

2-The Difference in the Reported use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies between Students with High and Low Vocabulary Knowledge



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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the difference in the reported use of vocabulary learning strategies among students with high vocabulary knowledge and those with low vocabulary knowledge in one private and one public universities in Beirut. The participants were of various majors who had to study English as an obligatory course. At the beginning of the study, the researcher administered. modified version of the TOEFL test in order to collect data about the students' level of vocabulary knowledge. Moreover,. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) questionnaire adapted from Gu and Johnson's (1996) Vocabulary Learning Strategies was also administered to collect data about the VLSs the participants use. The vocabulary knowledge test and the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire were piloted earlier to ensure the validity of the items. Based on the results of the vocabulary knowledge test, the participants were divided into two groups of high and low

level of vocabulary knowledge. The difference in the reported use of VLS of both groups was analyzed using SPSS. The results of the obtained descriptive statistics and the independent t-test indicated that there were significant differences in the use of Guessing and Memory Strategies among the two groups. Students with high vocabulary knowledge relied on the Guessing Strategies more than the low vocabulary knowledge. However, low vocabulary knowledge students reported the use of Memory Strategies more than those with high vocabulary knowledge.

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Vocabulary Knowledge

الفرق في استخدام استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات بين الطلاب ذوي المعرفة العالية والمنخفضة للمفردات

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في الاختلاف في استخدام استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات بين الطلاب ذوي المعرفة العالية والمنخفضة للمفردات وذلك في واحدة من الجامعات الخاصة وأخرى من الجامعات العامة في بيروت. وقد اختلفت تخصصات المشاركين في الدراسة ولكن كانت اللغة الإنكليزية هي المادة الإلزامية المشتركة في ما بينهم. في بداية الدراسة، استخدمت الباحثتان نسخة معدلة من اختبار TOEFL من أجل جمع البيانات حول مستوى معرفة الطلاب بالمفردات. علاوة على ذلك، تم إجراء استبيان استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات المقنن من استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات لجمع البيانات حول VLS التي يستخدمها المشاركون والذي تم وضعه من قبل (Gu and Johnson 1996). تم اختبار معرفة المفردات واستبيان استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات في وقت سابق لضمان صحة العناصر. وبناءً على نتائج اختبار معرفة المفردات، تم تقسيم المشاركين إلى مجموعتين من المستوى العالي والمنخفض من معرفة المفردات. ومن ثم تم تحليل الفرق في الاستخدام المبلغ عنه من VLS من كلتا المجموعتين باستخدام SPSS، وقد أشارت نتائج الإحصائيات الوصفية التي تم الحصول عليها واختبار **t-test** المستقل إلى وجود اختلافات كبيرة في استخدام استراتيجيات التخمين والذاكرة بين المجموعتين. اعتمد الطلاب الذين لديهم معرفة عالية بالمفردات على استراتيجيات التخمين أكثر من ذوي المعرفة المنخفضة للمفردات. ومع ذلك، أفاد الطلاب بمعرفة المفردات المنخفضة عن استخدام استراتيجيات الذاكرة أكثر من أولئك الذين لديهم معرفة عالية بالمفردات.

الكلمات الرئيسية: استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات، معرفة المفردات.

1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a lot of research on the importance of vocabulary learning strategies. Learners should be explicitly taught the different strategies of vocabulary learning, for this helps them with "...the overall sense of proficiency in communication and understanding of content related topics for discussion and response" (Pawlicki, 2017, p.11). This is why employing vocabulary learning strategies to improve the learners' vocabulary knowledge is worthwhile.

Learning strategies have been defined by Cohen (1998, p.4) as "...learn-

ing processes which are consciously selected by the learner". Furthermore, Griffiths (2008, p.87) defined learning strategies as "activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own learning."

Regarding the choice of Vocabulary Learning Strategies learners use, Naiman (1996) assures that there is no specific strategy that has an absolute advantage, that strategies have different effects on different learners, and that the choice of specific strategies is linked to factors such as attitude. Ellis (1997) assured that successful language learners use more strategies than the unsuccessful ones, and that the strategies the learners choose to employ influence their academic performance. Despite the fact that there has been a lot of research as early as the 1970's on vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), it is still challenging to determine which strategy is the best to apply. Thus, here arises a need for research which seeks answers to questions about what strategies can prove to be helpful to learn vocabulary of English as a foreign language which in turn leads us to find out the difference in the reported use of vocabulary learning strategies between students with high and low vocabulary knowledge.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Throughout the years of teaching English as a Foreign Language, it was evident that our university students lack sufficient vocabulary repertoire as well as the strategies to improve it. Having insufficient vocabulary knowledge hinders learners' academic success since, according to Graves (2006) and McKeown. Beck (2002), it is emphatically related to reading comprehension and oral/aural communication. Several language learning specialists (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Thompson. Rubin, 1996; Rubin. Thompson, 1994; MacDonough, 1995) have assured that the use of language learning strategies helps in acquiring higher levels of vocabulary knowledge and in overcoming the challenging and formidable never-ending task of vocabulary learning (Stahl. Nagy, 2007).

Few research studies have focused on the strategies learners use to learn new vocabulary. For that reason, there is still a necessity for more research studies to help in the understanding of the role/roles of those constructs in developing the EFL learners' vocabulary, particularly in the Lebanese context.

1.2. Rationale

Several courses are offered to university students to enhance their English proficiency level. However, the students' vocabulary retention and retrieval

levels are limited despite all the persistent efforts. It is obvious that lack of vocabulary knowledge rather than grammatical knowledge is the main factor that impedes the EFL university students' comprehension and communication skills. The lexical proficiency of the vast majority of the university students, even those majoring in the teaching of English, is limited. Those students cannot find the exact English terminology to express their ideas when delivering speech or making an oral presentation, so they tend to use their mother language, Arabic, most of the time. The most frequently developed vocabulary learning strategy in almost all the language classrooms is analyzing context clues (semantic and syntactic), whereas the other vocabulary learning strategies are not adequately focused on. Thus, the current research is based on the information resulted from investigating the level of vocabulary knowledge of university students to examine the difference in the use of vocabulary learning strategies between those with high vocabulary knowledge and low vocabulary knowledge..

1.3 Research Question

In order to find out the vocabulary learning strategies frequently used by good language learners and those commonly used by poor language learners, it was important to answer the following question:

How do students with high vocabulary knowledge and students with low vocabulary knowledge differ in the use of vocabulary learning strategies?

1. Significance of the Study

The researcher decided to analyze the vocabulary learning strategies used by high-achievers in order to make this study as a reference for all learners who want to employ the vocabulary learning strategies used by high-achievers. Moreover, this investigation broadens the insight into the most useful vocabulary learning strategies that would help EFL learners unlock the meaning of unfamiliar words, acquire these words, and use them in their oral and written productions. In addition, this research will enable academics as well as coordinators at schools and universities to choose the most effective vocabulary learning strategies while designing the curriculum or developing learning activities.

Oxford (1990) believed that the use of appropriate learning strategies results in proficiency and enhanced self-confidence. Learning strategies help learners overcome the difficulties in language task and enables them to develop their learning. Cameron (as cited in Boonkongsan, 2012) assured that using vocabulary learning strategies helps learners retain and retrieve

vocabulary items. Burrow et.al (2012) stated that high-achievers can be identified simply by their high GPA. Therefore, the high-achievers who have high GPA scores develop their own efficient and effective strategies that promote their learning process. Likewise, students with high scores in the vocabulary knowledge test use combination of effective vocabulary learning strategies that enable them to develop their vocabulary repertoire.

2. Theoretical Background and Review of Literature

1.1 Definition and Importance of VLSs

Cameron (2001) defined vocabulary learning strategies as "actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary." Then, Catalan (2003) elaborated on that definition by depicting that vocabulary learning strategies comprise the awareness of the mechanisms used to acquire new vocabulary words together with the actions taken by learners (a) to find out the meaning of new words, (b) to store them in long-term memory, (c) to retrieve them when needed, and (d) to utilize them orally and in written modes.

Consequently, the prominence of vocabulary learning strategies resides in the fact that they "make learners more independent of the teacher and serve as useful tools that can be used both inside and outside of the class" and that "vocabulary continues to be major area for language learning" (Alavi, 2006, p. 90). Thus, learners would keep on learning new vocabulary even after quitting or graduating from school. Hamzah et al. (2009) assured that guiding students to be independent learners who can develop their vocabulary learning strategies is "a powerful approach," which indorses "learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction" (Hamzah, 2009, p. 42).

1.2 Taxonomies of VLS

Although vocabulary learning strategies is somewhat new area of study, several taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies have been suggested. Some of the taxonomies have provided detailed descriptions of the different vocabulary learning strategies based on the results of the experimental research they conducted such as those of Ahmad (1989), Oxford (1990), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Stoffer (1995), and Gu. Johnson (1996). However, in the current research study, the taxonomy of Gu and Johnson (1996) has been adopted since it is the only one that includes items on selective attention and self-initiation, which are essential metacognitive regulation strategies. Moreover, Gu and Johnson's (1996) taxonomy, under the cognitive strategies, distinguished between two types of guessing strategies:

guessing by using background knowledge, and guessing by using immediate context.

Gu and Johnson (1996) proposed two major dimensions for vocabulary learning strategies: metacognitive regulation and cognitive strategies, which encompass six subsections namely, using. dictionary, guessing, note-taking, encoding, rehearsal, and activating. They added. part of the beliefs of learners about vocabulary learning. Gu and Johnson's original taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies included 91 items that were organized into seven subcategories: Metacognitive Regulation Strategies, Guessing Strategies, Dictionary Strategies, Note-taking Strategies, Rehearsal Strategies, Encoding Strategies, and Activation Strategies.

1.3. Description of the vocabulary learning strategies investigated in the current study

1.3.1. Beliefs

Research on language learning beliefs is considered quite new in the field of second language acquisition; however, its importance has been emphasized by researchers such as (Ellis, 1995; and Gu. Johnson,1996) who concluded that beliefs are variables that possibly explain the differences in the process as well as the outcome of L2 acquisition.

1.3.2. Metacognitive Regulation Strategies

Metacognitive regulation strategies are defined as "knowing the conditions that help. learner successfully complete language tasks, arranging for those conditions, and adjusting one's language performance to make the most of what is already known" (O'Malley. Chamot, 1990, p. 137). These strategies are considered as high order thinking skills which comprise first planning for learning, thinking about the learning process, monitoring of one's production, and finally evaluating of learning after the activity is completed (Crail. Zerwekh, 2002).

1.3.3. Guessing Strategies

For successful guessing of words, students should be knowledgeable about the world, linguistics, and strategies (Nagy, 1997). Regarding the linguistic knowledge, the higher the language level of the learners is, the more they are able to guess the meaning of unknown words effectively (Schmitt, 1997). This is why. large vocabulary size is. requirement for successful guessing (Nation, 2001). Nagy (1997) considered world knowledge as the prior knowledge of the topic. Finally, strategic knowledge has been defined

by Nagy (1997), as "involving conscious control over cognitive resources" (p. 65). This means that if students are taught how to guess, they may become better guessers.

1.3.4. Dictionary Strategies

Fraser (1999) assured that consulting dictionary to check and confirm inferences is significant metacognitive strategy that helps in lexical acquisition. Mokhtar, et al. (2017) found that the most preferred strategy among adult ESL learners was using the dictionary to learn English words.

Both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries have their limitations. Monolingual dictionaries are imperfect, for users might be unable to look up the right word and might as well find it difficult to understand the definitions despite the fact that they provide the learners with much more information (Thompson, 1987). Bilingual dictionaries' shortcomings lie in the fact that they do not provide information on word usage. Bilingual dictionaries also encourage translation which is risky for the learners in long-term perspective (Nation 2001). This is the reason why Bejoint and Moulin (1987) recommended employing bilingual dictionaries in case of quick reference whereas using monolingual dictionaries if the learners want more detailed information about the words.

1.3.5. Memory Strategies

The studies on vocabulary learning strategies have focused on lexical semantics and mental lexicon. While some reasonable evidence proves the efficiency of semantic network (e.g., Crow. Quigley, 1985), other research studies warned against the risk of presenting new words that are so closely related at the very same time (Tinkham, 1993; Nation, 1994). Researchers reached little evidence as to whether these strategies do help in vocabulary retention, irrespective of how much they help in actively using the newly learned vocabulary.

1.3.6. Sources

Cahyono (2016) concluded that textbooks can be rich lexical environments for second language vocabulary acquisition.

Several researchers found that there is positive correlation between reading and vocabulary acquisition (Grabe. Stoller, 2002; Huckin. Coady, 1999; Thornbury, 2002; Coady, 1997; and Nation, 2001). The results of the research study conducted by Senoo. Yonemoto (2014) indicate that extensive reading is particularly helpful in consolidating the learners' vocabulary

knowledge and in encouraging the learners to reflect on their needs in vocabulary learning.

1.4. Difference in the use of vocabulary learning strategies between students with high and low vocabulary knowledge

In his research study titled *The Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Good and Poor Language Learners*, Zhang (2011) found that “both good and poor language learners used many effective strategies for vocabulary learning,” and that poor language learners used learning strategies less frequently than good learners, which led Zhang to conclude that “vocabulary learning strategies were positively related to learning outcomes” (p. 33)

This is in line with Chamot and El Dinary’s (1993) conclusion that good learners are more skillful in adapting and monitoring different strategies to various tasks; however, poor learners stick to ineffective strategies.

Porte’s (1998) study revealed that poor and good language learners used some common vocabulary learning strategies such as jotting down the translations of new words and looking up the definitions of unfamiliar words in dictionary. However, the poor language learners demonstrated less tactfulness and showed less suitable response to these activities. Liu (2004) assured that the lower learner’s English language proficiency is, the fewer strategies he uses and vice-versa.

3. Research Methodology

The research design of the current study is quantitative with descriptive and correlational aspects. The researcher attempted to describe the current status of the variables (vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies) and to determine the extent of the relationship between these variables using statistical data. The data, relationships, and distributions of variables were studied without being manipulated.

1.1. Participants

The participants in the current research study are 475 students at one public and one private university in Beirut. The participants were of various majors studying English as Second Language as part of their major courses..

1.2. Instruments

Quantitative data were collected by the use of self-administered Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire.. modified version of the TOEFL Test was also administered to collect data about the participants’ level of vocabulary

knowledge. Both instruments used for data collection in this research study were written in English, the participants' target language.

1.2.1. Vocabulary knowledge test.

The Vocabulary Knowledge Test (VKT) was adapted from several versions of the TOEFL test, which were compiled and modified to suit the current research purposes. Three experts holding Ph.D. degrees in the fields of Linguistics and Teaching English as a Foreign Language reviewed the test items and suggested that the best number of items for the vocabulary knowledge test is 50 ranging from intermediate to advanced level. The experts emphasized that this would prevent the participants from feeling tired because of the length of the test, it also adheres to John W. Oller, Jr's recommendation. The Vocabulary Knowledge Test included four main tasks:

- a. Choosing the correct word that is closest in meaning to the underlined word (24 words)
- b. Selecting the correct words from frequently confused and misused pairs (8 pairs)
- c. Selecting the appropriate definitions that correspond to confusing pairs of words (9 words)
- d. Selecting the word that best completes the sentence (9 words)

To measure the reliability and internal consistency of the vocabulary test, the researchers used Pearson correlation to study the strength of test re-test. The results in the below table showed that there was positive and very strong significant correlation between the test and re-test of the vocabulary ($r = .994, p < .001$).

1.2.2. Vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire

The Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire was originally devised by Gu and Johnson (1996). The main purpose of this tool was to "...elicit students' beliefs about vocabulary learning and their self-reported vocabulary learning strategies" (Gu, Johnson, 1996). This questionnaire consists of two main parts: metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) and cognitive VLS. Gu and Johnson's questionnaire is the only one that includes items on selective attention and self-initiation, which are essential metacognitive regulation strategies. Moreover, Gu and Johnson's (1996) questionnaire, under the cognitive strategies, distinguished between two types of guessing strategies: guessing by using background knowledge, and guessing by using

immediate context. It is an extensively used instrument for data collection in foreign language learning in several countries. This research tool is mainly used to examine the kind of strategies. particular group of learners usually use to learn vocabulary and to explore the relationship among various VLS and vocabulary knowledge (Gu, 2018).

The researcher chose to modify the original questionnaire for this particular reason: The original questionnaire consisted of 108 items, and the researcher believes that setting. questionnaire that consisted of such. number of items as just. part of. booklet that also included. vocabulary knowledge test would make it impossible for the participants to answer all the questions accurately in one setting. This questionnaire consists of 35 items with the corresponding 5-point Likert-scale response options: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. The participants were asked to select the adverb of frequency that best represented their behavior and. or belief.

Based on the findings of Jeong. Lee (2016) which showed that trichotomous scales “performed well compared to the current 5-point scale, suggesting such collapsing could replace the original scale at least in the analysis phase of collected data.” (p. 128), the five rating scales were merged into three groups: Never. Rarely (NR), Sometimes (S), and Often. Always (OA). It should be noted that the Vocabulary Learning Strategies questionnaire administered in the main study was pilot-tested to measure the reliability and internal consistency of the items. This questionnaire was pilot-tested on. group of learners other than the participants of the main research study.

For testing the questionnaire, the researcher used the Test-retest technique using the Pearson correlation to measure how consistent the results of. test are over time. In addition, the researcher also used Cronbach’s Alpha which is. coefficient of reliability. The results reveal that all the Cronbach’s Alpha indicators range between 0.760 and 0.895 for the Test, and they range between 0.750 and 0.934 for the Retest. Since all of the indicators are greater than 0.7, we can conclude that there is high consistency between items.

1.3. Procedure and data analysis

1.3.1. Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained permission from the dean first, then the principal, and finally from the English instructors to visit their classes. The researcher explained the purposes of the research study to the students and sought their approval in participating in the study. The students were handed pens and copies of the questionnaire booklet that consisted of 1) the Vocabulary

Knowledge Test and 2) the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire.

1.3.2. Data Analysis Procedures

Using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), the researcher applied the following quantitative procedures: 1) Descriptive Statistics that included means and standard deviation for the whole sample to identify the most and least used strategies, and 2) an independent t-test to identify the difference in the reported use of vocabulary learning strategies between students with high vocabulary knowledge and students with low vocabulary knowledge.

4. Results and Discussion

In this research study, the results and discussion section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection consists of general information about the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the research participants and the researcher identifies the most frequently used strategies, which is the current study's aim. The following section deals with the different kinds of strategies, namely: beliefs, metacognitive regulation strategies, dictionary strategies, guessing strategies, and sources. The difference between the students with high vocabulary knowledge and those with low vocabulary knowledge are represented and the reasons behind such findings are also discussed. Finally, comparisons between the current study's results and those of previous studies are presented.

4.1. Vocabulary knowledge

A vocabulary test was used to collect data about the participants' knowledge of vocabulary. This test contained 50 multiple choice items. The scores obtained range between 0 and 100. A score that is close to 100 indicates that the participants' vocabulary knowledge is very high, while a score which is close to 0 indicates that their vocabulary knowledge is very low.

The results in Table 1 below demonstrate that the vocabulary knowledge of the students is at an intermediary level between the high and the low scores (Mean = 53.50); the lowest score being 10 and the highest score being 96.

Table 1
Results of Vocabulary Knowledge (/100)

Mean	53.50
SD	15.53
Min	10
Max	96

Note. SD= standard deviation, Min. minimum, Max. Maximum.

4.2. Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire

The researcher analyzed the results obtained from Tables 2–13 from the various sections of the Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire. Those sections were categorized as: (1) Beliefs, (2) Metacognitive Strategies, (3) Guessing Strategies, (4) Dictionary Strategies, (5) Memory Strategies, and (6) Sources.

In order to identify the vocabulary learning strategies most and least frequently used by the participants of this research study, the average mean score for each of the six strategies was calculated. In statistical computations, the mean is the average of. set of numbers; it is calculated by adding up all the scores and then dividing the total by the number of scores. In this research study, the mean represents the average score given to each strategy. On the other hand, the standard deviation (SD) shows how much dispersion there is from the average. That is, it indicates how much the participants within. group differ from each other in the employment of each strategy.

The main aim of this research study is to find the difference in the employment of each category of the vocabulary learning strategies by between the students with high vocabulary knowledge and those with low vocabulary knowledge.

The results depicted in tables 2–12 of the current study indicate that both students with high vocabulary knowledge and those with low vocabulary knowledge used. variety of effective strategies for vocabulary learning. This is evidenced by the relatively high means for all the vocabulary learning strategies: none of the vocabulary learning strategies received hundred percent “NR”, which indicates “rarely” and “never” ratings, and just one strategy received. mean below three (item 34). These relatively high means suggest

that the participants in this research study widely employ various vocabulary learning strategies, which are certainly beneficial for their learning.

Among all the strategies listed in the questionnaire, item 5, which belonged to beliefs category, received the highest mean (4.04) while item 34, which belonged to the sources category, received the lowest mean (2.34). This means that the students believed that they can expand their vocabulary through reading. lot, and, at the same time, class lessons are not the only sources to learn vocabulary.

Below is. detailed description of the respondents' answers to the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire.

4.2.1. Beliefs

This part of the 5–point Likert–type scale questionnaire asked the learners to state whether or not they believed the following. strategies to be viable for acquiring vocabulary: a) memorizing word lists, b) repeating isolated words, c) focusing on one definition, d) analyzing clues, e) reading extensively, f) revising words, and g) using the words orally or in writing. The last item (h) asked the participants to determine whether or not they could use the newly learned words in everyday situations.

For Beliefs, the scores ranged between. and 40.. score close to 40 indicated that the level of Beliefs of the respondents was high. The general mean of Beliefs was equal to 29.70 (Around 74.25% of the maximum score), revealing that the level of Beliefs of the respondents was very acceptable. We have, however,. low Standard Deviation of (SD. 4.14), indicating that data was concentrated around the mean with. minimum value that is equal to 13 and. maximum value that is equal to 40.

Table 2

Results of the. items that measure Beliefs

1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Some-times, 4= Often, 5= Always	Mean	SD	NR	S	OA
1. The best way to remember words is to memorize word lists.	3.55	1.01	18.32%	20.63%	61.05%
2. Repetition of individual words is the best way to remember words.	3.89	0.88	8.63%	17.47%	73.89%
3. To learn. word, it is only necessary to focus on one dictionary definition.	3.20	1.03	30.11%	27.79%	42.11%

4.. believe. can identify the meaning of most words through reading.	3.80	0.81	5.26%	28.63%	66.11%
5.. believe. can expand my vocabulary through reading. lot.	4.04	0.89	6.95%	15.79%	77.26%
6. Words to be learned should be revised.	3.80	0.83	7.79%	21.05%	71.16%
7. Words studied should be put to use before they are learned.	3.93	0.86	5.47%	22.74%	71.79%
8.. believe. can use the words. learned in everyday situations.	3.50	0.93	14.11%	33.26%	52.63%

Note. SD= standard deviation, NR. Never. Rarely,. = Sometimes, OA. Often+ Always

The results depicted in table. above conveyed that the majority of the respondents considered the following strategies: revising the newly learned words, repeating individual words, reading. lot, and using the newly learnt words in speaking and in writing and in everyday situations to be quite effective. They believed that those strategies needed to be implemented when learning new words.

On the other hand, half of the respondents believed that they could guess the meaning of most words they encountered while reading texts. Few of the respondents, however, believed that in order to learn. new vocabulary word, one needed to be exposed to all its possible meanings.

To clarify and simplify the above results, the researcher differentiated between positive and negative Beliefs and presented them in table 3. The obtained statistics indicated that about two-thirds of the respondents (67.79%: OA) had positive Beliefs (identifying the meaning of most of the words as they are reading, expanding their vocabulary through extensive reading, revising the newly learnt words, and using those words when speaking and writing). But on the other hand, more than half of the respondents (59.01%: OA) had negative Beliefs (studying word lists, repeating individual words, focusing on just one dictionary definition.

Table 3

Respondents' Positive and Negative Beliefs

	Never/Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always
Positive Beliefs (items.: – 8)	7.91%	24.29%	67.79%
Negative Beliefs (items. – 3)	19.02%	21.96%	59.01%

4.2.2. Metacognitive Regulation Strategies

The items in that part of the 5-point Likert-type questionnaire measure the Metacognitive Regulation Strategies used by the participants. Those items would reveal whether or not the participants applied the following strategies: analyzing the new words, focusing on words required for tests, selecting words that were important and interesting to them, making notes of the new words, and finally, skipping incomprehensible words.

For Metacognitive Regulation, the scores ranged between. and 30.. score that is close to 30 indicates that the level of Metacognitive Regulation Strategies among students is high.

The general mean of Metacognitive Regulation strategies was equal to 21.44 (Around 71.45% of the maximum score), revealing that the level of Metacognitive Regulation strategies among students was very acceptable. We have, however,. low Standard Deviation of (SD. 3.82), revealing that the data was concentrated around the mean with. minimum value equal to. and. maximum value equal to 30.

Table 4

Results of the items that measure Metacognitive Regulation Strategies

1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always	Mean	SD	NR	S	OA
9.. try to find out all. can about the new words. learn.	3.62	0.90	11.16%	27.37%	61.47%
10.. focus on words that are related to examinations.	3.53	0.96	15.79%	26.74%	57.47%
11.. know which words are important for me to learn.	3.56	0.97	14.11%	28.84%	57.05%
12.. look up words that I'm interested in.	3.85	1.01	12.42%	16.42%	71.16%
13.. make. note of words that seem important to me.	3.70	1.08	15.16%	20.00%	64.84%
14.. skip words. don't understand.	3.18	1.09	32.63%	24.21%	43.16%

Note. SD= standard deviation, NR. Never. Rarely,. = Sometimes, OA. Often+ Always

In order to clarify the results depicted in table 4, the researcher classified the metacognitive strategies into: selective attention strategies and self-initiation strategies for vocabulary words acquisition. The researcher not only differentiated between Selective Attention Metacognitive Strategies (items

11–13) and Self–Initiation Metacognitive Strategies (items 9, 10, and 14), but further divided the Self–Initiation Strategies into positive strategies (item 9) and negative strategies (items 10. 14). That classification is presented in Table 5. The results in Table. indicated that students claimed to use two significant selective attention strategies; mainly knowing which words were important to them and making note of those words. The results of Table. also indicated that the respondents found out all they could about the new words (self–initiation). On the other hand,. substantial number of the respondents admitted that they used the reversed value of the self–initiation strategy (Items 10. 14) of focusing only on words that were related to exams and skipping new unfamiliar words that were incomprehensible to them.

Table 5

The Respondents’ Positive and Negative Metacognitive Strategies

	Never/ Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always
Metacognitive Regulation Strategies	16.88%	23.93%	59.19%
Selective Attention (items 11. 13)	13.89%	21.75%	64.35%
Positive Self– initiation Strategy (item 9)	11.16%	27.37%	61.47%
Reversed Value Self– initiation Strategies (items 10. 14)	24.21%	25.47%	50.31%

4.2.3. Guessing Strategies

For Guessing Strategies, the scores ranged between. and 25.. score that is close to 25 indicates that the level of the Guessing Strategies of the respondents is high. The general mean of Guessing Strategies was equal to 18.83 (Around 75.30% of the maximum score), revealing that the level of the Guessing Strategies of the respondents is very acceptable. We have, however,. low Standard Deviation of (SD. 3.19), revealing that data was concentrated around the mean with. minimum value of. and. maximum value of 25.

Table 6
Results of the. items that measure Guessing Strategies

	Mean	SD	NR	S	OA
15.. use my experience and common sense to guess the meaning of. word.	3.88	0.88	7.37%	17.47%	75.16%

16.. guess the meaning and then look at the dictionary when. meet new words in reading.	3.76	0.97	11.58%	21.05%	67.37%
17.. use context clues to guess the meaning of. word.	3.83	0.94	7.37%	26.32%	66.32%
18.. look at the part of speech of the new word to guess the meaning of the word.	3.78	0.91	8.21%	24.00%	67.79%
19.. analyze the word structure (prefix, root and suffix) when guessing the meaning of the word.	3.57	0.97	12.63%	33.47%	53.89%

Note. SD= standard deviation, NR. Never. Rarely,. = Sometimes, OA. Often+ Always

Since all the items about guessing strategies have. positive sense, the researcher added all the statistics of those items and displayed them in table 7. The results depicted in table. revealed that around two thirds of the respondents (66.11% OA) used positive guessing strategies.

Table 7
The Respondents' Guessing Strategies

	Never/Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always
Guessing Strategies	9.43%	24.46%	66.11%

Dictionary Strategies

For Dictionary Strategies, the scores ranged between. and 35.. score that is close to 35 indicates that the level of the Dictionary Strategies of the respondents is high. The general mean of Dictionary Strategies was equal to 23.71 (Around 67.74% of the maximum score), revealing that the level of the Dictionary Strategies of the respondents is acceptable. We have, however,. low Standard Deviation of (SD. 4.06), revealing that data was concentrated around the mean with. minimum value of 10 and. maximum value equal to 35.

Table 8
Results of the. items that measure Dictionary Strategies

	Mean	SD	NR	S	OA
21.. prefer to use an English dictionary rather than. bilin- gual dictionary.	3.44	1.00	18.61%	28.39%	53.00%

22.. use. bilingual dictionary rather than an English dictionary.	3.21	0.97	23.97%	36.59%	39.43%
23.. use the dictionary to find only the meaning of the word.	3.72	0.94	13.56%	16.72%	69.72%
24.. use the dictionary to find out the pronunciation of the word.	3.31	0.99	23.03%	29.34%	47.63%
25.. look in the dictionary for the grammatical patterns of the word.	3.31	0.97	22.08%	31.23%	46.69%
26.. look in the dictionary for collocation patterns.	3.12	0.92	24.61%	41.32%	34.07%
27.. use the dictionary to find the appropriate usage of the word.	3.60	0.93	12.93%	26.18%	60.88%

Note. SD= standard deviation, NR. Never. Rarely,. = Sometimes, OA. Often+ Always

It is worthy of note that the researcher differentiated between positive Dictionary Strategies (items: 21, 24, 25, 26 and 27), and negative Dictionary Strategies (22 and 23). The researcher, then, presented the total of each of those categories of items in table. below. The obtained statistics indicated that only some of the respondents (one quarter) tended to make use of the positive Dictionary Strategies (preferring to use. monolingual dictionary to. bilingual one, looking for the pronunciation, grammatical patterns, collocation patterns and appropriate usage). While about three quarters of the respondents tended to make use of the negative Dictionary Strategies (referring to. bilingual dictionary and using it only to find the meaning of the word.

Table 9

The Respondents' Positive and Negative Dictionary Strategies

	Never/Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Always
Dictionary Strategies	19.83%	29.97%	50.20%
Positive Dictionary Strategies	20.66%	32.01%	47.31%
Negative Dictionary Strategies	13.56%	16.72%	69.72%

1.1.5. Memory Strategies

For Memory Strategies, the scores ranged between. and 30.. score that is close to 30 indicates that the level of Memory Strategies of the respondents is high. The general mean of Memory Strategies was equal to 20.41

(Around 68.03% of the maximum score), revealing that the level of Memory Strategies of the respondents was acceptable. We have, however, low Standard Deviation of (SD. 4.03), revealing that the data was concentrated around the mean with. minimum value of. and. maximum value of 29.

Table 10

Results of the. items that measure Memory Strategies

1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always	Mean	SD	NR	S	OA
28. To remember. word,. analyze the word by breaking it into different parts (prefix, root, suffix).	3.52	0.95	14.53%	30.95%	54.53%
29.. think of relationships between words. already know and the new words. am trying to learn.	3.71	0.93	10.74%	22.74%	66.53%
30.. use flash cards or. notebook to remember new words.	3.25	1.11	28.42%	25.89%	45.68%
31.. group words together to study them (example:. group all words about. topic).	3.23	1.06	28.42%	28.00%	43.58%
32.. group words together spatially on. notebook or card by forming columns, triangles, squares, circles...	3.05	1.08	33.68%	30.32%	36.00%
33.. remember. new word by making. mental image of it.	3.65	1.01	14.74%	23.79%	61.47%

Note. SD= standard deviation, NR. Never. Rarely,. = Sometimes, OA. Often+ Always

To further clarify the results depicted in table 10 regarding the respondents' Memory Strategies, the researcher added the percentages of all the items related to Memory Strategies together (items: 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33). The researcher, then, presented the total percentage in table 11 below. The obtained statistics indicated that only about half of the respondents (51.30%) applied the delineated Memory Strategies, mainly, breaking. word into its basic parts, relating the unfamiliar words to the familiar ones, using flash cards and notebooks, classifying words semantically and/or spatially, and making mental representations for the words to be learnt. While less than one third of the respondents (21.76. NR) admitted that they sometimes or never or rarely used any of those Memory Strategies. The respondents who only occasionally used those Memory Strategies was about one third (26.95. S), as well.

Table 11
The Respondents' Memory Strategies

	Never/Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Al-ways
Memory Strategies (items: 28, 33)	21.76%	26.95%	51.30%

Sources

For Sources, the scores ranged between. and 10.. score that is close to 10 indicates that the level of Sources for the respondents is high. The general mean of Sources was equal to 6.36 (Around 63.64% of the maximum score), revealing that the level of Sources for the respondents was acceptable. We have, however,. low Standard Deviation of (SD. 0.90), revealing that data was concentrated around the mean with. minimum value of. and. maximum value of 9.

Table 12
Results of the. items that measure Sources

1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Some- times, 4= Often, 5= Always	Mean	SD	NR	S	OA
34.. learn new words only in my class from my teacher.	2.55	1.02	21.47%	22.32%	56.21%
35.. learn new words from reading out-of-class English materials (e.g. newspaper, novels, etc.).	3.82	0.86	8.21%	20.84%	70.95%

Note. SD= standard deviation, NR. Never. Rarely,. = Sometimes, OA. Of-ten+ Always

Based on the results mentioned above, it is evident that the students, regardless of their vocabulary knowledge level, use various vocabulary learning strategies. Then what's the difference in the use of vocabulary learning strategies between students of high vocabulary knowledge and those with low vocabulary knowledge? The table below summarizes the means and standard deviation of the vocabulary learning strategies employed by students whose vocabulary test averages are below 50/100 and those whose average is above 50/100. To determine if there is. difference between the means of the two groups,. t-test was performed. Then the p-value was calculated to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the groups.. p-value which is equal to or less than 0.05 is statistically sig-

nificant.

1.2. Comparison between the Results of Students with High Vocabulary Knowledge and Students with Low Vocabulary Knowledge

Table 13

Comparison of Vocabulary Learning Strategies according to the level of students in Vocabulary test

	< 50		> 50		t-test	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Beliefs	29.84	4.19	29.60	4.10	0.643	0.520
Metacognition	21.48	4.05	21.40	3.66	0.236	0.813
Guessing	18.26	3.02	19.23	3.25	-3.283	0.001
Dictionary	24.08	4.12	23.47	4.01	1.311	0.191
Memory	20.87	4.37	20.08	3.75	2.135	0.033
Sources	6.44	0.95	6.31	0.86	1.541	0.124

In table 13 above, we notice that the p-value of the guessing strategies and the memory strategies are less than 0.05 which indicates. statistically significant difference between the students with high vocabulary knowledge and those with low vocabulary knowledge.

The results of the obtained descriptive statistics and the independent t-test indicated that there were significant differences in the use of Guessing and Memory Strategies among the two groups. Students with high vocabulary knowledge relied on the Guessing Strategies more than the low vocabulary knowledge. However, low vocabulary knowledge students reported the use of Memory Strategies more than those with high vocabulary knowledge.

As for the guessing strategies, the students with high vocabulary knowledge are better in using the guessing strategies since guessing requires experience and common sense (item 15), and determination to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words before referring to. dictionary (item 16). It also requires analysis of the context clues surrounding the new word (item 17), part of speech (item 18), as well as morphological analysis of the unfamiliar word (item 19). The larger the vocabulary repertoire, the better the guessing, for. large vocabulary size is. requirement for successful guessing (Nation,

2001, p. 233).

On the other hand, students with low vocabulary knowledge rely on memory strategies (analyzing words morphologically, activating schemata, taking notes, grouping words semantically, using graphic organizers, or even visualizing) to increase their vocabulary knowledge. Utilizing these strategies require proficiency. Research revealed that weak learners intended to use less complex strategies than advanced learners did (Schmitt, 1997).

The results depicted in table 13 of the current study are in line with the findings of several research studies. In his research study titled *The Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Good and Poor Language Learners*, Zhang (2011) found that “both good and poor language learners used many effective strategies for vocabulary learning,” and that poor language learners used learning strategies less frequently than good learners, which led Zhang to conclude that “vocabulary learning strategies were positively related to learning outcomes.” This finding partly matches Schmitt’s (1997) findings in his study about EFL students in Japan. Proficient students were found to be using different kinds of VLS more often than their less proficient counterparts.

By comparing the use of dictionary and guessing strategies, Schmitt (1997) found that most students preferred using the latter more frequently although they considered the former more useful. In contrast to the results presented in Table 13 of the current study, the results Schmitt obtained showed that the students mostly used repetition and dictionary strategies and considered them more suitable than the other strategies. Semantic grouping and imagery strategies were rarely used among those students; they considered them as the least effective. In contrast to the findings of Schmitt’s (1997) study, the results in Tılfarlıođlu and Bozgeyik’s (2012) research study showed that there was a positive correlation between memory strategies and the participants’ vocabulary proficiency level, which is in contrast to the results of the current study..

5.3.1. Conclusion and Implications.

This research study has investigated the use of vocabulary learning strategies by university students who have high as well as low vocabulary knowledge.

The participants in this research study learn English as a foreign language, which means that they rarely use English outside the class or in daily communication. They are expected to use personal effort to learn vocabulary, for

incidental learning experience is quite rare. This makes the use of vocabulary learning strategies fundamental in the learning process.

The results of the current study clearly show that the utilization of vocabulary learning strategies is widely spread among university students in Beirut, which is evidenced by the relatively high means of both groups for all the strategies listed in the questionnaire. The results also indicate that students with high vocabulary knowledge use Guessing Strategies more often than their counterparts. This is because the former group skillfully utilizes the two types of guessing strategies: guessing by using background knowledge, and guessing by using immediate context. On the other hand, the latter group generally has poorer background information about the topic in hand and are less skilled in guessing from context clues.

Since advanced learners are able to use more complex strategies than weak learners do, weak learners depend on memory strategies (analyzing words morphologically, activating schemata, taking notes, grouping words semantically, using graphic organizers, or even visualizing) more often for their vocabulary acquisition.

However, only one quarter of the respondents tend to make use of the positive Dictionary Strategies (preferring to use. monolingual dictionary to. bilingual one to look for the pronunciation, grammatical patterns, collocation patterns, and appropriate usage). While about three-quarters of the respondents tend to make use of the negative Dictionary Strategies (referring to. bilingual dictionary and using it only to find the meaning of the word). This limited usage of monolingual dictionaries reveals that the students rely mainly on the first language which enables them to know the meaning of. word; however, it does not enable them to know how to use it.

Academically, it is important that teachers encourage students to use monolingual dictionaries when they want to look up new words. It is also important that they give students detailed instruction and sufficient practice on guessing and memory strategies to help increase their vocabulary knowledge.

This research study has only paved the way for further research on effective vocabulary learning strategies that can be taught to Lebanese university students to expand their vocabulary knowledge and thus improve their English Language acquisition. By investigating the vocabulary learning strategies of students with high and low vocabulary knowledge, the current study has set the first step for further deeper investigation on how to help Lebanese university students become independent strategic learners. Thus, the results

provide curriculum designers, coordinators, and instructors with deeper understanding of the underlying vocabulary learning strategies that should be part of English language instruction.

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