

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background Of The Study

Grammar is an important component in language learning because it provides a structural framework that enables learners to construct meaningful sentences and communicate effectively (Ghafar & Sawalmeh, 2024). In addition, grammar contributes to literacy development by helping students make grammatical choices that are appropriate to the context (Xavier, 2023).

Mastery of grammar rules also boosts confidence and has an impact on students' academic achievement (Ghafar & Sawalmeh, 2024). However, grammar remains a challenging aspect for learners, mainly because applying grammar rules requires adequate knowledge (Azizova, 2025). Grammar errors can have long-term consequences, ranging from lower academic grades to reduced professional credibility (Omonova, 2024; Dinh, 2023). These conditions show that mastery of grammar is an important pillar of students' communication and literacy competencies.

One important factor related to students' grammar learning is the use of Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS). Learning strategies describe how students approach, understand, and manage their learning process when dealing with

grammatical materials. Learning strategies are conscious and purposeful actions taken by learners to manage, understand, and retain information more effectively (Olop et al., 2024; Kikas et al., 2024). Previous studies have shown that metacognitive, cognitive, and instruction-based strategies can improve language skills, including grammar mastery (Wongdaeng & Higgins, 2023; Pawlak, 2024). Learning strategies have also been shown to mediate the relationship between motivation and language acquisition success (Li, 2024). These findings indicate that learning strategies are closely related to how students process grammatical input and develop their understanding of grammar.

In addition to learning strategies, gender differences also have a significant contribution to language learning patterns. Research shows that male and female students often differ in terms of motivation, engagement, self-regulation, and learning behavior (Saxena et al., 2024; Koka, 2024). Li, Wang, and Shen (2025) found that female students tend to show higher motivation and emotional engagement than male students. Meanwhile, Sandsør and Brevik (2024) revealed changes in L2 English achievement dynamics based on age and learning context, where at certain stages male students may excel, although female students generally show more stable achievement. Östling and Jeppsson (2023) also emphasized that gender gaps are dynamic and influenced by the learning

context. These findings indicate that gender differences can influence students' choice of learning strategies and approaches to grammar learning.

Research on grammar mastery also highlights the importance of individual differences in learning. Pawlak (2024) asserts that Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) contribute significantly to both explicit and implicit grammar knowledge and can be influenced by motivation and learning style. Zhong and Wakat (2023) show that corpus-based learning through an inductive approach can also improve students' grammar mastery. Research by Ebadi and Raygan (2024) adds that technological experiences, particularly in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), influence students' perceptions of grammar learning. In addition, external factors such as the level of difficulty of the material, teaching methods, and intentional or incidental learning conditions also have an impact on grammar learning outcomes (Daskan, 2023; Rivera et al., 2023). This confirms that grammar mastery is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including learning strategies and gender-based tendencies.

Several previous studies have examined grammar learning strategies and gender differences in English language learning. Pawlak (2024) found that the use of Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) contributed significantly to grammar mastery, both explicitly and implicitly. The study confirmed

that students who actively used cognitive and metacognitive strategies demonstrated better mastery of grammatical structures.

In line with this, Alharthi (2025) reported that female students tended to demonstrate better English achievement and more consistent learning than male students. These findings suggest that gender differences may be observed in certain learning contexts.

In addition, Wongdaeng and Higgins (2023) emphasize that metacognitive awareness and strategy regulation play an important role in improving grammatical accuracy in the context of EFL. However, most of these studies were conducted at the university level and have not specifically examined junior high school students in Indonesia. Furthermore, studies that simultaneously examine Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) and gender differences in relation to grammar mastery are still limited, particularly among junior high school students.

Although various studies have discussed grammar learning and gender differences in English language learning, studies that simultaneously examine Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) and gender differences in grammar mastery among junior high school students in the Indonesian EFL context remain limited. Most previous studies have focused on university students, technology-assisted language learning, or

language skills in general rather than grammar mastery. Consequently, little is known about how male and female junior high school students differ in their use of Grammar Learning Strategies and their grammar mastery. This research gap highlights the need for the present study.

Although grammar is an important aspect of learning English, many junior high school students still have difficulty mastering it. This can be seen from the initial observations conducted on November 20, 2025, at SMP N 03 Seluma, which showed differences in participation and learning behavior in grammar learning between male and female students. Female students were seen to be more active in asking questions, answering, and using more varied learning strategies, such as taking detailed notes and practicing sentence construction. In contrast, some male students tended to be more passive and relied on memorization without deep understanding. In addition, students still had difficulty understanding specific grammar materials such as the simple past tense, past continuous tense, and modal verbs. This condition indicates that differences in learning strategies and gender may be associated with students' grammar mastery.

Based on the research gap and actual conditions in the field, there is still a need to compare grammar mastery between male and female students and to describe the Grammar Learning Strategies used by each group. Understanding how male

and female students differ in their use of learning strategies and their levels of grammar mastery in simple past tense, past continuous tense, and modal verbs will help teachers design more effective and responsive learning approaches. Therefore, this study aims to compare the grammar mastery of male and female students and to describe the Grammar Learning Strategies used by each group at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem and preliminary findings of the study, several issues can be identified as follows:

1. Students tend to have difficulty understanding and applying grammar rules correctly in the English language learning.
2. The variations in Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) used by students have not been systematically identified.
3. Students' level of grammar mastery still varies, especially in materials such as simple past tense, past continuous tense, and modal verbs.
4. Based on preliminary classroom observation, male students tend to experience more difficulties in understanding grammar compared to female students.

C. Limitation of the Research

This study was conducted with several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, this study only involved eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma in the academic year under review, so the findings cannot be generalized to other grade levels, different schools, or broader regional contexts. Second, the measurement of grammar mastery was limited to the material covered in the test instruments, namely the simple past tense, the past continuous tense, and modal verbs in accordance with the eighth-grade curriculum, so the results of the study did not represent all aspects of English grammar comprehensively. Third, data collection only used written tests and Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) questionnaires without involving other supporting methods such as interviews, observations, or speaking skill assessments that could provide a more in-depth picture of students' grammar abilities. Fourth, this study only focuses on grammar mastery and Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) based on gender differences. Other factors such as motivation, learning style, language exposure, and environmental support were not included in the analysis. Finally, this study is cross-sectional in nature, so it only describes the condition of students at a certain point in time and does not reflect the long-term development of grammar mastery. Thus, this study provides an important initial overview,

but still opens up opportunities for more comprehensive and in-depth follow-up research.

D. Research Questions

1. What grammar learning strategies (GLS) are used by male and female eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma in learning English grammar?
2. What is the level of English grammar mastery of male and female eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma?
3. Is there a significant difference in English grammar mastery between male and female eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma?

E. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions formulated above, the objectives of this study are designed to provide clear direction in achieving the following research objectives:

1. To identify the grammar learning strategies (GLS) used by male and female eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma in learning English grammar
2. To describe the level of English grammar mastery of male and female eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma.

3. To determine whether there is a significant difference in English grammar mastery between male and female eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma.

F. The Significance of the Research

The research entitled Learning Strategies and Gender Differences in English Grammar Mastery: A Comparative Study of Eighth Grade Students at SMP Negeri 03 Seluma has significant theoretical and practical implications. Grammar, as the foundation of English language learning, influences students' ability to understand, compose, and convey ideas effectively. Meanwhile, learning strategies and gender differences also determine how students process and master grammar rules in the context of junior high school learning.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of scientific studies on grammar mastery by incorporating gender perspectives and Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) in the context of junior high schools in Indonesia. Previous studies have focused more on university students or the use of technology; therefore, research examining Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS), gender differences, and grammar mastery among junior high school students is still limited. Through this study, scientific understanding of the factors that influence students' grammar skills can be expanded and deepened.

In practical terms, this research provides benefits for English teachers in designing more effective, adaptive, and responsive grammar learning that takes into account gender differences and student learning strategies. The findings of this study can be used as a reference for teachers to adjust their teaching methods in order to encourage active participation from both male and female students. In addition, the results of this study provide input for schools in developing learning policies that support equal learning outcomes and help students identify the grammar learning strategies that best suit their characteristics and needs.

Thus, this study has strong theoretical and practical value. The findings are expected to enrich the academic discourse on Grammar Learning Strategies, gender differences, and grammar mastery, while also making a real contribution to improving the quality of English language learning at the junior high school level. In addition, the results of this study can be used as a reference for teachers, schools, and education policy makers in developing more effective and contextual approaches to grammar learning.

G. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid differences in interpretation, the following explains important terminology that is defined operationally so that this study has clear concepts and scope:

1. Grammar Mastery

Grammar mastery is the level of students' ability to understand and use English grammar rules appropriately to construct meaningful sentences, improve effective communication, and support their academic achievement.

2. Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS)

Grammar learning strategies (GLS) are conscious techniques or approaches used by students to understand, remember, and apply subject matter in order to improve the effectiveness and results of their learning.

3. Gender Differences

Gender differences refer to the comparison between male and female students in terms of their Grammar Learning Strategies and grammar mastery.

4. Comparative Study

A comparative study is a research method that compares two groups or variables to find significant differences in certain phenomena, such as grammar learning outcomes based on gender.

5. SMP Negeri 03 Seluma

Seluma State Junior High School 03 is the research location where data was collected. In this study, Seluma State Junior High School 03 refers to the state junior high school that was the subject of the research, specifically eighth-grade

students who were actively enrolled in the academic year of the study and were used as the research population and sample.

