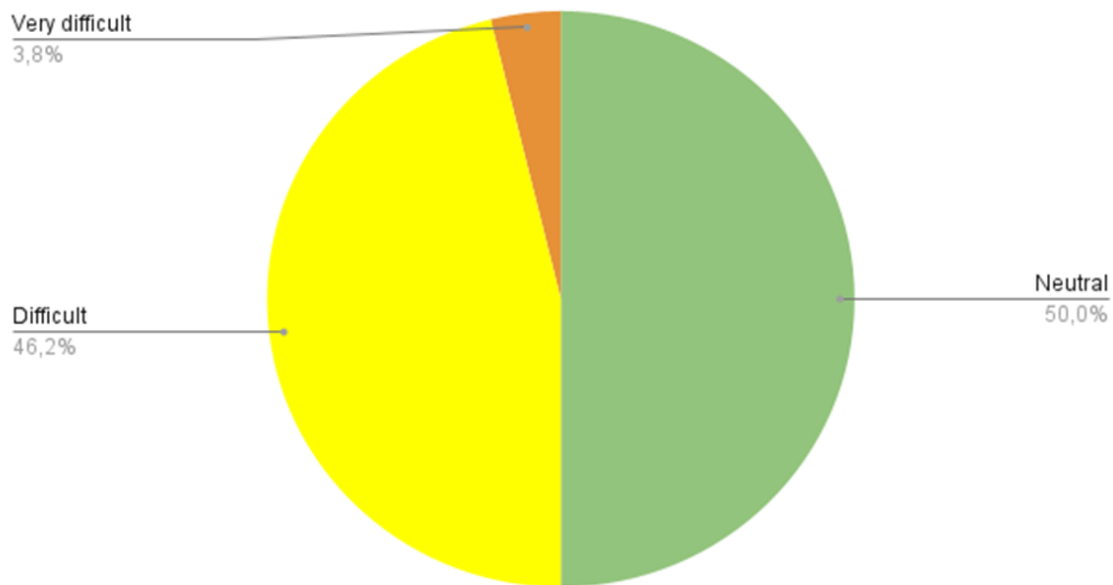
**Figure 1: Student's awareness of the importance of grammar learning**

As can be seen from Figure 1, most of the students agreed that learning English grammar is very important, which accounts for 57,7%. About 34, 6% find it important. Meanwhile, only 7,7% of them reckon that it is quite important. This chart shows that most English-majored students at the Faculty of International Training, Thai Nguyen University of Technology, claim that learning English grammar has an important role in learning English. Grammar plays an important role in English, like Abu Jeld (2004), Thornbury (2004) pointed out that " grammar has a psychometric function: that is to say, it is used as a measure of language proficiency ". So, Doff (1988) stated, "if students learn the main structures of English, it will help them greatly to speak and to write the language". Nordquist (2010) realized that grammar is very important for excellent writing. Therefore, he said, "by gaining a clearer understanding of how our language works, you should also gain greater control the way you shape words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs". In a word, grammar leads learners to be effective writers. Ziegler (2007) believed that "language has a structure and grammatical form, the structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses".



#### 4.1.2. The difficulties students face when learning English grammar

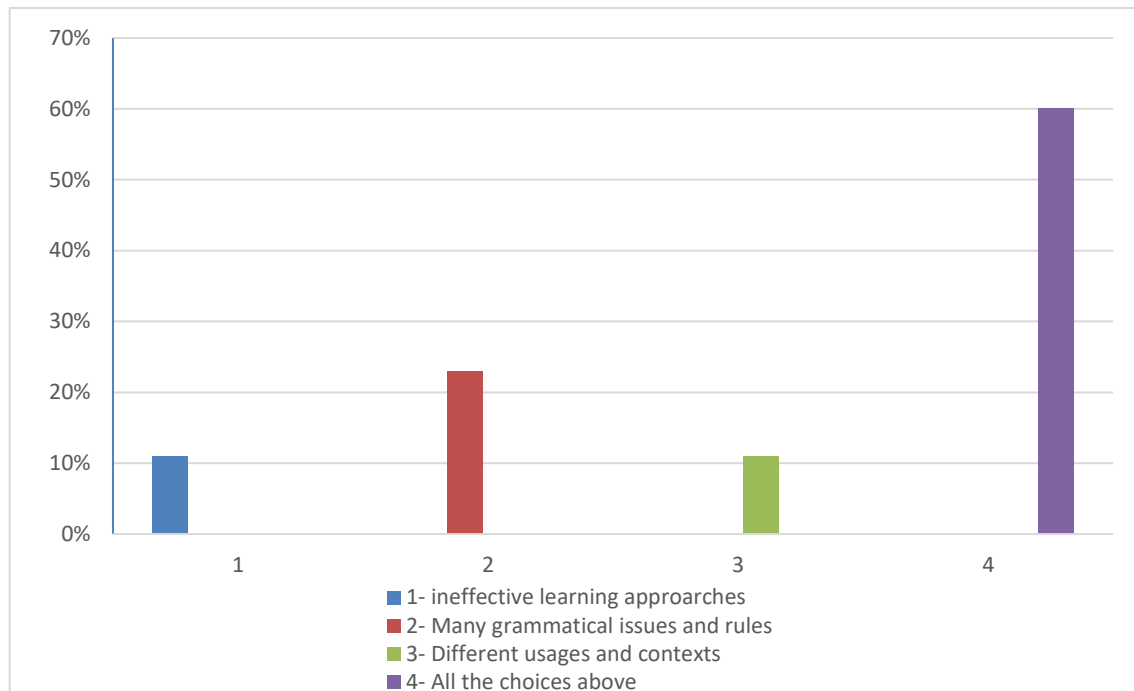
To understand more clearly the students' opinion of grammar, the second question in the questionnaire is designed to find out their personal assessment for English grammar. The result is shown on the chart below.



**Figure 2: English-majored students evaluate English grammar**

It can be seen from the chart that English grammar is a difficult part to learn. 46,2% of the learners suppose that grammar is difficult. For the students, learning English grammar is really a problem. Besides, half of the students think that learning English grammar is neutral (both easy and difficult). Moreover, the number of learners who agree that learning grammar is very difficult took 3,8%. Through the survey, the majority of students learning English face many problems such as many grammatical issues and rules, different usages and contexts, ineffective learning approaches. It is concluded that even though many students consider English grammar easy to learn, They confront difficulties in learning grammatical structures. In fact, unsurprisingly, the learners who confirm that it is easy to learn English grammar are the best students.

In addition, grammar learners also face many problems. The chart below will present this issue clearly.



**Figure 3: The problems students face when learning English grammar**

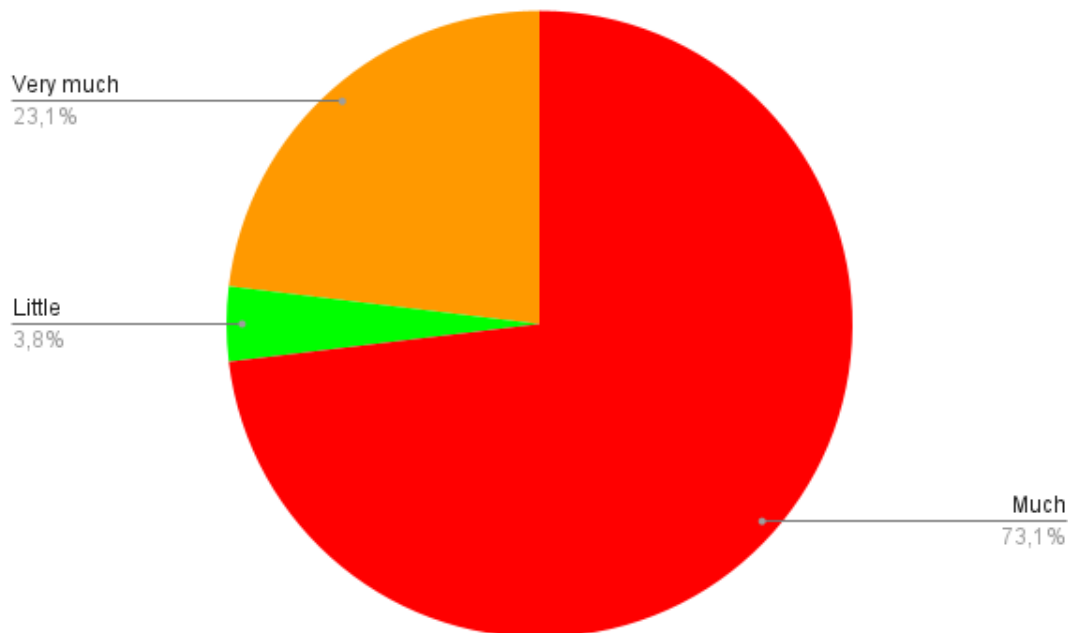
The above chart shows the problems that the learners face when they are learning English grammar. Particularly, 23.1% of the participants consider many grammatical issues and rules as the difficult aspect in learning grammar. While 11.5% of learners selected the problem of different usages and contexts as the main problems when they use grammar. The same proportion (11.5%) of learners have not found effective learning approaches. Moreover, more than half of learners (61.5%) choose “all of the choices above”. The responses provided by the students reveal that the way use of grammar is the major problem that learners encounter when learning the English grammar rules. In conclusion, many factors have affected the students’ learning grammar, so they need to find out effective learning approaches.

#### **4.1.3 The benefits of the proper use of grammar**

Through the survey, 26.9% of the students said that they will be confident about their language proficiency when they learn grammar well while, 21.1% confirm the fact that “if you know the grammar knowledge well, you can do the English test with high scores”. Only 3.8% of the students think that learning grammar helps to communicate well effectively. 61.5% of the students have selected all the above benefits. It can be seen that

grammar has a great influence on students, not only in English tests in class but also in communication, which helps you to convey your messages, coherently and efficiently.

Besides, students stated that learning English grammar has affected their competence, which is stated in the chart below



**Figure 4: Learning English grammar has affected student's competence**

The results obtained from the above table clarifies that a great number of participants (73,1%) think learning grammar greatly affects their competence. In addition, several students (23, 1%) asserted that learning grammar affects their competence very much. The remaining (3.8%) confirmed that they interfere little in learning levels. Most students believe that learning grammar determines their ability. Learning grammar well will serve as the foundation to learn other skills in English fluently; or in some cases, grammar determines the level of learners.

## 4.2 Strategies students use to learn their grammar

### 4.2.1. The activities students often do when they learning English grammar

The Google form of questionnaire involves the activities students do when they learn English grammar.

As it is clearly displayed in the Google form, the highest percentage (46.2%) of learners who watching media and learning grammar (e.g., on television and/or on the Internet). Seven students, representing 26.9%, find grammar rules through reading about

grammar in different books. This can indicate that they are aware of the importance of reading in developing their knowledge of grammar. 34,6% of the students learn grammar rules through using electrical devices or apps (including grammar lessons). Only 3,8% of the students prefer asking other people about grammar. Moreover, 38,5% of the students choose all of the activities above. This means they discover grammar rules through doing exercises and practicing regular examples. As can be seen that students maintain interest and self-confidence in grammar learning. They have clear goals and motivation, so they determine to learn English well and overcome all difficulties. However, most students feel that grammar learning is rather boring, so appropriate strategies and methods for grammar learning are extremely important.

The students were introduced four English grammar learning methods, indicated by Pawlak (2013) includes Cognitive strategies (practicing, receiving, and sending messages strategies, analyzing and reasoning, creating the structure for input and output), metacognitive strategies( creating your learning, arranging, planning, and evaluating your learning), memory strategies( Applying images and sounds reviewing well, employing action) and Social strategies( asking questions, cooperating with others). The number of participants who would choose the Cognitive strategies is 38,5%. The same proportions (38,5%) of students would employ the memory strategies. 34,6% of the students would apply metacognitive strategies. and similar figures, 34,6% of the students would apply social strategies in learning English grammar.

#### ***4.2.2. The methods English-majored students use to study English grammar effectively***

The questionnaire on Google Forms two was delivered to the learners. The data are analyzed in this part of the study strategies. This questionnaire aimed to investigate how English-majored students apply grammar learning strategies and which one they use the most.

Items 1-32 of GLS (Grammar Learning Strategies) questionnaire adapted from Gurata, A. (2008). The table reports the use of the four categories of GLS covering memory, cognitive, metacognitive, social-affective strategies. The results of English-majored students GLS were depicted in the tables as follows:

#### ***Cognitive strategies***

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Cognitive strategies</b> |  |
|-----------------------------|--|

|    |   | Percentage of use |
|----|---|-------------------|
| 1  | When I learn a new grammar structure, I try to associate it with other structures that I already know.                            | 57,7%             |
| 2  | When I learn a new grammar structure, I try to classify it under a group of similar things (e.g. verbs, tenses, etc).             | 46,2%             |
| 3  | When I learn a new grammar structure, I compare it with my own language by thinking of its equivalent in my native language.      | 42,3%             |
| 4  | When I see a new grammar structure, I use the context/situation, the dialogue, or the picture in order to understand its meaning. | 50%               |
| 5  | When I see a new grammar structure, I examine the parts of that structure.  | 26,9%             |
| 6  | When I see a new grammar structure, I try to infer the rules about that structure.  | 34,6%             |
| 7  | I use my own language to write the rules of a new grammar structure.  | 42,3%             |
| 8  | I draw charts for the grammar rules I learn.  | 23,1%             |
| 9  | I do grammar exercises at home.   | 50%               |
| 10 | I use grammar books in order to review or better understand new grammar structures.   | 38,5%             |
| 11 | I write one or two sentences using the new grammar structure so that I can remember that structure.                               | 34,6%             |
| 12 | I remember a new grammar structure by thinking of the context/situation it was used in  | 73,1%             |

|    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 13 | I try to practice a new grammar structure in speaking or writing.                              | 46,2% |
| 14 | I write e-mails, letters or compositions in order to practice newly learnt grammar structures. | 15,4% |

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics of students' use of cognitive strategies**

Cognitive strategies helped students to understand and produce new grammar items by manipulating grammar structure to make sense of them. As can be seen from the strategies reported in Table 5, Strategy 12 was the most applied in that students (73.1%) learn grammar by thinking about the context of the structure was employed. Undoubtedly, for students this strategy is one of the best ways to learn when learning English grammar. While only 15,4% of the students apply strategy 14 practice newly learned grammar structures by writing e-mails, letters, or compositions. It is possible to conclude that the respondents do not like writing compositions in order to practice new grammar structures. The data would seem to suggest that a small number of students could apply this strategy because it was very difficult and only students with a strong grammar background can use this strategy. Half of the participants choose three strategies (strategies 1,4,9): Students learn a new grammar structure by doing grammar exercises at home (50%), connecting with the structure they already know (57, 7%), or using the context/situation, dialogue, or picture to understand it is meaning (50%). These findings show that this strategy is considered as an important strategy for many learners when learning grammar.

From the above data, it can be seen that the cognitive method is an easy method for students majoring in English. Almost all the students who participated in the survey used this method. According to Oxford's frequency table (Oxford 1990), all of the students sometimes used cognitive grammar learning strategies. Cognitive strategies are essential for a new target language learning. Both students from level A1- C2 use cognitive strategies while learning grammar.

On the other hand, this result of the study coincides with Oxford's (1990) "Cognitive strategies are typically found to be the most popular strategies with language learners."

### ***Metacognitive strategies***

|  |                                 |  |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
|  | <b>Metacognitive strategies</b> |  |
|--|---------------------------------|--|

|    |  | Percentage of use |
|----|--|-------------------|
| 15 | I think about the situations in which I can use the newly learnt grammar structures.                   | 30,8%             |
| 16 | I try to notice the new grammar structures that appear in a listening or a reading text.               | 46,2%             |
| 17 | I determine the grammar structures that I have trouble with and make an effort to improve them.        | 42,3%             |
| 18 | I examine the mistakes which my instructor has marked in a written assignment, and try to correct them | 34,6%             |
| 19 | I pay attention to grammar rules when I speak or write   | 50%               |
| 20 | I try to notice my grammar mistakes and find out the reasons for them.                                 | 38,5%             |

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics of students' use of metacognitive strategies**

Learners' responses to the using meta-cognitive strategies from table 6 show that half of the participants claimed that they pay attention to grammar rules when they speak or write. This means they have productive skills and tend to emphasize structure in texts. These findings show that learners employ strategies when they both learn and use grammar structures. While only 30,8% of the students choose the strategy of thinking about situations to use newly learned grammar structures. This means that this strategy is extremely difficult for students because their level is mostly at B1. In addition, there are some strategies which were applied by students such as trying to notice new grammatical structures appearing in the listening or reading passage, identifying difficult grammar structures and trying to improve them, checking errors marked by the instructor, a writing assignment, and try to correct them, or try to notice my grammar mistakes and find the reason for them. These results show that the metacognitive strategy of setting goals is not favorable strategy to all learners but good number of participants regarded it as an important strategy in their learning. These findings also reveal that the

majority of learners are aware of the importance of metacognitive strategies to improve their learning of grammar.

### *Memory strategies*

|    | <b>Memory strategies</b>  | <b>Percentage of use</b> |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 21 | I note down the main ideas of grammar rules and learn them by heart.          | 65,4%                    |
| 22 | I say a new grammar structure to myself several times in order to memorize it | 57,7%                    |

**Table 7: Descriptive statistics of students' use of memory strategies**

The table above shows that most students consider rote learning as their main method because there are 65.4% of the students choose strategy 21. In grammar learning, students employed memory strategies by storing and retrieving information. Further, they are able to memorize grammar structures in their brain. In addition, they try to memorize structures grammar by speaking for themselves structures grammar (57,7%). These strategies helped the students in remembering the grammar rules.

It can be seen from the table that the number of students choosing this strategy is quite high; most students like to use this strategy in learning English. Most students are hard-working learners who know how to memorize and use grammatical structures.

### *Social-affective strategies*

|    | <b>Social-affective strategies</b>   | <b>Percentage of use</b> |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 23 | If I do not understand my teacher's explanation of a new structure, I ask him/her to repeat. | 66,5%                    |
| 24 | If I do not understand my teacher's explanation, I ask my friends for help.                  | 65,4%                    |
| 25 | I ask good speakers of English to correct my grammar when I talk.                            | 69,2%                    |
| 26 | I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a grammar mistake.       | 57,7%                    |



**Table 8: Descriptive statistics of students' use of social-affective strategies**

Regarding the use of socio-affective strategies when learning grammar, the results from table 6 revealed that 69, 2% of the participants use the socio-affective strategy of asking good speakers of English to correct their grammar when talking. This means that the majority of students do ask speakers of well English when they find it difficult in understanding grammar structure when talking. Noticeably, many students motivated themselves to used English grammar in communication regardless of making mistakes. As represented in the table, 57, 7% of the students opted to encourage themselves to speak English even when afraid of making a grammar mistake. This shows that students are not afraid to communicate, but always try to improve their knowledge and correct mistakes. Furthermore, more than half of the participants ask their teachers and friends for help when they do not understand a new structure. In fact, the role of teacher has been considered as the only, or at least the main source of knowledge in the classrooms. This belief has made a strong kind of dependency on teachers; so that any question and problem should be solved by the teacher and not the student her/himself. Beside the teacher, peers are the second source of help for students. This number of percentage shows, learners' awareness of the importance of avoiding negative feelings and trying to build self-confidence in improving their learning of grammar.

According to the results that were obtained from the percentages table, more than half of the students have clear goals for improving their grammatical knowledge. Most of the students try to find out how to be a better learner of English. Similarly, most of them think about their progress in learning English grammar. More than half of the students prefer rote learning. Most of them notice their grammatical mistakes and use this knowledge to help them perform better later.

The results from all of the tables above explained the data analysis procedures that are carried out in this study and reported the results gathered from them. According to these results, English-majored students use a variety of strategies when they learn and use grammar structures. The study also revealed that there are differences in grammar strategy use according to proficiency level, perceived importance of grammar. The next chapter will first discuss the results of the study in detail, then, present the pedagogical implications followed by the limitations and finally make suggestions for further research.

## V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1. Conclusion

The questionnaires were designed to investigate students' opinions about the grammar learning strategies they employ when learning grammar. The results obtained from the first questionnaire reveal that learners have a different conception of grammar. Besides, learners' development of cognitive, metacognitive, memory and social-affective strategies varies. It was surprising to find that most of the participants have basic knowledge about GLS and how they were developed and used effectively to face learning grammar problems. The findings of the study showed that most GLS categories were applied by all participants. The results also confirmed that English-majored students use a variety of strategies when learning and using grammar structures. Certain GLS were consistently considered to have a substantial effect on overcoming learning grammar problems that learners face. Most participants agreed on the effectiveness of the cognitive strategies more than that of other strategies.

Particularly, more participants used cognitive strategies, especially in explicit learning which was detected in the case of "learn grammar by thinking about the context of the structure, "do grammar exercises at home", and "connecting with the structure they already know". They predominantly mentioned engaging in the practice to understand and control sentence structures by doing exercises that have highly controlled activities.

With respect to the predominant use of cognitive strategies, this might be due to the type of grammar tasks that require practice, and it might be due to the fact that learners have their preferred method of facing grammar problems, which is more convenient to their cognitive experiences and styles. Another reason might be due to participants' foreign language proficiency level, as lower level learners use more cognitive strategies and then they are mainly keen on seeking practice opportunities.

This is in line with O'Malley et al.'s (1985) study, as they found that beginner-level Russian and Spanish English as foreign language learners use cognitive strategies the most and more than the intermediate level learners. In addition, this also coincides with the findings of Pawlak (2013), as in his study he found that about 74% of students refer to the use of 'doing exercises' for learning grammar.

In short, this study has revealed that English-majored students use a variety of strategies specifically for learning and using grammar structures. More specifically, it can

be definitely seen that the importance of learning English grammar has been perceived rightly by language learners. The study has also revealed that the use of these strategies varies by level. These findings have once again shown the importance of learning strategies to learning grammar.

## **5.2. Implications for teaching and learning English grammar**

Oxford (2001) states that learning strategies “make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8) when certain conditions about strategies were met. First, they should fit the learners’ learning style, and second, they should relate well to the learning second task at hand (Oxford, 2001). Therefore, certain strategies that help learners deal specifically with grammar tasks are essential for learning a foreign language.

As can be seen from the data analysis, all learners appear to use many learning strategies, whether they are low-level students or high-level students. However, they may not always be aware of the strategies they use, so they may not know whether these strategies work well for them. Therefore, it is the teachers’ job to make learners aware of these strategies and encourage them to use strategies with variety and relevance (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 2001).

The survey results show that English-majored students' awareness of using English grammar learning strategy is generally limited, and the usage level is rather. Students have many misconceptions about grammar learning. Many students are tired or afraid of grammar learning. Memory strategy is a traditional method that students apply a lot, so teachers can give students some opportunities to memorize grammatical structures. However, pedagogical strategies should be combined with current methods such as cognitive, metacognitive, and social-effective strategies which can help students learn grammar in the most effective way.

In order to change the students’ negative attitude of English grammar learning, strategy training should become an important part of English lessons for students. Teachers must grasp the latest and most comprehensive grammar teaching strategies. In order to strengthen students’ strategy using awareness, necessary grammar learning strategy guidance and training should be carried out, for example, delivering lectures on grammar knowledge, guiding students to use a variety of suitable grammar learning strategies, and guiding them to form their own strategy.

To improve the students' grammar using the level of grammar learning strategy, teachers can actively explore effective methods of grammar teaching, and adopt appropriate teaching methods, such as, communicative language teaching method. Teachers can also combine different approaches to make the lessons more interesting and comprehensible to students, especially English- majored students. The combination of methods helps students become more competent when using grammatical structures. To arouse students' interest in learning grammar, a teacher can let student focus on practical usages, for example, the teachers should give students more opportunities to engage in oral communication, improve the students' oral English and improve their English grammar knowledge as well.

According to the result of this study, the researcher suggests that teachers should find other strategies in teaching, so they could help the students to learn the isolated grammar course, especially for the Intermediate Grammar course. Ismail (2010) stated that Teachers do not only focus on teaching only but they should know the students" style in learning to find appropriate strategies and material for learning. Besides, the teachers also need to give more motivation to the students, so that the students can motivate themselves in learning the course.

The list of strategies devised for this study to enable learning and using of grammar structures may help the teachers who would like to help their students improve awareness of these strategies. The questionnaire may thus be used to assess their strategy uses. This assessment may also help teachers attune their instruction to the students' learning styles and strategies. As Oxford (2001) points out, teachers should draw upon a wide range of instructional approaches to address different learning styles and strategies of their students.

### **Acknowledgement**

This work is supported by Thai Nguyen University of Technology, Thai Nguyen, Vietnam.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Table 1 - Categorization used for the grammar learning strategies of this study

Table 2. Oxford's (1990, p. 17) taxonomy of LLSs

Table 3. Based on Pawlak's (2013) classification

Table 4: Grammar learning strategies in survey questionnaire

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of students' use of cognitive strategies

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of students' use of metacognitive strategies

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of students' use of memory strategies

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of students' use of social-affective strategies

Figure 1: Student's awareness of the importance of grammar learning

Figure 2: English-majored students evaluate English grammar

Figure 3: The problems students face when learning English grammar

Figure 4: Learning English grammar has affected student's competence

### ABBREVIATIONS

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>TOEFL</b> | Test of English as a Foreign Language           |
| <b>IELTS</b> | International English Language Testing System   |
| <b>TOEIC</b> | Test of English for International Communication |
| <b>LLS</b>   | Language Learning Strategies                    |
| <b>GLS</b>   | Grammar Learning Strategies                     |

## REFERENCES

- Abu Jeld, R. (2004). *Development project based on teaching grammar*. Educational Development Centre, UNRWA, Gaza.
- Bialystok, E. (1981). "The role of conscious strategies in second language proficiency", in *Modern Language Journal*, pp.24-35.
- Brown, Douglas. 1987. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Foreign Language*. London: Longman
- Cohen, A. D., & Pinilla-Herrera, A. (2010) Communicating grammatically: Constructing a learner strategies website for Spanish. In T. Kao & Y. Lin (Eds.), *A new look at language teaching and testing: English as subject and vehicle* (pp. 63-83). Taipei, Taiwan: The Language Training and Testing Center.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Skehan, P. (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C. J. Doughty, & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 589-630). Oxford, Blackwell.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2002). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Doff, A. (1998). *Teach English: a training course for teachers*, the press syndicate the University of Cambridge, Britain.
- Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: an SLA perspective. *TESOL*.
- Ellis, R. (2005). Measuring implicit and explicit knowledge of a second language: A psychometric study. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 27, 141-172.
- Ellis, R.(1997), *Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: OUP
- Griffiths, C. (2008). Strategies and good language learners. In Griffiths, C. (Ed.), *Lessons form good language learners* (pp. 83-98). Cambridge University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511497667.009>
- Ghani, M. 2003. *Language Learning Strategies Employed by L2 Learners*. Journal of Research (Faculty of Languages & Islamic Studies) 2003 Vol.4.
- Faerch , Claus and G.Kasper . (1983). *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*. London: Longman.
- Hamrick.P *The Effectiveness of Cognitive Grammar and Traditional Grammar in L1 Pedagogy: An Empirical Test*. Unpublished M.A thesis, Youngstown State University. (2008)

- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching grammar: From grammar to grammaring*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Nyikos, M. and Oxford, R. L. (1993). "A factor analytic study of language learning strategy use: Interpretations from information-processing theory and social psychology", in *Modern Language Journal*, 7: 11-22.
- Nordquist, R. (2010). *Grammar and Composition: What is Grammar?* (Forum).
- O'Malley, J. & Chamot, A. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. England. Cambridge University Press.
- O'MALLEY, J. Michael, CHAMOT, Anna U., STEWNER-MANZANARES, Gloria, RUSSO, Rocco P., and L. KUPPER. (1985). "Learning Strategy Applications with Students of English as a Second Language" in *TESOL Quarterly* 19: 557-584
- Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Oxford, R. (2003). *Language Learning Styles and Strategies: An Overview*. Available at <http://web.ntpu.edu.tw/~language/workshop/read2.pdf> (visited on 15th Jul 2015).
- Oxford, R. L. (2017). *Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Selfregulation in context*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Oxford, R. L., Lee, R. L., & Park, G. (2007). *L2 grammar strategies: The Second. Cinderella and beyond*. In A. D. Cohen & E. Macaro (Eds.), *Language learner strategies: Thirty years of research and practice* (pp. 117-139). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pawlak, M. (2006). *The place of form-focused instruction in the foreign language classroom*. Poznan – Kalisz: Adam Mickiewicz University Press.
- Pawlak, M. (2009). *Grammar Learning Strategies and Language Attainment: Seeking a Relationship*. *Research in Language* 7: 43-60.
- Pawlak, M. (2013). *Researching grammar learning strategies: combining the macro- and micro perspective*. In Ł. Salski, W. Szubko-Sitarek & J. Majer (Eds), *Perspectives on foreign language learning* (pp. 191-220). University of Łódź Press.
- Pawlak, M. (2014). *Error correction in the foreign language classroom: Reconsidering the issues*. Heidelberg – New York: Springer.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the "good language learner" can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9(1), 41-51)



- Rubin, J. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner*. (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Rigney, JW (1978). *Language learning strategies: A theoretical perspective*. In H F O'Neil(jr) (ed) 165-205.
- Richards, J. and John Platt. (1992). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Essex: Longman.
- Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stern, H.H. (1992). *Issues and Options in Language Teaching*. Oxford: OUP.
- Strakova, Z. (2013). "Developing cognitive strategies in foreign language education", in *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 1, 1: 37-50 N. J rentice Hall
- Thornbury, S. (2004). *How to Teach Grammar?*, Pearson Education, England.
- Wenden, A. and Rubin, J. (1987). *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall
- Williams, M. and Robert L. Burden. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach*. Cambridge: CUP