Exploring The Use of Knowledge in Language Learning

Noor Hanim Rahmat, Sharifah Amani Syed Abdul Rahman, D Rohayu Mohd Yunos, Syed Salleh Syed Abdul Rahman, Azrul Hisyam Abdul Rahman

Exploring The Use of Knowledge in Language Learning

Noor Hanim Rahmat[1], Sharifah Amani Syed Abdul Rahman[2], D Rohayu Mohd Yunos[3], Syed Salleh Syed Abdul Rahman[4], Azrul Hisyam Abdul Rahman[5]

[1,2,3]Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang, [4]Novartis Pharmaceutical Corporation, Selangor, Malaysia, [5]UNIKL, Kampus Cawangan British Malaysian Institute
Email: noorh763@uitm.edu.my, shari348@uitm.edu.my, droha932@uitm.edu.my, syedsalleh86@gmail.com, azrul@unikl.edu.my

Abstract
There is a close connection between the use of different types of knowledge and the connections with the four strands of language arts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the quest to gain knowledge, learners need to use their language skills. The knowledge can be categorised as conditional, declarative and procedural knowledge. In order to gain these three types of knowledge, language users need to use the four language skills and they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the context of this study the skills are developed by language users in the process of gaining conditional, declarative and procedural knowledge. This study is done to explore how conditional, declarative and procedural knowledge influence the use of language skills. 252 respondents responded to the survey. The instrument used in this study is a survey. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile, section B has 22 items on conditional knowledge, section C has 10 items on declarative knowledge and section D has 10 items on procedural Knowledge. Data is analysed using SPSS and revealed that different people focus on different knowledge in their effort to learn English. Total mean show that language uses used declarative most often compared to conditional and procedural knowledge. Findings of the study bear interesting implications in the teaching of all four language skills.
Keywords: Conditional, Declarative, Procedural, Knowledge, Four Language Skills.

Introduction
Background of Study
English teachers often recognize the close connections between the use of different types of knowledge and the connections with the four strands of language arts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW); as indicated by (Atta-Alla, 2012). These are skills that students need to develop to form language competence. In the context of this study, language skills are defined as the process through which English language skill is taught by LSRW. Engaging students in hands-on communicative language learning activities is believed to be the

greatest way to develop these skills (Hiep, 2007). Some activities might include language memorization and translation within a learner's group. Furthermore, having the incentive to engage in learning activities outside of school hours can help to accelerate the learning process. Such activities may include watching English movies or listening to English songs. Thus, this paper will explore the use of knowledge in language learning.

Statement of Problem

Language learning strategies (LLs) are believed to be influenced by many factors such as individual differences, environmental factors as well as contextual factors. As learners, we all come from different backgrounds than each other. English language learners are no different, but have even greater needs for scaffolding than most first language English-speakers. If "systematically building on students' experiences and knowledge" is a key to scaffolding, knowledge of students is of even greater importance (Gallagher, 2020). Hence, these factors play a part in determining the effective use of LLs.

Language learning methodologies have also progressed beyond rote learning, grammar exercises, and primary and secondary school approaches to language development, notably in the tertiary context. Many elements, such as individual ability, perseverance, hard work, and the teacher and student's positive attitudes, influence current language learning methodologies and processes at the tertiary level (Nguyen and Terry, 2017). The same can also be applied when it comes to adult learners. Factors such as age, motivation, attitude, social setting, learning environments, and many more contributes to the success of them acquiring the skills involve when learning the language.

Another study by Thu (2009) investigates the language learning tactics used by effective English as a foreign and second language learners. Two successful Mandarin learners were interviewed and asked to fill out a questionnaire and a self-evaluation measure to indicate their perceived level of language proficiency as well as their future learning goals for each specific language skill. In terms of motivation, it was discovered that while one student, Miranda, learns English to flourish and utilize the language as fluently as native English speakers, the other learner, Kate, learns English for her everyday communication and academic pursuits in the United States. The results of the interviews and questionnaires demonstrate that these students use a variety of ways to learn to listening, reading, speaking, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are all important skills to have. It was also discovered that vocabulary acquisition strategies exceed those for other language abilities and subjects studied. Learners were shown to adopt a variety of social tactics to improve their English. Practice, as well as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, was said to be the key to strengthening all four language skills. Thus, it can be seen that through these previous studies, language learning strategies has a vital role in determining a learner's success in learning a second/foreign language.

Learning English either as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) prove to be a challenge for certain students. Their mother tongue can be a significant barrier to understanding the language they are learning. ESL and EFL learners' language acquisition is influenced to some extent by their mother tongue. First language acquisition significantly affects these speakers in transferring the message into the target language and this interference can possibly cause a communication breakdown between a native speaker and

an ESL/EFL speaker. A study done by Septianasari and Baihaqi (2019) at university level in Bandung shows that the common challenges faced by EFL learners with Bahasa Indonesia as their first language are in phonological domain and syntactic domain. Bahasa Indonesia has similar way to pronounce its alphabets and its phonetics. In contrast, English has different condition. English alphabets have different phone with Bahasa Indonesia alphabets. Once or twice they have to deal with the interference of their first language linguistic system.

The challenge also comes from syntactical point of view. Some participants still created some errors which indicate any interference of their first language. The distinctive feature of speakers' first language and foreign language becomes one of many aspects of first language interference. They spoke in English but once or twice they still used the grammatical rules of their first language. Incomplete expressions, plural nouns, and word order are some interferential problem they should deal with.

Another challenge for ESL and EFL learners comes from motivation. Hussain, Salam and Farid (2020) in their study on *Students' Motivation in English Language Learning (ELL): An Exploratory Study of Motivation-al Factors for EFL and ESL Adult* Learners noted that motivation is a powerful driving force that propels learners to attain their goals via continual hard effort and commitment. Some are built-in or intrinsic, while others are self-created or extrinsic motives that push people to do duties that are allocated to them on a regular basis. Students participating in the study were found to have different levels of motivation, which may be measured by their interest in learning, desire for self-improvement or achievement, social approval, and pleasure with their learning environment.

Hence, apart from linguistic challenges, learners can also be influenced by first language interference as well as types of knowledge in determining their language learning strategies which will later contributes to their interest and success in learning the second or foreign language. This study is done to answer the following questions;
- In what ways do conditional knowledge influence language learning?
- In what ways do declarative knowledge influence language learning?
- In what ways do procedural knowledge influence language learning?

Literature Review
Language Skills
There are four main skills in learning a language and each skill has different functions. Table 1 shows two main skills in language learning. According to Brown (2000), Receptive skills are those used in understanding and they are gained through reading or listening. Productive skills involve producing language and they are gained through speaking or writing.

Table 1- Receptive and Productive Skills (source: Brown, 2000)

	RECEPTIVE	PRODUCTIVE
SPOKEN	Listening	Speaking
WRITTEN	Reading	Writing

Types of Knowledge
When learning languages, learners use different types of knowledge to facilitate their learning. According to Atkinson & Shiffrin(1968), in figure 1, knowledge can be seen as having

three aspects; (a) conditional, (b) declarative, and (c) procedural. Conditional knowledge involves knowing the when and the why to apply the other two types of knowledge, e.g., readers skim newspapers to get the gist, but apply close reading to literature or difficult texts to develop deeper understandings. Declarative knowledge is the knowing of this or that, e.g., penguins have feathers or trees grow by converting carbon dioxide and sunlight into oxygen (photosynthesis). Procedural knowledge is the knowing how to do things or the steps/strategies involved in how to do things, e.g., the steps involved in multiplying mixed numbers or the best ways to make a tuna fish sandwich.
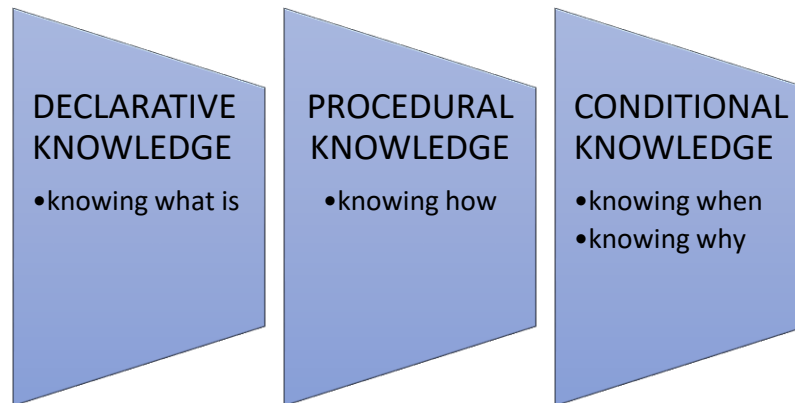

Figure 1- Types of Knowledge (Source- Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968)

Past Studies
Past Studies in Difficulties in Learning English.
Existing studies have examined the difficulties associated with learning English, with an emphasis on the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This section provides a descriptive summary of the approach and findings of the two reviewed studies.
The study by (Khasawneh, 2021) investigates the relationship between learning language skills and learning difficulties in English among elementary students in Irbid Governorate. A survey was carried out among 300 students from 10 different schools. The results showed that students face difficulty with listening, reading, and writing due to the teacher's lack of focus and curriculum (e.g., sentence and letter training) in teaching these skills. As for the speaking was due lack of students' confidence and fear of making mistakes.
Next, the study by (Jdetawy, 2011) conducted a literature review to understand the reasons to the problems encountered by Arab students with learning English as a second language. The study results showed that Arab students encounter problems associated with the four language skills due to the lack of proficiency, exposure, confidence, and preference to communicate in English.

Both reviewed studies emphasized the need and importance of overcoming the difficulties to strengthen and effectively developed the four language skills when learning English.

Past Studies in Learning English among Adult Learners
Although, a lot has been said about the good language learners, not much is known about the adult learners and the strategies they use in order to further improve and acquire their second language learning skills Wu, Wu and Le (2014) in their paper did state that adult education as having an important role in Chinese education. ESL learning by adults, in particular, has a significant impact on China's and adults' growth. The goal of their study was to identify the

hurdles and problems that Chinese adults have when learning English as a second language, as well as solutions to these issues. A total of 50 Chinese adult ESL students were chosen at random. A questionnaire was used to collect data, and both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze it. The findings revealed that acquiring English as a second language is critical for Chinese adults' future success. However, despite some benefits they may have over youngsters, they have encountered numerous difficulties and problems while pursuing ESL learning. As a result, many proposals for improving adult ESL learning were suggested.

Another study done by Fernandez, Peyton, and Schaetzel (2017) illustrates the need to strengthen students' academic and professional writing skills. The types of texts and aspects of writing that students must generate in order to succeed have been established by research on the teaching of writing. Simultaneously, examinations of writing in adult education have discovered that only a small amount of time is allocated to writing training. Teachers frequently do not understand or meet the demands of adults learning English as a second language (L2 learners), and teachers frequently have little professional development in the successful teaching of writing to adults. The article summarizes the research and presents the findings of a survey of over 400 adult education teachers of L2 learners across the United States.

Thus, based on the two previous studies on adult learners and their needs when learning English, this paper attempts to find the need to explore more on the use of knowledge in language learning especially among adult learners.

Conceptual Framework

This study is rooted from the levels of knowledge by Atkinson & Shiffrin,(1968) and language skills by Setiyadi (2016). This framework of the study presents the three levels of knowledge in language skills. In the learning of a language, learners used their conditional, declarative and procedural knowledge to ease learning. Language skills such as listening and speaking are considered as conditional knowledge as learners need to know when or why they use the language skills to communicate. Next, reading skills is used with the help of declarative knowledge to facilitate understanding. Writing skills; however, need the learners to use procedural knowledge to communicate effectively.
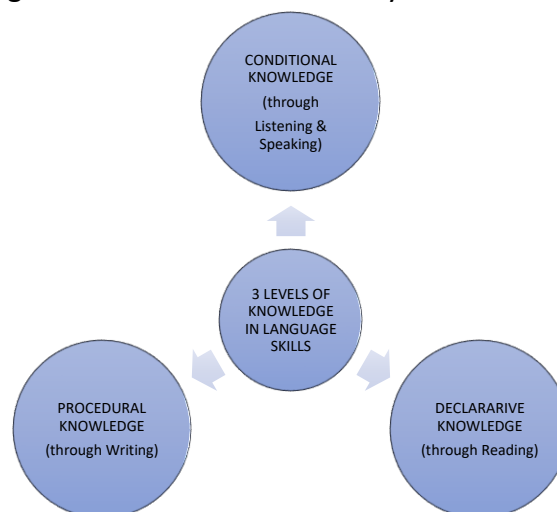

Figure 2- Conceptual Framework of the Study
(Source- Atkinson & Shiffrin ,1968 & Setiyadi, 2016)

Methodology
Research Design
        This quantitative research is done to investigate how learners use cognitive and meta cognitive strategies when they learn French as a foreign language. The instrument used is a survey adapted from Setiyadi (2016). .252 respondents were purposively chosen to answer the survey. The survey has 3 main sections. With reference to Table 2, section A has items on the demographic profile. Section B has 22 items on conditional knowledge (Speaking & Listening) and section C has 10 items on Declarative knowledge (reading) and section D has 10 items on Procedural Knowledge (Writing).

Table 2-Distribution of items in Survey

SECTION	KNOWLEDGE NEEDED	VARIABLES	NO OF ITEMS
B	CONDITIONAL	SPEAKING	10
		LISTENING	12
C	DECLARATIVE	READING	10
D	PROCEDURAL	WRITING	10
			42

Table 3- Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.933	42

        Table 3 presents the reliability statistics for the instrument. SPSS analysis revealed a Cronbach alpha of .933 thus showing a high internal reliability of the instrument used. Data is collected online via goggle form. Data is then analysed using SPSS version 26. Analysed data is presented in the form of percentages and mean scores to answer the 2 research questions

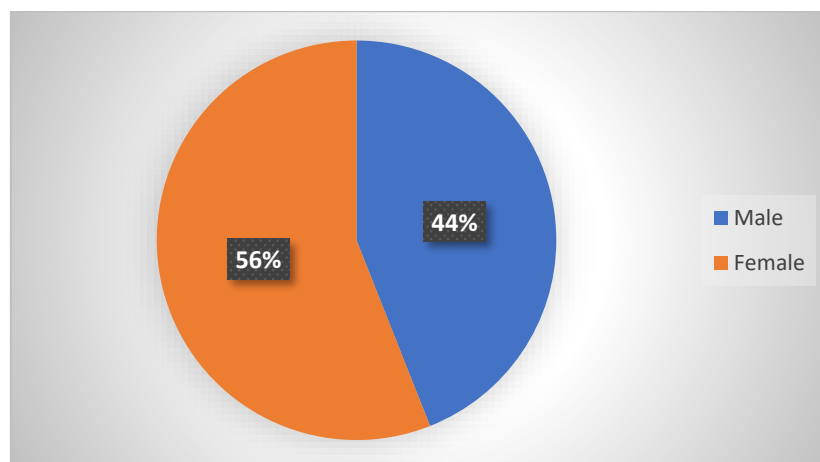**Findings**
Findings for Demographic Profile

Figure 3- Percentage for Gender

This section provides the results of the participants that have participated in the survey. A total of 252 surveys were conducted with 56% of the study participants are female while 44% are male (Figure 3).
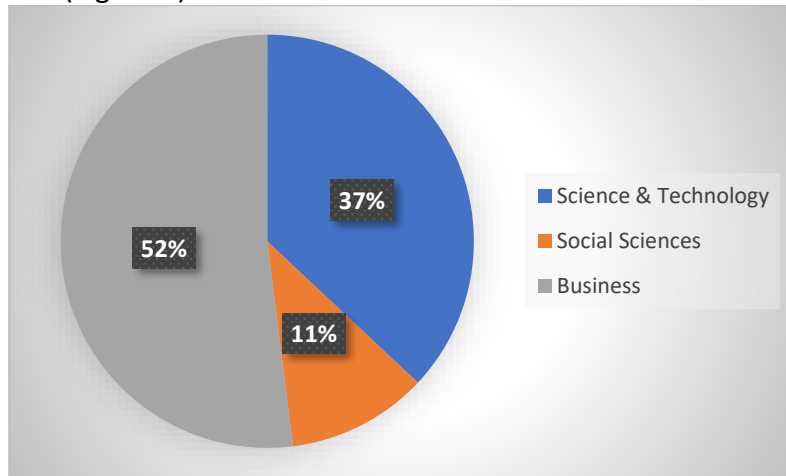

Figure 4- Percentage for Cluster

According to figure 4, more than half of the participants come from the business cluster (52%), with the remaining from science and technology (37%) and social sciences (11%).
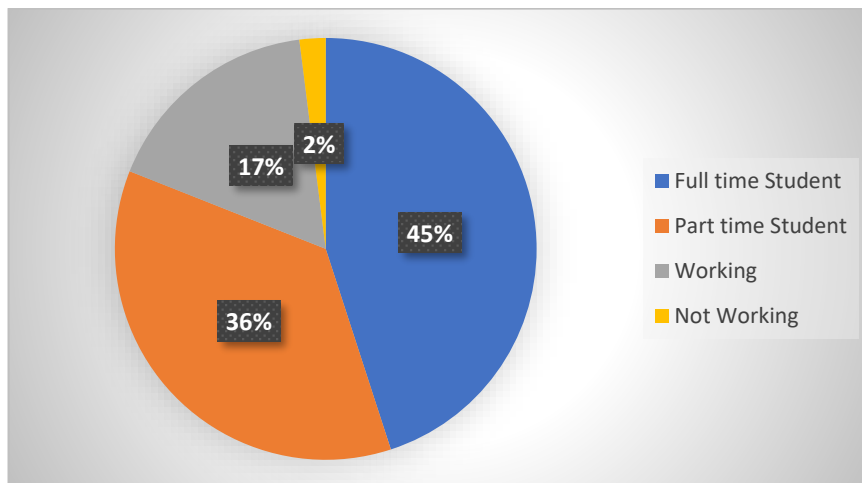

Figure 5- Percentage for Category

Figure 5 shows that majority of the participants (45%) claimed to be full time students, and those remaining are part time students (36%), working individuals (17%) or unemployed (2%).
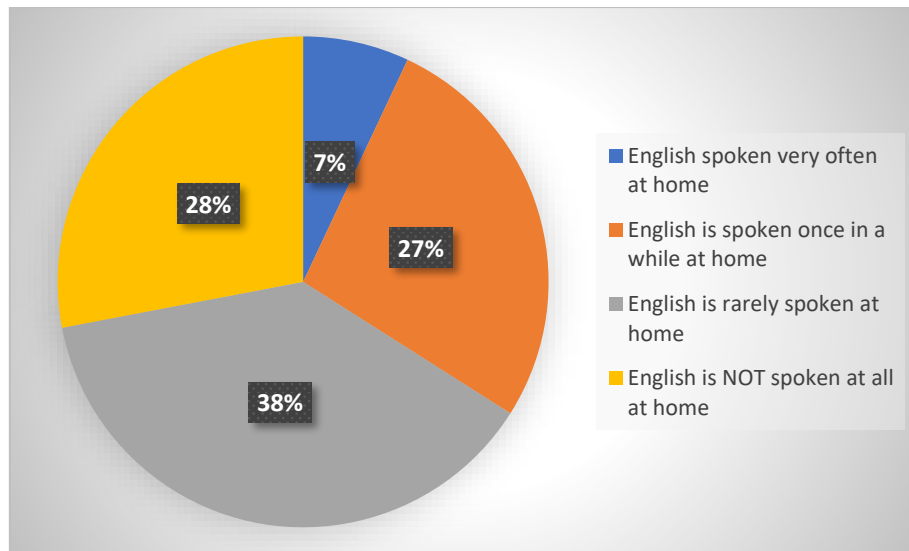
Figure 6-Percentage for Background

At the of end the survey, the participants answered the question of how often they spoke in English at home where the majority of the respondents (38%) claimed it to be rarely (Figure 6), 28% of respondents answered not at all, 27% use it occasionally, while frequently for the remaining 7%. This finding implies that most participants preferred speaking in their native language at home than in English.

Findings for Conditional Knowledge

This section presents data to answer research question 1: In what ways do conditional knowledge influence language learning? In the context of this current study, conditional knowledge refers to (a) speaking and (b)listening.
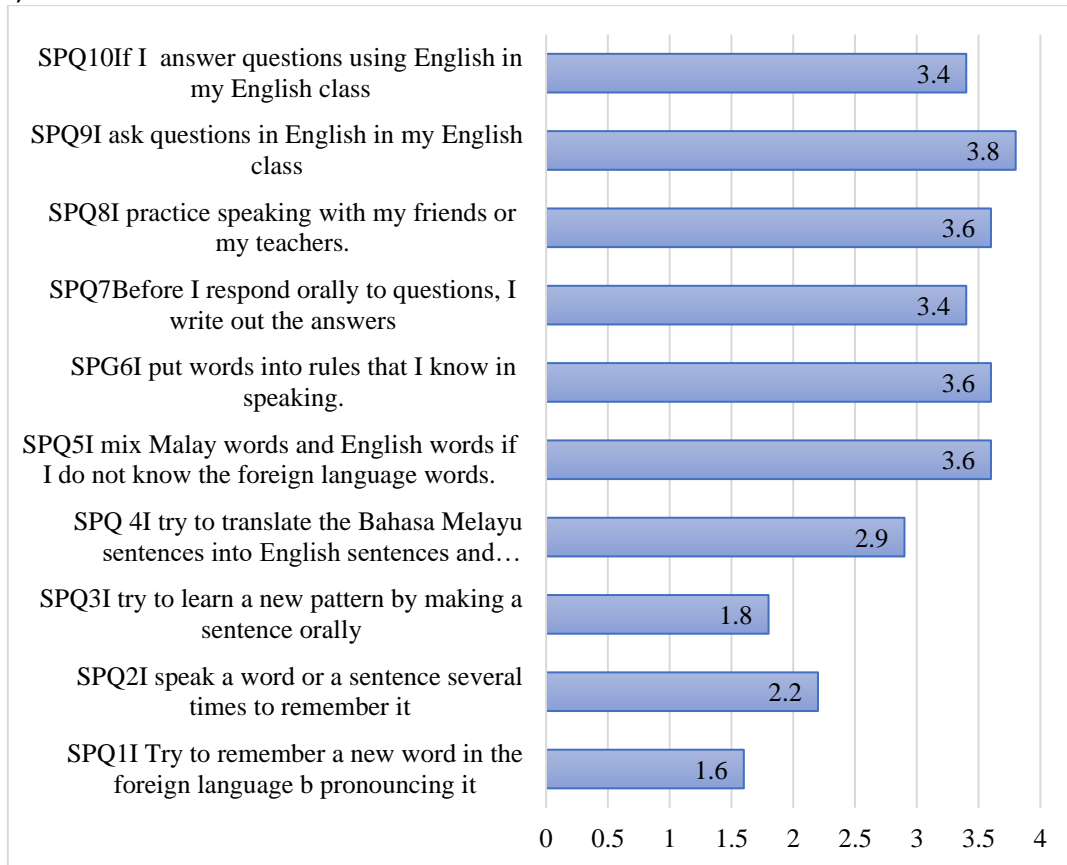
(a) SPEAKING

Figure 7- Mean for Conditional Knowledge - Speaking

Figure 7 illustrates that the highest score is 3.8 and the lowest score is 1.6. Most of the participants in this survey stated that they use English when asking questions, but only during English class. As for the minority of them, they claimed that they tried to remember a new word in the foreign language i.e. English, by trying to pronounce the words as part of the learning and memorization process. Hence, these are the scores gathered when it comes to using and applying speaking skill in their daily life or workplace when it comes to English.
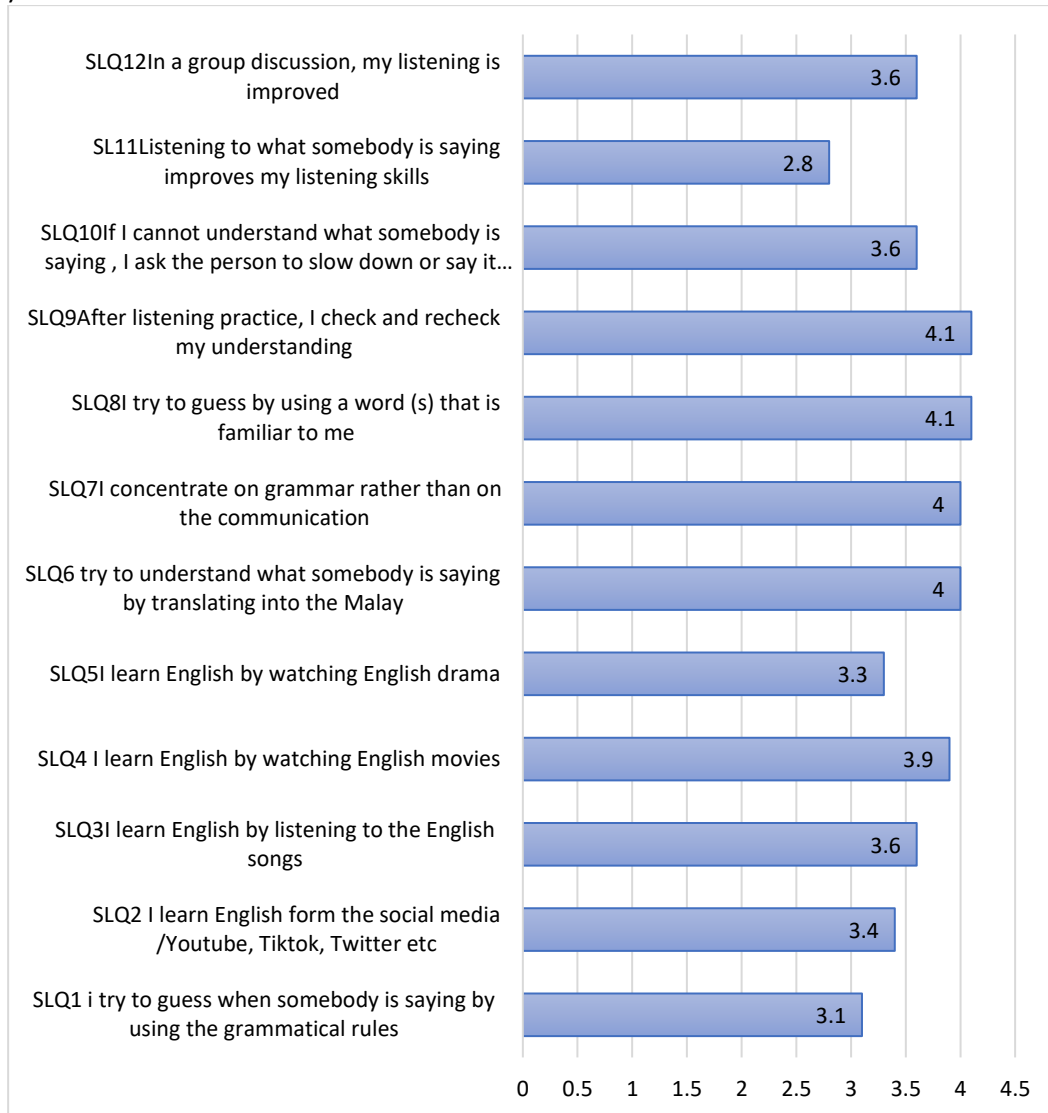
(b) LISTENING

Figure 8- Mean for Conditional Knowledge -Listening

Figure 8 shows that most participants in this survey use their listening skill when learning English by trying to guess a word/words that is familiar to them, or by checking and rechecking their understanding after every listening practice. The scores for both of these findings are at 4.1 of the mean score while the lowest score sits at 2.8 whereby participants claim that their listening skill improve just by listening to what somebody/someone says whether in class or via daily conversations.

Findings for Declarative Knowledge

This section answers research question 2: In what ways do declarative knowledge influence language learning? In the context of this study, declarative knowledge is obtained through reading.
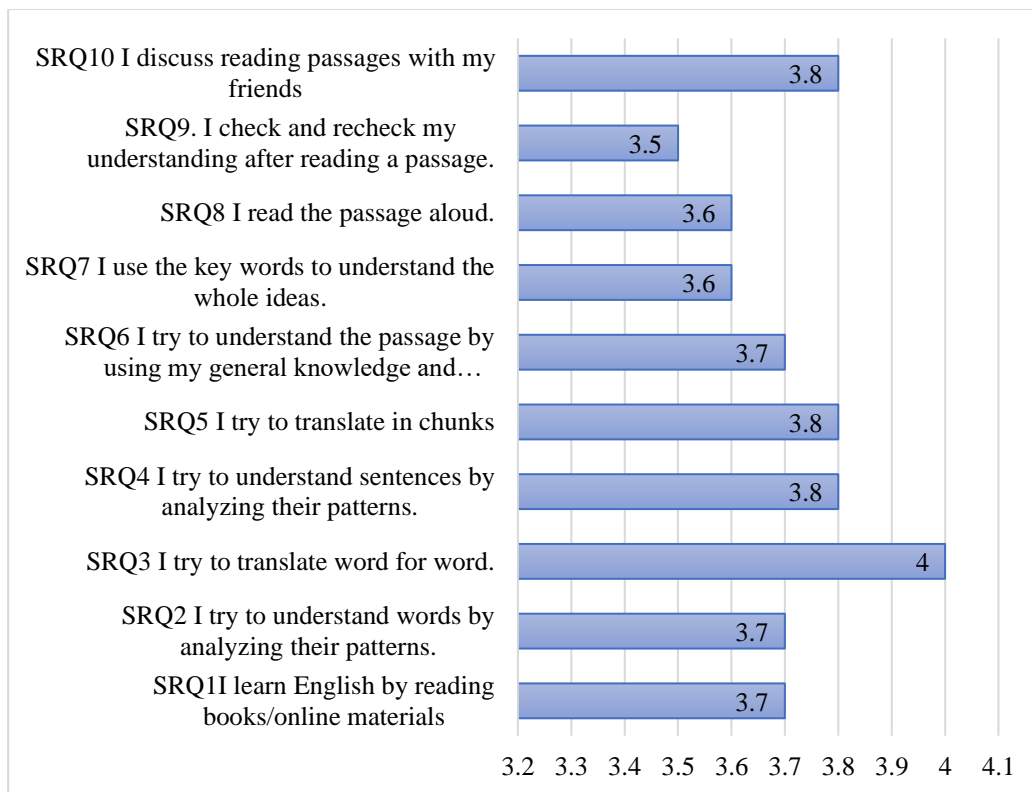
Figure 9- mean for Declarative Knowledge (Reading)

Figure 9 presents the mean results of analyzing participants declarative knowledge (reading) influence on language learning. Participants who translated word for word than in chunks while reading had the most influence, while the least for ensuring comprehension after re-reading a passage.

Findings for Procedural Knowledge
This section answers research question 2: In what ways do procedural knowledge influence language learning? In language learning, learners practice their procedural knowledge through writing.
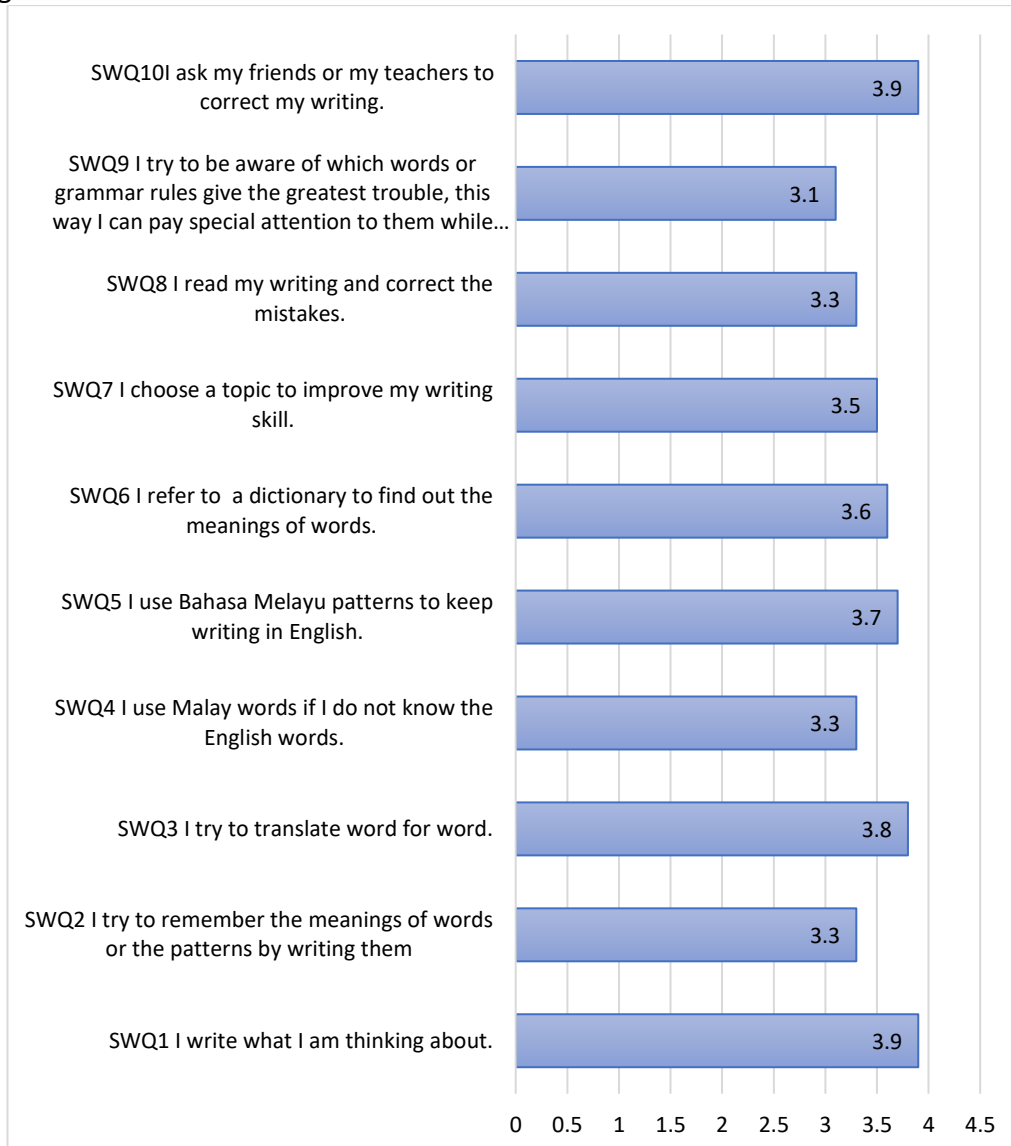
Writing

Figure 10- Mean for Procedural Knowledge (Writing)

In terms of acquiring or improving the writing skills, Figure 10 shows that most participants in this survey will write what is on their mind or ask their friends or teachers to check their writing (3.9 mean score). The lowest score which is at 3.1 shows that participants claim to pay attention to any grammatical rules or new vocabularies that give them the greatest trouble to ensure that they will face less challenges or difficulties during writing practice.

Conclusion
Summary of Findings and Discussion
This study revealed that in the learning of a language (English), learners use three types of knowledge. The summary is thus presented with reference to the three research questions ;
- In what ways do conditional knowledge influence language learning?
- In what ways do declarative knowledge influence language learning?
- In what ways do procedural knowledge influence language learning?

Atkinson & Shiffrin (1968) presented knowledge as having three aspects and they are (a) conditional, (b) declarative, and (c) procedural. Learners use declarative knowledge to add on to their knowledge. Learners use procedural knowledge to write. Conditional knowledge involves knowing when and why to apply declarative and procedural knowledge .

Data analysis in this study has revealed that different people focus on different knowledge in their effort to learn English. In the use of conditional knowledge, when speaking, many chose to ask questions about things they are not sure of. In addition to that, socializing too helps people learn a language. Speaking comes with listening when it comes to learning a language. It is interesting to note that people depended on translating to their mother tongue to understand new words. Psychologically, they would go back to what they are familiar with when dealing with new learning. This is also discovered in the study by Khasawneh (2021) who found that leaners lacked confidence when they spoke; hence, they needed to depend on familiarity in the learning process.

The summary of mean scores is shown in figure 11. The highest mean is for declarative knowledge. In the context of this study declarative knowledge is used when language learners use readings skills to facilitate their learning. Readers depend on their translation skills to understand what they are reading. Reading is also considered a social process when learners depend on/ use materials read to communicate with others. In language learning, procedural knowledge is needed when learners write and this knowledge is often under-rated. The study by Fernandez, Peyton, and Schaetzel (2017) also reported that only a small amount of time was allocated in the learning of this knowledge.
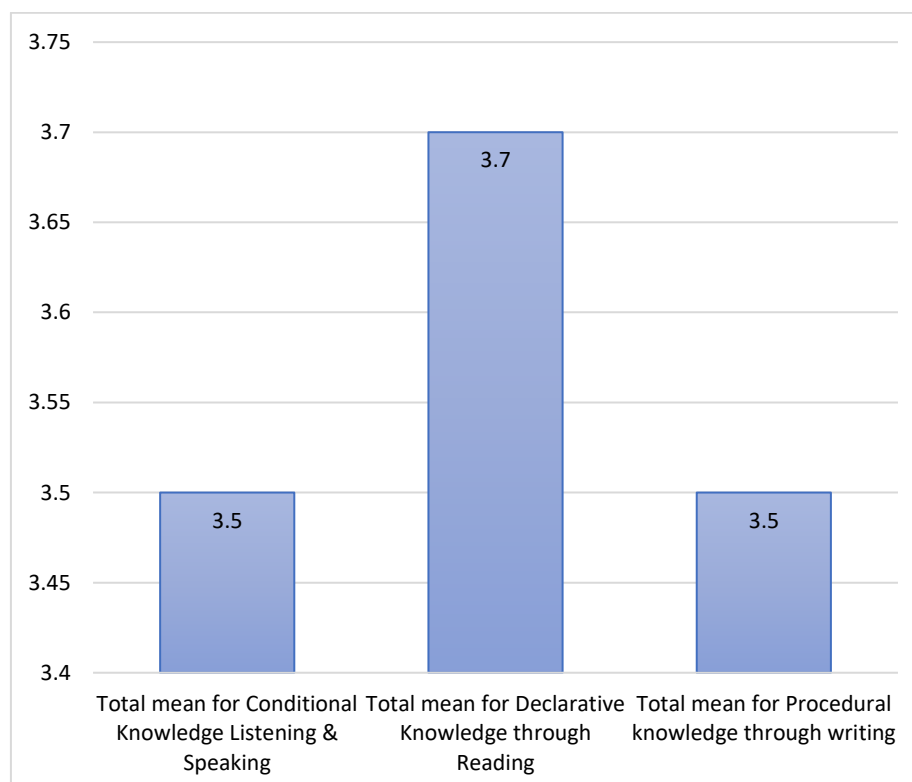

Figure11- Summary of mean Scores.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Resaerch
The teaching of conditional knowledge like listening and speaking should be done in an environment that is as close as possible to the learning of learners' mother tongue. Some

rules like not allowing the use of mother tongue in the second or foreign language class need to be relooked. What is the use of learners being forced to "bark" at language usage with little or no understanding of the meaning? Next, procedural writing is an under-rated skill and sometimes taught separately as the others skills in the language. Perhaps if learners can see the need for procedural knowledge through writing skills, then the teaching/learning of writing would not be seen as a 'difficult" task my many parties. Writing is a part of the communication process and therefore needed to be taught as such. Only then can writing in language learning be more appreciated and less hated.

It is suggested that future research look into the comparison of knowledge needed for language learners that is needed in the outside world. Knowing which knowledge (conditional, declarative and procedural) knowledge is used more often at different industries/ workplace can help future researchers to look into the needs analysis for different types of language for different environment.

References

Atta-Alla, M. N. (2012). Integrating language skills through storytelling. *English Language Teaching,* Vol 5 (1), pp 1-13. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n12p1

Atkinson, R. C., & Shiffrin, R. M. (1968). Human memory: A proposed system and its control processes. In K. W. Spence & J. T. Spence, *The psychology of learning and motivation: II.* Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0079-7421(08)60422-3

Brown, H. D. (2000) Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (4th Edition). NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Fernandez, R., Peyton, J. K., & Schaetzel, K. (2017). A Survey of Writing Instruction in Adult ESL Programs: Are Teaching Practices Meeting Adult Learner Needs? *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education*, *6*(2), 5–20. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1150482

Gallagher, K. (2020). *Learning Strategies for the ESL Classroom*. TeachHub.com.Retrieved February 6, 2022, from https://www.teachhub.com/teaching-strategies/2020/03/learning-strategies-for-the-esl-classroom/

Hiep, P. H. (2007). Communicative language teaching: Unity within diversity. *ELT journal,* 61, 193-201. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm026

Hussain, M. S., Salam, A., & Farid, A. (2020). Student Motivation in English Language Learning (ELL): An Exploratory Study of Motivational Factors for EFL and ESL Adult Learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, *9*(4), 15–28. Retrieved February 2, 2022, from www.ijalel.aiac.org.au.

Jdetawy, L. F. A. (2011). Problems Encountered by Arab EFL Learners. *Language in India,* 11 (3), pp 19-27. Retrieved from https://pdf4pro.com/view/problems-encountered-by-arab-efl-learners-33e988.html

Khasawneh, M. A. S. (2021). Language skills and their relationship to learning difficulties in English language from the students' point of view. *Science and Education,Vol* 2, (9),pp 261-272.Retrieved from
https://openscience.uz/index.php/sciedu/article/view/1846

Nguyen, H., & Terry, D. R. (2017). English Learning Strategies among EFL Learners: A Narrative Approach . *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*, *3*(1), 4–19. Retrieved from https://iafor.org/journal/iafor-journal-of-language-learning/volume-3-issue-1/article-1/

Septianasari, L. A. F. H., & Baihaqi, Y. (2019). Mother Tongue Issues and Challenge in

Learning English as Foreign Language. *International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching*, *3*(2), 204–214. Retrieved from https://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJIET/article/view/1941

Setiyadi, A. B. (2016) Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire (LLSQ) A Measurement to identify Students' Learning Strategies and Prepare the Success of Learning English in the Indonesian Context (Empirical Evidence). Indonesia: Graha Ilmu. Retrieved from http://repository.lppm.unila.ac.id/8847/2/isi%20buku.pdf

Thu, T. H. (2009). *Learning Strategies Used by Successful Language Learners* (thesis). Retrieved February 8, 2022, from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED507398.pdf.

Wu, R., Wu, R., & Le, V. T. (2014). Challenges of Adults in Learning English as a Second Language: Focus on Adult Education in China. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *5*(5), 1132–1138. https://doi.org/doi:10.4304/jltr.5.5.1132-1138