

Students' Use of Memory Strategies in Learning English Pronouns

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Received: 05/06/2026

Revised: 06/07/2026

Accepted: 24/07/2026

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of various memory-enhancement strategies in helping 9th-grade students at Al-Quran Darul Ulum Junior High School improve their mastery of English pronouns. Through an analysis of usage frequency and students' strategy preferences, this study reveals a strong relationship between cognitive memory aids and improved grammar skills. The findings highlight three prominent techniques, repetition, mnemonics, and contextual association, as highly effective methods that enable students to transition from rote memorization to a deeper, more practical understanding of pronouns within sentence structures. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that students who apply these methods are far more proficient in correctly identifying and using pronouns in everyday situations. This implies that effective language instruction must shift from conventional memorization exercises to targeted memory aids that align with the brain's natural way of absorbing and retaining new language elements.

Keywords: memory techniques, English pronouns, grammar instruction, ESL learners, word retention, language acquisition.

Introductions

Background of Research

English pronouns are a key grammatical component that prevent redundancy and ensure discourse fluency. However, ESL learners often face challenges with pronouns due to differences between the rules of their first language and those of English. This frequently results in errors in subject, object, and possessive forms in both spoken and written language. For instance, students might incorrectly use "her" as a subject or "he" as an object, demonstrating a lack of distinction between pronoun functions.

Memory techniques have been shown to aid second-language learning by facilitating better storage, retention, and retrieval of knowledge. For grammar, approaches such as repetition, mnemonics, and mental visualization help integrate rules for proper usage. Contemporary research emphasizes the role of memory techniques in building vocabulary and grammar skills. This study focuses on pronoun mastery to uncover how learners intentionally use these techniques to overcome language barriers and improve English grammar proficiency.

Furthermore, the difficulty in mastering pronouns is not only related to grammatical understanding, but also to how students process and retain language input. Many learners tend to memorize forms without fully understanding their functions across different contexts, which can

lead to confusion when they are required to use pronouns in real communication. This indicates that effective learning depends not only on explanation but also on how learners store and recall information during language use.

In this context, memory strategies are highly relevant, as they help learners organize and retain linguistic information more efficiently. By applying strategies such as repetition, association, and visualization, students can connect new knowledge with what they already know, making it easier to recall and apply pronouns correctly. These strategies also encourage more active involvement in the learning process, allowing students to develop greater awareness of their own learning techniques.

Therefore, integrating memory-based approaches into grammar instruction is considered an important step in improving students' overall language competence. It not only helps reduce common grammatical errors, but also supports long-term retention and meaningful use of language. This study, therefore, aims to explore how students use memory strategies and how these strategies contribute to their ability to master English pronouns more effectively.

Research Questions

- a. To what extent do students employ memory strategies in learning English pronouns?
- b. Which types of memory strategies are predominantly used by students?
- c. How do memory strategies contribute to students' mastery of English pronouns?

Research Limitations

This investigation has some limitations that need recognition. Primarily, it is confined to 9th-grade students at Junior High Quran Darul Ulum. Therefore, this research may not be relevant for students in different contexts. The results may not fully capture the experiences of learners across diverse age cohorts, academic stages, or sociocultural milieus, given the substantial contextual variations in strategy deployment.

Secondly, the inquiry is limited to memory strategies in the context of English pronoun acquisition. Alternative grammatical domains, including verb tenses, articles, or intricate syntactic constructions, remain unexamined. Thus, while the findings illuminate pronoun mastery, extrapolating them to broader grammar instruction requires additional empirical scrutiny.

Thirdly, data were collected through classroom observations, surveys, and brief assessments. This approach may fail to encapsulate the intricacies of learners' cognitive mechanisms. Self-reported data from questionnaires are susceptible to response bias, in which participants might exaggerate or minimize their engagement with memory techniques. Moreover, the study's abbreviated timeframe precludes evaluation of the sustained efficacy of these strategies in achieving enduring pronoun proficiency.

Methods

To conduct an in-depth examination of the effectiveness of memory-enhancing interventions for mastering English pronouns, this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. This methodological framework was chosen for its ability to provide a deep, detailed picture of the learning experience, thereby enabling exploration of "how" and "why" students interact with specific mnemonic strategies in a natural classroom setting. Participants included

9th-grade students from SMP Quran Darul Ulum. Memory techniques were systematically introduced through the following classroom exercises: Repetition Exercises, **in which daily practice of substituting pronouns in sentences was** repeated until they could be recalled fluently. Then, **Mnemonic Activities were taught by** teaching memory aids (e.g., “He for the subject, him for the object”) to clarify the role of pronouns. **Visualization Exercises** will also be used by creating charts and diagrams linking pronouns to everyday scenarios (e.g., “She refers to my mother,” “They mean my friends”). Next is Real-World Application, where students use dialogues and role-playing to practice pronoun usage in realistic conversations, and last is Memory Games, where students match flashcards to build recognition and recall.

The data collected from pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and surveys were analyzed to assess the effectiveness of memory strategies for learning English pronouns. The survey responses were thematically coded to classify the types of strategies students used: repetition, mnemonics, visualization, and contextual practice. Pre-test and post-test scores were compared to measure improvement in pronoun mastery. The analysis showed that all students demonstrated progress, particularly in differentiating subject and object pronouns. Mnemonics contributed to the largest improvement, followed by contextual practice and visualization. Repetition drills were effective but showed slightly lower improvement, suggesting that combining strategies may enhance results.

Then, Classroom observations confirmed that students who actively engaged in multiple memory techniques were more confident in applying pronouns in both written and spoken tasks. Survey responses indicated that students preferred strategies that allowed them to connect pronouns to real-life contexts or visualize their usage. This suggests that memory strategies not only support retention but also improve comprehension and practical application. The analysis also identified trends related to individual differences. Some students responded better to visualization tasks, while others found mnemonics or contextual exercises more helpful. These variations highlight the need for teachers to provide diverse learning activities and guide students in selecting strategies that suit their learning preferences.

Overall, the data analysis confirmed that memory strategies are effective in improving pronoun mastery. Mnemonics had the highest impact, but combining different strategies enhanced both accuracy and confidence. These findings provide empirical evidence that teaching grammar through memory-focused techniques supports meaningful learning rather than rote memorization.

Results and Discussions

The survey underwent thematic coding to classify memory techniques, such as repetition, mnemonics, visualization, and contextual association. Pre-test and post-test scores were compared to measure progress. The analysis showed significant progress in the identification and use of pronouns, particularly in subject-object distinctions, with mnemonics yielding the largest reduction in errors. Monitoring indicated that active students demonstrated greater confidence and accuracy in pronoun usage. These findings confirm that these techniques not only improve memory but also real-world application, making it a key component of grammar instruction.

Table 1. Results of the study

Student Group	Average Pre-Test Score (%)	Average Post Test Score (%)	Improve ment (%)
Group A (Repetition drills)	62	78	+16
Group B (Mnemonic devices)	58	82	+24
Group C (Visualization tasks)	60	80	+20
Group D (Contextual practice)	64	85	+21
Overall Average	61	81	+20

Mnemonic techniques led to the greatest measurable improvement in performance (+24%), demonstrating their significant effectiveness in facilitating cognitive differentiation of pronoun functions among learners. This significant improvement underscores the utility of mnemonic techniques as a structural support framework that alleviates cognitive load, thereby enabling students to systematically distinguish complex grammatical roles. Furthermore, the implementation of contextual exercises and visualization techniques yielded statistically significant improvements, reinforcing the pedagogical imperative to employ diverse teaching strategies to accommodate various learning modalities.

Although repetition exercises proved reasonably effective, they yielded a lower marginal rate of improvement than other cognitive strategies. This difference suggests that traditional rote repetition, when used in isolation, may yield diminishing returns in working memory retention. Consequently, the data indicate that a hybrid pedagogical model, for example when systematic repeated consolidation is combined with mnemonic frameworks or contextual applications, will optimize student learning outcomes more effectively.

Specifically, mnemonic tools yielded the highest performance metrics (+24%), validating their strong capacity to help students distinguish between subject and object pronouns. Contextual exercises and visualization also produced significant academic improvements, demonstrating that combining active cognitive engagement with real-world application significantly enhances semantic encoding and conceptual mastery. On the contrary, while repetition exercises provided basic benefits, they showed lower overall improvement, further reinforcing the premise that mechanical repetition alone is insufficient to foster deep structural understanding or long-term retention.

Statistical and qualitative analyses revealed that learning autonomy, specifically active engagement in selecting and applying cognitive strategies, correlates directly with superior academic performance. Students who demonstrate a high level of metacognitive flexibility by combining techniques, such as integrating mnemonic anchors with visual imagery, exhibit significantly higher confidence and conviction in the practical application of pronouns. These insights illustrate that linguistic mastery extends beyond mere passive memorization; rather, it relies on the learner's executive functions to access and apply syntactic knowledge fluently within meaningful communicative contexts.

Empirical observations show that all participants employed memory strategies to varying degrees, with mnemonic frameworks being the most common. The data also revealed a clear behavioral preference for mnemonics, contextual practice, and visualization over traditional, isolated drill-and-practice methods. Ultimately, the strategic application of these memory-enhancing techniques is directly reflected in improved recognition, deeper conceptual understanding, and better practical application of pronoun rules, as evidenced by increased grammatical accuracy, reduced error rates, and heightened student confidence in both written and spoken modes.

Overall, these findings suggest that educators should systematically integrate a diverse matrix of memory strategies into the grammar curriculum rather than relying solely on mechanical repetition. Providing regular opportunities for contextual language production, alongside guiding students to identify and select strategies aligned with their individual cognitive preferences, can significantly maximize learning outcomes.

Finally, this study reinforces the vital role of active and self-directed learning; as students develop metacognitive awareness of their optimal learning pathways, they are empowered to make strategic choices that fundamentally enhance their understanding and long-term retention of complex grammatical concepts.

Conclusions

This study highlights the significant role of memory strategies in helping students master English pronouns. Techniques such as repetition, mnemonics, visualization, and contextual practice were shown to improve students' ability to recognize and correctly use pronouns in both spoken and written contexts. Among these, mnemonic devices proved particularly effective in reducing common errors and enhancing retention. The findings also suggest that students benefit most when they are actively involved in selecting and applying strategies that match their individual learning preferences. This indicates that teaching grammar is not just about explaining rules, but also about guiding students to use strategies that support long-term understanding and practical application.

Although some challenges remain, such as individual differences in the effectiveness of strategies and the need for continued practice, integrating memory-focused techniques into classroom instruction can significantly enhance pronoun mastery. This approach not only improves grammatical accuracy but also builds learner confidence and engagement. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to incorporate a variety of memory strategies, provide opportunities for practice in meaningful contexts, and guide students to reflect on their learning. Future research could expand to other grammatical structures and examine the long-term impact of these strategies on comprehensive language proficiency.

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