

# Reporting Moroccan High School Students' Attitudes Towards Vocabulary Learning Strategies: High Schools as a Case Study

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## Abstract

This survey aims to explore the vocabulary learning strategies utilized by English students in high schools located in Oujda. Moroccan EFL learners actively participated in this study, contributing vital data that forms the crux of this paper. The study's population sample comprises 80 EFL learners, encompassing 34 males and 46 females, representing various academic levels (common core, 1st and 2nd baccalaureate), and diverse streams (physics, humanities, and science). Data collection involved the administration of a questionnaire. The collected data underwent analysis using SPSS, employing frequencies, percentages, and mean measurements to discern the most prevalent trends. The findings highlight discernible variations in the significance attributed to students' responses regarding vocabulary learning strategies. The research outcome indicates that, overall, students predominantly employed cognitive vocabulary strategies in the acquisition of English vocabulary ( $X=3.58$ ). Additionally, social strategies ( $X=3.49$ ), memory strategies ( $X=3.43$ ), determination strategies ( $X=3.24$ ), and metacognitive strategies ( $X=2.62$ ) were also identified as significant contributors to the student's vocabulary learning approaches. This research provides valuable insights into the nuanced landscape of vocabulary acquisition strategies among EFL learners in the specified context.

**Keywords:** Vocabulary Learning Strategies, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners, High Schools, Cognitive Strategies, Social Strategies, Memory Strategies, Determination Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies

## Introduction

"If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh" (Harmer, 1993, p. 153). This metaphor encapsulates the profound significance of vocabulary in language learning, depicting it as the dynamic force breathing life into the skeletal framework of linguistic structures. The ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language centers on a robust vocabulary base, rendering vocabulary acquisition a central tenet of language mastery.

Scrivener (2005) underscores the potency of vocabulary as a conduit for meaning. He illustrates that even with fundamental grammar, learners can convey substantial messages through the effective use of individual words, highlighting the pivotal role of vocabulary in language acquisition and communication. This study delves into the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Moroccan EFL learners in high schools in Oujda city in Morocco. Understanding the diverse strategies learners utilize is crucial for educators in tailoring effective lesson plans and instructional approaches to fortify students' English

language competence. The research is motivated by observed challenges faced by learners in vocabulary acquisition during practicums, emphasizing the practicality of incorporating learner preferences into teaching methodologies.

The investigation seeks to answer questions about the types of vocabulary learning strategies employed by students, the frequency of their usage, and which strategies are perceived as most beneficial by Moroccan learners. It also challenges the hypothesis that different vocabulary learning strategies are employed by high school students. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to language educators and researchers, shedding light on effective approaches to vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners in Moroccan high schools.

### **Literature review**

The significance of vocabulary in language learning cannot be overstated; it serves as the fundamental building blocks of a language. As language learners, our experiences affirm the paramount importance of vocabulary in second language (L2) acquisition. Thornbury (2002) aptly articulates this importance by stating that without grammar very little can be conveyed but without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. According to Thornbury, dedicating most of one's time to grammar study may yield limited improvement in English proficiency; true enhancement is witnessed through the acquisition of a richer lexicon. In essence, while grammar facilitates expression to a certain extent, the true breadth of communication is unlocked through a rich vocabulary.

During practicums as an observer, the prevalent issue of limited vocabulary among learners became apparent. Students faced challenges in conveying their thoughts effectively, resorting to shifting between English and Moroccan Arabic to express themselves. This language code-switching was exacerbated by frequent requests for word explanations in their mother tongue, hindering students' ability to communicate proficiently in English.

The deficiency in vocabulary among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Moroccan learners can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, students' preferred vocabulary learning strategies need to be diagnosed, as learners have unique profiles and diverse learning styles. Customized activities and materials, particularly in the context of vocabulary acquisition, are essential to meet these varying needs. Secondly, the emphasis on form over meaning in teaching practices contributes to learners overlooking the importance of vocabulary. Mastery of grammatical rules, while crucial, should not overshadow the critical role of vocabulary in effective communication. Thirdly, explicit instruction on vocabulary learning strategies is lacking, leaving students unaware of the diverse approaches available to them. Finally, the scarcity of materials and curriculum constraints act as intervening variables, limiting the teacher's ability to diversify the strategies employed in teaching vocabulary.

In summary, vocabulary stands as the most vital organ in the body of any language. Recognizing this, employing effective Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) becomes imperative to address the diverse needs of EFL learners, ultimately facilitating more proficient and meaningful communication.

### **Teaching vocabulary through standards- based approach**

Language serves as an intricate tapestry of communication, woven with the delicate threads of words—the fundamental units of any language (Harmer, 1993). Acknowledging the pivotal role vocabulary plays in language acquisition, the Ministry of Education in Morocco has embraced the Standards-Based Approach (SBA) in teaching the four language skills, with a particular emphasis on vocabulary instruction.

The adoption of the SBA emanates from a commitment to comprehensively address learners' needs. This approach transcends traditional language teaching by integrating various skills—spoken, written, and auditory—while connecting English with other subject areas like history and geography. Encouraging students to compare and contrast their language and culture with others, the SBA aims to foster a deeper understanding of their own identity. The five Cs—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—serve as central tenets, guiding teachers in preparing lesson plans that resonate with the globalized world.

Within the SBA framework, teaching vocabulary holds a privileged position. The rationale behind prioritizing vocabulary instruction lies in its correlation with intelligence, reading comprehension, and effective communication (Thornbury, 2002). Vocabulary, functioning as a tool for independence, enables learners to articulate ideas and shades of meaning. The SBA recognizes that a limited vocabulary not only restricts linguistic expression but also hampers cognitive abilities, hindering learners from fully grasping grammatically incorrect sentences with accurate grammar but inaccurate vocabulary.

In the Moroccan educational context, teaching vocabulary involves a nuanced understanding of various factors. To be effective, educators should adhere to specific guidelines:

**Pacing and Spacing:** Revisit and practice new words with increasing intervals, accommodating individual differences.

**Contextual Learning:** Emphasize meaningful contexts over de-contextualized methods like word lists, flashcards, or dictionary usage.

**Meaningful Practice:** Move beyond presentation, providing opportunities for learners to use new vocabulary in both oral and written forms.

**Pronunciation Practice:** Encourage learners to practice pronunciation in contextualized phrases or in isolation, fostering free practice through pair or group work.

**Strategic Word Selection:** Choose words based on learners' communicative needs, aligning with their study contexts (social, academic, or professional).

**Minimize Bilingual Dictionaries:** Discourage over-reliance on dictionaries, emphasizing the importance of understanding words in a communicative context.

Integrating vocabulary instruction through the SBA in the Moroccan curriculum represents a paradigm shift. This teaching methodology places significant emphasis on employing diverse strategies and techniques tailored to meet the unique needs of students. By adhering to these guidelines, educators can empower learners to navigate language intricacies and extend their learning experiences beyond the classroom, preparing them for effective communication in the globalized world.

In conclusion, the journey to language mastery begins with the mastery of vocabulary. The SBA in Moroccan high schools illuminates a path where educators and learners collaboratively engage in a dynamic process of vocabulary acquisition, enriching not only linguistic capabilities but also fostering a deeper understanding of the world and its myriad cultures.

### Learning strategies

Learning strategies (LS) form an integral part of a learner's engagement during the process of acquiring knowledge. Weinstein and Mayer define LS as the behaviors and thoughts that learners employ to influence how they process information, applicable across diverse subjects and settings (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). Rubin, a prominent figure in the field, offers an extensive definition, categorizing LS into those directly contributing to learning (e.g., monitoring memorization, deductive reasoning) and those

indirectly supporting learning (e.g., creating practice opportunities, production tricks) (Griffiths and Judy, 2001). These strategies play a crucial role in shaping a learner's cognitive processes and are not confined to specific subjects.

In the realm of language learning, a shift has occurred towards a learner-centered approach, prompting extensive research into how learners effectively acquire languages. Researchers, such as Rubin and Wenden, have focused on identifying the techniques employed by successful language learners (TESL Journal, Rubin & Wenden, 1987). The concept of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) has been defined diversely. Wenden and Rubin describe them as strategies contributing directly to the development of the learner's language system (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). O'Malley & Chamot view LLS as special thoughts or behaviors aiding comprehension, learning, or retention of new information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Oxford's definition emphasizes operations used by learners for acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information, supporting self-directed, effective, and transferable learning (Oxford, 1990).

Oxford further outlines twelve pivotal features underlying LLS, highlighting their contribution to communicative competence, role expansion of teachers, problem orientation, specificity, and the involvement of various aspects of the learner (Oxford, 1990). Essentially, LLS encompass complex mental processes facilitating information acquisition, storage, and retrieval, serving as efficient tools for autonomous learning, self-directed participation, and rapid success in language acquisition. This synthesis underscores the multifaceted nature and universal applicability of learning strategies, with a specific focus on language learning and its intricacies.

### **Classification of learning strategies**

In the intricate landscape of language acquisition, understanding the various classifications of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) is pivotal. The consensus among leading theorists such as Wenden and Rubin (1987), O'Malley (1985), Oxford (1990), and Stern (1992) highlights commonalities in categorizing LLS, with special attention to Rubin's and O'Malley's taxonomies.

**Rubin's Taxonomy:** Rubin's taxonomy distinguishes between strategies contributing directly and indirectly to language learning, encompassing "Learning Strategies," "Communication Strategies," and "Social Strategies."

**Learning Strategies:** Rubin identifies two types of learning strategies with direct or indirect contributions: "Cognitive Strategies" and "Metacognitive Strategies."

**Cognitive Learning Strategies:** Mental steps or actions focused on direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning material. Six core cognitive strategies include "Clarification/Verification," "Guessing/Inductive Inferencing," "Deductive Reasoning," "Practice," "Memorization," and "Monitoring."

**Metacognitive Learning Strategies:** Involves learners employing techniques to regulate or self-direct language learning, such as self-management, goal-setting, prioritizing, and planning.

**Communication Strategies:** Aimed at achieving effective communication, learners employ strategies like paraphrasing, switching languages, seeking clarification, and coining new words to convey clear messages.

**Social Strategies:** Encompass cooperation with others, fostering an environment for practicing language without directly affecting the learning process.

**O'Malley's Classification:** O'Malley classifies language learning strategies into "Metacognitive Strategies," "Cognitive Strategies," and "Socioaffective Strategies."

Metacognitive Strategies: Learners employ these strategies to coordinate their learning efficiently, involving directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation.

Cognitive Strategies: Involves directly manipulating or transforming the target language, including repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note-taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, keyword contextualization, elaboration, transfer, and inferencing.

Socioaffective Strategies: Encompass learners' engagement in social transactions to develop their learning, fostering attachment to their social environment and building channels of communication with community members.

In conclusion, the utilization of LLS significantly enhances language learning effectiveness and success. However, the application of these strategies varies among learners due to factors such as age, gender, personality, and motivation. Recognizing the diversity in learning pace and styles, LLS account for learners' individual needs, expectations, and preferences, emphasizing the importance of instruction and training by teachers to empower learners with the most appropriate strategies for efficient language acquisition.

### **Vocabulary learning strategies**

Research on L2 learning strategies has been inspired by two closely interwoven disciplines: Cognitive psychology and second language acquisition. The cognitive psychology mostly concerns the mental abilities devoted to learning new vocabulary during second language learning process. It also concerns the learner's awareness of using such abilities or what is referred to in the literature as "strategies". For this reason, many theorists and researchers (some of them will be reviewed in this section) insist on the fact that learners should be informed of one or more strategies they use when learning. The literature proved that vocabulary learning strategies play a pivotal role in the learning strategies the learners use to learn a second language in general. According to Reza and Heshmatifar (2013), when foreign language learners are provided with strategies like vocabulary learning techniques, they are more likely to succeed in language acquisition. These strategies help students become more independent in their learning and encourage them to take responsibility for their own progress.

Many studies dealt indirectly with strategies that are specifically applicable to vocabulary learning. In other words, both language learning strategies in general and vocabulary learning strategies in particular almost overlap in the cognitive domain. Research proved that learning vocabulary is considered an important part in language learning in general as limited knowledge of vocabulary for (ESL) learners results in learning difficulties at the level of production and comprehension. This may be the very simple reason why (ESL) learners report more strategies used for vocabulary learning than any other language activity, which may be ascribed to the discrete nature of vocabulary learning than any other foreign language teaching activities (Chamot and O'Malley 1987).

Language teaching methodologies came out with a series of techniques of how to deal with vocabulary in a foreign language classroom. The development of the different teaching methodologies and the improvement of theories and techniques related mainly to the role of the teacher made the vocabulary teaching strategies theoretically structured. However, before Schmitt (1997), vocabulary learning strategies had no theoretical basis; that is, they lacked the deeper analysis of the strategies the learner applies when learning vocabulary. Much controversy was in how vocabularies are learned. Some theories believed in mechanical learning, others believed in memory learning, others advocated contextual and



association learning and so on. Yet, the theoretical basis of vocabulary learning came from Schmitt (1997) who set a series of strategies the learner applies when involved in the process of vocabulary learning. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) were theoretically structured as “Schmitt’s taxonomy”. Schmitt imported four of the strategies from Rebecca Oxford dictionary (1990), and then added two other strategies (association strategy and determination strategy).

Recent scholarly works proved the interference lies in the method adopted in classroom and the strategy employed by the students to learn vocabulary. Shejbalova, for instance, argued that the interference of different teaching methods at a time makes the learner develop different strategies when learning vocabulary. The literature also showed that the methods and approaches adopted in vocabulary teaching have much impact on students’ learning (Shejbalova, 2006). In this study, Shejbalova concluded that the implication of several vocabulary lesson plans underlying two different teachings showed a strong relationship between the method adopted in the classroom and vocabulary acquisition.

### **Vocabulary learning strategies: empirical studies.**

One of the latest empirical studies conducted on the issue of vocabulary learning strategies was Reza’s and Heshmatifar’s (2013) work on the most frequently used strategies. The result indicated that “guessing meaning from contexts” and “checking the dictionary” were the most employed strategies when learning vocabulary. While the percentage of “asking peers” and the teacher for meaning” was too low among the 74 university students who were the subjects of the study. Another significant study conducted at Islamic Azad University was on testing the relationship between critical thinking abilities and learning strategies for EFL students. This study had a two-way design. Within the same study, both a questionnaire including all Schmitt’s taxonomies and another questionnaire including all the critical thinking items were distributed. The study proved that the Iranian participants’ vocabulary knowledge was strongly related to their critical thinking abilities. In the same way, “the participants’ critical thinking ability also correlated positively with their self-assessed degree of determination, memorization, cognitive, and meta-cognitive strategies of L2 vocabulary learning. The study also showed a positive relationship between participants’ L2 vocabulary knowledge and their L2 vocabulary learning strategies” (Fahim and Komijani, 2010).

Vocabulary learning strategies were recognized by many theorists and researchers in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. For instance, In Craven’s (2014) *Vocabulary learning strategies*, (VLS) are important components of second language learning. Many scholarly works have provided evidence that vocabulary learning strategies are a subset of language learning strategies and that learners should be informed of the strategies they use when learning new vocabulary. Though, the actual classification and categorization of vocabulary learning strategies are still controversial (Craven, 2014), a variety of studies have relied on Schmitt’s taxonomy as mentioned previously, brought the classification of (VLS) from Rebecca Oxford’s dictionary containing memory strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies and the discover/consolidation distinctions suggested by Cook and Mayer to propose an extensive taxonomy of VLS (Craven, 2014).

### **Vocabulary learning strategies: classification and taxonomy.**

Vocabulary Learning strategies are thought to be context-specific. They rely on the context the study is conducted and the cultural idiosyncrasies of the students as respondents and users of such strategies. Therefore, researchers around the globe may sometimes avoid, modify, or declassify the questionnaire items according to the cultural contexts in which the study is conducted and according to the nature of the

participants. For instance, Craven (2014) asserts that Japanese university students are not autonomous learners and rely on mechanical, or rote- learning. Therefore, because rote learning is defined as repetition, memorization, and practicing (Li and Cutting, 2011), the items representing repetition, memorization, and practicing should be the main focus of the study and the starting items in the questionnaire. Other items can be classified at the end of the questionnaire and sometimes can be deleted or modified.

However, in the present study, we tend to adopt, categorize and describe (VLS) the way they were set by Schmitt (1997) who imported a series of taxonomies from Oxford (1990) ( see the charts below). These taxonomies were advocated by many theorists. Wenden (1991); for instance, summarized Schmitt's taxonomies under four main questions a researcher should analyze and investigate:

1. What do L2 learners do to learn a second language?
2. How do they manage or self-direct these efforts?
3. What do they know about which aspects of their L2 learning process?
4. How can their learning skills be refined and developed?

The first two questions concern the learner's self-employment of the strategies. The third question is conditioned by the learners' "maturity" which enables the learners to recognize the strategy they use most. Finally, the fourth question concerns the teacher's dexterous and methodical skills to identify and develop the learners' learning strategies. The fourth question, in other words, concerns vocabulary teaching strategies as one of the limitations of the present research that will be recommended for future studies.

As stated previously, there was a strong agreement on the strategy categorization that Norbert Schmitt established. Oxford's classification of the strategies showed some limitations. For instance, no category in Oxford's taxonomy adequately describes the kind of strategies used by an individual when faced with discovering a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's expertise. It was, therefore, necessary to create a new category for these strategies: Determination Strategies (DET). In the present study, we deal with Schmitt's (1997) and Oxford's (1990) categorization that most studies have dealt with. This categorization comes as follows:

### **Oxford's (1990) direct and indirect strategies**

#### **Direct strategies:**

- Memory strategies (**MEM**): in exploiting the existing knowledge to learn new language items.
- Cognitive Strategies (**COG**): exhibiting the common function of "manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner" (Oxford, 1990:43).
- Compensation Strategies (**COMP**): in using gestures to compensate for the limitation a learner has in the target language.

#### **Indirect strategies:**

- Metacognitive Strategies (**MET**): when managing, planning and making decisions about what the learners believe as the best way to learn new vocabulary.
- Affective strategies: it refers to managing both positive and negative emotions when learning a foreign language
- Social strategies (**SOC**): in maintaining interaction with others to learn new vocabulary.

**Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (Schmitt,1997, p.134)**

Strategy group	Strategy
Strategies for the discovery of a new word’s meaning	
DET	Analyze part of speech
DET	Analyze affixes and roots
DET	Check for L1 cognate
DET	Analyze any available pictures or gestures
DET	Guess from textual context
DET	Bilingual dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)
SOC	Ask teacher for a synonym, paraphrase or L1 translation of new word
SOC	Ask classmates for meaning
Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered	
SOC	Study and practice meaning in a group
SOC	Interact with native speakers
MEM	Connect word to previous personal experience
MEM	Associate the word with its coordinates
MEM	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms
MEM	Use semantic maps
MEM	Imagine word form
MEM	Imagine word’s meaning
MEM	Group words together to study them
MEM	Study the spelling of a word
MEM	Say new word aloud when studying
MEM	Use physical action when learning a word
COG	Verbal repetition
COG	Written repetition
COG	Word lists
COG	Put English labels on physical objects



COG	Keep a vocabulary notebook
MET	Use English language media
MET	Use spaced word practice
MET	Test oneself with word tests
MET	Skip or pass new word
MET	Continue to study word overtime

Determination Strategies (**DET**) is, therefore, the strategy Schmitt's added to Oxford's adopted strategies to come up with a consistent taxonomy. It implies that if learners do not know a word, they may endeavor to get the meaning from structural knowledge of the language, guessing from an L1 cognate, guessing from context, using reference materials, or asking someone else. They may be able to discern the new word's part of speech. They can also obtain hints about meaning from its root or affixes, although not always reliably (Schmitt, 1997).

### Method

The research embarked upon an exploratory and descriptive trajectory, delving into the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) employed in Moroccan high schools, with a specific focus on eliciting students' opinions on the most crucial and frequently utilized VLS. Preceding the formulation of a comprehensive questionnaire, an extensive review of the literature on learning strategies, particularly VLS, was undertaken, complemented by an examination of analogous surveys conducted globally. This extensive groundwork significantly informed the quantitative methodology chosen for data collection and analysis. The study engaged 80 students from diverse streams in the common core and second-year baccalaureate at Sidi Driss High School, all instructed by the same English teacher across four classes encompassing sciences and letters. This deliberate choice aimed at ensuring a substantial and manageable sample, enhancing representativeness, and facilitating the research process. The study was conducted at Sidi Driss High School in Oujda, selected for its potential to yield data transferable to other Moroccan high schools, coupled with logistical advantages and prior familiarity due to the researcher's practicum in the institution. The primary research instrument, a meticulously designed questionnaire based on Schmitt's Taxonomy, consisted of 23 items distributed across categories like determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Before its final administration, a pilot study involving 10 students aided in refining and clarifying questionnaire items. It took 20 days to collect the data, with inherent challenges such as language barriers addressed through Arabic translations. Subsequent statistical analysis using SPSS aimed to derive frequencies, percentages, and means for a numeric interpretation of students' responses. In the upcoming section, the research will shift focus toward presenting the outcomes derived from this methodological framework.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**1. Results from part one of the questionnaire**

**Table 1: The Respondents’ General Information**

Schools	Student s’ number	Gender		Age			Educational level			stream		
		Femal e	Mal e	- 1 5	16 - 20	+2 0	Commo n core	1st yea r bac	2 <sup>nd</sup> yea r bac	humaniti es	physic s	scienc e
Sidi Edriss	30	18	12	4	21	5	10	10	10	10	10	10
Echarif Edrissi	30	16	14	5	25	0	10	10	10	15	15	0
Ibno Elhayta m	20	12	8	4	16	0	20	0	0	10	10	0
<b>Total</b>	80	46	34	1 3	62	5	40	20	20	35	35	10

From Table 1, 46 out of 80 of the respondents were female. The male represents 34. The majority of students were over 16 years old (62 out of 80). The respondents were from different streams. Additionally, common core, the first and second-year baccalaureate are the educational levels of students. The common core level includes 40 respondents. The 1<sup>st</sup> year baccalaureate level includes 40 respondents and so does 2<sup>nd</sup> year baccalaureate level.

**2. Students’ responses about vocabulary learning strategies**

**2.1. Students’ responses about DET strategies**

**Table 2: Students’ responses about determination strategies.**

Determination strategies					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	100	26.3	26.3	26.3
	seldom use it	34	8.9	8.9	35.3
	sometimes use it	76	20.0	20.0	55.3
	often use it	53	13.9	13.9	69.2
	always use it	117	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	380	100.0	100.0	

A close analysis of the table reveals that the” always use is it” scale of the determination strategies received the highest figures (117) with a percentage of 30.8% for the five items. The lowest figure for the same category is 34 with a percentage of 8.9%.

**2.1.1. Students’ responses about the individual items of determination strategies.**

**Table 3: Students’ responses about the individual items of DET strategies**

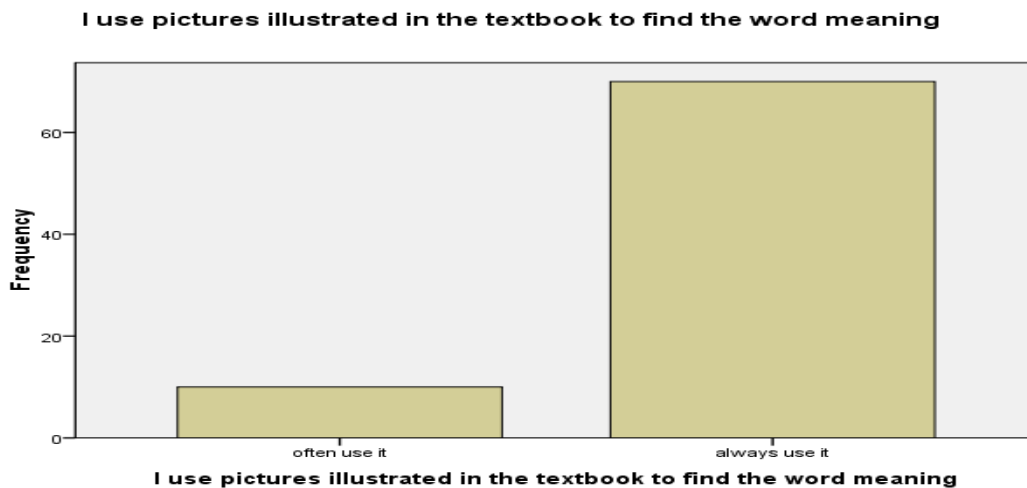
Items	Frequencies and percentages									
	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	0	0	10	12.5	50	62.5	10	12.5	10	12.5
2	60	75	10	12.5	5	6.2	3	3.8	2	2.5
3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	12.5	70	87.5
4	10	12.5	5	6.2	5	6.2	10	12.5	50	62.5
5	30	37.5	5	6.2	20	25	20	25	5	6.2

According to determination strategies, the results show that respondents most frequently used the strategy item 3” I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meaning”. The latter is the dominant item in determination strategies. The “always use it” scale received the highest frequency (70) with percentage of 87.5%. The second item in this DET strategy was rated 50 points (62.5). This item refers to “I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech”. The less important strategy in this category is item 2 “I use monolingual dictionary to understand the meaning of words”. 60 out of 80 students replied that they never use this strategy.

**2.1.2. Presentation of the most and least frequently used VLS in determination category in the eyes of respondents**

**Table 4: Item 3: I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meaning**

I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meaning					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	often use it	10	12.5	12.5	12.5
	always use it	70	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

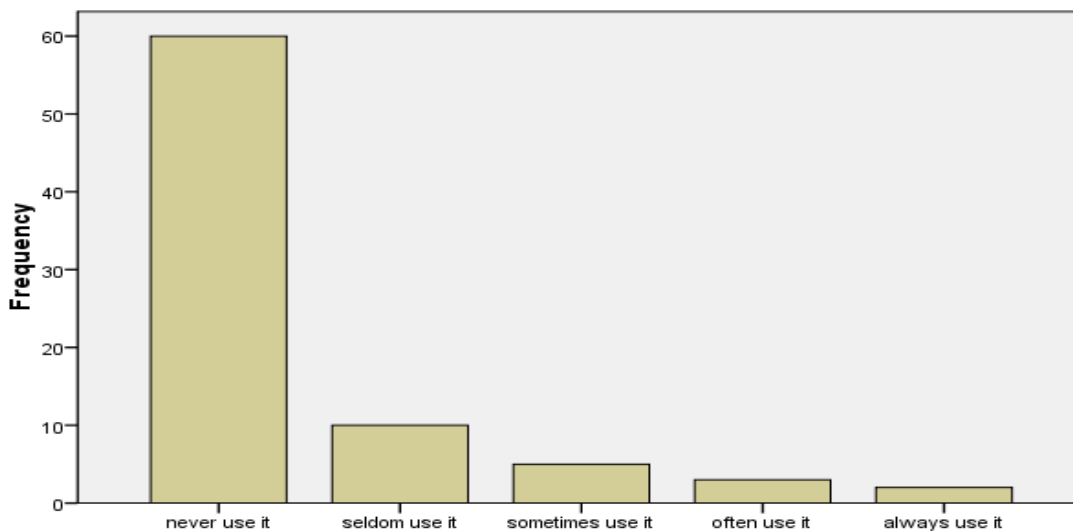


As the table and the chart indicate, the “always use it “scale dominated. It received 87.5%.

**Table 5: item 2: I use a monolingual dictionary to understand the meaning of words**

<b>I use monolingual dictionary to understand the meaning of words.</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	60	75.0	75.0	75.0
	seldom use it	10	12.5	12.5	87.5
	sometimes use it	5	6.2	6.2	93.8
	often use it	3	3.8	3.8	97.5
	always use it	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

**I use monolingual dictionary to understand the meaning of words.**



**I use monolingual dictionary to understand the meaning of words.**

The table 5 and the chart show that students consider using monolingual learning vocabulary as an unimportant strategy. 75% of students ticked the” never use it” scale.

**2.2. Students’ responses about social strategies**

**Table 6: students’ responses about social strategies.**

<b>Social strategies</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	110	22.9	22.9	22.9
	seldom use it	32	6.7	6.7	29.6
	sometimes use it	50	10.4	10.4	40.0
	often use it	88	18.3	18.3	58.3

	always use it	200	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	480	100.0	100.0	

A close analysis of the table revealed that the "always use it" scale of the social strategies received the highest figures (200) with a percentage of 41.7% for the six items. The lowest figure for the same category is 32 with a percentage of 6.7%.

### 2.1. Students' responses about the individual items of social strategies

**Table 7: students' responses about the individual items of social strategies.**

Items	Frequencies and percentages									
	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6	5	6.2	5	6.2	10	12.5	20	25	40	50
7	5	6.2	5	6.2	7	8.8	23	28.8	40	50
8	0	0	0	0	10	12.5	10	12.5	60	75
9	0	0	7	8.8	13	16.2	20	25	40	50
10	70	87.5	5	6.2	5	6.2	0	0	0	0
11	30	37.5	10	12.5	5	6.2	15	18.8	20	25

According to the frequency of social strategy, the results show that the strategy which the students use most frequently is the item 8 "I ask my classmates for meaning of words". 60 out of 80 ticked the "always use it" scale to choose the item 8 over others in terms of social strategies. The next to come are item 6 "I ask the teacher to translate the word into Arabic", item 7 "I ask the teacher to put the unknown word into a sentence" and the item 9 "I know some new words when working in group works". Each of these items received 40 points. While the least used strategy is the item 10 "I ask native speakers for help when chatting with them on the internet". The majority of students (70 out of 80) opted for the "never use it" scale.

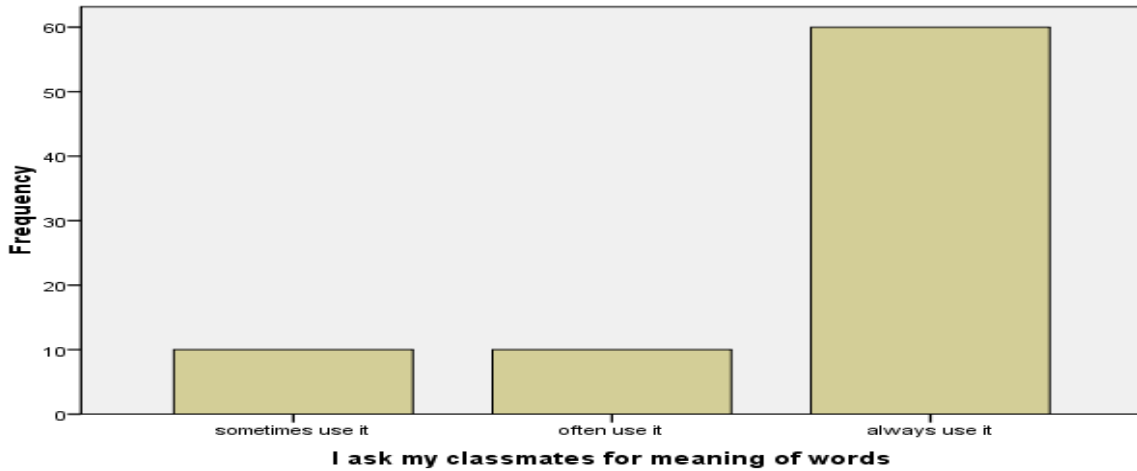
#### 2.2.1. Presentation of the most and least frequently used VLS in social strategies in the eyes of respondents

**Table 8: item8: I ask my classmates for the meaning of words**

I ask my classmates for meaning of words					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	sometimes use it	10	12.5	12.5	12.5
	often use it	10	12.5	12.5	25.0
	always use it	60	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	



**I ask my classmates for meaning of words**

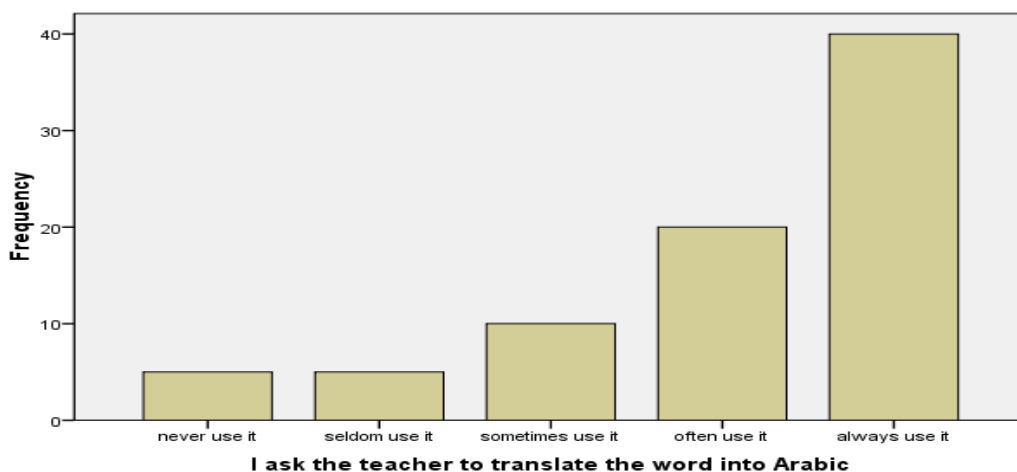


The item presented in the table and chart received 75% of respondents. 60 students preferred asking their classmates for meaning of words when it comes to learning vocabulary

**Table 9: item 6: I ask the teacher to translate the word into Arabic**

I ask the teacher to translate the word into Arabic					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	5	6.2	6.2	6.2
	seldom use it	5	6.2	6.2	12.5
	sometimes use it	10	12.5	12.5	25.0
	often use it	20	25.0	25.0	50.0
	always use it	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total		80	100.0	100.0

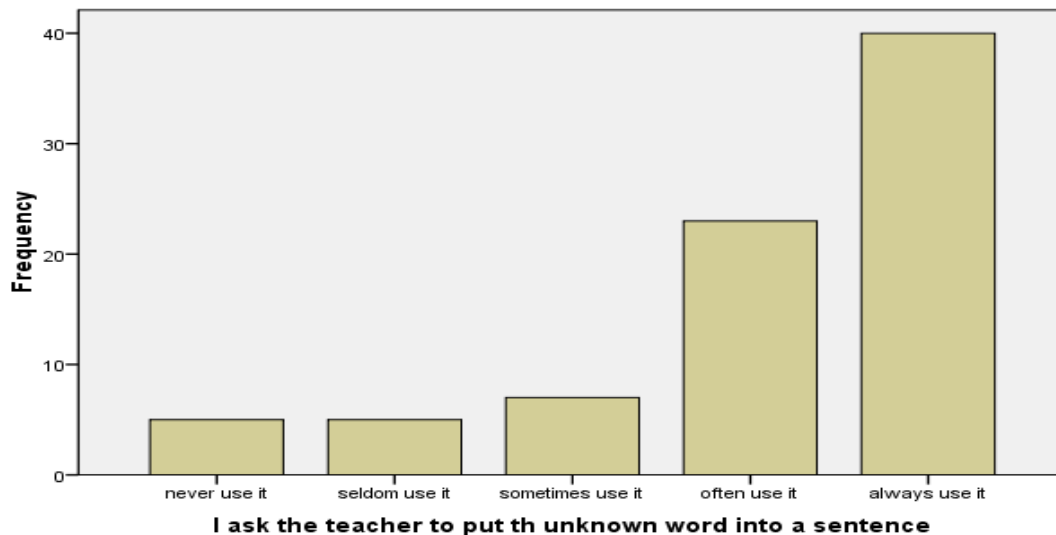
**I ask the teacher to translate the word into Arabic**



**Table 10: item7: I ask the teacher to put the unknown word into a sentence**

<b>I ask the teacher to put the unknown word into a sentence</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	5	6.2	6.2	6.2
	seldom use it	5	6.2	6.2	12.5
	sometimes use it	7	8.8	8.8	21.2
	often use it	23	28.8	28.8	50.0
	always use it	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

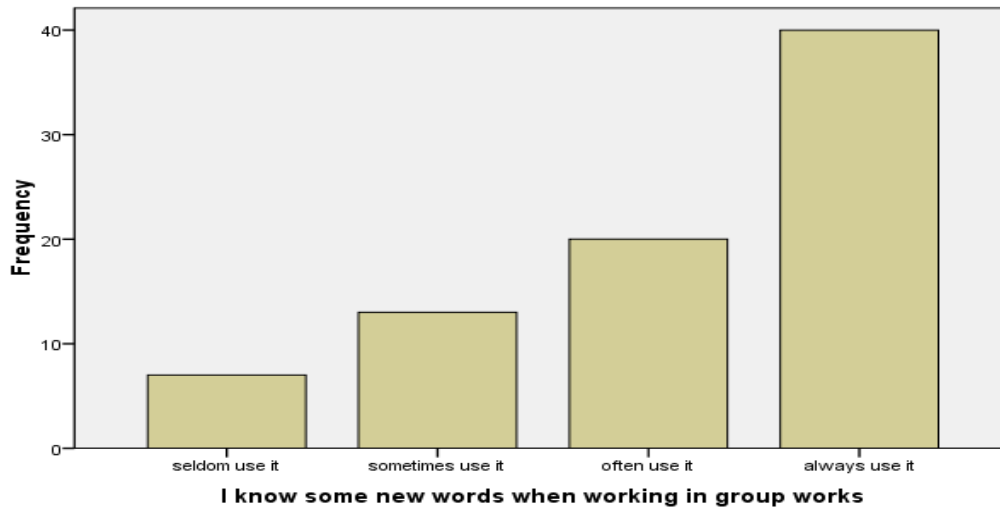
**I ask the teacher to put th unknown word into a sentence**



**Table 11: item 9: I know some new words when working in group works**

<b>I know some new words when working in group works</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	seldom use it	7	8.8	8.8	8.8
	sometimes use it	13	16.2	16.2	25.0
	often use it	20	25.0	25.0	50.0
	always use it	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

**I know some new words when working in group works**

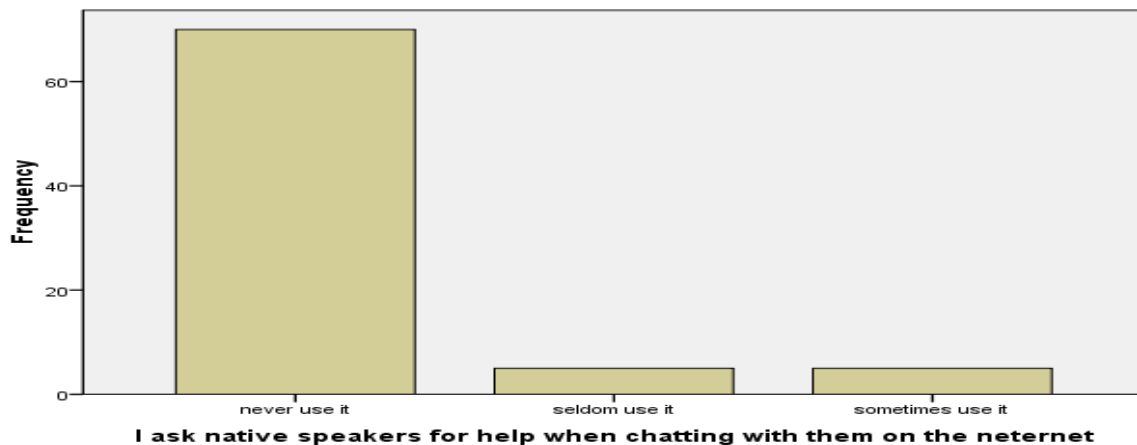


The results presented in the tables and charts above show that the students frequently use these strategies. The three items that are presented in the tables and charts above ranked second after the item presented in Table 7. Each item received 40 points.

**Table12: item10: I ask native speakers for help when chatting with them on the internet**

I ask native speakers for help when chatting with them on the neternet					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	70	87.5	87.5	87.5
	seldom use it	5	6.2	6.2	93.8
	sometimes use it	5	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

**I ask native speakers for help when chatting with them on the neternet**



The least frequently used strategy in SS is the item10. The latter received 87.5% of respondents who never use this strategy in learning vocabulary.

**2.3. Students’ responses about memory strategies**

**Table 13: students’ responses about memory strategies**

Memory strategies					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	65	20.3	20.3	20.3
	seldom use it	40	12.5	12.5	32.8
	sometimes use it	45	14.1	14.1	46.9
	often use it	30	9.4	9.4	56.2
	always use it	140	43.8	43.8	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0	

A close analysis of the table reveals that the “always use it” scale of the MMS received the highest figures (140) with a percentage of 43.8% for the four items. The lowest figure for the same category is 30 with a percentage of 9.4%.

**2.3.1. Students’ responses about the individual items of memory strategies**

**Table 14: students’ responses about the individual items of memory strategies**

Frequencies and percentages										
Items	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
12	40	50	20	25	10	12.5	10	12.5	0	0
13	20	25	10	12.5	15	18.8	5	6.2	30	37.5
14	0	0	5	6.2	10	12.5	5	6.2	60	75
15	5	6.2	5	6.2	10	12.5	10	12.5	50	62.5

The results from the table show that the Memory strategy which the respondents most frequently used for storing and retrieving new information was item 14 “I connect words to my personal experiences”. The item received 75% respondents. Meanwhile, the least used strategy by the respondents is item 12 “I use physical action when I learn words”. 50% of students never use this strategy.

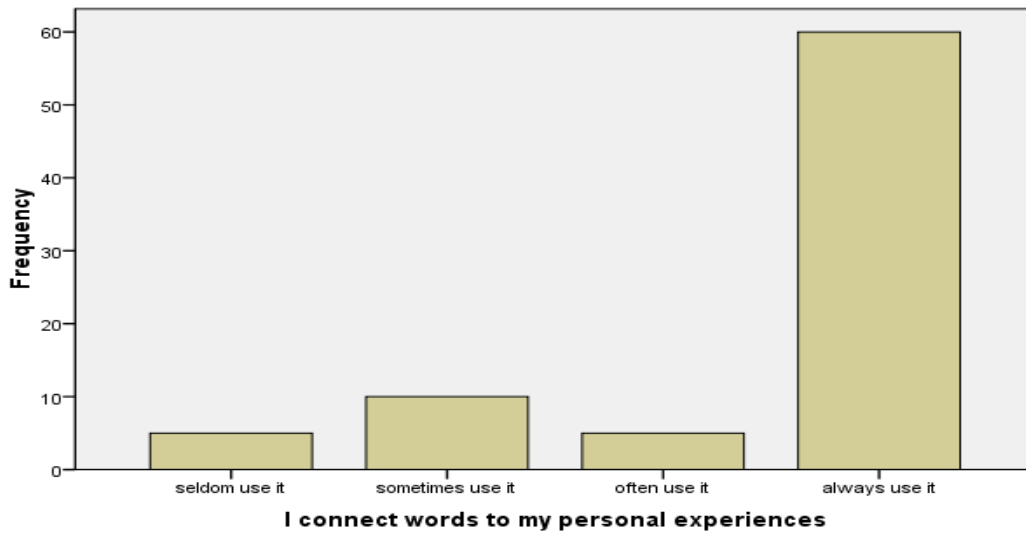
**2.3.2. Presentation of the most and least frequently used VLS in memory strategies in the eyes of respondents**

**Table 15: item 14: I connect words to my personal experiences**

I connect words to my personal experiences					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	seldom use it	5	6.2	6.2	6.2
	sometimes use it	10	12.5	12.5	18.8
	often use it	5	6.2	6.2	25.0
	always use it	60	75.0	75.0	100.0

Total	80	100.0	100.0	
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**I connect words to my personal experiences**

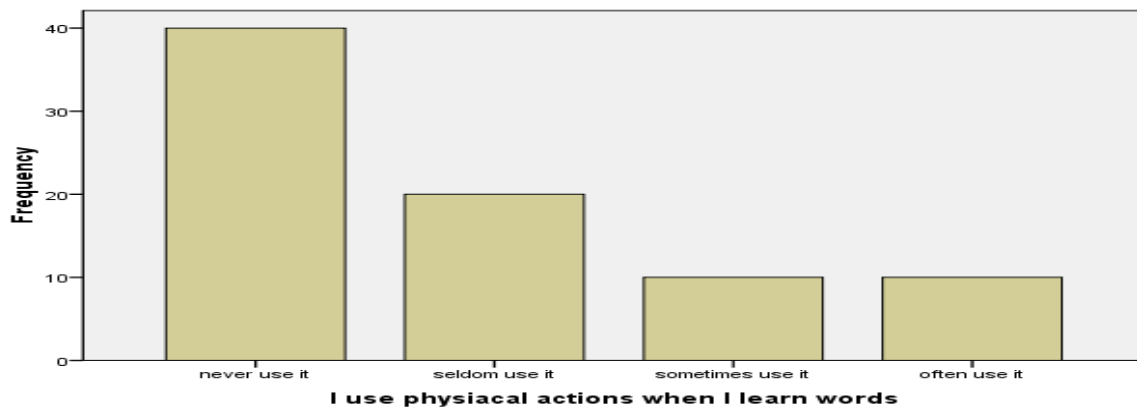


The result shows that 60 out of 80 use the item 14 as a best way of storing and retrieving vocabulary, as table and chart revealed

**Table 16: item 12: I use physical action when I learn words**

I use physical actions when I learn words					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	seldom use it	20	25.0	25.0	75.0
	sometimes use it	10	12.5	12.5	87.5
	often use it	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

**I use physical actions when I learn words**





According to the table and chart, 40 students replied that they never use physical action when they learn words. This item is the least frequently used strategy in-memory strategies.

**2.4. Students’ responses about cognitive strategies**

**Table 17: students’ responses to COG Strategies**

cognitive strategies					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	70	29.2	29.2	29.2
	seldom use it	10	4.2	4.2	33.3
	sometimes use it	10	4.2	4.2	37.5
	often use it	10	4.2	4.2	41.7
	always use it	140	58.3	58.3	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

A close analysis of the table reveals that the” always use is it” scale of the COG S received the highest figures (140) with a percentage of 58.3% for the three items. The lowest figure for the same category is 10 with a percentage of 4.2%.

**2.4.1. Students’ responses about the individual items of cognitive strategies**

**Table 18: students’ responses about the individual items of cognitive strategies**

Frequencies and percentages										
Items	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
16	0	0	0	0	5	6.2	5	6.2	70	87.5
17	70	87.5	10	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	5	6.2	5	6.2	70	87.5

Table 19 shows that to develop automatic vocabulary retrieval, the Cognitive strategy that the students used most frequently were items 16 “I repeatedly practice new words.” (F=70) and item 18” I learn words by listening to songs and vocabulary CDs” (F=70) while the strategy “I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go” was least used. The” never use it” scale received 87.5% of the respondents.

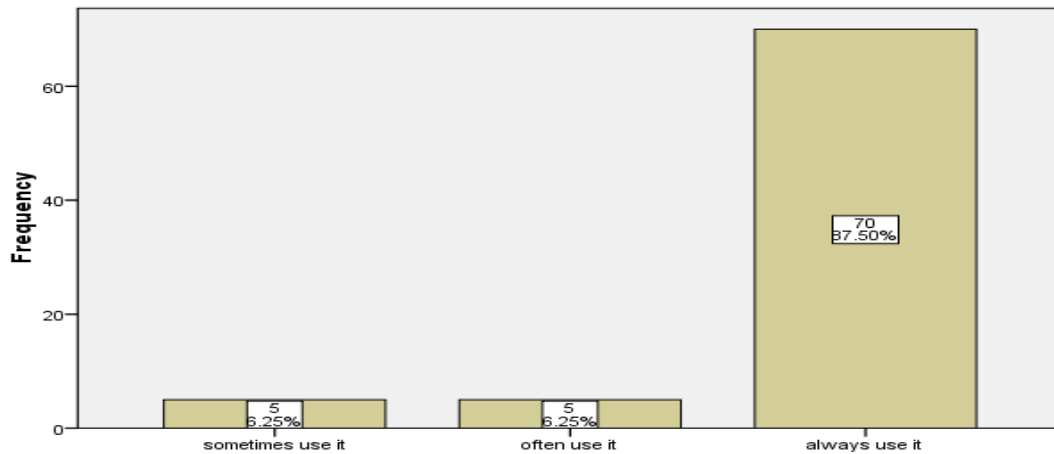
**2.4.2. Presentation of the most and least frequently used VLS in cognitive strategies in the eyes of respondents**

**Table 19: item 16: I repeatedly practice new words**

I repeatedly practice new words					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	sometimes use it	5	6.2	6.2	6.2
	often use it	5	6.2	6.2	12.5

	always use it	70	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

I repeatedly practice new words

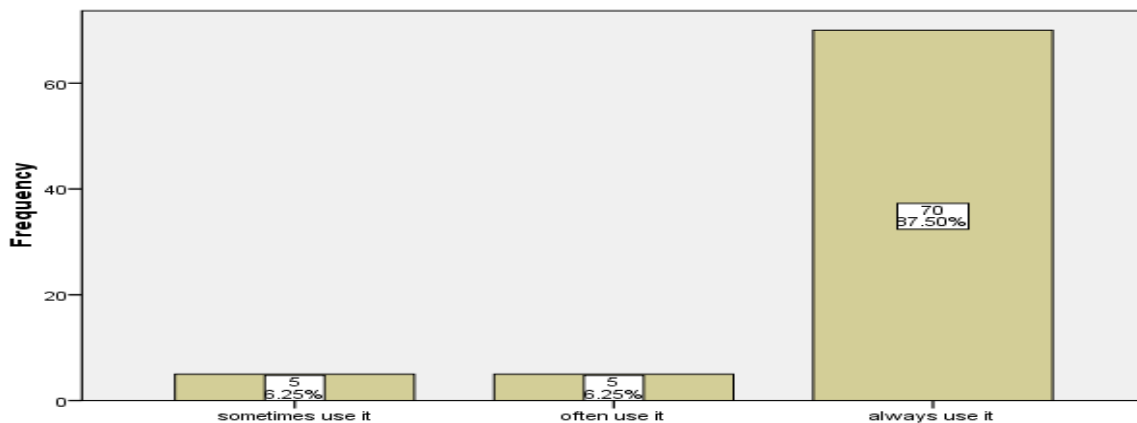


I repeatedly practice new words

Table20: item 18: I learn words by listening to songs and vocabulary CDs

I learn words by listening to songs and vocabulary CDs					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	sometimes use it	5	6.2	6.2	6.2
	often use it	5	6.2	6.2	12.5
	always use it	70	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

I learn words by listening to songs and vocabulary CDs

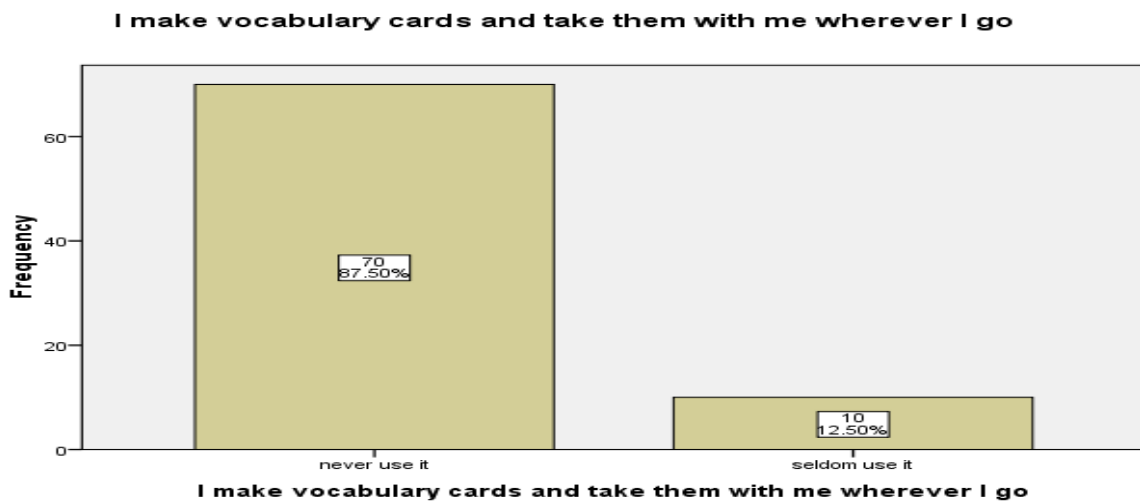


I learn words by listening to songs and vocabulary CDs

The table 20 , 21 and charts show that both items were frequently used by respondents in the sense that each of these items received 87.50% of students’ responses.

**Table 21: item 17: I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go**

I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	70	87.5	87.5	87.5
	seldom use it	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	



Learning vocabulary by making vocabulary cards was the least strategy in cognitive strategies. 70 students out of 80 ticked the “never use it” scale.

**2.5. Students’ responses about MET strategies**

**Table 22: students’ responses about MET strategies**

Metacognitive strategies					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	201	50.4	50.4	50.4
	seldom use it	55	13.8	13.8	64.2
	sometimes use it	50	12.5	12.5	76.7
	often use it	25	6.3	6.3	83.0
	always use it	68	17.0	17.0	100.0
	Total	399	100.0	100.0	

A close analysis of the table reveals that the” never use it” scale of the MET strategies received the highest figures (201) with a percentage of 50.4% for the five items. The lowest figure for the same category is 25 with a percentage of 6.3%.

2.5.1. Students’ responses about the individual items of MET strategy

**Table 23: students’ responses about the individual items of MET strategies**

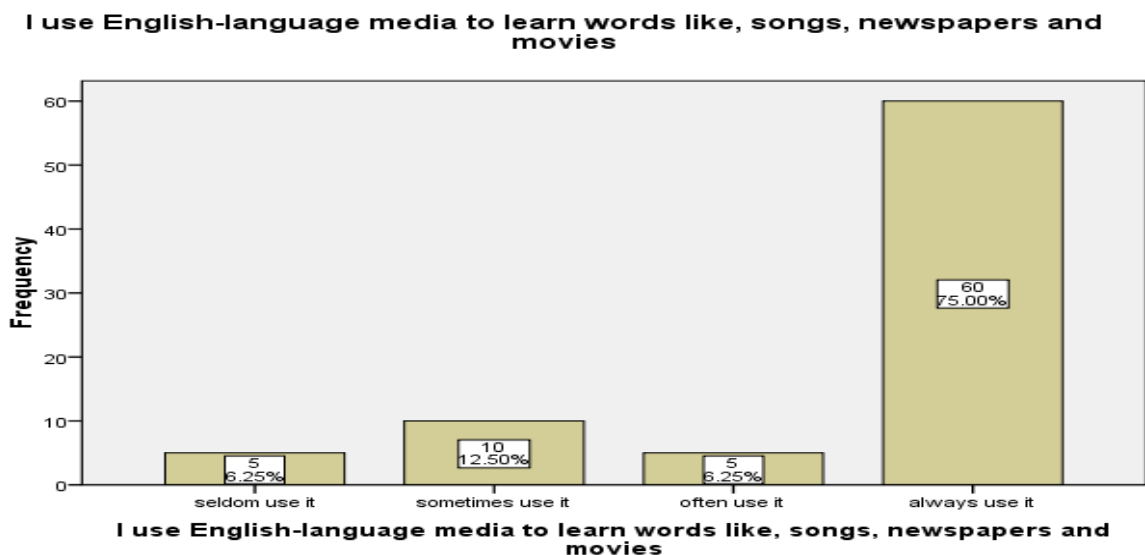
Frequencies and percentages										
Items	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
19	0	0	5	6.2	10	12.5	5	6.2	60	75
20	60	75	10	12.5	10	12.5	0	0	0	0
21	51	63.8	15	18.8	5	6.2	5	6.2	4	5
22	40	50	10	12.5	10	12.5	15	18.8	5	6.2
23	50	62.2	15	18.8	15	18.8	0	0	0	0

Table 24 shows the results of the most frequently used strategy of Metacognitive is the item 19 “I use English language media to learn words like songs, newspaper and movies” by the respondents (F =60), while the item 20 “I use on line exercises to test my vocabulary knowledge” was least used (never use it =75%).

2.6. Presentation of the most and least frequently used VLS in Meta cognitive strategies in the eyes of respondents

**Table24: item 19: I use English language media to learn words like songs, newspaper and movies**

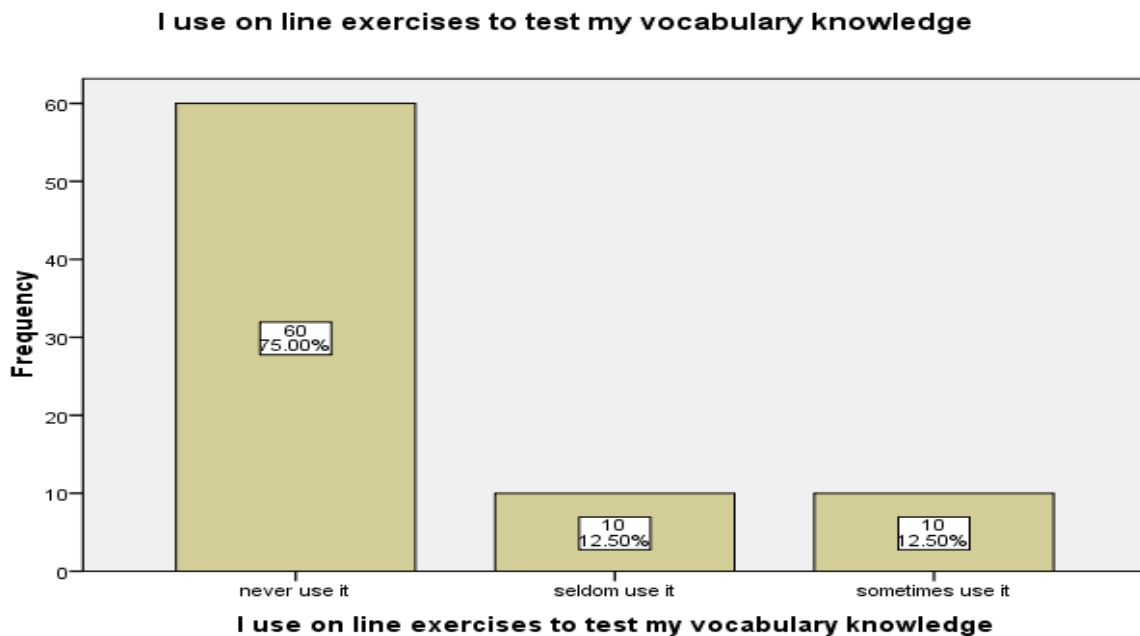
I use English-language media to learn words like, songs, newspapers and movies					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	seldom use it	5	6.2	6.2	6.2
	sometimes use it	10	12.5	12.5	18.8
	often use it	5	6.2	6.2	25.0
	always use it	60	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	



The majority of students rely on English language media to learn vocabulary. 75% of students ticked the always use it scale. Therefore, this item is the most frequently used strategy in Meta cognitive strategies

**Table 25: item 20: I use on line exercises to test my vocabulary knowledge**

I use on line exercises to test my vocabulary knowledge					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never use it	60	75.0	75.0	75.0
	seldom use it	10	12.5	12.5	87.5
	sometimes use it	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	



As the table and chart indicate, using on line exercises in learning vocabulary is the least strategy used in MET strategies in the fact that 75 % of students never use this strategy.

### 3. Descriptive statistics of the five strategies

**Table 26: Descriptive statistics of the five strategies**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory strategies	320	1.00	5.00	3.4375	1.61182
Cognitive strategies	240	1.00	5.00	3.5833	1.80461
Metacognitive strategies	400	1.00	5.00	2.2650	1.53808
Determination strategies	397	1.00	5.00	3.2443	1.59489
Social strategies	479	1.00	5.00	3.4906	1.61304



Valid N (listwise)	240				
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The result of this table shows that, in general, the students employed cognitive vocabulary strategies in learning English vocabulary ( $X=3.58$ ). The other strategies employed are the social strategies ( $X= 3.49$ ), the memory strategies ( $X= 3.43$ ), the determination strategies ( $X= 3.24$ ) and the metacognitive strategies ( $X=2.62$ ). Yet, we have to bear in mind that the strategies presented in the table are not equal in terms of items. For example, both metacognitive and determination strategies consist of five items whereas cognitive category includes three items and memory strategies contains four items. Social strategies outnumber all strategies in the fact that it consists of six items. Therefore, the difference in the rate between the five categories is that they are not equal in terms of the number of items.

#### 4. Results of the Part 3: follow up question

Here are some of the answers obtained from the question below:

Choose four most useful learning vocabulary strategies from the list above. Write the numbers only. I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meaning. DET

- I ask the teacher to translate the words into Arabic. SS
- I use English language media in learning vocabulary. MET
- I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it. MM
- I connect words to my personal experiences. MEM
- I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech. DET
- I study words overtime. MET
- I repeatedly practice new words. COG
- I review my own English vocabulary before going to class. MET
- I ask my classmates for meaning of words. SS
- I know some new words when working in group works. SS

The part III of the questionnaire deals with the reactions of students after filling out the questionnaire. A specific space was provided for students to choose four strategies that they see as important in learning vocabulary. As shown above, there were differences in choosing the strategies among students. For the sake of brevity, I have only stated the mostly used VLS among Moroccan learners.

#### Discussion

The study revealed notable distinctions in students' preferences for vocabulary learning strategies (VLS), with certain strategies holding higher significance than others. Cognitive strategies emerged as the most valued category, indicated by an average of  $X=3.58$ , followed by Social strategies ( $X=3.49$ ), Memory strategies ( $X=3.43$ ), Determination strategies ( $X=3.24$ ), and Metacognitive strategies ( $X=2.62$ ) as the least utilized. Specifically, within Determination strategies, students overwhelmingly favored using pictures illustrated in textbooks to find word meanings (Item 3), with 87.5% consistently opting for "always use it." In contrast, the least employed strategy in this category was using a monolingual dictionary (Item 2). In the Social category, students predominantly sought help from classmates (Item 8), aligning with a preference for collaborative learning. The majority rarely utilized strategies involving native speakers (Item 10). Memory strategies saw a prevalence of connecting words to personal experiences (Item 11),

while strategies involving physical action (Item 12) were less favored. For Cognitive strategies, repetitive practice (Item 16) and learning through songs and vocabulary CDs (Item 18) were prominently employed. Metacognitive strategies indicated a preference for using English language media (Item 23). Notably, the dominance of cognitive strategies did not diminish the importance of other categories, emphasizing the need for tailored teaching approaches. Suggestions provided by students underscored the prominence of repetition, group work, and multimedia resources. The study encourages English teachers to cultivate students' awareness of their preferred learning strategies, fostering independence and effectiveness in second language acquisition.

To elaborate further on the results, the students' inclination towards cognitive strategies, such as repetitive practice and learning through songs and vocabulary CDs, aligns with existing literature on vocabulary learning strategies. The prevalence of these strategies may be attributed to the accessibility of technology, with students utilizing digital devices like laptops, iPods, and phones to facilitate their learning experience. The findings also shed light on the importance of collaborative learning, as indicated by the students' preference for seeking assistance from classmates (Social strategy - Item 8). This emphasis on peer interaction suggests that incorporating group activities into language learning may enhance vocabulary acquisition. However, logistical constraints, as mentioned by some tutors, pose challenges to implementing group-based teaching methods.

Moreover, the study highlights variations in the adoption of memory strategies, with a clear preference for connecting words to personal experiences (Item 11). Conversely, strategies involving physical action (Item 12) were less favored. This discordance suggests that while physical actions may be incorporated by teachers, students may not find them as beneficial or engaging.

The metacognitive strategy of using English language media, including songs, newspapers, and movies, underscores the significance of multimedia resources in language learning. This aligns with contemporary pedagogical approaches that leverage diverse media to enhance students' exposure to the target language. In conclusion, while cognitive strategies dominate students' vocabulary learning preferences, it is crucial to acknowledge the value placed on other categories. The study advocates for a student-centric approach, encouraging teachers to empower learners with the awareness and skills to select suitable strategies aligned with their proficiency levels. By integrating varied strategies into language instruction, educators can better support students in becoming adept language learners, ultimately fostering independent and successful language acquisition.

### **General conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the evaluations of students' measurement of the vocabulary learning strategies. Data from questionnaire revealed that students valued some VLS over others. In other words, the replies of students about the five main categories, determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, did not receive the same value. The findings showed the predominance of cognitive category over other categories. However, the predominance of the cognitive category should not reduce in value and importance the other categories. The findings showed that students preferred some items to others within the same category and also some items are preferred to others among the five VLS. Overall, students tend to use varied VLS. For instance, the learners under study are interested in learning vocabulary in groups, asking their classmates for the meaning of words, listening to songs and using movies, using bilingual dictionary and repetition and so on and so forth. In brief, the Schmitt's taxonomy of VLS is of great importance in learning English vocabulary.

This study, like most other research, has some limitations. One of them is that the sample of students used was not large enough to claim that the findings can be generalized to all high school students in Morocco. Another limitation is that the investigation requires a lot of time and a deep analysis. The amount of time allowed for the realization of the present study was not enough for such a broad scope of study. Therefore, the results yielded by this work are only tentative.

For further research, the data provided may be used for further empirical studies that will determine specifically the points mentioned in this study. More experimental studies with all the required criteria are still needed.

Teachers of English, Textbook designers, educationalists and stakeholders can make better use of the present study's findings. First, teachers will be able to help students become better language learners by training them in using the right strategies or appropriate strategies that suit their level. Knowing the students' needs will help teachers to prepare lesson plans that respond to these needs. Also, the implication of the research can help students to support their English vocabulary learning in many ways. Many strategies can be used as methods of vocabulary learning. For instance, teachers could encourage use of a dictionary and other learning media. Teachers can also assign more tasks in order to immerse weak students in effective English learning. Second, textbook designers can also take the findings of this study into account in designing or selecting textbooks to be taught. Based on the findings of this study, they can design a textbook which takes the students' point of view about VLS into consideration. Doing this, textbooks are to include different VLS and different tasks to meet students' needs as far as vocabulary learning is concerned. Finally, the present study is beneficial to curriculum makers as well. Curriculum makers should assess and modify the content and the design of the curriculum to meet the needs and the interests of the students. The findings of students' attitudes towards vocabulary learning strategies may give them a clear image of how English vocabulary should be taught. This can make students motivated to learn English as long as they see that their ideas are respected and taken into account.

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