

Effect of Vocabulary learning Strategies on Academic Achievements of Pre-University Libyan EFL Learners

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Abstract

The present study is focused on identifying the effects of vocabulary learning strategies on academic achievement of students who learn English as a foreign language in Libya. The primary assumption made in this study is that the high achieving students in a class make use of a particular strategy or set of strategies for learning, including learning vocabulary items in a foreign language, different from the low achieving students, which help them learn new vocabulary items faster, retain them permanently and recall them in appropriate contexts. The secondary assumption made is that the set of strategies, used by low achievers is not suitable for effective learning in the given contexts as reflected in their achievement grades. The study was conducted by collecting data through a questionnaire which was adopted from Rebecca Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990) and which elicits information about the use of six language learning strategies used by learners. The sub-strategy questions were focused on eliciting responses about learning new vocabulary items in English, their retention and recall in context. The collected data were analysed statistically to calculate frequency of use of different vocabulary learning strategies among high, medium and low achievers in the same class. As hypothesized, the results showed that high achievers and low achievers use different strategies to learn, retain and recall new vocabulary items, strengthening my belief that the use of a particular strategy is the major drawback in the learning process of low achieving students in the same learning conditions.

Key words: academic achievement, learning and frequency of strategy use, vocabulary learning strategies

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1.0 Introduction

Vocabulary has a key role in the ability of the students to communicate their thoughts in a clear and concise manner. Reading and comprehending text is a basic part of the learning process, where novel words and phrases are brought up in class daily. Students can and learn and develop ideas only when they feel comfortable and confident in using their vocabulary orally and in writing. In this regard, Anderson and Freebody (cited by Francis & Simpson, 2003) highlighted the relationship between the vocabulary knowledge of students and their understanding when reading (p.66).

Hence, vocabulary is a very important aspect of a language. We can even say that the major chunk of the corpus of a language is its lexicon; the rest is the grammatical aspect. Knowledge of vocabulary means that a learner can convey meaning and express his ideas because as Wilkins (1972) stated, "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". (111-112). In other words, if a second language learner enriches his/her vocabulary, s/he can master the language very fast since much of the grammatical aspect of the language is present in its words - in their forms, categories, collocation, association and combination in sentences. English language is no exception to this. English language packs even more information in its lexicon, not only semantic information but also syntactical information and even extra-linguistic information through stress, tone, rhythm and punctuation, etc.

English is taught as a foreign language in Libyan schools. In the academia all the students joining the university should have a working knowledge of English since English is the language for almost all the university courses and for professional courses English is the medium of instruction. Even in the society in general there is felt a growing need to learn English to make progress in the present globalized world. But, it is generally noticed that students, except for a handful of exceptions, develop a kind of distaste for English and miserably fail to learn the language despite the best of efforts at teaching and learning.

This may be owing to several reasons, one of them being a lack of emphasis on generating awareness among learners to build vocabulary effectively, especially to be aware of the strategies to help themselves acquire English vocabulary apart from classroom teaching since classroom teaching / learning gives only a small scope for learning vocabulary. The major part of vocabulary acquisition is left to the learners. According to Oxford (1990), "Language-learning strategies, based on the idea of learner self-direction, are beginning to command attention around the world." (11) Oxford's idea of language learning strategies leading to learner self-direction, that is, learners becoming autonomous learners, is particularly suited to learning new vocabulary items since it is obvious for many reasons that language learners have to develop the habit of self-dependence.

1.1 The Problem

The Teaching of vocabulary is a neglected area of teaching English, wherever English is taught being placed on the functional aspects of the as a foreign language, owing to more emphasis language. If vocabulary is taught at all, it is only the lexical items found in the texts used in classrooms. A major problem arises when the learners have acquired the initial stages of the target language but face difficulties for lack of vocabulary for further progress. They are never taught to be autonomous vocabulary learners. That's why I have selected secondary school students for the present study as the secondary school students pass the initial stages of foreign language learning and are ready to use the language widely but face difficulties in using the language fluently for lack of proper vocabulary and lack of awareness of the need to build a

wider vocabulary base on their own. Since many researchers, like, Lawson and Hogben (1996:102) have emphasized on “the importance of vocabulary learning for second language (L2) learners (Allen, 1983; Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990; Richards, 1980)” and they also note that vocabulary has until recently been something of a “poor relation” as far as linguists and language teachers have been concerned (Maiguashca, 1993)”. I found the field quite fertile for research. With reference to the situation in Libyan schools, since I had been teaching there many years, and had an opportunity to talk to the learners about vocabulary learning. The main problem that learners complain about is forgetting the words taught. The learners cannot recall the words taught, or their meanings. Another issue is word orthography. The learners find it is difficult to spell correctly words which have strange pronunciations or have similar sounds to other known words. In order to memorize new words, most of the learners normally use the word repetition strategy. For instance, they repeat the English word aloud with its Arabic translation, or write it several times on a piece of paper or notebook with the Arabic equivalent. Some of the learners feel that using only memorization strategy doesn't generate any interest or enthusiasm to learn more new words on their own. Lastly, the learners have never been exposed to training in different vocabulary learning strategies. This relates to the problem specifically raised present paper: since learners aren't trained in any learning strategies, they follow their own strategies, which may or may not be well suited to producing appropriate results.

1.1 The Objectives

The objective of this research was to identify the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on the academic achievements of pre-university learners learning English as a foreign language in Libya. One of the problem areas in learning English language among Libyan students appears to be learning, retention and recall of the vocabulary items. I have hypothesized that the majority of learners must have been using strategies that may not be appropriate for the purpose since not each learning strategy is suitable for every learning objective.

The specific objectives of the research are to find out -

- I. The vocabulary learning strategy used most frequently by high achievers in a class.
- II. The vocabulary learning strategy used most generally by high achievers in a class.
- III. The vocabulary learning strategy used most frequently by low achievers in a class.
- IV. The vocabulary learning strategy used most generally by low achievers in a class.

'Most Frequently' used strategy is the strategy 'always' and 'usually' put to use by learners, while 'Most Generally' used strategy is the strategy put to use 'always,' 'usually' and 'sometimes' as well (for further clarity see 'frequency variables.')

1.2 Research Questions

So, to test the hypothesis and meet the objectives of the research I have designed the present research to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between vocabulary learning strategies followed by foreign language learners and their performance in learning the FL, with specific reference to English language?
2. What is the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on the academic achievements of English language learners, with specific reference to secondary school students in Libya?
- 3.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

I have hypothesized that there exists a relationship between vocabulary learning strategies used by learners learning English as a foreign language, and their performance in that language since specific vocabulary learning strategies are suitable for specific learning objectives. Second, I have also hypothesized that brighter students in a class rely on some particular vocabulary learning strategies more than the other strategies, and that brings better outcomes for them. In contrast, the slow learners rely more on particular vocabulary learning strategies which do not bring better results in the long run, and it becomes the major drawback in their learning process.

1.4 The Scope and Limitations

The present study was limited to students in a Libyan secondary school in Bani Walid. The research was conducted with the 2nd year students since they have passed the initial stages of learning English after 5 years of training in English. It is assumed that at this stage the learners are ready to use the language widely and therefore they require a wider vocabulary base.

The conclusions drawn from the study will be primarily related only to the students used as subjects for the present study, though on a wider experimentation the conclusions may be found sound for other second/foreign language learners as well. The scope of the present study is limited to English language taught as a foreign language in Libya, and not to any other foreign language.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies not only it is being a pioneering research in this neglected area of research in Libya but also possibly in the major part of the Arabic world since English is taught as a foreign language in Arabic speaking countries. In addition to contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the area of English language teaching, it is hoped that the findings of the present study will help the second/foreign language learners of English in a major way by suggesting easy ways to acquire new lexical items fast and effectively. They will be aware of vocabulary learning strategies, so VLSs will adopt, guide and help learners to learn not only in the class but also outside the school.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Research in vocabulary learning strategies of foreign language learners has been growing at a constant pace now. To enhance vocabulary retention Mondria and Mondria-de Vries (1994) suggest that learners use a card system where they enter the word and its meaning. Some textbooks use graded series of books which present new words which the learners should acquire gradually. Lawson and Hogben (1996) have investigated some of the procedures students use in situations where they attempt some deliberate acquisition of vocabulary. They opine that the learners must analyze the “to-be-acquired word-meaning complex” and then must establish a representation of this complex in memory. They support their hypothesis through Mayer (1992) and Wittrock’s (1992) argument that “The more effectively the to-be-learned material is elaborated during acquisition, the more readily it will be recalled.” (p.104). Gu and Johnson (2006) studied the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies used by Chinese students learning English and their outcomes and found that participants used a wide variety of ways. Indeed, language learning theorists also place significant stress on foreign language learners developing autonomous vocabulary learning strategies (Rossini Favretti, Silver, Gasser &

Tamburini, 1994, cited by Lawson and Hogben, 1996); McCarthy, 1990; Nation, 1990; Oxford 1990).

Of course, there is some disagreement too among scholars regarding vocabulary learning strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996) list only four strategies: memory, cognitive, metacognitive and activation strategies, whereas Schmitt (1997) gives a list of two broad categories: determination and consolidation strategies. The first one is sub-divided into determination strategies and social strategies, while the second one is sub-divided into cognitive, metacognitive, memory and social strategies. 'Social strategies' are repeated in both divisions since they can be used for purposes, determination as well as consolidation of meaning. Nation (2001) divides strategies into three general categories: 'planning,' 'source' and 'processes,' and each in turn is divided into a sub-set of key strategies. 'Planning strategy' is meant to decide how, where, how often to focus attention of the lexical item. The purpose of the 'Source strategy' is getting information about the word, while 'Processing strategy' involves establishing word knowledge through noticing, retrieving and generating strategies.

Nation (2001) as cited in (*Riankamol, 2008*), stated that "vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies" .Most scholars agree that the six language learning strategies charted by Oxford and others are commonly used by learners, with individual learners leaning heavily towards one or two of them. Therefore, in the present study the researcher has followed the taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies based on the six language learning strategies charted out by Oxford (1990): cognitive, metacognitive, memory, affective and social strategies. A short description of each strategy is given below:

- a. **Cognitive Strategies:** are the strategies / techniques used by learners for understanding and producing the target language. In the case of vocabulary, the learners try to understand the meaning of new words they come across and try to use them in contexts.
- b. **Metacognitive Strategies:** are the put to use by learners to coordinate the learning in various different ways. For example, the learners create a situation where they can test and evaluate their own knowledge of difficult words.
- c. **Memory Strategies:** are employed by language learners for remembering and retrieving new information, i.e., new vocabulary items.
- d. **Compensation Strategies:** are utilized especially in the initial stages of language learning, to make up for the lack of knowledge of the new language. There are occasions when the learners do not know the exact meaning of a word, so, s/he may try to convey the sense through gestures, signs and guessing. (Schmitt, 1997)
- e. **Affective Strategies:** are particularly important for regulating emotions. They are important to keep the morale of the learners up.
- f. **Social Strategies:** are the strategies put to effective use when the learners learn new vocabulary items with others. The learners ask the meaning of words from others and check the correctness of what they know. (Oxford, 1990: 14-15)

In terms of literature, there is a scarcity of research on the language / vocabulary learning strategies used by Libyan students if we look at the issue in international contexts. Whatever research there was on language learning issues, not on issues specifically concerning vocabulary learning. Therefore, there exists a large research gap in this area. I try to conduct this study to get good data which provides good knowledge in the area of vocabulary learning and teaching in Libyan school contexts.

2.2 Global Perspective

Research in language learning strategies has a history of almost half a century since the studies in the area took off in 1960s. Williams & Burden (1997: 149) state that research and developments in cognitive psychology influenced research in language learning strategies to a great extent. Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) may be considered as the pioneers in the field. Aaron Carton's study 'The Method of Inference in Foreign Language Study' (1966) triggered Rubin's study on successful learners' strategies of learning as he hypothesized that once identified, these strategies could be of use to less successful learners. As mentioned in Hismanoglu (2000), Rubin (1975) "classified strategies of language learning in terms of processes that may contribute to language learning directly or indirectly."

Thus, it is almost three decades now that research in vocabulary acquisition, teaching and learning in EFL / ESL contexts has gained prominence (Richards, 1980; Nation, 1990; Mondria & Wit-De-Boer, 1991; Manguashca, 1993; Wang, Thomas, Inzana, & Primicerio, 1993). Although Moulton (1966) placed considerably high value on reading and significance of context in learning word meaning, vocabulary attracted the attention of researchers and commentators only much later, in the 1980s. According to Nation (1990), from the late 1980s, vocabulary was an area that had drawn researchers' interest within the mainstream of L2 acquisition. Seal (1991) as cited in (Ghazal 2007, p.85) "also recognizes word knowledge as an important part of communicative competence. Knowing a word involves knowing a great deal about its general frequency of use and the syntactic and situational limitations on its use". Hatch & Brown (1995) observe that vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning (Ghazal, 2007).

In the 1990s the amount of empirical research on vocabulary acquisition began increasing at a slow pace. A study by Granowsky (2002) confirms that many researchers assigned an important role to vocabulary knowledge in students' reading comprehension, and therefore in their school success. As regards learning vocabulary, we consciously or unconsciously use some strategy to process the information packed in the lexical items, retain the meaning and retrieve it in proper contexts. Some strategies may be better than others; therefore some learners are more successful than others. The researcher's focus in the present study is to identify superior learning strategies in learning vocabulary.

2.3 Libyan Perspective

The field of research in language learning strategies or vocabulary learning strategies is still unexplored in Libyan contexts since there is not much work done yet. Aljdee (2011) in "The Relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary knowledge," a study conducted at 7th April University, makes an attempt to ascertain the range and frequency of some vocabulary learning strategies students commonly use. His findings show that,

The Libyan EFL learners reported using a wide range of Vocabulary Learning Strategies even though the frequency of use is relatively low. Discovery strategies, such as using dictionaries and guessing meaning from context, were used more frequently than consolidation strategies, such as practising in groups, making word lists, or assessing their own vocabulary knowledge.P.2

Pathan & Mar'ei (2013) investigate 'the role of short stories in overcoming the problems faced by EFL learners in reading comprehension skills' and they have come up with the conclusion that,

with numerous linguistic and other pedagogical advantages, with practical and feasible implications for the EFL contexts like Libya, short-stories surely can be a wonderful boon not only for overcoming problems of the EFL learners related to reading comprehension skill but also for the effective fostering of all the major language skills in creative and enjoyable way. P.7

Actually, I think that Libyan students may be using only one or two strategies to learn new vocabulary items, focusing mainly on dictionary use and guess work. Orafi and Borg (2009: 251) point out that the shift of emphasis from teacher-centred approach to learner-centred approach in the new school curriculum introduced in Libya in 2000 has brought about some shift in perspectives, and therefore the new school textbooks in English include different communicative activities and learning tasks which encourage learners to engage in group tasks. This may inspire learners to use learning strategies, like, social strategies, compensation strategies, and even metacognitive strategies. The appropriate implementation of activities introduced in the new school textbooks, like, role-play, group work, language games, etc. involves students' true engagement and active participation and teachers' adoption of the role of a facilitator.

3.0 Materials and Methods

The methodology followed in the present study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative analysis was used to collect data from the participating students through a survey questionnaire eliciting responses from them on the sub-strategies (framed in the form of questions) concerned with all the six learning strategies identified by scholars like Oxford (1990) and Schmitt (1993). Qualitative analysis involves interpreting the results obtained, especially the interpretation of the relationship between particular learning strategies and their impact on the performance of learners in learning a foreign language like, English.

The questionnaire used was adopted from Oxford's Strategies in Language Learning Inventory, with slight modifications here and there. The major modification involves adapting the questionnaire to test vocabulary learning strategies, so, that the sub-strategies were framed to elicit learners' responses on steps followed by them in learning new vocabulary items. The other modification in the questionnaire was the provision of an Arabic version of all the stimuli along with the English texts. The purpose of this process was to make all the points clear to all the participants, as it was assumed that not all the students would understand English very well.

3.1. Methodology

The questionnaire was tested with 30 students before it was administered to the larger section of students. The questionnaire was then administered to 180 students. All the participants were briefed about the purpose of the questionnaire. Frequency of use of vocabulary learning strategies was calculated using simple statistical analysis through creating frequency tables.

3.2 Sampling

A simple random selection method was followed for the sampling of the school. As regards sampling of participating students, I followed a systematic sampling method choosing 6 sections of secondary classes with 32 students each making the total number 180 students. All the classes

were mixed groups of high, medium and low achieving students. Thus, enough care was taken to eliminate any bias in sampling.

3.3 Research Setting and the Participants

The present research was proposed to be conducted at selected Libyan schools. In Libya English is taught as a foreign language. Teaching of English in Libyan schools begins from standard 5, and by the time a student joins university s/he has 6 years of English learning. The participants selected for the study are secondary school students whose next step in education is university, so, they have learnt English language for 6 years, sufficient to understand the requirements of the present research. Also, the rationale behind the selection is that these students have gained knowledge of English language and are ready to make use of a wider range of vocabulary items, either for further studies or for their own business, as they can easily reflect upon their own strategies use in learning, retention and recall of vocabulary.

3.4 The Instrument of Data Collection: The Questionnaire

As discussed above, I adopted Version 7 of The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) prepared by Oxford (1990: 293) to conduct the survey, with some modifications to frame the survey questionnaire. The total numbers of strategies measured were 6, with a slightly varying (between 4 and 5) number of their sub-strategies, thus making a total of 27 questions to be answered, rated on a 5-point scale, as follows: (1) Always (2) Usually (3) Sometimes (4) Rarely (5) Never. These pointers indicate the learners' choice of sub-strategies falling under a particular strategy, thus finally indicating his/her choice of that particular strategy to learn a new vocabulary item. "Always" means 100% in terms of use; "Usually" means above 90%; "Sometimes" means more than 60% in terms of use; "Rarely" would mean less than 40% use and "Never" stands for no, or almost no use at all. Participants were asked to record their opinions by choosing what to them would be the most suitable response to the given statement.

The various sub-strategies included in the questionnaires as statements tested the following features of each VLS:

Memory: memorization, semantic mapping, repetition, remembering and retrieval of new information, etc.

Cognitive: understanding a new concept, making associations, analyzing, and producing language, etc.

Compensation: looking for clues, using mother tongue, learning to cope with new situation, using language despite lack of knowledge, etc.

Metacognitive: coordinating the learning process, linking new concepts with the known, self-monitoring, and taking help from other sources, etc.

Affective: control and regulation of emotions in learning new vocabulary, discussion with others, etc.

Social: learning with others, taking help from teachers and classmates, checking correctness with others, etc.

The questionnaire consisted of six sections, each strategy devoted to one section, and their sub-strategy questions grouped under the respective strategy sections. For instance, all the sub-strategy questions measuring 'Memory Strategy' use were grouped under the section 'Memory Strategy.' To calculate the frequency of use of all the strategies, all the responses for all the five pointers were counted and tabulated.

3.5 Variables

The primary hypothesis of the present study was that there is a relationship between the use of learning strategies and their impact on a learner's performance, with the secondary hypothesis emerging from the first, that is, brighter students in a class of learners use different strategies from the slow learners. So, to test this idea through collecting data from a mixed group of learners, the independent variable fixed was **the learner's level of achievement** (high / medium / low achievers) in his/her studies and the dependent variable was **his/her choice of strategy** (the six vocabulary learning strategies outlined above). The level of learners' achievement was arrived at by gleaning through their exam results in English language over the past two years.

4.0 Survey of VLS frequency of Use by Libyan Students

4.1 Data Collection

The survey questionnaire was distributed to all the 180 students, explaining to them the purpose of the research. Most of the students returned the filled-in questionnaire the next day. Then, the questionnaires were sorted out into three groups, belonging to (i) high achievers, (ii) medium achievers, and (iii) low achievers. The number of students in each group was as follows:

High achievers (scoring 80% and above marks): 30 [All female students]

Medium achievers (scoring between 69-79% marks): 82 [76 female and 6 male students]

Low achievers (scoring less than 69% marks): 68 [39 female and 29 male students]

The questionnaire given to them comprised of 27 sub-strategy-statements with following distribution:

Strategy	Sub-strategy statements
Memory	4
Cognitive	5
Compensation	5
Metacognitive	5
Affective	4
Social	4

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Results for the Data from Participants Categorized as High/Medium/Low Achievers

The results presented below are derived from the data collected from participants categorized as High/Medium/Low achievers based on their academic achievements and performance in the examinations.

4.2.2 Frequency Tables for the Results of the Five Variables

The results of the statistical analysis for each frequency variable (Always/ usually / Sometimes/ rarely, and Never) were computed (Columns 3-7) with all the six vocabulary learning strategies (Memory / Cognitive / Compensation / Metacognitive / Affective and Social, in column 2) and shown in separate tables for High, Medium and Low achievers. For convenience, I gave only the total figure of the responses to each sub-strategy-statements and the percentage of those responses. Thus, the columns for variables were divided into two, one for the total of responses and the other for its percentage, making the number of sub-columns 10. The total figure of the

responses appears in the first sub-column and the percentage of the same appears in the second sub-column for each variable.

The percentage of frequency for the five variables was calculated as follows:

$$\frac{R}{P \times S} \times 100$$

Where R is the total frequency of responses; P is the total number of participants; S is the number of sub-strategy statements. For example, in case of **High Achievers**, for Memory strategy variable “Always,” the total frequency of responses (R) is 62, the total number of participants (P) is 30 and the number of sub-strategy statements (S) is 4; therefore, the percentage frequency of the variable “Always” for the ‘Memory’ strategy is:

$$= \frac{62}{30 \times 4} \times 100$$

$$= 52\%$$

In total there are 3 tables, one each for High, Medium and Low achievers, as follows.

Table 1

Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use Frequency Table for High Achievers

S. No.	VLS	Frequency of Variables										Total	%
		Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never			
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%		
1	Memory	62	52%	33	27%	25	21%	0	0%	0	0%	120	100
2	Cognitive	90	60%	33	22%	26	17.3%	0	0%	1	.7%	150	100
3	Compensation	36	24%	44	29%	31	21%	9	6%	30	20%	150	100
4	Metacognitive	28	19%	53	35%	35	23%	8	5%	26	18%	150	100
5	Affective	59	50%	32	27%	12	9%	12	10%	5	4%	120	100

6	Social	38	32%	29	24%	39	33%	12	10%	2	1%	120	100
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Table 2

Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use Frequency Table for Medium achievers

S. No.	VLS	Frequency of Variables										Total	%
		Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never			
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%		
1	Memory	155	47%	92	28%	64	19%	12	4%	5	2%	328	100
2	Cognitive	119	33%	79	22%	66	18%	68	19%	32	8%	364	100
3	Compensation	63	15%	57	14%	83	20%	138	34%	69	17%	410	100
4	Metacognitive	32	8%	60	15%	134	33%	112	27%	72	17%	410	100
5	Affective	86	26%	64	20%	67	20%	71	22%	40	12%	328	100
6	Social	103	31%	75	22%	85	25%	58	17%	17	5%	338	100

Table 3

Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use Frequency Table for Low achievers

S. No.	VLS	Frequency of Variables										Total	%
		Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never			
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%		
1	Memory	74	27%	34	13%	51	19%	63	23%	50	18%	272	100

			%		%		%		%		%		0
2	Cognitive	16	5%	63	19%	59	17%	89	26%	113	33%	340	100
3	Compensation	0	0%	25	7%	48	14%	118	35%	149	44%	340	100
4	Metacognitive	8	2%	5	2%	58	17%	130	38%	139	41%	340	100
5	Affective	75	28%	35	13%	67	24%	54	20%	41	15%	272	100
6	Social	17	6%	32	12%	41	15%	100	37%	82	30%	272	100

4.2.3 Calculation of Frequency of Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

I calculated the most frequently used and the least frequently used VLSs among high/medium/low achievers. To get a general idea, I also calculated the most generally used VLS. This is done in the following way:

1. The **most frequently used** vocabulary learning strategy among the participants is calculated by adding up the percentage responses for Always and Usually.
2. The **most generally used** vocabulary learning strategy is calculated by adding up the percentage responses for Always, Usually and Sometimes.

The calculations were as follows. The results were also presented in Tabular form in Table 4.

High achievers:

Memory:

Always + usually (52+27) = 79 + sometimes (21) = 100 / rarely + never (0) = 0

Cognitive:

Always + usually (60+22) = 82 + sometimes (17.3) = 99.3 / rarely + never (0+0.7) = 0.7

Compensation:

Always + usually (24+29) = 53 + sometimes (21) = 74 / rarely + never (6+20) = 26

Metacognitive:

Always + usually (19+35) = 54 + sometimes (23) = 77 / rarely + never (5+18) = 23

Affective:

Always + usually (50+27) = 77 + sometimes (9) = 86 / rarely + never (10+4) = 14

Social:

Always + usually (32+24) = 56 + sometimes (33) = 89 / rarely + never (10+1) = 11

Medium achievers:

Memory:

Always + usually (47+28) = 75 + sometimes (19) = 94 / rarely + never (4+2) = 6

Cognitive:

Always + usually (33+22) = 55 + sometimes (18) = 73 / rarely + never (19+8) = 27

Compensation:

Always + usually (15+14) = 29 + sometimes (20) = 49 / rarely + never (34+17) = 51

Metacognitive:

Always + usually (8+15) = 23 + sometimes (33) = 56 / rarely + never (27+17) = 44

Affective:

Always + usually (26+20) = 46 + sometimes (20) = 66 / rarely + never (22+12) = 34

Social:

Always + usually (31+22) = 53 + sometimes (25) = 78 / rarely + never (17+5) = 22

Low achievers:

Memory:

Always + usually (27+13) = 40 + sometimes (19) = 59 / rarely + never (23+18) = 41

Cognitive:

Always + usually (5+19) = 24 + sometimes (17) = 41 / rarely + never (26+33) = 59

Compensation:

Always + usually (0+7) = 7 + sometimes (14) = 21 / rarely + never (35+44) = 79

Metacognitive:

Always + usually (2+2) = 4 + sometimes (17) = 21 / rarely + never (38+41) = 79

Affective:

Always + usually (28+13) = 41 + sometimes (24) = 65 / rarely + never (20+15) = 35

Social:

Always + usually (6+12) = 18 + sometimes (15) = 33 / rarely + never (37+30) = 67

Table 4

Frequency of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Use among High/Medium/Low Achievers

Level of Learners	Frequency of Use	Strategies					
		Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
High Achievers	Most Frequent: Always + Usually	79%	82%	53%	54%	77%	56%
	Most General: Always + Usually + Sometimes	100%	99.3%	74%	77%	86%	89%
Medium	Most Frequent: Always + Usually	75%	55%	29%	23%	46%	53%

Achievers	Most General: Always + Usually + Sometimes	94%	73%	49%	56%	66%	78%
Low Achievers	Most Frequent: Always +Usually	40%	24%	7%	4%	41%	18%
	Most General: Always + Usually + Sometimes	59%	41%	21%	21%	65%	33%

4.3 Discussion of the Results for Frequency of VL Strategies Use among High/Medium/Low achiever Participants

4.3.1 Most and Least Frequently Used Strategies

High achievers: Most frequently used strategy – Cognitive, with the highest percentage of 82% use, followed by Memory strategy with a percentage of 79% use; the rest of the strategies in sequence were Affective strategy with 77% use, Social strategy with 56%, Metacognitive strategy with 54% and Compensation strategy with 53% of use.

The most generally used strategy among the high achievers was – Memory strategy with the highest percentage of 100%; followed by Cognitive strategy with a percentage of 99.3% of use. The rest in sequence were: Social strategy with 89%, Affective strategy 86%, Metacognitive strategy 77% and Compensation strategy with 74% of use. This was not very surprising since Libya being a Muslim country, learning through memorization was in the tradition there.

Medium achievers: Among medium achievers, the largest group in any class, the most frequently used strategy was Memory strategy with 75% use, followed by Cognitive strategy with 55% use; the rest in sequence are: Social strategy (53%), Affective strategy (46%), Compensation strategy (29%) and Metacognitive strategy (23%). What was generally followed by the high achievers was the most frequently used strategy among medium achievers. They favour Metacognitive strategy the least. That means these students were least interested in correcting their mistakes or observing good English samples written by others; even practicing and checking their progress through self-evaluation and self-monitoring was also not done by them. They hardly went for making proper arrangements to learn new vocabulary items with proper planning.

The most generally used strategy among the medium achievers was once again Memory strategy (94%), followed by Social strategy (78%). The rest in sequence were: Cognitive (73%), Affective strategy (66%), Metacognitive strategy (56%) and Compensation strategy (49%).

Low achievers: The low achievers used Affective strategy the most frequently (41%); followed by Memory strategy (40%). The rest in sequence were: Cognitive (24%), Social strategy (18%), Compensation strategy (7%) and Metacognitive strategy (4%).

One thing was obvious from the obtained results that learning of new vocabulary items, their retention and recall could be much faster and long-lasting if Libyan learners used cognitive strategy techniques like, analysing words by breaking them into sound segments, or into meaningful parts, linking new words to already existing visual images in mind, linking words with known English words and linking new words with similar words in the mother tongue. Memorization was another great strategy that helps build learners' repertoire of lexicon in a foreign language. The findings were much similar to the results obtained by Aljdee (2011) who stressed upon memory strategy in his research.

Low achievers did use memory strategy but not primarily. So, the results from my study implied that teachers could make an experiment by encouraging the low achieving students to change their vocabulary learning strategy to see if the results were better. Even the medium achievers in a class should go primarily for cognitive strategy techniques and try to memorize new words only when fully recognized.

5.0 Conclusion

The results make clear why the high achievers are high achievers: they learn new vocabulary items with proper understanding and full memorization. The least favoured strategy among high achievers is the Compensation strategy, which means those participants don't like looking for clues, using mother tongue, trying measures to cope with new situations or using new vocabulary items despite lack of knowledge, etc. They do take risks but wisely.

The picture is clear: low achievers are always concerned about their emotional states when learning new vocabulary items; that is, they may be always confused about the meaning, spelling and pronunciation of the words but lack control over their feelings. Although they do use Memory strategy but without being cool in the head.

The most generally used strategy among the low achievers was once again the Affective strategy (65%), followed by Memory strategy (59%). The rest in sequence are: Cognitive strategy (41%), Social strategy (33%), Compensation and Metacognitive (21% each). Low achievers don't seem to favour Compensation and Metacognitive strategies, which indicate that they don't give much importance to looking for clues, using mother tongue to learn new vocabulary or using language despite lack of knowledge, etc. They also don't try to link the new concepts with the known concepts, as well as taking help from other sources, like, magazines, films, Internet, etc.

I began this research study with two questions in mind: (i) Is there a relationship between vocabulary learning strategies followed by foreign language learners and their performance in learning the FL, with specific reference to English language?, and (ii) What is the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on the academic achievements of English language learners, with specific reference to secondary school students in Libya? The results obtained show that the answer to the first question is in the affirmative – Yes, there is a relationship between particular vocabulary learning strategies and performance of learners of foreign language, like English, in the target language. As to the second question, the results prompt me to conclude that at least in Libya contexts, the combination of cognitive and memory strategies works wonders for a better performance in learning, retention and recall of new lexical items in appropriate contexts.

5.1 Suggestions

But, I would like to add that the present research has been conducted on a small scale and the results may hold good only for the participants used in the study. If the experiment could be repeated by researchers on a larger scale in a wider variety of settings within Libya, we would arrive at a better understanding of vocabulary learning strategies and their effects on the learning outcomes of EFL learners in Libya.

Yet another interesting aspect of vocabulary learning, not explored in Libyan contexts, is the effect of learners' enhanced repertoire of lexical items in a foreign language on their understanding of the syntactical structures of the language.

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Appendix 1:

Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ)

Personal Details of the Participant

Gender: Male Female

Age: _____

Class _____

Score in English test: _____

The questionnaire is about learning new words in English language. Please tick [√] what to you is the most suitable choice for each of the following statements:

Item.	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
A. Memory Strategy					
1. I repeatedly say the word in my mind frequently.					
2. I repeatedly spell the word in my mind.					
3. I repeatedly say the word aloud.					
4. I repeatedly write the word.					
B. Cognitive Strategy					
5. I analyze the word by breaking it into sound segments.					
6. I analyze the word by breaking it into meaningful parts.					
7. I link the word to a visual image in my mind.					
8. I link the word to another English word with similar sound.					
9. I link the word to an Arabic word with similar sound.					
C. Compensation Strategy					
10. I associate sound with meaning.					
11. I group words together with storyline.					
12. I remember the sentence in which the word is used.					
13. I remember the new word together with the context where the new word occurs.					
14. I make up my own sentences using the new word.					
D. Metacognitive Strategy					
15. I try to use newly learned words in imaginary situations in my mind.					

16. I remember words by doing dictations.					
17. I remember words by doing group work activities in class.					
18. I remember words by doing a project.					
19. I analyze the part of speech of the new word					
E. Affective Strategy					
20. I analyze the affixes and roots of the new word					
21. I check for the meaning of new English word in Arabic.					
22. I analyze any available pictures or gestures to guess the word meaning.					
23. I guess the meaning of the new word from the story					
F. Social Strategy					
24. I use a dictionary to check the words					
25. I ask teacher for the new word's synonym.					
26. I ask teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, translation					
27. I ask classmates for meaning of the word					