



English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by Palestinian EFL Students

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study explores the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Palestinian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) university students, focusing on their popularity and effectiveness.

Methodology: The study adopted Schmitt's (1997) questionnaire to analyze how 390 students use determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies.

Findings: The study found out that determination strategies, such as guessing meaning from context, were used more than others. It was also found that social strategies were the least frequently used strategies. Moreover, the results showed no significant difference in strategy use depending on gender. Such insights help in understanding the unique challenges that Palestinian learners encounter.

Research implications: The results emphasize the significance of diverse and targeted instructional approaches to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning strategies; Palestinian EFL students; determination strategies; social strategies; memory strategies; cognitive strategies; metacognitive strategies.

1 Introduction

Language is the tool used for communication, since it is the method people use to transfer their feelings, ideas, thoughts, etc. Thousands of languages are found around the world. However, their importance varies. Since English is the lingua franca, i.e., the number one used language in the world, learning it has become important. Learning English has made things easier for people. Thus, language differences are no longer hinder communication between people, thanks to the existence of a global language that is widely Learned-English. In the context of Palestine, English is considered a foreign language following Arabic (Bianchi & Abdel Razeq, 2017; Farrah & Halahlah, 2020). Students at schools learn English from the first grade. In addition, Palestinian university's medium of instruction is English.

When learning a language, English in our case, it is important that the learner master its skills. Despite the fact that students, in Palestine for instance, learn English from childhood, their level often remains poor. This can be ascribed to several reasons. Some of the reasons can be attributed to the student himself/herself, or the material itself that the student learns (Bianchi & Abdel Razeq, 2017). Regarding the teaching materials, they are often theoretical, meaning that no enough practical concentration is put (Bianchi & Abdel Razeq, 2017). Then, students are not exposed well to adequate practical activities that lead them to master the language skills. Then, this gap negatively affects students' academic performance at university, which relies heavily on mastering English. In many cases, students avoid studying certain majors because they depend a lot on English, feeling that their weakness in the language may limit their future opportunities.

When students or learners start learning a new language, it is important to make sure that they retain a good number of vocabulary since it is the backbone of language (Yang & Dai, 2011). Hence, students who aspire to understand the language should apply effective vocabulary learning strategies that suit their aims and abilities. Research has shown that acquiring and knowing strong vocabulary is not only important for effective communication but also it is the base for understanding academic material in all fields (Hatch & Brown, 1995; Schmitt, 2000.). Of course, there are many other factors that affect vocabulary acquisition like: Learner age, aims, cultural background.

Learners can apply diverse vocabulary acquisition strategies to improve their vocabulary acquisition process. Choosing the suitable strategies for learners and their interests improve their long-term retention of vocabulary and their ability to use them in different context. In addition, research has shown that applying multiple strategies makes learning more effective, and helps learners improve their language proficiency (Schmitt, 1997). This research aims to identify the most and least common strategies among Palestinian students in EFL situation using Schmitt's questionnaire as a tool for data collection.

1.1 Problem Statement

Second language learners can face several problems when learning of a new language (Yang and Dai, 2011). It is noted that in Palestine, a good number of Palestinian students have challenges learning English (Bianchi & Abdel Razeq, 2017). This can be attributed to having not enough vocabulary repertoire that negatively affects their ability to understand and communicate using English. In fact, the way that students learn English vocabulary can be the basis of this problem. According to Nyikos and Oxford (1993) using insufficient strategies in learning hinder student's improvement and effect their language proficiency. In reality, many students have yet to identify the learning strategies that suit them best, which adversely affects both their language and academic proficiency. There is no doubt that educational environment may be contributing factor for this problem as it emphasizes theoretical aspects over practical applications (Bianchi & Abdel Razeq, 2017). As a result, students may recognize vocabulary in isolation but struggle to use it effectively in real-life situations. Consequently, this leads to students' lack of self-confident.

Although there is a lot of research that discussed applying English learning strategies for EFL students in general and vocabulary acquisition in particular, there is a scarcity of studies that are conducted on Palestinian students in particular, taking into account that Palestinian students face unique challenges which need unique solutions. This research aims to fill this gap by understanding and examining the common strategies employed by Palestinian students.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for English vocabulary learning, and the recurrence rates

among groups. In addition, it attempts to examine if there are statistically significant differences between the use of VLSs attributed to gender?

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for English vocabulary learning, and what are its recurrence rates among groups.
- Are there statistically significant differences between the use of VLSs attributed to gender?

2 Literature Review

This section presents theoretical information about the importance of vocabulary learning, learning strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, classification of vocabulary learning strategies and some practical related studies.

2.1 English Vocabulary Learning

The term vocabulary refers to words that are employed by individuals of a particular language users (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Learning vocabulary is considered an inseparable part of enhancing one's proficiency of the language he/she learns. According to Useini (2019), vocabulary is the complete collection of the words that compromise a language. Vocabulary is classified by Shepard (1980) into two kinds. These are the receptive vocabulary and the productive vocabulary. The first type includes the words that are perceived when a learner listens and reads. However, this process is considered passive since the learner only receives information. As for productive vocabulary, these are said to be the words that are used when the learner speaks or writes. In this context, Harmer (1998), stated that active vocabulary refers to words that learners have been taught or learned but will probably not be able to produce. It is believed that learners' receptive vocabulary is typically larger than productive vocabulary.

2.2 The Importance of Vocabulary Learning

Recent research consistently underscores the vital role of vocabulary learning in English language acquisition. Internationally, there are several studies that highlight how learners' beliefs, motivation, and self-regulated strategies have a positive influence on vocabulary knowledge (Black & Wright, 2024). They argue that strong academic vocabulary is necessary for students' success. Theoretical frameworks such as social constructivism underscore the cognitive and social dimensions essential for effective vocabulary instruction. In the Arab context, there are a number

of studies that highlight the importance of vocabulary learning. Elyas and Al-Zahrani (2023) demonstrated the impact of critical thinking on learners' EFL vocabulary retention. Likewise, Tareq and Essa (2023), in their study about morphological awareness, and Alolaywi and Alkhalaf (2023) revealed how digital communication tools significantly enhance vocabulary retention and use. Furthermore, perceptions from both teachers and learners stress the importance of vocabulary as a base for language proficiency (Alshumrani, 2024). Together, these findings reveal that vocabulary acquisition is foundational to language success and benefits from diverse pedagogical approaches and technological tools across contexts.

2.3 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

A learning strategy is defined as the behavior of the learner that affects the way the learner process information (Useini, 2022). Chamot et al. (1992, p. 2) define learning strategies as "procedures or techniques that learners can use to facilitate a learning task". Learning strategies are used in all learning fields, whether it is math, science, history, language and other context. In fact, learning strategies instructions "can help students of English become better learners. Students become more motivated as they begin to understand the relationship between their use of strategies and success in learning English" (Chamot, 1999:1). As mentioned by Nunan (1989, p. 47), "Familiarity with Learning Strategy can enhance understanding of what goes on in classrooms".

No one can deny the importance of learning more and more vocabulary when learning a new language. Therefore, researchers have been vocabulary acquisition since the 1970s. Vocabulary learning strategies are part of language learning strategies and which are part of general learning strategies. According to Nation, (2001, p. 217), attempts to define the notion of strategy by giving the following list:

- Involve choice, that is, there are several strategies to choose from.
- Be complex that is, there are several steps to learn.
- Require knowledge and benefit from training.
- Increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use.

Schmitt (1997, 2000) divided vocabulary learning strategies into two main groups. These are discovery strategies, which include social interaction, and determination and consolidation strategies, which include cognitive techniques,

metacognitive approaches, and memory. These classifications highlighted a variety of important strategies that learners follow in different context.

With the increasing tendency on learners toward autonomies learning, the importance of vocabulary learning strategies has grown. With the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s and 1980s the focus has become on promoting self-directed learning instead of passive vocabulary acquisition (Hazenbergh & Hulstijn, 1996). Research has focused on successful and effective vocabulary learning strategies to achieve deeper understanding and excellent linguistic outcomes.

To encourage learner independence, it is recommended to teach vocabulary learning strategies directly. This helps students to choose strategies that fit their learning style and improve their vocabulary acquisition in class. Many studies have focused specifically on successful learners in an attempt to understand their characteristics and strategies. These studies found that high achieving learners are more aware of vocabulary learning techniques that work effectively for them; they always try to guess the meaning of new words from the text, and they focus on the new word's spellings and forms. As regards struggling learners, they tend to avoid new words and don't even try to use dictionaries to understand their meanings so they are following passive learning strategies (Gu, 2003). This shift in focus moves from just recognizing successful learner's strategies to exploring how all learners can become successful by using second language learning techniques effectively. Successful learners typically face challenges by using a diverse set of strategies, while struggling learners depend on specific strategies that hinder their vocabulary growth and make the process more difficult.

In his comprehensive review, Schmitt (1997), mentioned three important conclusions about vocabulary learning strategies. First, most learners tend to overuse mechanical like repetition and rote memorization while neglecting deeper strategies that deal with the problems of vocabulary limitation among student, such as guessing and visualization. Second, focusing on vocabulary and its learning strategies leads learners to try these strategies and they may neglect other areas of language in favor of vocabulary acquisition. Finally, successful learners are marked by their application of a variety of strategies that are vital for effectively managing vocabulary learning. Schmitt also highlighted the importance of focusing

student's attention to the repetition to the target words to improve their vocabulary learning.

2.4 Classification of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Researchers classified vocabulary learning strategies to analytically comprehend the learners' vocabulary acquisition process. Among the most prominent taxonomies are those advanced by Rubin, (1981), Oxford (1990), Nation (2001) and Schmitt (1997). Rubin concentrated on strategies employed by successful language learners, while Oxford (1990) presented a more detailed classification, dividing strategies into two categories. The first category is direct strategies which include compensation techniques, memory, and compensation. The second category is indirect strategies, which involve social/affective, and metacognitive strategies. On the other hand, Nation classified VLSs based on the aspects of vocabulary knowledge (e.g., form, meaning, and use) and the stages of vocabulary learning (e.g., noticing, retrieval, and creative use). Additionally, O'Malley and Chamot (1999) proposed a system for classifying strategies that consists of three main types: social/affective, metacognitive, and cognitive. This classification was a great reference for many studies in language learning. Building on this, Researchers Gu and Johnson (1996) emphasize the importance of cognitive strategies and metacognitive regulation. They divide them into six main subcategories: note-taking, using dictionaries, guessing, activating, rehearsal, encoding. Important studies were done as regards learning strategies and language learning strategies. Of these important studies are Naiman et al. (1978) and Rubin (1981) which were like the base for identifying different patterns in these strategies.

Despite the convenience of the above taxonomies, the current study adopts Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies as it is more comprehensive and learner-oriented. It has a clear structure and it is widely accepted to be applicable across EFL context. It combines both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. It classifies VLSs into two main groups: discovery strategies (used for initial learning of a word) and consolidation strategies (used for remembering and integrating the word into existing knowledge). Schmitt broke down the categories into determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Schmitt's taxonomy is having high citations in various empirical studies, making it a robust and validated framework to examine learners' vocabulary strategy use.

2.5 Related Studies

There are a number of studies that are carried out on vocabulary learning strategies (Al-Fraidan, 2018; Al-Zahrani & Chaudhry, 2022; Farrah and Darabee, 2024; Gu & Johnson, 1996; O'Malley et al. 1985; Saengpakdeejit, 2014; Schmitt, 1997). Al-Fraidan (2018) concentrated on Saudi university students who learn new words to examine the vocabulary strategies they use. In his study, the researcher employed a VLSs questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, which were distributed to 84 university students, of who are 52 first-year English Major (EFL) male, and 32 Preparatory Year Deanship (PYD) male students. Results of the study reveal that there is a difference in the frequency of the use of the vocabulary learning strategies among students. As noted by the researcher PYD students prefer to use determination strategies more than EFL students. On their role, EFL students prefer the metacognitive strategies.

Al-Zahrani and Chaudhry (2022) examined the knowledge level and preferences as regards vocabulary learning strategies by concentrating on EFL university students who study English for Specific Purposes course. The researchers also examined the effect of these strategies on the performance of the EFL learners. The researchers gathered his data from 20 students through a triangulated approach using the questionnaire, semi-structured interview and classroom observation. The researchers found that using different vocabulary learning strategies has a direct impact on the performance of student.

To support the relationship between language proficiency and vocabulary acquisition, Gu and Johnson (1996) conducted a study that established how metacognitive strategies, including self-innated learning and selective attention. Serve as critical indicators of proficiency in English, moreover, later studies demonstrated a positive correlation between various vocabulary learning strategies and over all vocabulary knowledge. The results indicate that a variety of strategies enhance learner's performance in language. Techniques such as focused training, repetition, and efficient use of dictionaries play a significant role in achieving a deeper understanding of vocabulary.

O'Malley et al. (1985) found that Asian students were reluctant to use imagery and grouping strategies in vocabulary learning; however, their result was better than the groups that focus on memorization. Saengpakdeejit (2014) focused on Thai students and vocabulary learning strategies to find out the problems encountering

these students due to their limited strategies of learning vocabulary. To gather data, the researcher used the semi-structured interview from undergraduate students studying at Khon Kaen University (2 campuses). The researcher found that the students showed awareness of vocabulary learning strategies. He also found two main types of vocabulary learning strategies 1) strategies for discovering the meaning of unknown words; and 2) strategies for retaining the newly learned words in long-term memory and recalling them at will.

Schmitt (1997) conducted further exploration through a study on 600 Japanese students, which showed that the students tended to prefer using dictionaries and repetition, seeing these strategies as the most helpful for vocabulary acquisition, whereas strategies like semantic grouping and imagery were considered less effective and useful for them. The results highlight the importance of taking cultural and psychological factors into account when studying learning strategies. By creating a sportive educational environment that aligns with learner's needs, teachers can enhance the adaption of more effective and successful strategies.

In conclusion, vocabulary learning strategies are a vital and essential part of language acquisition, while learners face many challenges and difficulties in this filed, understanding how effectively and successfully implement these strategies can simplify the process, by taking into account cultural and cognitive differences and emphasizing a diverse range of strategies we can achieve positive outcomes. Furthermore, the methods used to teach these strategies in classrooms greatly impact how learners apply them. This creates possibilities for farther research aimed at improving methods for teaching vocabulary learning strategies to achieve better education outcomes. Additionally, acknowledge the important role of technology in teaching these strategies can lead to the development of innovative tools that enrich the learning experience and increase student's engagement.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive study. The researchers employed the quantitative approach. The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire.

3.2 Sampling, Instrumentation and Procedure

The sample consisted of 390 students at the Palestinian universities. The background of the

study sample is varied in terms of gender, university as shown in (Table 1) below.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample According to Study Independent Variables

Variable	Class	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	113	29.0
	Female	277	71.0
University	Hebron University	76	19.5
	Palestine Polytechnic University	50	12.8
	Al-Quds University	32	8.2
	Palestine Ahliya University	41	10.5
	Birzeit University	37	9.5
	Bethlehem University	31	7.9
	Arab American University	36	9.2
	Al-Najah National University	45	11.5
	Al-Quds Open University	42	10.8

3.3 Instrumentation

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers adopted a 39-item questionnaire based on Schmitt'e (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ). The questionnaire was administered to a sample of students from Palestinian universities in the field of learning English. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; the first section focused on demographic data of the respondents such as gender, age, educational level, major, university, average and years spent on studying English including your (elementary, middle, and High schools).

The second consisted 39 items about the strategies used by Palestinian EFL students to learn English vocabulary effectively. The questionnaire was anonymous. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and were asked to fill out of the questionnaire if they are willing to participate.

The scores of responses to each item were calculated according to a five-point Likert scale. The questions measured by a 5- point Likert scale 1 (strongly disagree) 5 (strongly agree).

3.4 Reliability of the questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire as calculated through Cronbach Alpha formula for the total degree was (0.79) which is acceptable for conducting the research.

3.5 Procedure

The final draft of the Google form questionnaire was distributed online to study sample at the Palestinian Universities. The questionnaire was distributed online to the Heads of the English Departments, who then shared it with their students via Google Classroom and WhatsApp groups. It took about four weeks for the instrument to be distributed, collected, and returned to the researchers. The total number of the returned questionnaires was 390.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using (SPSS-24) to provide answers to the questions of the study. Means, frequencies, standard deviations two independent sample T-test were calculated. The researchers used the following scales to represent the estimation level of sample responses:

4.20 and more	- 84.0 % and more	Very High
3.40-4.19	- 68.0 – 83.8%	High
2.60-3.39	- 52.0 – 67.8 %	Moderate
1.80- 2.59	- 36.0 – 51.8 %	Low
Less than 1.8	- 35.9% and less	Very Low

4 Results

This study aimed at identifying the strategies used by Palestinian EFL students to learn English vocabulary effectively. It also aimed at identifying the effect of several variables on the responses. To accomplish the aims of the study, the researcher analyzed the data in accordance with the study questions and the results were as follows:

4.1 Results related to Study Questions

Results related to the First Question. What are the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for vocabulary learning, and what are its recurrence rates among groups?

To answer this question, the researchers used means and standard deviations and estimation level as shown in following tables.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations and estimated level of the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for vocabulary learning, and what are its recurrence rates among groups

No.	Strategy	Means	standard deviations	Percentage %	Estimated level
1	Determination Strategies	3.88	0.42	77.6	High
2	Social Strategies	3.70	0.57	74.0	High
3	Memory Strategies	3.81	0.46	76.2	High
4	Cognitive Strategies	3.82	0.39	76.4	High
5	Metacognitive Strategies	3.83	0.43	76.6	High
Total		3.81	0.32	76.2	High

Table 2 shows that the total degree of most popular strategies among Palestinian students for vocabulary learning, and what are its recurrence rates among groups was (76.2). The highest mean

was given to (Determination Strategies). The lowest was for (Social Strategies).

As for the strategies, the following tables show the results:

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and estimated level of the Determination Strategies

No.	Item	Means	Standard deviations	Percentage %	Estimated level
1	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Check the new word's form (verb, noun etc.)	3.78	0.97	75.6	High
2	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Look for any word parts that I know (impossible, colorful).	3.75	1.00	75.0	High
3	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Check if the word is also an Arabic word. (e.g., carton)	3.77	1.03	75.4	High
4	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Use any pictures or gestures to help me guess the meaning	3.82	1.02	76.4	High
5	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Guess meaning from context	4.18	0.91	83.6	Very High
6	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Use an English-Arabic dictionary	3.94	0.97	78.8	High
7	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Use an English-English dictionary	3.90	0.96	78.0	High
Total		3.88	0.42	77.6	High

Table 3 shows that the total degree of Determination Strategies was (3.88) which suggest high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to (When I find a new English word that I

don't know, I Guess meaning from context). The lowest was for (When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Look for any word parts that I know (impossible, colorful)).

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations and estimated level of the Social Strategies

No.	Item	Means	standard deviations	Percentage %	Estimated level
1	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Ask the teacher to give me the definition or a sentence of new word.	3.72	1.04	74.4	High
2	When I find a new English word that I don't know, I Ask my classmates for the meaning.	3.73	1.03	74.6	High
3	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Study the word with my classmates.	3.69	1.04	73.8	High
4	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Ask the teacher to check my definition.	3.57	1.08	71.4	High
5	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary I Talk with native speakers.	3.80	1.00	76.0	High
Total		3.76	0.42	75.2	High

Table 4 shows that the total degree of Social Strategies was (3.76) which suggest high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to (When I want to remember new words and build my

vocabulary, I Talk with native speakers s). The lowest was for (When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Ask the teacher to check my definition).

Table (5): Means, Standard Deviations and estimated level of the Memory Strategies

No.	Item	Means	standard deviations	Percentage %	Estimated level
1	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Draw a picture of the word to help remember it.	3.72	1.05	74.2	High
2	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Make a mental image of the word's meaning.	3.82	1.00	76.4	High
3	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Connect the word to a personal experience.	3.82	0.99	76.4	High
4	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Remember the words that follow or proceed the new word.	3.76	0.98	75.2	High
5	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Connect the word to other words with similar or opposite meanings.	3.93	0.95	78.6	High
6	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Remember words on 'scales'(always-often-sometimes-never).	3.77	0.96	75.4	High
7	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Group words together to study them.	3.85	0.99	77.0	High
Total		3.81	0.46	76.2	High

Table 5 shows that the total degree of Memory Strategies was (3.81) which suggest high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to (When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Connect the word to other words with

similar or opposite meanings). The lowest was for (When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Draw a picture of the word to help remember it).

Table 6: Means, Standard Deviations and estimated level of the Cognitive Strategies

No.	Item	Means	standard deviations	Percentage %	Estimated level
1	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Use new words in sentences.	3.94	0.94	78.8	High
2	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Write paragraphs using several new words.	3.69	1.01	73.8	High
3	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Study the spelling of a word.	3.86	0.94	77.2	High
4	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Study the sound of a word.	3.86	0.98	77.2	High
5	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Say the new words a loud when I first meet them.	3.88	0.98	77.6	High
6	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Repeat the words many times.	4.00	0.95	80.0	Very High
7	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Write the words many times.	3.98	1.00	79.6	High
8	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Make lists of new words.	3.93	1.00	78.6	High
9	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Use flash cards to record new words.	3.65	1.04	73.0	High
10	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Put English labels on physical objects.	3.78	0.99	75.6	High
11	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Keep a vocabulary notebook.	3.67	1.01	73.4	High
12	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Take notes or highlights on physical objects.	3.78	1.07	75.6	High
Total		3.82	0.39	76.4	High

Table 6 shows that the total degree of Cognitive Strategies was (3.82) which suggest high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to (When I want to remember new words and build my

vocabulary, I Repeat the words many times). The lowest was for (When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Use flash cards to record new words).

Table (7): Means, Standard Deviations and estimated level of the Metacognitive Strategies

No.	Item	Means	standard deviations	Percentage %	Estimated level
1	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Make a mental image of the word's form	3.80	0.93	76.0	High
2	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Remember the word using its parts (im-, in-, -able, -ful, -ment, ex)	3.75	1.00	75.0	High
3	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Remember the word using its word form (verb, noun, adjective)	3.63	1.04	72.6	High
4	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Make my own definition for the word.	3.86	1.01	77.2	High
5	remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Use physical action when learning a word	3.78	1.01	75.6	High

6	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Use English language media (songs, movie, the internet)	3.95	1.00	79.0	High
7	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Test myself with word tests	3.89	0.99	77.8	High
8	When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Study new words many times	3.98	0.99	79.6	High
Total		3.83	0.43	76.6	High

Table 7 shows that the total degree of Metacognitive Strategies was (3.83) which suggest high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to (When I want to remember new words and build my

4.2 Results related to Second question: Are there statistically significant differences between the use of VLSs attributed to gender?

Table 8: Independent two sample t test result of the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for vocabulary learning, and what are its recurrence rates among groups attributed to the variables of gender

	Gender	N	Mean	S. D	t	Sig.*
Total degree	Male	113	3.80	0.27	-0.637	0.524
	Female	277	3.83	0.34		

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8 shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) about the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for vocabulary learning, and what are its recurrence

vocabulary, I Study new words many times). The lowest was for (When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I Remember the word using its word form (verb, noun, adjective.)).

To answer this question, Independent Sample t-test was used and the table below show the results:

rates among groups attributed to the variables of gender.

Another t-test is carried out for each subscale to get clearer insights of the use of the different strategies based on gender as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Independent two sample t-test result of the most popular strategies among Palestinian students for vocabulary learning attributed to the variable of gender

	Gender	N	Mean	S. D	t	Sig.*
Determination	Male	113	3.8508	.42058	-.954	.341
	Female	277	3.8958	.42360		
Social	Male	113	3.7150	.58420	.116	.907
	Female	277	3.7076	.57013		
Memory	Male	113	3.8357	.45386	.567	.571
	Female	277	3.8061	.47221		
Cognitive	Male	113	3.8048	.35705	-.501	.617
	Female	277	3.8271	.41603		
Metacognitive	Male	113	3.7688	.42627	-1.961	.050
	Female	277	3.8637	.43645		

As Table 9 shows, there are no statistically significant differences attributed to gender and student use of the various vocabulary learning strategies as most p-values are greater than 0.50. However, the Table reveals that the Metacognitive strategies have statistically significant differences at 0.050. Some statisticians consider this to be marginally significant as it is at the threshold for statistical significance, suggesting that female may use metacognitive strategies slightly more than male students.

5 Discussion

This study investigated the most popular vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by

Palestinian EFL university students. Moreover, the researchers investigated whether there were statistically significant differences in strategy use due to gender. The findings revealed that all five categories of VLSs –Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive, and Meta-cognitive- were employed at high levels by students. The average means ranged from 3.70 to 3.88. The most frequently used strategy was the determination strategy with a mean of 3.88. This is followed by Metacognitive (3.83), Cognitive (3.82), Memory (3.81). Moreover, the findings revealed that Social strategies were used the least, though still at a high level (3.70). The researchers attribute these results to the fact that there is a similarity in the size of

vocabulary knowledge of Palestinian university students at these stages of their education. The similarity that the students have similar linguistic backgrounds and experience. The high level of preference for determination strategies indicate that students are rely on individual, problem-solving methods for learning new vocabulary. They tend to guess the meaning of new words from the context use, use bilingual dictionaries, and analyze word parts. This is in harmony with the findings of Gu and Johnson (1996) and Nation (2001), who reported the importance of cognitive engagement and learner autonomy in the process of vocabulary acquisition.

Furthermore, the high preference for the metacognitive strategies (e.g., reviewing, making a mental image, using English media, testing, and using parts of speech) demonstrate that learners manage and evaluate their learning process in active manners. This is in line with O'Malley et al. (1985) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) who reported that these strategies as the most helpful for vocabulary acquisition. They clarified that learners who engaged in metacognitive planning and evaluation can have higher levels of language proficiency. The general preference for the above strategies at a high level reveals a multi-strategy approach among Palestinian students, demonstrating their awareness of the complexity of vocabulary acquisition and their inclination to utilize various techniques to support learning. The results are in line with Johnson (1996) who opined that a variety of strategies enhance learner's performance in language. Likewise, the results are in line with Al-Zahrani and Chaudhry (2022) which indicate that using different vocabulary learning strategies has a direct impact on the performance of student and Saengpakdeejit (2014) which found that the students showed awareness of vocabulary learning strategies.

Moreover, the researchers investigated whether there statistically significant differences in the use of VLSs attributed to gender. The findings revealed that there are no statistically significant differences due to gender in the students' overall use of vocabulary learning strategies – determination, social, memory, cognitive. These findings mirror the findings Griffiths (2003) and Wharton (2000) who reported no significant difference due to gender in overall strategy use. They opined that individual learner differences and proficiency level may play vital roles than gender in determining strategy use. However, in the current study, the metacognitive strategies revealed that there is a statistically significant difference as females favored metacognitive strategies more than males. This resonates with other studies (e.g., Oxford, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995) that found that female students have slight inclination towards the metacognitive strategies as they are inclined to be more reflective and self-regulating in their learning habits.

6 Conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate the most popular vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by Palestinian EFL university students. Moreover, the researchers investigated whether there were statistically significant differences in strategy use due to gender. The findings demonstrated that Palestinian EFL students use a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies at high levels with the determination strategies being the highly used one. Moreover, the findings demonstrated that gender does seems to significantly affect strategy use. However, female learners showed a tendency toward greater metacognitive awareness. These results may help decision makers, curriculum designers, educators develop more tailored vocabulary instruction by promoting strategic learning across genders and fostering greater metacognitive engagement among all learners.

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