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Expoloring the role of gender differences in using vocabulary learning strategies among algerian EFL students

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved mother, the closest person to my heart. Your

boundless love, unwavering support, and endless sacrifices have shaped me into the person I

am today.

to my beloved father, the greatest love of my life. They say a father's love for his daughter

knows no bounds, and indeed, your unconditional love, selflessness, and unwavering support

have been the cornerstone of my journey.

To my two sisters, Malak & Hadil: You are the stars that light up my sky, my soul. Love you

so much.

To my only brother Mohamed Aymen whom I love dearly

To my fiancé Ayyoub, For his support and endless patience. You've been my rock during life's

toughest moments. Your presence means the world to me."

Thank you for being there for

Ranya

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I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved family

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Abstract

Acquiring vocabulary is a fundamental part of the language learning journey, and learners face multiple challenges in this regard, impacting their ability to communicate and comprehend accurately. Hence, it becomes necessary to develop effective strategies for vocabulary learning to enhance their language skills. This study aims to explore vocabulary learning strategies used by university students in Algeria, focusing on first-year students at Mila University, and analyze the differences in strategies employed by males and females. Based on the research questions, it is assumed that English as a Second Language (ESL) students at Mila University use different strategies for vocabulary learning, with some students preferring certain strategies over others. Additionally, there may be differences in strategy usage between males and females. Surveys could be a suitable tool for data collection in this study. The results of this study indicate that students employ a variety of vocabulary learning strategies, with some students favoring certain strategies over others, and that gender impacts strategy selection. Based on the data extracted from the survey, increasing awareness of vocabulary learning strategies to assist students, regardless of gender, in improving their efficiency comes to mind. Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to utilize these strategies and guide them on how to maximize their benefits. Additionally, students should be directed to effectively apply these strategies to enhance their proficiency, irrespective of their gender. Teachers can provide detailed guidance on the application of these strategies tailored to the individual needs of each student.

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, University students, Gender differences, ESL

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a foreign language

GD: Gender Differences

L2: Second Language

LLSs: Language Learning Strategies

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

VLSs: Vocabulary Learning Strategies

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Introduction

1. Statement of the problem:

Words play a vital role in daily interactions, serving as the foundation for communication between individuals. The richness of one's vocabulary directly impacts the fluency and effectiveness of communication. In language acquisition, having a diverse vocabulary is essential for conveying messages accurately. Gender differences may significantly influence how individuals approach building their vocabulary and mastering a language, potentially affecting their communication skills and cultural understanding. The study aims to delve into how gender influences the utilization of vocabulary learning strategies among language learners. It seeks to explore whether males and females employ different methods when acquiring new words and how these differences may impact their language proficiency and overall learning progress. Understanding these gender-based disparities in vocabulary acquisition could provide valuable insights into educational approaches and contribute to more effective language learning strategies.

2. Research Aims

The main objective of this research is to explore gender differences in using Vocabulary learning strategies among Algerian EFL students at Mila University Center.

- This research aims to determine the Vocabulary learning strategies used by EFL Algerian students at Mila University Center.
- To discover differences between male and female students in the number of vocabulary learning strategies.

3. Research Questions:

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the Vocabulary learning strategies used by EFL Algerian students to learn new vocabulary?

- What are the Vocabulary learning strategies used by male and female students to learn new vocabulary?

- Do male and female students employ the same number of vocabulary learning strategies?

4. Research Hypotheses

- EFL Algerian students use Vocabulary learning strategies.

- EFL Algerian male and female students differ in the use of Vocabulary learning strategies.

- Male and Female students employ the same number of Vocabulary learning strategies.

5. Research Methodology

In this research, First-year EFL students at Mila University Center were chosen as a population among Algerian EFL students. Since they are fresh and new in university, learning vocabulary can be difficult for them, so vocabulary learning strategies can help them. Therefore, to obtain data for our research, a questionnaire was administered to 48 First-year EFL students 24 males and 24 females selected randomly from the whole population of 239. This questionnaire aims to explore gender differences in using vocabulary learning strategies. It also aims to find whether male and female students implement a similar amount of VLSs and to determine the VLSs used by them.

6. Structure of the Study

This research is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter represents the literature review, which is in the other hand divided into two sections. The first section is

about Language learning strategies. It starts with an introduction and provides definitions of Language learning strategies LLSs along with classifications of LLSs. It also includes factors that influence the choice of Language learning strategies, the importance of Language learning strategies, and ends with a conclusion. The second section is about Vocabulary learning strategies. This section starts with an introduction and provides different definitions of vocabulary and emphasizes the importance of vocabulary. It also includes the kinds of vocabulary and techniques for teaching vocabulary. Following that, it gives definitions of Vocabulary learning strategies, taxonomies of VLSs, and the importance of VLSs. This section ends with gender differences in using Vocabulary learning strategies, and a conclusion.

The second chapter which is the fieldwork, deals with the analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaire that was administered to first-year EFL students at Mila University Center. This study ends with a general conclusion and offers some recommendations.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Section One: Language Learning Strategies

Chapter One:

Literature Review

Section One: Language Learning Strategies

Introduction

In the past two decades, there has been a notable transformation in the field of language learning and teaching, with a pronounced shift in focus towards learners and their learning processes, rather than solely on teachers and teaching methods. This change has led researchers to prioritize understanding how learners process information and the various strategies they employ to enhance comprehension and recall. This chapter thoroughly explores language learning strategies (LLSs) by providing definitions and delving into their classification. Additionally, it aims to investigate the factors that impact the choice of these strategies. The overarching goal of this exploration is to emphasize the importance of LLSs in the process of language acquisition.

1. Definition of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies have been a focal point for scholars since the mid-1970s, (e.g., Cohen, 2011; Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002; Griffiths, 2008, 2013; Ogeyik, 2009; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 2001, 2011; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Wenden, 1986). The research on language learning strategies has been significantly influenced by theories from both Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and cognitive psychology. SLA theories provide insights into how languages are learned and processed, while cognitive psychology offers an understanding of memory, attention, and learning processes, which are crucial for effective language learning strategies. According to Cohen" LLS refers to the conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language.

"Wenden (1986) defined them as "steps or mental operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials to store, retrieve, and use knowledge" (p. 10). Oxford (1990) explained, "Strategies are essential for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence." (p. 7). Strategies can make learning "easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Hence, Different scholars and researchers may emphasize different aspects or approaches, leading to diverse perspectives on how language learning occurs. This diversity underscores the complexity of the language learning process. To sum up, language learning strategies encompass the techniques employed by learners to facilitate and enhance the learning process, making it more effective and efficient.

2. Classification of language learning strategies

Since the late seventies, numerous scholars have endeavoured to identify and categorize all possible strategies used by second language (L2) learners, aiming to classify them systematically. This classification helps in understanding the different approaches learners employ to acquire a second language and provides a framework for educators and learners to utilize and enhance language learning strategies effectively.

2.1. Oxford (1990) Classification of language learning strategies

Oxford (1990) proposed a detailed classification model of language learning strategies, which has been hailed as "the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies" (Ellis, 1994, p. 539). She categorized language learning strategies into two main types: direct strategies and indirect strategies.

2.1.1. Direct Strategies

Direct strategies, as defined by Oxford (1990), are those language strategies that engage with the new language itself. Oxford emphasizes that "all direct strategies require mental processing of the language" (p. 37), indicating that these strategies involve active cognitive engagement with the language material. This mental processing is essential for tasks such as encoding, understanding, and recalling language elements, highlighting the importance of direct engagement in language learning. They include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies.

• **Memory strategies:** These are diverse tactics used to encode and retain new information, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. Techniques include mental imagery, where vivid mental pictures represent word meanings, and physical movement, such as gestures linked to words. Mechanical aids like flashcards provide structured reviews. These strategies optimize cognitive processes, improving the absorption and recall of information

• **Cognitive strategies:** Cognitive strategies refer to a set of deliberate techniques used to actively engage with language material, facilitating deeper understanding and retention. These strategies involve the conscious manipulation or transformation of information through various methods, such as note-taking, summarization, and consistent practice. Note-taking allows learners to capture key points and organize information in a personalized format that aids in comprehension and recall. Summarization involves condensing complex ideas into concise summaries, which promotes higher-order thinking and reinforces understanding. By employing cognitive strategies, individuals can effectively process and internalize language material, leading to more proficient language skills and improved academic performance.

• **Compensation strategies:** Are employed by language learners to fill knowledge gaps, especially when encountering unfamiliar language elements. These techniques involve

inferring meaning from context, employing synonyms, and using gestures to convey ideas. They serve as creative problem-solving approaches, aiding comprehension and communication despite incomplete language proficiency. By adapting and utilizing these strategies, learners can effectively navigate language challenges, facilitating smoother communication and understanding throughout their learning journey.

2.1.2. Indirect strategies

Indirect Strategies earn their name because they operate in a manner that subtly and indirectly impacts learning. Unlike direct strategies which involve direct engagement with learning tasks, indirect strategies work behind the scenes, supporting and shaping the learning process less overtly

• **Metacognitive strategies:** Metacognitive strategies serve as valuable tools for learners to regulate and oversee their cognitive processes. They are especially advantageous for students who encounter challenges in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary or improving their writing skills. According to Oxford (1990) metacognitive strategies can be classified into three primary groups:

1) Centering Learning: This category includes tactics that assist learners in directing their attention and focus toward specific skills or tasks.

2) Arranging and Planning Learning: Within this grouping, the focus is on organizing the learning process effectively. Learners may create study schedules, set objectives, or break tasks down into smaller, more manageable units.

3) Assessing Learning: This set of strategies involves individuals evaluating their progress and achievements in learning. Learners may assess their vocabulary knowledge through

regular self-testing or review of their writing to ensure clarity, coherence, and effectiveness. Seeking feedback from teachers or peers also plays a crucial role in this assessment process.

• **Affective strategies:** Oxford (1990) states that "The term affective refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values" (p. 140). Affective strategies, like self-reinforcement and self-rewarding, help learners maintain a positive engagement in language learning by managing their emotions, attitudes, motivation, and values. Oxford (1990) further categorizes affective strategies into three sets:

1) Lowering Your Anxiety: Implementing techniques to reduce feelings of nervousness or stress. For instance, a language learner might practice deep breathing exercises before a speaking exam to calm their nerves.

2) Encouraging Yourself: Employing methods to boost self-confidence and motivation. For example, a student struggling with grammar might remind themselves of past successes and say " I can do it again!

3) Taking Your Emotional Temperature: Recognizing and managing one's emotional state to enhance learning.

• **Social strategies:** Social strategies play a vital role in language learning since learners use language to communicate, and communication inherently involves interaction with others. Oxford (1990) further categorizes these social strategies into three sets:

1). "Asking Questions": For example, seeking assistance to complete a task.

2). "Cooperation with Others": Such as collaborating with fellow language learners to improve writing skills.

3). "Empathizing with Others": This involves being sensitive to people's thoughts and emotions.
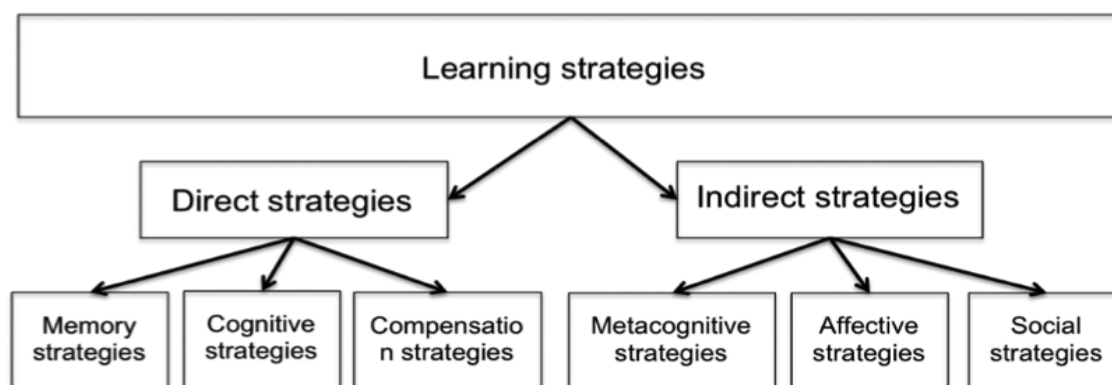
Figure 1. Oxford's (1990) Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs)

2.2. Rubin's (1987) classification system of LLS Rubin's (1987)

The classification System of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) divides learning strategies into two main categories: direct and indirect categories. Direct strategies encompass cognitive and metacognitive strategies, involving active engagement with the learning material and controlling one's learning process. In contrast, indirect strategies include communicative and social strategies, which facilitate learning more subtly or secondarily through language use and interaction with others.

2.2.1. Direct strategies:

• **Cognitive Strategies:** Refer to the steps or processes utilized in learning or problem-solving that involve the analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials (Rubin, 1987: 23). Rubin proposed six main classifications of cognitive learning strategies that directly contribute to language learning:

1. Clarification/Verification 2. Guessing/Inductive referencing

3. Deductive reasoning 4. Practice

5. Memorization 6. Monitoring

• **Metacognitive Strategies:** According to Rubin, Metacognitive Strategies refer to the techniques individuals utilize to regulate and direct their learning process. These strategies involve a range of activities including planning out how to approach a task, setting specific goals to achieve, and effectively managing one's learning journey. Essentially, metacognitive strategies empower learners to take control of their learning experience by strategically organizing their efforts and monitoring their progress along the way.

2.2.2. Indirect strategies:

• **Communicative Strategies:** These are not as directly tied to language learning since their main emphasis lies in engaging in conversation and effectively conveying meaning, or clarifying the speaker's intended message. These strategies are utilized when a speaker faces difficulties while speaking, leading them to use different techniques to clarify or explain their intended message to the listener.

• **Social Strategies:** on the contrary, revolve around establishing situations where learners can engage with and refine their language skills. This involves initiating conversations in the target language and making use of resources such as television, radio, and reading materials to facilitate language practice and exposure.
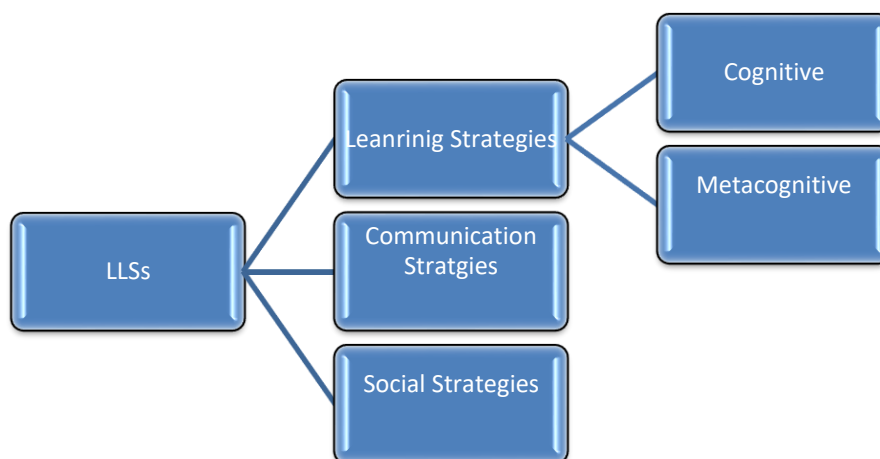
Figure 2. Rubin's (1987) Classification System of LLSs

2.3. O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) Classification

LLSs Learning Strategies Cognitive Metacognitive Communication strategies: Social strategies O'Malley and Chamot (1990) delineated language learning strategies into three principal categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective.

• **Metacognitive Strategies:** according to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), represent learning techniques that involve reflecting on or understanding the learning process, planning for learning activities, monitoring progress during learning, and evaluating learning outcomes post-task completion (pp. 230-231). In other terms, metacognitive strategies are methods learners can employ to optimize and improve their learning, including tasks such as organization, self-assessment, and planning.

• **Cognitive Strategies:** Cognitive strategies are specific to particular learning tasks; they encompass the methods learners employ directly to recognize, acquire, store, retrieve, and apply language information they possess (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

• **Social/affective strategy:** O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classify social/affective strategies as encompassing interaction with others and the management of emotions. Grenfell and Harris

(1999) define socio-affective strategies as those used in social settings, including cooperation and seeking clarification, as well as the regulation of emotions and feelings that are naturally part of learning a foreign language.

3. Factors affecting the choice of language learning strategies

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in examining the intricate relationship between Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) and the myriad of factors that influence their utilization (Macaro, 2001). Language learners exhibit diverse approaches to foreign language (FL) or second language (L2) acquisition, offering them opportunities to optimize their language learning potential and enhance their proficiency levels. Ellis (1994) emphasizes the significant impact of individual differences on learners' strategy use, as these variances can directly influence learners themselves. For instance, heightened motivation may coincide with decreased anxiety levels, thereby shaping the selection and application of specific strategies. The effectiveness of these strategies, when appropriately employed, can consequently influence learning outcomes, further influencing the strategic choices made by learners. Moreover, an array of additional variables, including gender, age, motivation, and learning styles, can significantly impact learners' decisions regarding strategy selection. This multifaceted interplay underscores the complexity of the language learning process and highlights the importance of understanding and addressing these factors to facilitate effective language acquisition.

3.1. Age

The role of age in second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) learning is widely acknowledged, yet the specific relationship between learners' age and their choice of language learning strategies (LLSs) has received limited attention in research. One critical factor influencing this relationship is the concept of the critical period hypothesis. The critical period

hypothesis, proposed by Lenneberg in 1967, suggests that there is a specific period in early life during which language acquisition occurs most effectively. During this time, individuals have a heightened ability to learn languages almost effortlessly. However, after this critical period, language acquisition becomes more difficult, if not impossible, due to physiological changes in the brain. This hypothesis underscores the importance of early language exposure and learning opportunities in maximizing language learning potential. Studies examining age differences in language learning strategy (LLS) use have investigated variations among adults, adolescents, and young learners (Skehan, 1998; Ortega, 2009). Oxford (1994) observed that learners of different ages and proficiency levels employ distinct strategies. She suggests that older learners or those at advanced proficiency levels tend to utilize specific strategies not commonly employed by younger learners. This indicates that older learners may possess a more diverse repertoire of LLSs and are better equipped to manage their learning process compared to younger learners.

3.2. Gender differences

Gender differences in language learning have been extensively studied, revealing that males and females often exhibit different cognitive styles and preferences. Females tend to utilize a wider range of strategies, especially in social contexts, possibly influenced by societal expectations. Conversely, males may focus more on specific strategies aligned with their cognitive styles. Research suggests that females may be more effective in utilizing language learning strategies, possibly due to higher levels of interest and motivation outside of formal education. Recognizing these differences can inform teaching practices to create inclusive environments catering to diverse learning styles and preferences, ensuring all students have the opportunity to excel regardless of gender. Studies, such as those by Oxford (1990) and Macaron (2001), suggest that females may employ language learning strategies more effectively than males. Additionally, females tend to exhibit higher levels of interest and

motivation in learning foreign languages or second languages outside of formal educational settings. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender differences in language learning approaches and motivations when designing language learning programs and interventions.

3.3. Motivation

Motivation plays an essential role in language learning and education overall. Generally, it serves as a vital source of positive energy that drives individuals to take action. Specifically, within language learning, motivation represents the desire or willingness to engage in the process of acquiring a new language. Motivation plays a crucial role in language learning, as it influences the adoption of learning strategies (Macaro, 2001). Studies indicate that highly motivated students tend to employ a greater number of strategies (Oxford, 1990). Motivation can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic categories. Intrinsic motivation drives learners to engage in language learning for personal satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation is based on external incentives (Brown, 2000). Furthermore, motivation can be characterized as either integrative or instrumental. Integrative motivation involves a desire to assimilate into a target community, whereas instrumental motivation revolves around practical objectives such as career advancement (Brown, 2000). The relationship between motivation and achievement in language learning is a topic of ongoing debate, with unanswered questions regarding whether motivation precedes accomplishment or vice versa.

3.4. Learning Style

Refers to an individual's preferred method of approaching learning or problem-solving within a specific context (Cassidy 2004, Cohen 2003, Oxford 2003, Oxford, Ehrman, and Lavine 1991, Peacock 2001). Within the realm of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, certain aspects of learning style have been recognized as particularly pertinent to the

language learning process. These include sensory preferences, personality traits, and cognitive styles (Cohen 2003, Cohen and Dörnyei 2002, Ehrman 1996, Ehrman and Oxford 1990, Oxford, Hollaway, and Horton-Murillo 1992, Reid 1995). These dimensions have been investigated concerning their correlation with learning strategies, among other factors. Various scholars (Brown 1994, Cohen 1984, Ehrman and Oxford 1990, O'Malley et al. 1985) argue for a reciprocal relationship between learning styles and learning strategies. Empirical studies have shown that individual learners tend to employ different strategies based on their sensory preferences, personality traits, and cognitive styles (Carson and Longhini 2002, Li and Qin 2006, Littlemore 2001, Wenden 1986).

4. The importance of language learning strategies LLS

Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) are tools that learners utilize to optimize and regulate their learning process, playing a crucial role in language acquisition. Research conducted in this area demonstrates their contribution to knowledge acquisition (Rubin, 1975), fostering learner independence, and self-engagement, and enhancing language proficiency for effective communication. Oxford (1990) emphasizes their significance in language learning as tools for active, self-directed engagement, essential for developing communicative competence. LLSs aid in problem-solving (Brown, 2000), facilitating understanding, retention, and application of learned information, thus facilitating language learning (Chamot, 1998, 2005). Oxford (2008, p. 50) further categorizes L2 LLSs into four groups based on their roles and functions:

• **"Metacognitive strategies":** Guiding the learning process and promoting autonomous learning through self-evaluation.

• **"Affective strategies":** Supporting decision-making and emotional organization.

• **"Cognitive strategies":** Reflecting internal mental processes such as analysis.

• **"Social strategies":** Assisting learners in social interactions, such as collaboration. In essence, the significance of LLSs lies in their ability to offer insights into learners' approaches to tasks during the learning process. Learners can effectively utilize LLSs by diversifying their usage and employing them appropriately based on their learning style and context. Chamot (1998) asserts that "students need to be aware of the strategies that lead to their success" (p. 3) to excel in learning tasks. Thus, Studies conducted by O'Malley (1985a), Oxford (1989), and Ellis and Sinclair (1989) provide evidence supporting the idea that learners who undergo learner training generally outperform those who do not. Consequently, Horwitz (1988) and Wenden (1991) advocate for educators to ascertain the individual beliefs of their students and subsequently apply this understanding to develop teaching strategies aimed at fostering autonomous and successful second language learning. Additionally, students themselves must engage in self-reflection on their learning process, thus gaining awareness of their criteria and how these perceptions impact their learning journey.

Conclusion

Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) are pivotal for effectively acquiring a language, as they encapsulate the cognitive and behavioral approaches utilized by learners, thereby distinguishing between proficient and less proficient learners. Initial investigations into language learning strategies were geared towards identifying the specific strategies indicative of successful language acquisition, culminating in the establishment of typologies to systematize and classify these approaches. Furthermore, research has delved into diverse factors that impact the application of LLSs, such as age, learning preferences, and motivation. LLSs are essential tools that empower learners to take control of their learning through conscious efforts. Encouraging students to utilize a diverse range of LLSs properly and effectively is paramount for enhancing their language learning outcomes. By fostering an

environment that promotes the strategic use of LLSs, educators can empower learners to become more independent and successful language learners.

Section Two: Vocabulary Learning

Section Two: Vocabulary Learning

Introduction

Vocabulary is an important aspect of language. Though, vocabulary acquisition is very important to foreign language learners, as it plays a crucial role in improving their language proficiency and sub-skills. Learners cannot communicate in a language effectively without having enough vocabulary items, and to facilitate vocabulary acquisition the use of vocabulary learning strategies is important.

This section will shed light on what vocabulary means, the importance of vocabulary, the kinds of vocabulary, and techniques for teaching vocabulary. It also gives a clear definition of vocabulary learning strategies, the important classifications, and their importance, and ends with a discussion about gender differences in the use of VLSs.

1. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a collection of meaningful words, that are used to construct sentences when studying a language. Without vocabulary, learners cannot recognize what they hear, pronounce, read, and write. According to Ur (1996, p. 60), "Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item's vocabulary may be more than a word." For Neuman and Dwyer (2009, p. 384), "vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively: words in speaking (expressive vocabulary), and words for listening (receptive vocabulary)." Shmitt (2000, p. 112), said that " vocabulary is more than just individual words working separately in a discourse environment. Rather, once words are placed in discourse, they establish numerous links beyond the single orthographic word level." Hatch and Brown (1995, p. 01), indicated that, " vocabulary refers to the list or set of words for a particular language or a list or a set of words that individual speakers of language may use." According to Richard and Renandya (2002, p. 255), "

vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write." Nunan (1999, p. 101), stated that, " vocabulary is more than just lists of target language words."

Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the total number of words used to express ideas and state the speaker's meaning. Hence, it is a part of a particular language.

2. Importance of vocabulary learning

Vocabulary knowledge is an essential tool and key factor for second language learners. In other words, it is the heart of language learning because, without it, learners cannot communicate in any meaningful manner. Having a rich vocabulary enhances the four language skills, as stated by Rubin and Thompson (1994, p. 79), "One cannot speak, understand, read, or write a foreign language without knowing many words. Therefore, vocabulary is the heart of mastering a foreign language." Similarly, Alemi and Tayebi, (2011, p. 81), point out that, " vocabulary is a basic component of language proficiency which provides the basis for learners performance in other skills such as: speaking, reading, listening, and writing." Wilkins (1972, p. 111), emphasized the significance of vocabulary and said, "The fact is that while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." This means that a poor grammar package cannot affect the meaning like vocabulary does. Deccarico (2001, p. 285), mentioned that " vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, whether the language is first, second, or foreign."

It is clear from the above explanations that, vocabulary plays an important role and a necessary and fundamental component for language learners. Without a strong lexical repertoire, it is hard to obtain the four language skills, and big vocabulary baggage will let and help learners express themselves, their ideas, and their thoughts perfectly and effectively.

3. Kinds of Vocabulary

3.1. Receptive and Productive Vocabulary

Experts categorized vocabulary into two main kinds. Nation (2001, p. 24-25), declared that " essentially, receptive vocabulary use involves perceiving the form of a word while listening, reading, and retrieving its meaning. Productive vocabulary use involves wanting to express meaning through speaking, writing, retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form." According to Grains and Redman (1986), receptive vocabulary includes words that are only recognized and understood when reading and listening, However, productive vocabulary is language terms that learners can recall and apply correctly in speech and writing. Furthermore, Haycraft (1978), defined receptive vocabulary as "words that student recognizes and understand when they occur in context, but which he cannot produce correctly.", and productive vocabulary is "words which the student understand, can pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing." (cited in Hatch and Brown, 1995, p. 370).

4. Techniques for Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching a language is crucial, and the teacher has an important role. It is clear that the; teacher's interference is necessary, and to facilitate the acquisition of new words, teachers should adopt various techniques. Seal (1991, as cited in Hatch and Brown, 1995) divided vocabulary teaching into planned and unplanned techniques.

4.1. Unplanned Vocabulary Teaching

Hatch and brown (1995) stated that unplanned vocabulary teaching is when students need the meaning of unfamiliar words during the lesson. Also, when the teacher recognizes the importance of explaining certain words. Seal (1991, p. 298) defined it as "the

extemporaneous teaching of problem vocabulary items that comes up without warning in the course of a lesson". Seal (1991) proposed an approach called ''the three C's'', divided into three stages: convey meaning, check meaning, and consolidate meaning.

In the first stage, the teacher attempts to convey the meaning of the new word to the student, using techniques such as miming, giving synonyms, or telling an anecdote. In the second stage, the teacher checks if the meaning of the new word is understood, using a series of questions with learners, In the third stage, the teacher consolidates the information by allowing learners to use the word in another context, or relate it to their personal experience.

4.2. Planned Vocabulary Teaching

According to Hatch and Brown (1995, p. 415), planned vocabulary teaching is known as " intentional vocabulary instruction". Seal (1991) defined it as when the teacher enters the classroom with assets or vocabulary items that will be covered during the lesson. Seal (1991) mentioned two types of planned vocabulary.

The first type is similar to planned vocabulary teaching. In this stage, the teacher is aware that certain items can cause comprehension difficulties for learners. Hence, the teacher prepares an approach that suits the learners and makes learning easier.

The second type of planned vocabulary teaching can be described as " the vocabulary lesson". The main objective of this type is acquiring and practicing vocabulary. It includes teaching vocabulary separately, or as a follow-up to any activities, like reading and listening, discussions, and dialogs.

5. Definition of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The acquisition of vocabulary is a key component of good communication skills and it is a basic requirement for language fluency. Additionally, developing a rich vocabulary is a

crucial and challenging task for second/foreign language learners. To learn and acquire vocabulary, knowing a large number of words and their meaning, or understanding how to pronounce and use them, requires using strategies. These strategies are named vocabulary learning strategies (VLS). This term has been defined by different experts. Cameron (2001, p. 92), defined vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) as "the actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary." Nation (2001, p. 217), stated that "vocabulary learning strategies are part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies." Catalan (2003, p. 56) uses the definitions of VLS adopted from different scholars (Rubin,1987; Schmitt,1997), and gives the following definition in her research study as "knowledge about the mechanisms (processes, strategies) used to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students (a) to find out meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, (d) to use them in oral or written mode.

6. Taxonomies of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

6.1. Shmitt's Taxonomy

Schmitt (1997) proposed a VLS taxonomy made of fifty-eight (58) strategies, which are divided into two main groups: discovery strategies, and consolidation strategies. The first one explains strategies that help learn a word's meaning for the first time. The second explains strategies that help remember and memorize words that have been taught or encountered. Discovery strategies include determination strategies (DET), and social (SOC) strategies. Consolidation strategies include social (SOC) strategies, memory (MEM) strategies, cognitive (COG) strategies, and metacognitive (MET) strategies.

6.1.1. Discovery strategies

6.1.1.1. DET strategies. Learners use these strategies while discovering the meaning of the new words, without the need for others' help. It includes analysing parts of speech, affixes, and roots, guessing from the textual context, and checking from L1 cognate. (Schmitt, 2000).

6.1.1.2. SOC strategies. appears during interaction with people, to improve language learning. Learners here can ask the teacher or classmates to offer them information about the new words, like synonyms, and translation. (Schmitt, 2000).

6.1.2. Consolidation Strategies

6.1.2.1. SOC strategies. It involves practicing the meaning of the new words within a group, or interacting with native speakers. (Schmitt, 2000).

6.1.2.2. MEM strategies. (mnemonics previously). Involves linking the word to be remembered with some information that has already been learned, using various forms of imagery, or grouping. To aid remembering, another type of mnemonics strategy focuses on the orthographic or phonological forms of the target words. (Schmitt, 2000).

6.1.2.3. COG strategies. According to Schmitt (2000), COG strategies are the same as MEM strategies, but they do not concentrate on manipulative mental processing. COG strategies involve repetition. E.g. verbal repetition, written repetition, and mechanical means.

6.1.2.4. MET strategies. Comprise deciding how best to plan, monitor, or evaluate the study process as well as keeping a mindful perspective of the learning process. Schmitt (2000, p. 136), said: "This includes improving access to input, deciding on the most efficient methods of study/review, and testing oneself to gauge improvement, it also includes deciding which words are worth studying and which are not, as well as preserving with the words one chooses to learn".

Table 1. Schmitt's (2000) Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (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 meaning from textual context
DET	Use a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)
SOC	Ask the teacher for synonyms, paraphrases, or L1 translations of a 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 coordinates
MEM	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms

MEM	Use the semantic map
MEM	Image word form
MEM	Image word's meaning
MEM	Use keyword method
MEM	Group words together to study them
MEM	Study the spelling of a word
MEM	Say new words 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 (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)
MET	Use spaced word practice (expanding rehearsal)
MET	Test oneself with word tests
MET	Skip or pass the new word

6.2. Nation's 2001 Taxonomy

Nation (2001), proposed a taxonomy of various vocabulary learning strategies (VLS), which are divided into three main types of strategy. These are strategies for planning vocabulary learning, strategies for finding out information about words (sources), and strategies for establishing knowledge (processes). Each of these is divided into several strategies.

6.2.1. Planning

Nation (2001), determined that this type of strategy consists of deciding on where to focus attention, how to focus attention, and how often to give attention to the item. The strategies included in this type are choosing words, choosing aspects of knowledge, choosing strategies, and planning repetition.

6.2.1.1. Choosing words. This empowers learners to decide their vocabulary aim. Therefore, choosing the viable type of vocabulary that can achieve this aim. "learners should have a clear strategy for deciding what vocabulary to focus on and where to find this vocabulary." (Nation, 2001, p.219).

6.2.1.2. Choosing aspects of word knowledge to focus on. In this strategy, Nation (2001) stated that learners are mostly interested in knowing the meaning of words, but for them to use a word in both speaking and writing they need to consider other aspects of word knowledge. Nation (2001).

6.2.1.3. Choosing strategies. In this strategy, learners select the suitable strategy from a range of options, decide how this strategy will be implemented, and change the strategy as needed. Nation (2001).

6.2.1.4. Planning repetition. In this strategy, the use of increasingly spaced retrieval is important in remembering word cards, and old material. Nation (2001).

6.2.2. Sources

Finding information about words: Nation (2001) stated that for learners to acquire new vocabulary and deal with it, they must be able to obtain information about words. Nation (2001) proposed four sources for information: analysing word parts, using context, consulting reference sources, and using parallels with another language.

6.2.2.1. Analysing word parts. In this strategy understanding the components of common words can be a helpful starting point for "recognizing connection between related words, checking guesses from context." Nation (2001, p. 220).

6.2.2.2. Using context. This strategy is divided by Gu and Johnson (1996) into different types of cues that learners can use including background knowledge, and linguistic cues. (Nation, 2001).

6.2.2.3. Consulting a reference source. This strategy shows that a variety of reference sources learners can use to learn their vocabulary like dictionaries, lists, and oral sources like asking teachers, native speakers, or other learners for information. Nation (2001).

6.2.2.4. Using parallels with other languages. Nation (2001, p. 220) stated that "the learning burden of a word depends on how much its various aspects are similar to patterns and items that the learner already knows from previous study of second language, from first language, or other languages.

6.2.3. Processes

Establishing vocabulary knowledge: the third and the last type of Nation (2001) taxonomy focuses on different ways of remembering vocabulary, and making it available for use. Which include three strategies: noticing, retrieving, and generating.

6.2.3.1. Noticing. It indicates recognizing the word as an item to be learned. It includes "putting the word in a vocabulary notebook, or list." Nation (2001, p. 221).

6.2.3.2. Retrieving. It entails remembering what has been already encountered. Nation (2001) stated that there are kinds of retrieval: receptive/productive, oral/visual, overt/covert, and incontext/decontextualized. Moreover, "retrieval can occur throughout the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing." Nation (2001, p. 221).

6.2.3.3. Generating. According to Nation (2001) generating is similar to retrieving. Where vocabulary knowledge consists of many kinds of generations: receptive/productive, oral/visual, overt/covert, and context/decontextualized. "Generation strategies include: attaching new aspects of knowledge to what is known through instantiation (visualizing examples of the word)." Nation (2001, p.222).

Table 2. A Taxonomy of Kinds of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (Nation, 2001, p. 218)

A general class of strategies	Types of strategies
Planning: Choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it.	Choosing words Choosing the aspects of word knowledge Choosing strategies Planning repetition
Sources: Finding information about words	Analysing words Using context Consulting a reference source on L1 or L2 Using parallels in L1 and L2
Processes: Establishing word knowledge	Noticing Retrieving Generating

7. Importance of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

During L2 learning VLS are considered important and received much attention. As learning new vocabulary has always been challenging for L2 learners, VLS plays a key role in helping them find out and memorize the meaning of unknown words, and make the process of learning easier. Nation (2001) stated that VLS allows learners to have more control of their learning without the need for teachers' help. Therefore, Schmitt (2000) said that learners use the appropriate strategies to learn vocabulary, rather than language tasks that contain a range of linguistic skills. E.g. oral presentations. He clarified that " this might be due to the relatively discrete nature of vocabulary learning compared to more integrated language activities, making it easier to apply strategies effectively. It may also be because classrooms tend to emphasize discrete activities over integrative ones, or that students particularly value vocabulary learning." Schmitt (2000, p. 132). Nation (2001) stated that the majority of vocabulary learning strategies are beneficial at every level of vocabulary learning.

To conclude, VLS are important, and effective as they encourage learners to take control of their learning, they foster learner's autonomy and self-direction.

8. Gender Differences in Using Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Researchers have found gender differences in the knowledge and the use of language learning strategies. According to Catalan (2003, p. 55), gender as a variable has received little attention in the field of second language teaching and learning.

Catalan (2003) conducted a study about the differences between male and female learners in using vocabulary learning strategies. A total of 581 Spanish-speaking students, aged 11-56, learning either English or Basque participated. While Catalan (2003) pointed out that there are gender differences in the use of language learning strategies have been identified, research has also provided evidence that LLSs may be associated with other

individual factors such as types of memory, learning styles, motivation, and culture. Catalan (2003) used Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy as an instrument for gathering data for her study and designed the questionnaire based on Schmitt's reported information.

The study reveals that male and female learners tend to use the same strategies; they used more discovery strategies than consolidation strategies. The main difference found in this study is that male and female learners differ in the number of VLSs they use. Therefore, females tend to use a greater number of VLSs than males. Catalan (2003) stated that the reason that makes females use more strategies is due to motivation towards language learning in general, and vocabulary learning in particular.

To conclude, gender differences in the use of vocabulary learning strategies are a crucial topic to investigate, However, only a few studies have been done on it.

Table 3. Catalan (2003) ten most frequently used strategies.

Male	Female
Bilingual dictionary (D)	Bilingual dictionary (D)
Take notes about the word in class (C)	Take notes about the word in class (C)
Guess from textual context (D)	Guess from textual context (D)
Ask the teacher for an L1 translation (D)	Ask classmates for meaning (D)
Ask classmates for meaning (D)	Ask the teacher for an L1 translation (D)
Analyse part of speech (C)	Say the word aloud when studying (C)
Connect the word to cognates (C)	Connect the word to cognates (C)
Use English-language media (C)	Analyse part of speech (C)
Say the word aloud when studying (C)	Use English-language media (C)
Form image of word's meaning (C)	**Use the vocabulary section in the textbook (C)**

Conclusion

To conclude, acquiring vocabulary is important for learning a foreign language, and learning vocabulary seems to be a challenge to foreign language learners. This can be facilitated by the use of vocabulary learning strategies. These strategies can help learners to learn new vocabulary easily, and they are crucial for enhancing language development, strategies like asking the teacher for synonyms, or L1 translation of new words, analysing parts of speech, and guessing meaning from the context can help learners to expand their vocabulary skills.

Chapter Two: Data Collection and Analysis

Chapter Two:

Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse the data obtained from the questionnaire to investigate students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies. It seeks to identify the most and least utilized Vocabulary Learning Strategies among students, with a focus on comparing the usage patterns between genders. The data analysis employs descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage calculations, facilitated by Microsoft Excel. This comparative analysis between genders aims to uncover any disparities or similarities in how male and female students approach Vocabulary Learning.

2.1. Pilot Study

Conducting a pilot study plays a crucial role as it helps in testing the effectiveness of the actual questionnaire, and to determine if the items are yielding the kind of information needed. To assess the acceptability and efficacy of our questionnaire items we administered five questionnaires to first-year EFL students at Mila University Center, the participants were two males and three females. The results of the pilot study show that the questionnaire contains some questions that are not necessary and missed some questions. Therefore, we decided to omit and reformulate some questions and add new items to make the questionnaire clear and effective. Finally, the pilot study guided and enabled us to modify and enhance the quality of our questionnaire items and to make them more reliable and impactful.

2.2.The Student's Questionnaire

2.2.1. Administrating and Aim of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered in a realistic setting, to first-year EFL students of English at Mila University Center. It took one week to collect the data. The questionnaire is designed to explore gender differences in using Vocabulary Learning Strategies.

This questionnaire aims to explore the differences between male and female students in using Vocabulary Learning strategies. Additionally, it seeks to find whether male and female students implement the same amount of VLSs.

2.2.2. The Sample

The questionnaire was handed out to 48 first-year EFL students at the Department of Foreign Languages, Mila University Center. 24 girls and 24 boys were selected from different groups randomly.

**2.2.3. Description of the Questionnaire**

To explore gender differences in using Vocabulary Learning Strategies among EFL students our questionnaire was made based on Norbert Schmitt Taxonomy 1997. The questionnaire is divided into two sections with a total of fifteen questions. The types of questions used are closed-ended questions where the participants are asked to tick the options that suit them and open-ended questions where they are asked to provide their answers or justifications. The first section is about the background information, it contains four items. The first item is about gender, the second item is about the age of the participants. The third item is about their experience in learning English as a second or foreign language, and the fourth item is a common question about their level of English. The second section deals with "Vocabulary Learning Strategies". The first question seeks to find learners' difficulties when

learning new words with three options, and the second question explores whether classroom participation is important to learning vocabulary. The following questions are designed based on Schmitt taxonomy (1997) to find gender differences in using VLSs, questions from (3-6) are strategies used by learners to discover the meaning of new words, questions from (7-10) are strategies used by learners for consolidating new words. These questions are divided into five categories (Q3-Q4) about DET strategies, (Q5-Q8) SOC strategies, (Q9) the first four options are about MEM strategies and the last three options are about COG strategies, and (Q10) about MET strategies. The last question aims to find learners' views about VLSs.

2.2.4. Analysis of Students Questionnaire

Section One: Background information
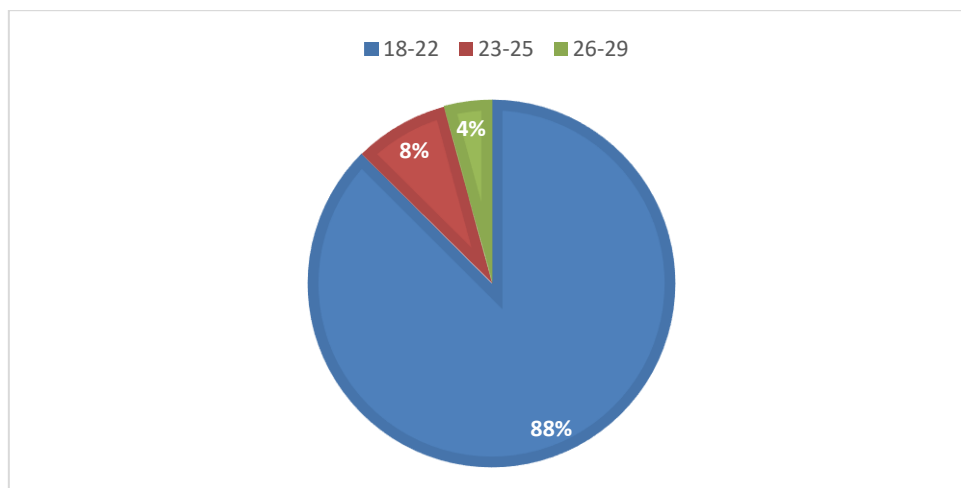
Item 01: Gender
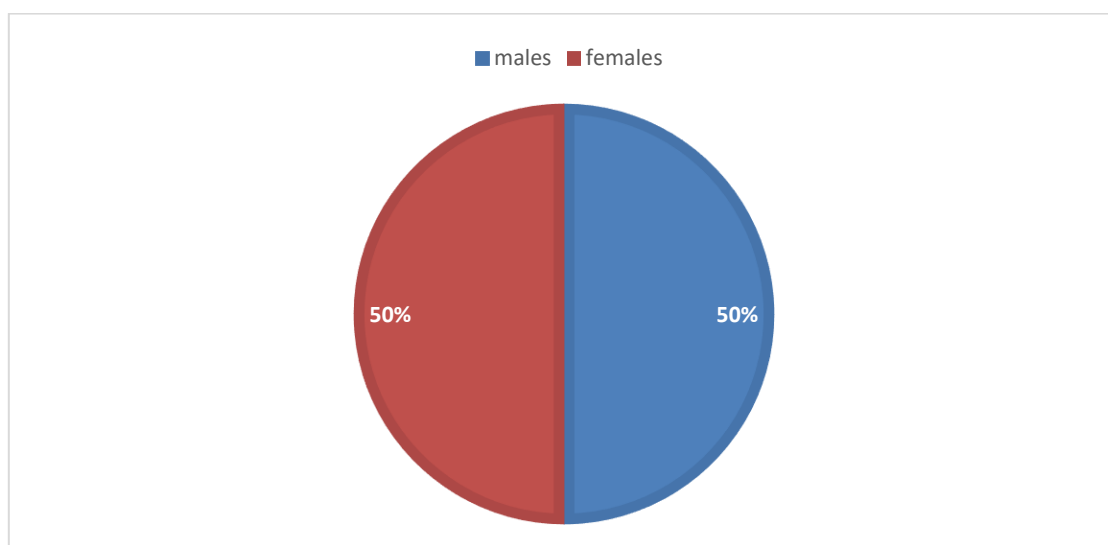
Graph 1. Students' gender

Graph 1 above shows that 48 participants are divided into 24 male students 50% and 24 female students 50%.

- **Males Questionnaire Analysis**
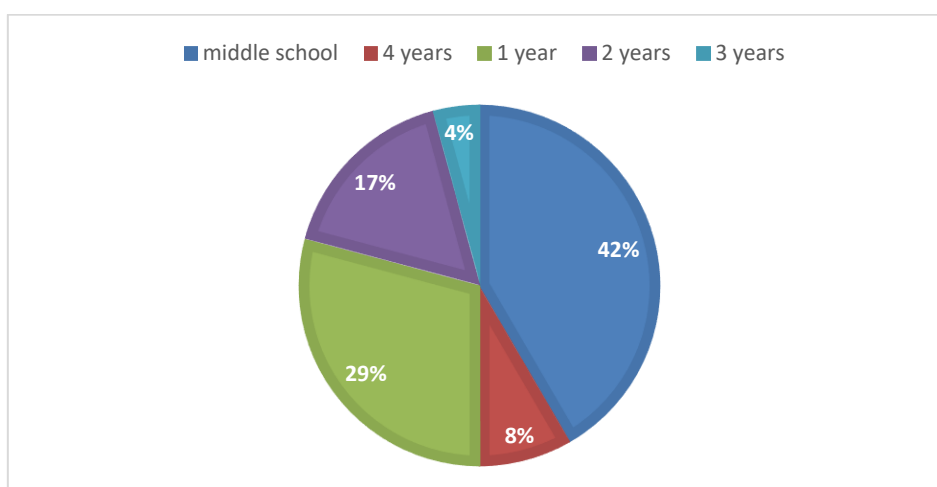
Section One: Background information

Item 02: Age

Graph 2. Males' age

The results in Figure 2 above show that most male students are within the age range of 18-22 with a percentage of 87.5% while 8.33% are between the 23-25 age range and the smaller percentage of male students within the age range of 25-29 making up 4.17%.

Item 03: How long have you been studying English

Graph 3. Males' years of studying English

The results in Graph 3 above show that 41.67% of male students have been studying English since Middle School which is a long duration of learning English, while 29.17% have been studying for just one year, 16.67% have been studying for two years, 8.33% have been studying for four years, and 4.17% have been studying for three years. Data suggests that male students have different experiences in learning English.

**Item 04:** How do you consider your level in English?
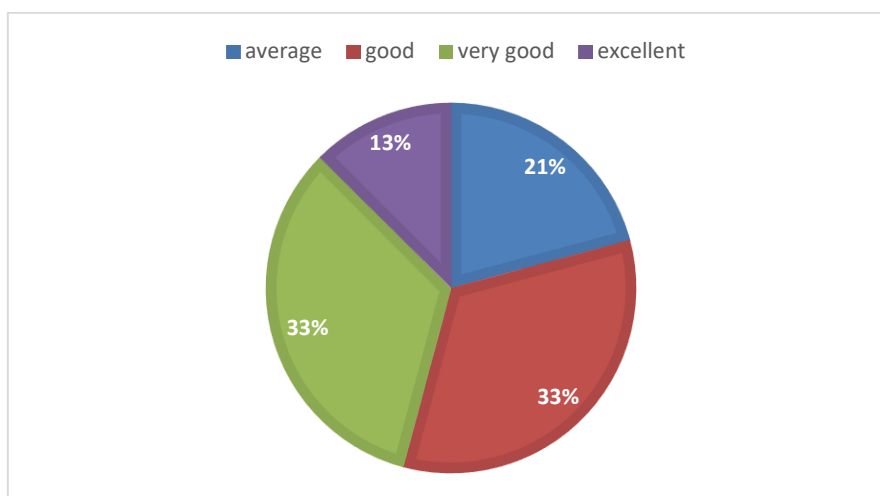
Graph 4. Males' level in English

The results in Graph 4 above show that 33.33% of male students have a good level of English, and the same percentage of 33.33% are very good which clarifies that they are acquiring a good knowledge about the basic principles of English. However, 20.83% said that their level of English is average which proves that they have limited knowledge in learning English, and 12.5% claimed that their level of English is excellent.

Section Two: Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Question 01: Where do you find difficulties when learning a new word?
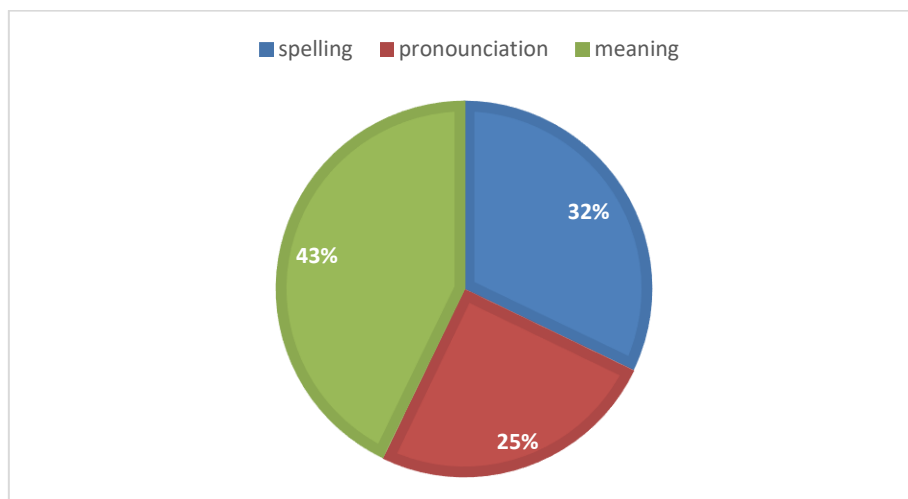
Graph 5. Males' difficulties when learning a new word

The results in Graph 5 above show that 42.86% of male students have difficulties in comprehending the meaning of new words when learning, however, 32.14% found difficulties in word spelling and 25% found pronunciation difficulties.

Question 02: Do you think that participation inside the classroom is important in the process of learning vocabulary?
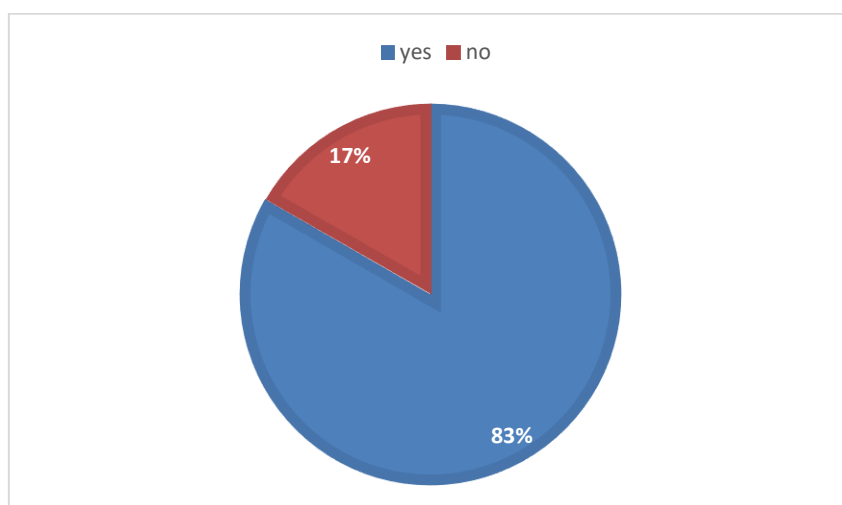

Graph 6. Classroom participation

The results in Graph 6 above show that the majority of male students 83.33% agree that participation inside the classroom is important in learning vocabulary this highlights that the students are aware of the significance of class discussions and activities and their role in enhancing students' level and keeping them engaged when learning new vocabulary. however, 16.67% of them said no.
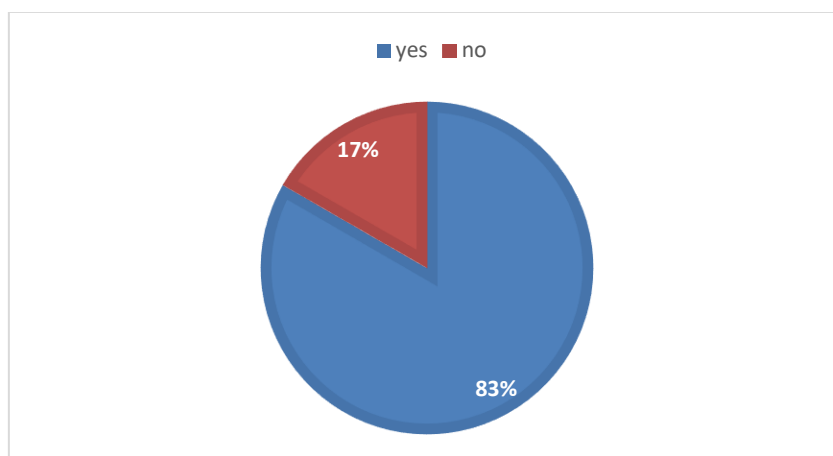
➤ **Determination Strategies:**

Question 3: How do you discover the meaning of the new word?
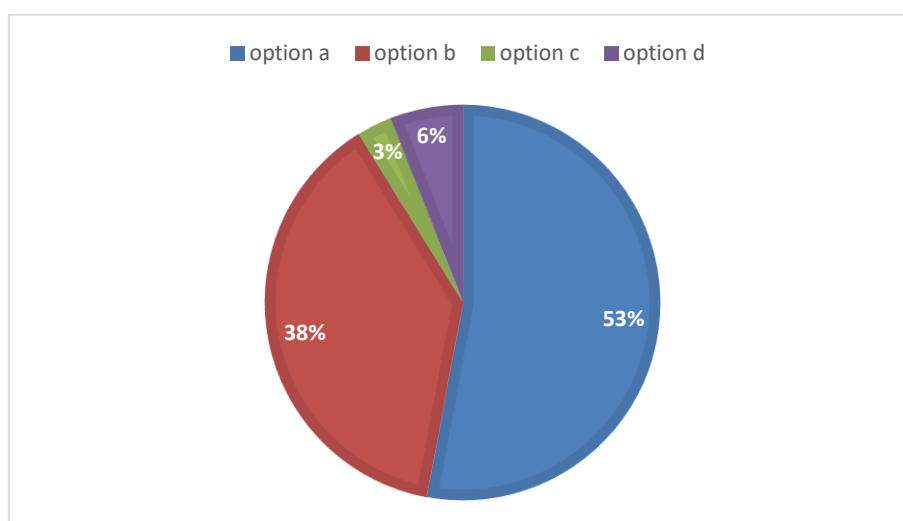
Graph 7. Males' Use of Determination Strategies

The results presented in Graph 7 above show that 52.94% of male students tend to discover the meaning of new words by guessing the meaning from the context which emphasizes the importance of textual cues to determine the meaning of unknown words, 38.24% use bilingual dictionaries as they feel more comfortable to use their native language to understand unfamiliar words, 5.88% analyse available pictures or gestures that match the word and the rest 2.94% use monolingual dictionary.

Question 04: Do you usually relate the new word to its part of speech (E.g. noun, verb, etc...)?


Graph 8. Males' Use of Determination Strategies

The results gathered in Graph 8 show that the majority of male students 83.33% relate the new word to its part of speech like nouns, and verbs, and this is due to their strong knowledge of grammatical structures and language rules, and 16.67% of them do not relate the new words to its part of speech they might be using other learning strategies when they face new words.
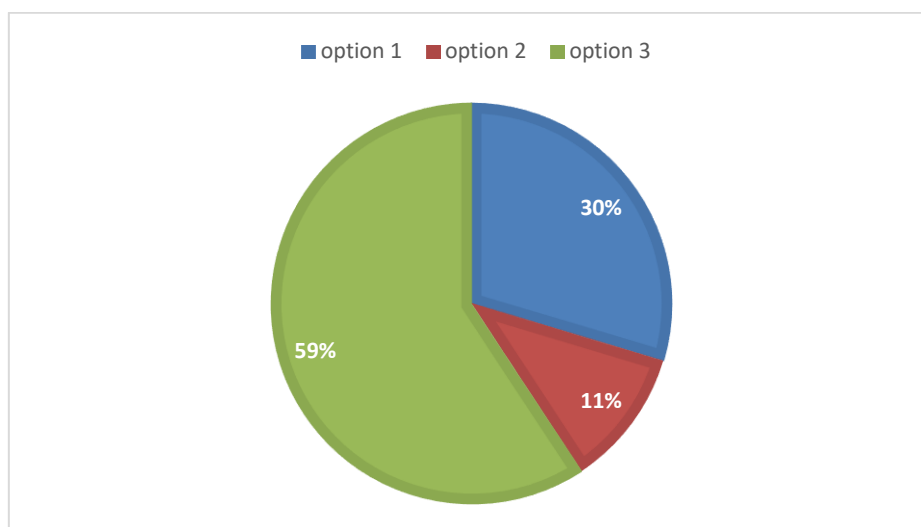
➤ **Social Strategies:**

Question 05: When you face a new word from whom do you get help?
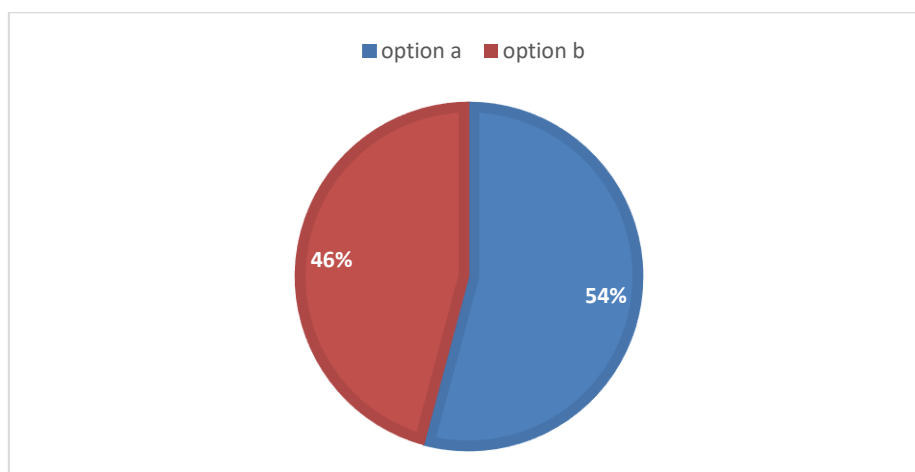
Graph 9. Males' Use of Social Strategies

The results presented in Graph 9 above show that 54.17% of male students choose to ask their classmates for the meaning of unknown words this reveals that male students prefer collaborative learning and sharing knowledge and learning strategies, while 45.83% tend to ask their teacher to give them the meaning of unknown words and provide them with explanations and clarifications.

Question 06: When you face a new word do you prefer the teacher to give you:

Graph 10. Males' Use of Social Strategies

The results presented in Graph 10 above show that most male students 59.26% ask their teacher to give them synonyms of the new words, on the other hand, 9.63% ask for the translation of the new word to L1, and the rest 11.11% ask for paraphrasing new words.

Question 07: Do you work in groups with your classmates to find the meaning of the new words?
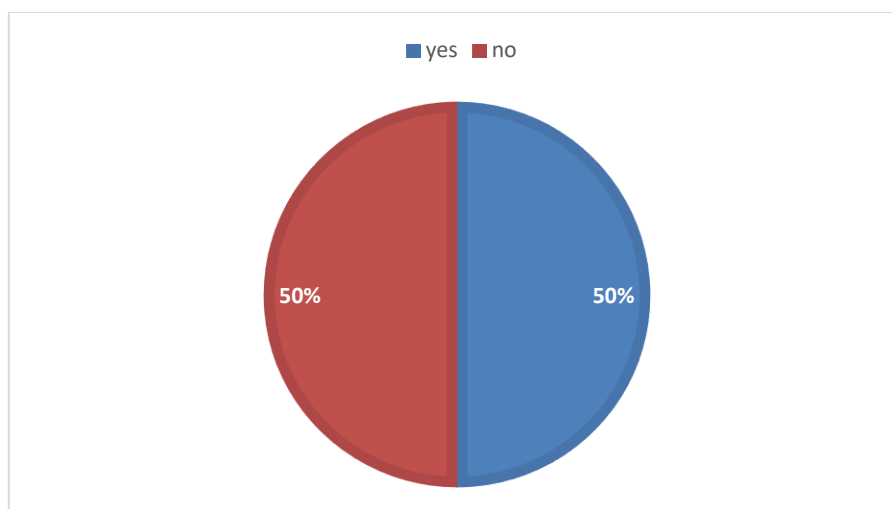
Graph 11. Males' Use of Social Strategies

The results presented in Graph 11 above show that half of male students 50% choose group work with their classmates to find the meaning of the new words which indicates that they are aware of group discussion and sharing learning experiences, in contrast, 50% of them do not prefer group work as they prefer self-directed learning.

**Question 08:** Do you interact with native speakers through social media?
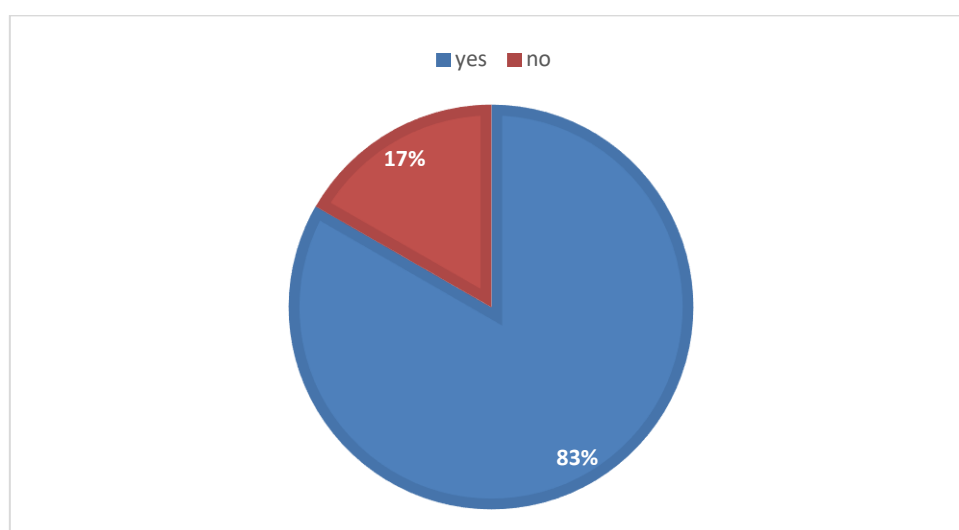
Graph 12. Males' Use of Social Strategies

The results presented in Graph 12 above show that the majority of male students 83.33% interact with native speakers through social media, while 16.67% of them might not interact with native speakers and might have other preferred strategies for learning new vocabulary.

➢ **Memory and Cognitive Strategies:**

Question 09: How do you memorize new vocabulary?
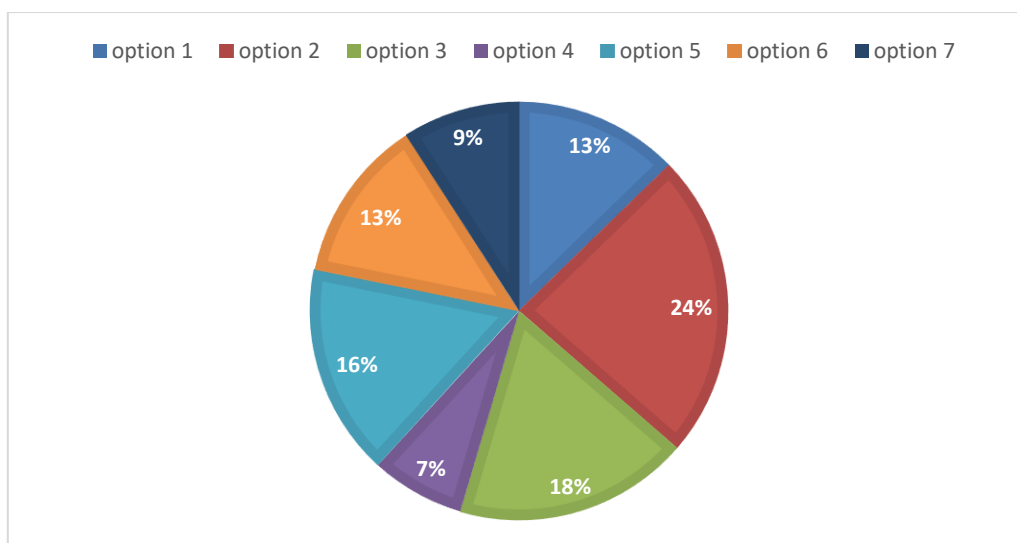
Graph 13. Males' Use of Memory and Cognitive Strategies

The results presented in Graph 13 above show that among male students 23.64% tend to memorize new vocabulary by connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms for contextual understanding. Additionally, 18.18% focus on memorizing the spelling of the new word, while 16.36% keep repeating the word several times. Another 12.73% group the words and relate them to other words from the same class and meaning, with an equal percentage of male students 12.73% write the word several times which is a part of kinaesthetic learning. Furthermore, 9.09% use a notebook to write the new words, while, 7.27% say the word aloud.

➢ **Metacognitive Strategies:**

Question 10: What strategies do you think are effective for consolidating new vocabulary?
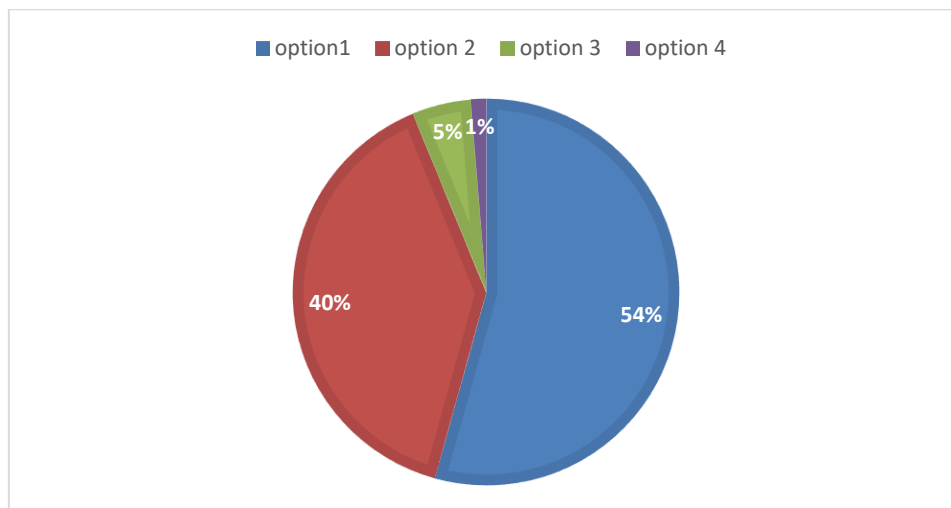
Graph 14. Males' Use of Metacognitive Strategies

The results presented in the Graph above show that half of the male students 51.16% prefer to watch English movies and podcasts to consolidate new vocabulary, while 37.21% choose to listen to songs and audiobooks for auditory reinforcement. Additionally, 6.98% use online word tests, and 4.67% prefer to continue studying the new word over time.

Question 11: Do you think that Vocabulary Learning Strategies are important?
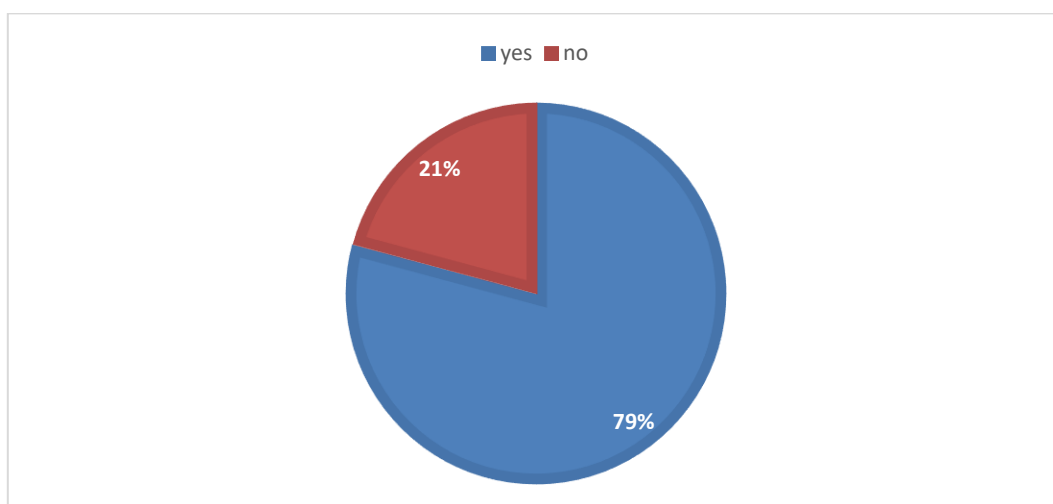
Graph 15. Males' Opinion about Vocabulary Learning Strategies Importance

The results presented in Graph 15 above show that the majority of male students 79.17% recognize the significance of Vocabulary Learning Strategies on improving communication skills and enhancing comprehension. In comparison, 20.83% of them think that VLSs are not important.

Justifications:

Male students who answered with "yes" said that VLSs are important because they help in memorizing new words, other participants noted that VLSs make their learning process easier and help them to improve their English skills. Another participant claims that VLSs make their learning process funny and not boring, and another participant said that learning new words can be difficult for beginners, thus it is necessary to use multiple strategies to remember new words. Another participant noted that the use of VLSs is obligatory and necessary. Participants who answered with "no" did not justify their choice.

- **Females Questionnaire Analysis**

Section One: Background Information

Item 02: Age
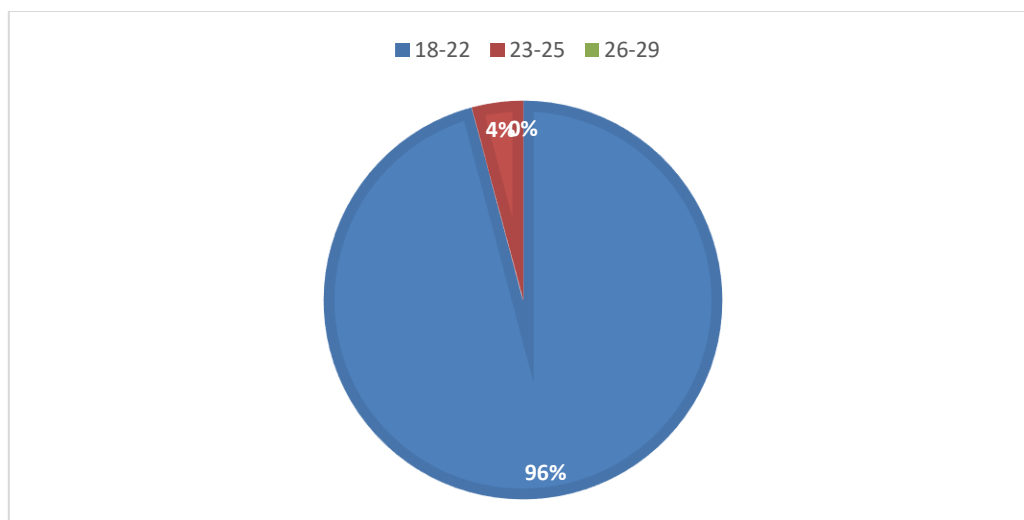
Graph 16. Females Age

The results in Graph 16 above show that most female students are within the age range of 18-22 with a percentage of 95.83% while 4.17% are between the 23-25 age range, with the absence of female students within the age range of 25-29.

Item 03: How long have you been studying English?
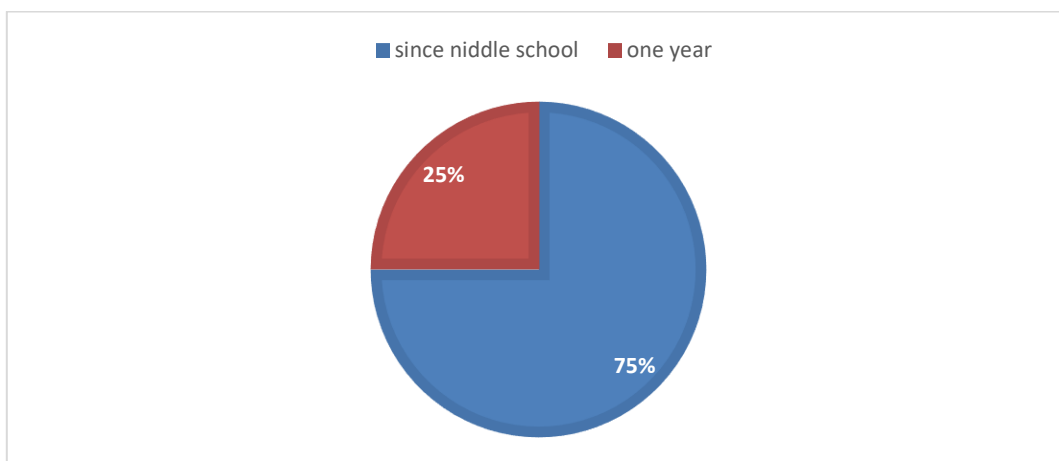
Graph 17. females' years of studying English

The results in Graph 17 above show that the majority of 75% of female students have been studying English since Middle School which is a long duration of learning English, while 25% have been studying for just one.

Item 04: How do you consider your level in English?

Graph 18. Females level in English

The results in Graph 18 above show that the majority of female students 62.5% have a good level of English which clarifies that they are acquiring a good knowledge 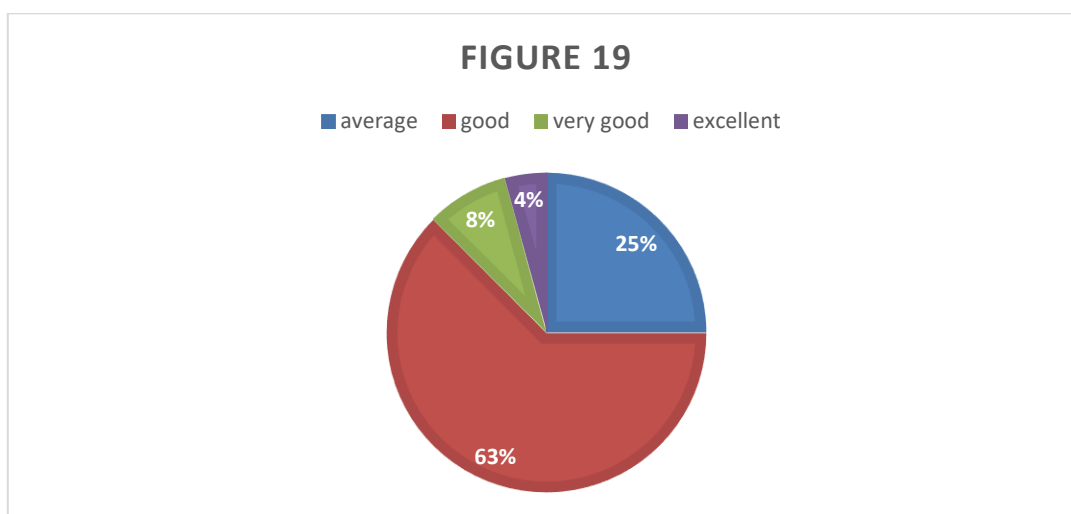about the basic principles of English. However, 25% said that their level of English is average which proves that they have limited knowledge in learning English, 8.33% of female students said that their level of English is very good, and 4.17% claimed that they have an excellent level in English which indicates that there are students with exceptional abilities in English learning.

Section Two: Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Question 01: where do you find difficulties when learning a new word?
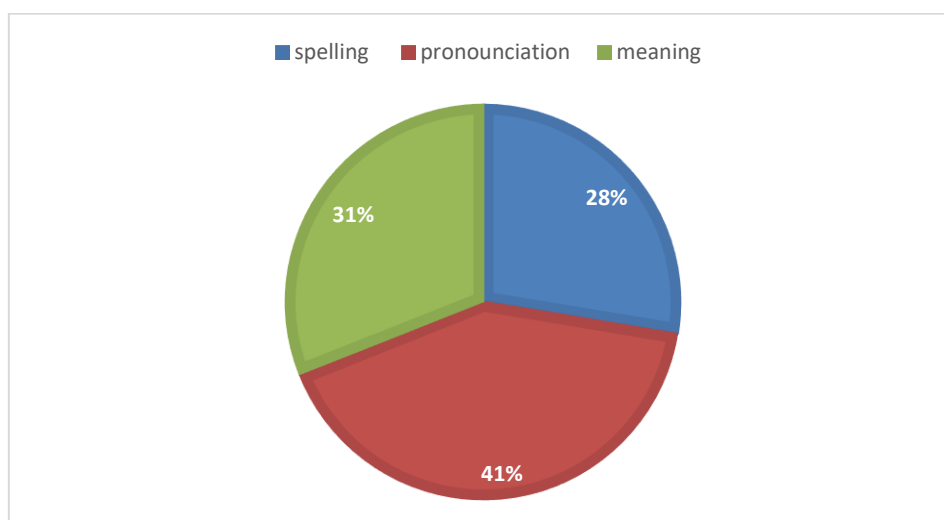
Graph 19. Females Difficulties when learning new words

The analysis of difficulties in learning new words among females shows that pronunciation is the most challenging aspect, with 41.38% of respondents citing it as a primary difficulty. Following closely behind is meaning, with 31.03% of respondents struggling to grasp the precise definition or nuances of new words. Spelling poses a considerable challenge, with 27.59% of respondents encountering difficulties. These findings emphasize the complex journey of language learning and the diverse challenges learners confront when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary.

Question 02: Do you think that participation inside the classroom is important in the process of learning vocabulary?
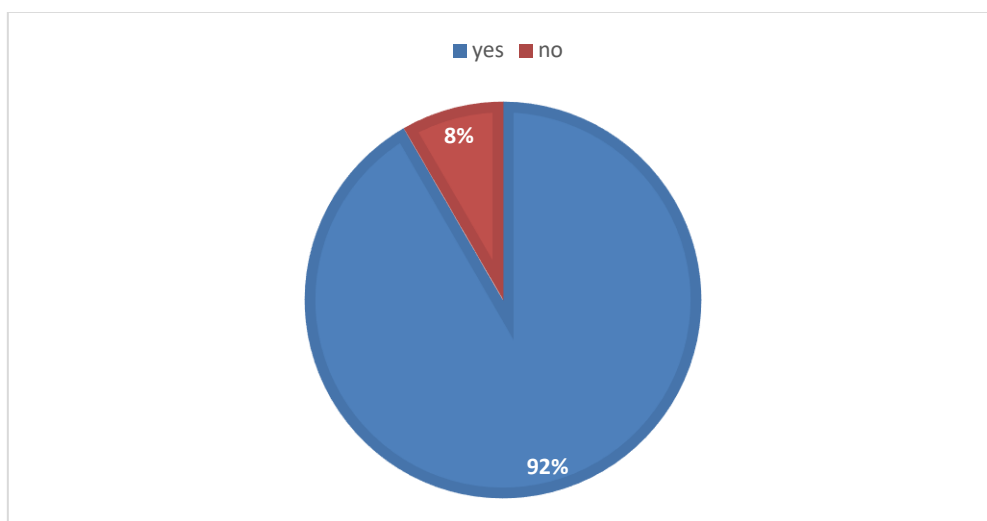
Graph 20. Classroom Participation

The findings indicate a pronounced agreement among female participants, with 91.67% confirming the significance of classroom participation for vocabulary acquisition, this substantial majority highlights the perceived importance of actively engaging in the learning process. Nevertheless, 8.33% voiced differing opinions, indicating a minority perspective regarding the impact of classroom participation on vocabulary acquisition. The findings suggest a significant agreement among female participants regarding the value of classroom involvement in vocabulary acquisition, though a minority held differing views.

➤ **Determination Strategies:**

Question 03: How do you discover the meaning of the new word?
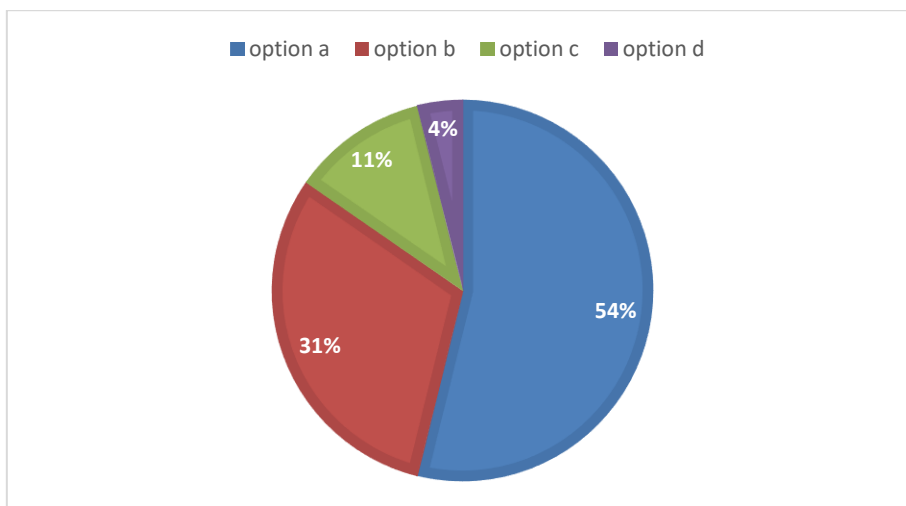
Graph 21. Females' Use of Determination Strategies

When analysing the question, it is clear that among female respondents, the primary approach to uncovering the meanings of new words is to guess from the context, as indicated by 53.8% of respondents. This technique relies on surrounding text or conversation to infer word meanings, showcasing a contextual comprehension approach. Following closely, 30.8% of respondents turn to bilingual dictionaries, offering translations and definitions in their native language for direct comprehension. Monolingual dictionaries are favored by 11.5% of respondents, reflecting a desire for definitions in the target language to deepen understanding and foster language immersion. A smaller portion, 3.8%, utilize available pictures or gestures associated with the word, indicating a preference for visual or kinesthetic learning methods among certain individuals.

Question 04: Do you usually relate the new word to its part of speech?
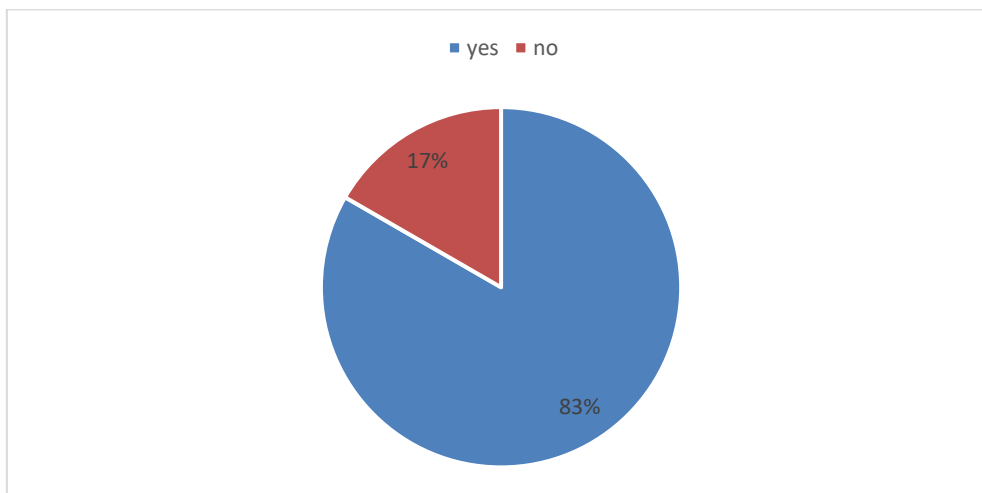
Graph 22. Females' Use of Determination Strategies

The results of Graph 22 demonstrate the determination strategy female participants employ when encountering new words and their parts of speech. A significant majority, constituting 83.33% of female respondents, indicated their inclination to relate new words to their part of speech. This proactive approach implies that these individuals employ determination as a cognitive strategy, aiming to grasp the grammatical context and the role of words within sentences. conversely, the 16.67% minority of female participants do not typically relate new words to their part of speech. These results highlight the intricate relationship between determination strategies and language learning methods within the group of female participants.

➢ **Social Strategies:**

Question 05: when you face a new word from whom do you get help?
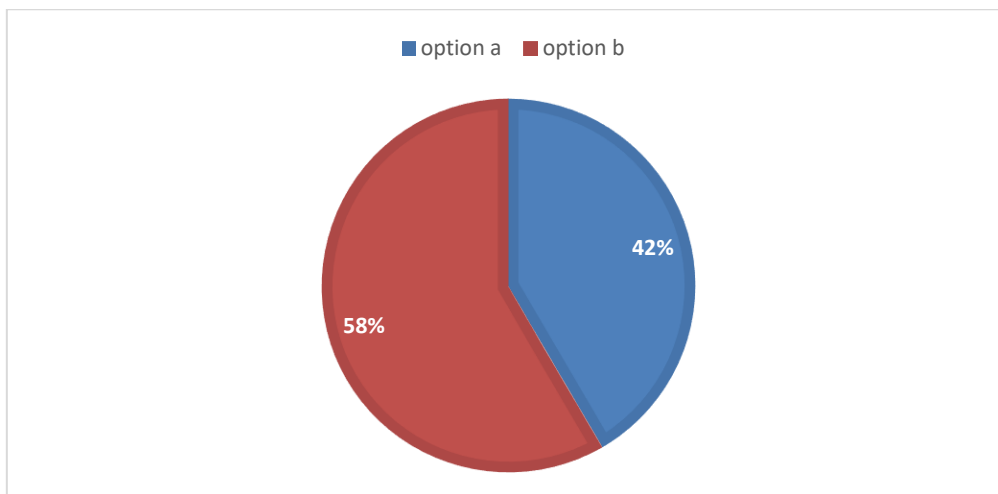
Graph 23. Females' Use of Social Strategies

The findings indicate that when it comes to understanding new words, females employ different social strategies. 41.6% of them turn to classmates, suggesting a preference for collaborative learning and peer support. In contrast, a majority, constituting 58.32%, opt for seeking clarification directly from the teacher.

Question 06: When you face a new word do you prefer the teacher to give you?
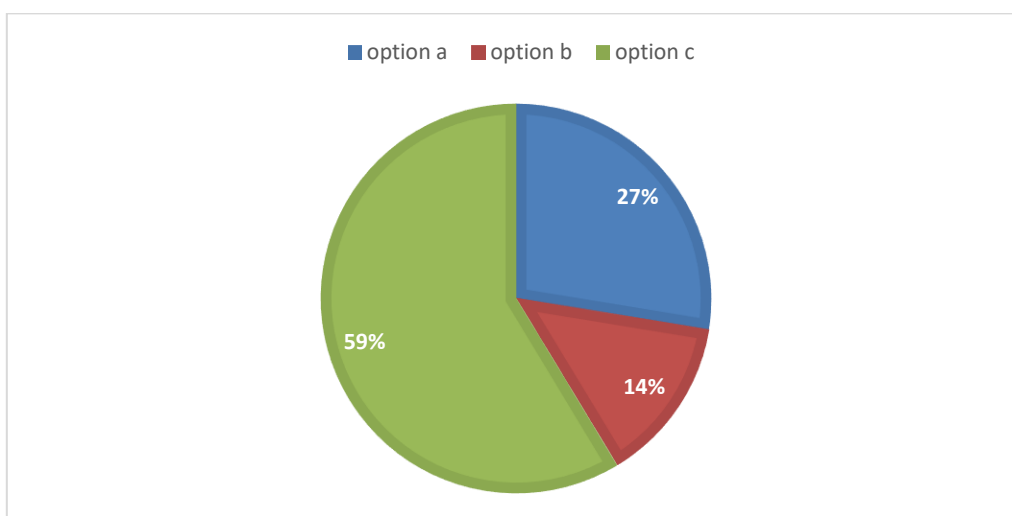
Graph 24. Females' Use of Social Strategies

The findings indicate that most female learners, comprising approximately 58.62%, prefer to be presented with synonyms when encountering a new word. Additionally, around 13.79% express a preference for paraphrased explanations, while roughly 27.59% favour translations into their native language. These findings underscore the diverse learning styles and linguistic backgrounds among female learners.

Question 07:do you work in a group with your classmates to find the meaning of a new word?
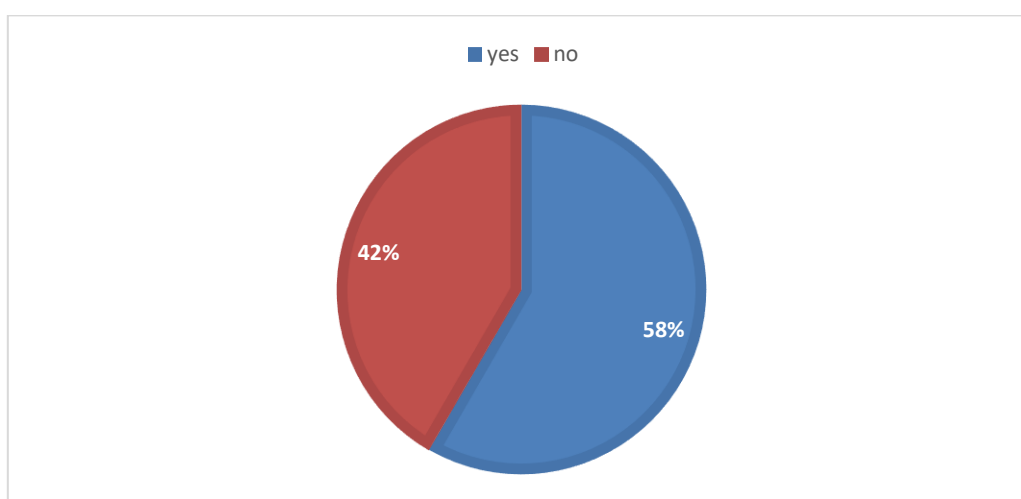
Graph 25. Females' Use of Social Strategies

The findings among female respondents show that 58.33%: prefer working in a group with classmates to find the meaning of a new word, this suggests that they value the input and diverse perspectives offered by group discussions. At the same time, 41.67% prefer not to. This could be due to various reasons, such as a preference for independent learning, and a belief that group discussions might be less efficient.

Question 08:do you interact with native speakers through social media?
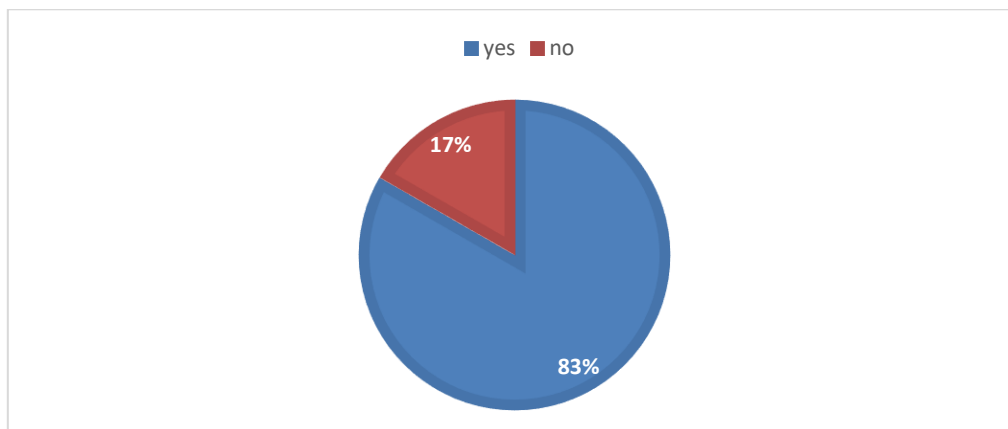
Graph 26. Females' Use of Social Strategies

The findings suggest a strong inclination towards the social strategy of "community engagement" among respondents, with 83.33% actively participating in interacting with native speakers through social media platforms. This strategy emphasizes the importance of building connections and learning from others within a community. While a minority of respondents (16.67%) do not engage in such interactions, they may employ alternative strategies for language learning, such as traditional classroom settings or self-study methods.

➢ **Memory and Cognitive Strategies:**

Question 09: how do you memorize new vocabulary?
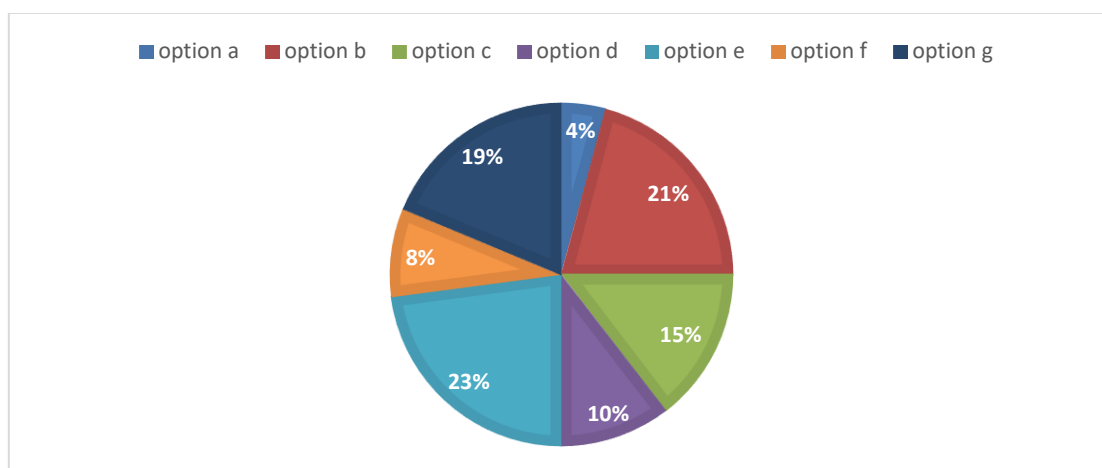
Graph 27. Females Use of Memory and Cognitive Strategies

The findings suggest a well-rounded approach to vocabulary acquisition, highlighting the importance of repetition (22.92%), connecting synonyms and antonyms (20.83%), and using a notebook (18.75%). These methods strengthen memory through repeated exposure, foster a deeper grasp of word meanings via associations, and maintain organized study materials for effective review. Moreover, dedicating substantial time to memorizing spelling (14.58%) ensures precision in written expression. Although grouping words (4.17%), saying them aloud (10.42%), and writing them repeatedly (8.33%) receive lower percentages, they still serve as valuable tools in consolidating and reinforcing memory.

> **Metacognitive Strategies:**

Question 10: what strategies do you think are effective for consolidating new vocabulary?
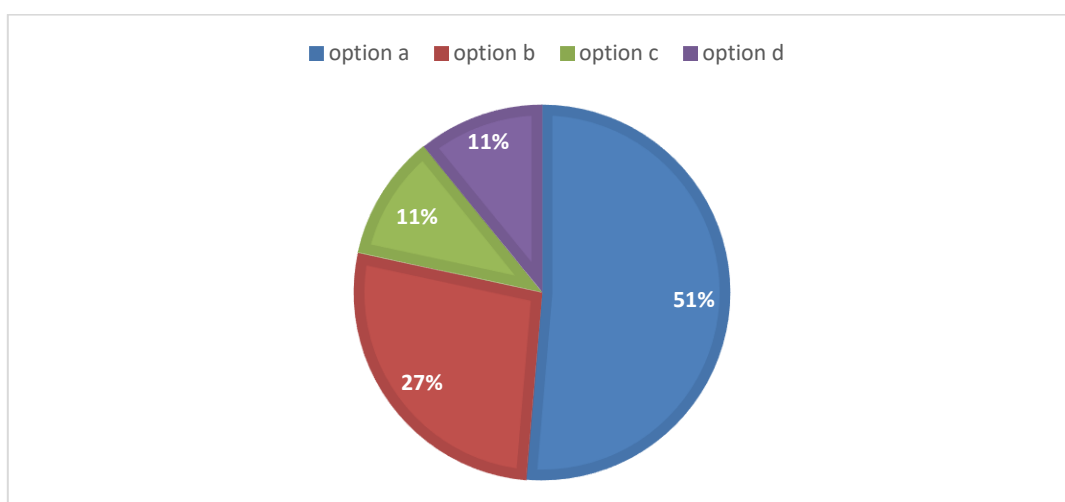
Graph 28. Females' Use of Metacognitive Strategies

The analysis highlights a metacognitive strategy among females, the analysis reveals that watching English movies is the most favored approach, with 51.35% indicating its effectiveness. This preference may be attributed to the immersive nature of movies, offering authentic language usage in context, which resonates with many learners. Close behind are methods such as studying new words over time (10.81%) and utilizing online word tests

(10.81%). These findings suggest that females prioritize techniques that provide ongoing reinforcement and assessment of vocabulary, reflecting a metacognitive strategy of monitoring and evaluating one's learning process. However, listening to songs and audiobooks (27.03%) may not be as preferred, possibly due to the less straightforward context.

Question 11: Do you think that vocabulary learning strategies are important?
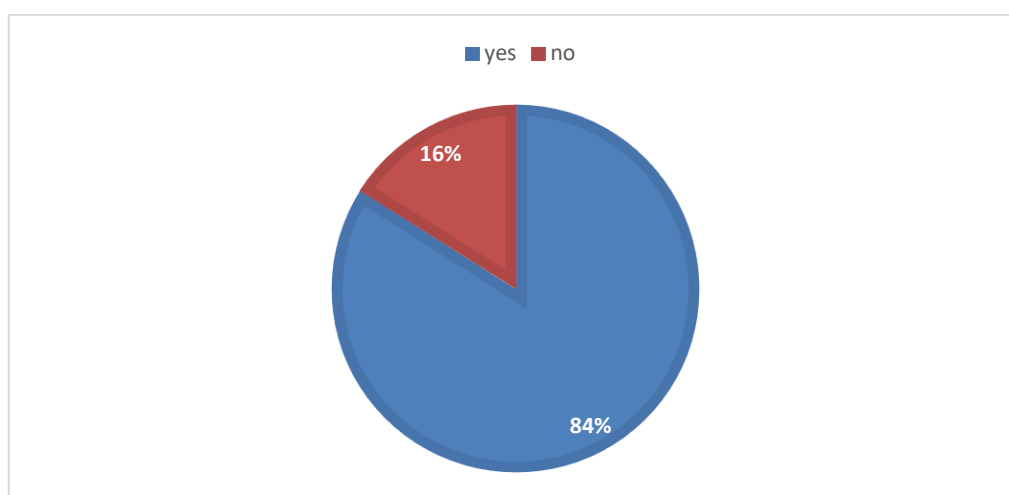
Graph 29. Females' Opinion about Vocabulary Learning Strategies Importance

The results show a clear consensus on the importance of vocabulary learning strategies, with 84% of respondents affirming their significance. The minority opinion, represented by 16%, may indicate a potential disagreement or perhaps a lack of awareness about the benefits of employing structured strategies for vocabulary acquisition.

Justifications:

Male students who answered with "yes" said that VLSs are important because they help in memorizing new words, other participants noted that VLSs make their learning process easier and help them to improve their English skills. Another participant noted that

the use of VLSs is obligatory and necessary. Participants who answered with "no" did not justify their choice.

- **Gender Differences Analysis**

Question 01: Where do you find difficulties when learning a new word?
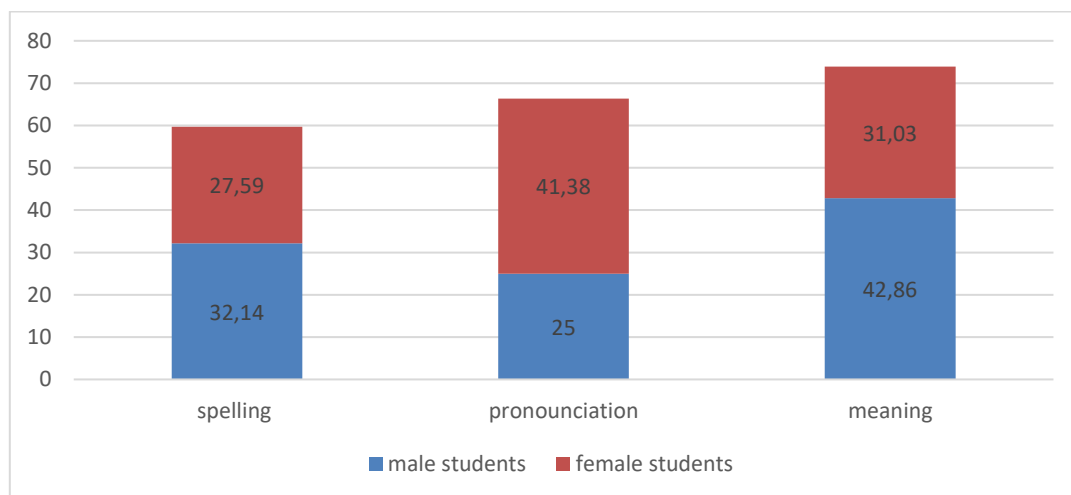
Graph 30. Students difficulties when learning English

Based on the results presented in Graph 1 above it appears that male students struggle more with understanding the meaning of new words 42.86% compared to female students 31.03%. however, female students struggle more with the pronunciation of new words 41.38% compared to male students 25%, concerning spelling difficulties, there is no huge difference between male students 32.14%, and female students 27.59%.

Question 02: Do you think that participation inside the classroom is important in the process of learning vocabulary?
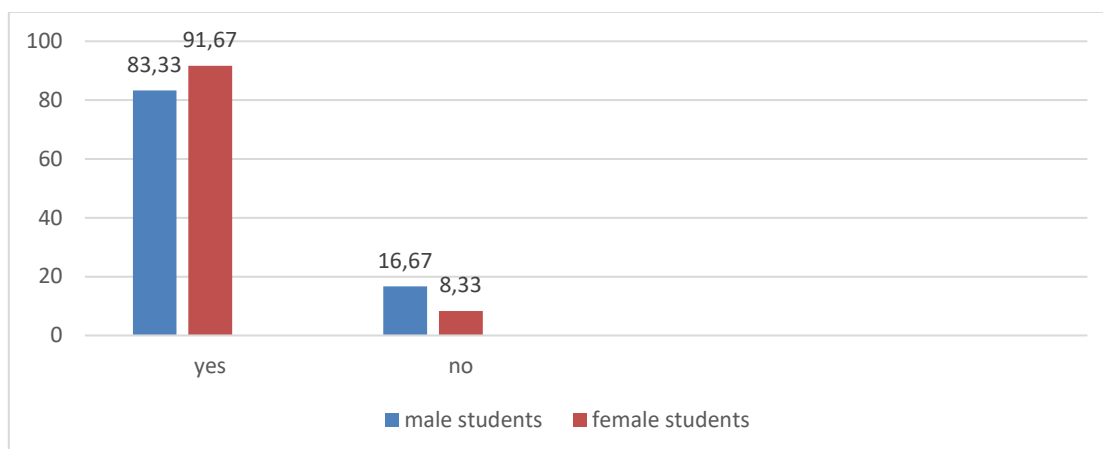
Graph 31. Classroom participation

Based on Graph 2 it appears that the majority of male 83.33% and female students 91.67% consider that participating inside the classroom is important and helpful in learning new vocabulary, however, the minority of males 16.67% and females 8.33% have another opinion about classroom participation.

➢ **Determination Strategies:**

Question 03: How do you discover the meaning of the new word?
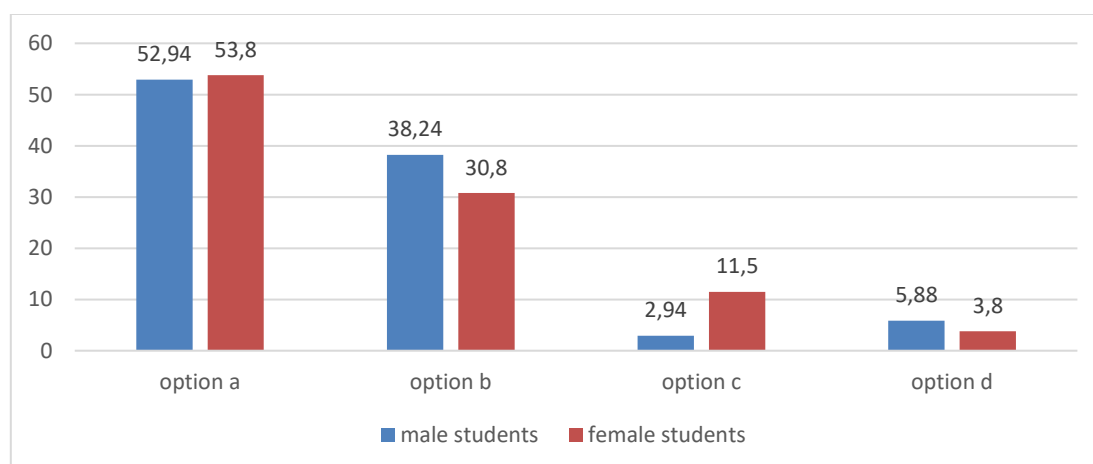
Graph 32. Gender Differences in Using Determination Strategies

Males and females are equally adept at discovering word meanings from context, with both genders relying on this method to a similar extent. Males tend to rely more on bilingual dictionaries and visual aids like pictures and gestures, while females exhibit a stronger preference for using monolingual dictionaries. These differences suggest that males may learn through direct translation methods and visual learning aids, while females understand the meanings within the context of the language they are learning. The distinction reflects variations in learning strategies and approaches to language acquisition between the two genders.

Question 04: Do you usually relate the word to its part of speech nouns and verbs?
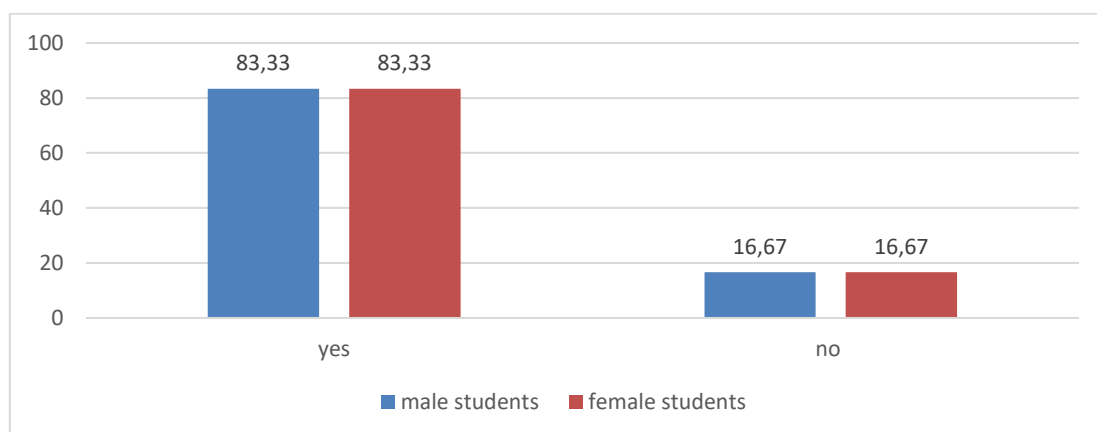
Graph 33. Gender Differences in Using Determination Strategies

based on the determination strategy, the analysis focuses on the contrast between the percentages of males and females who responded affirmatively and negatively to the question about relating words to their parts of speech. Females show an 8% higher affirmative response rate and males exhibit an 8% higher negative response rate regarding the tendency to relate words to their parts of speech.

➢ **Social Strategies:**

Question 05: When you face a new word from whom do you get help?
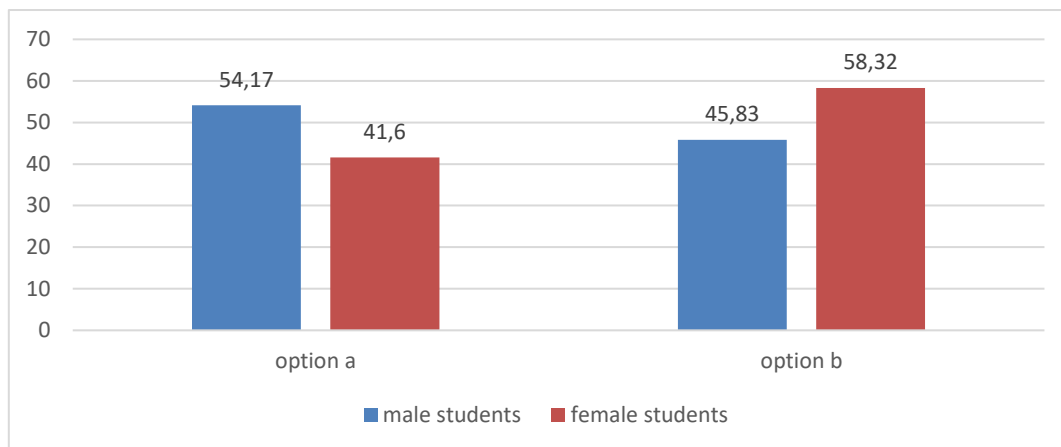
Graph 34. Gender Differences in Using Social Strategies

The data indicates that males tend to rely more on social strategies such as asking classmates when encountering new words, this suggests that they may prefer seeking assistance from peers and engaging in collaborative learning. On the other hand, females show a higher inclination towards seeking help from authority figures such as teachers, indicating a preference for a more structured and formal approach to learning. These differences in social strategies could be influenced by societal norms, individual learning preferences, or cultural factors.

Question 06: When you face a new word do you prefer the teacher to give you the following:
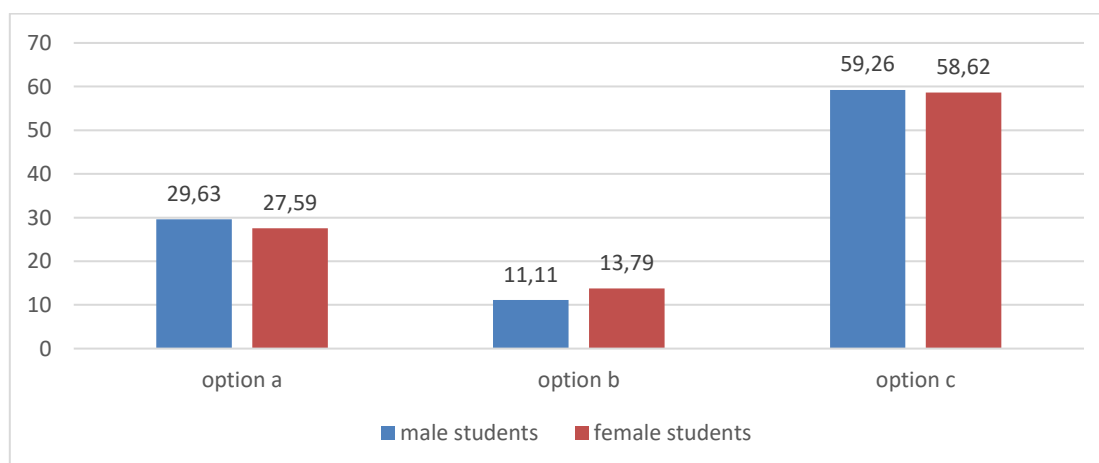
Graph 35. Gender Differences in Using Social Strategies

The data suggests that both males and females show a preference for receiving synonyms of a new word from their teacher. However, there is a notable difference in the inclination toward paraphrasing and translation to their first language L1. Females are more likely to prefer paraphrasing, while males show a slightly higher preference for translation to L1. This could indicate varying learning styles and preferences between genders. Females might prefer a more nuanced understanding through paraphrasing, while males may find translation to their first language more helpful in grasping the meaning of a new word.

Question 07: Do you work in groups with your classmates to find the meaning of the new words?
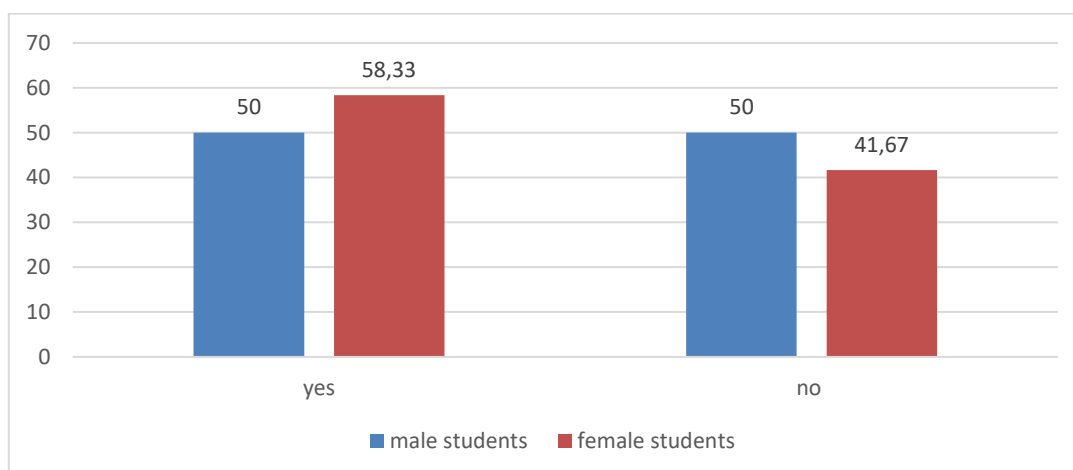
Graph 36. Gender Differences in Using Social Strategies

The data indicates that there is a notable gender difference in the preference for working in groups to decipher the meaning of new words. While males are evenly split between those who prefer group work and those who do not, females show a clear preference for collaborative learning with a majority opting to work in groups. This suggests that females may find value in discussing and exchanging ideas with peers when tackling unfamiliar vocabulary, potentially benefiting from the diverse perspectives and collective problem-solving approach that group work offers.

Question 08: Do you interact with native speakers through social media?
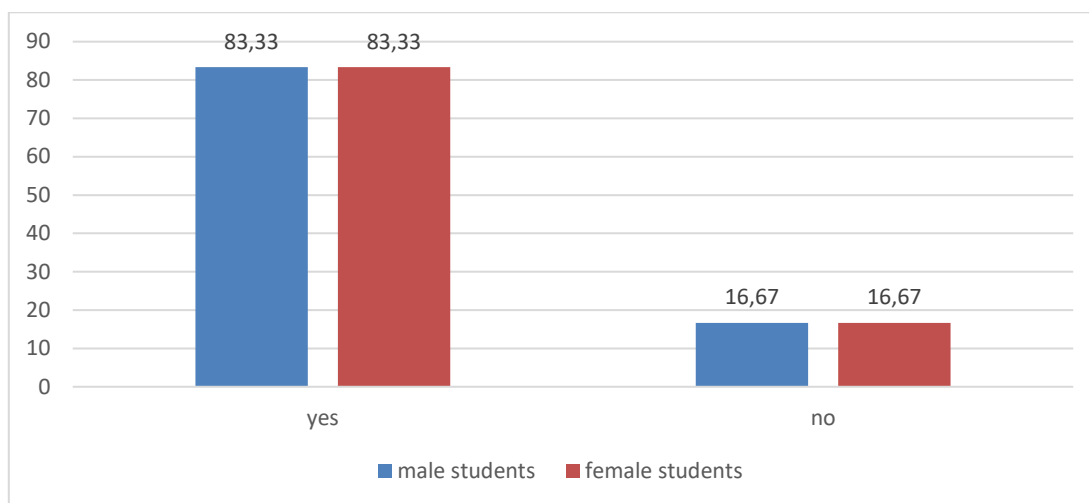
Graph 37. Gender Differences in Using Social Strategies

The data suggests a high level of similarity in social strategy between males and females when it comes to interacting with native speakers via social media. With 83% of both genders engaging in such interactions, it indicates that both groups highly value and actively seek out opportunities for communication with native speakers through online platforms. Additionally, the matching percentage of 17% for males and females who do not interact with native speakers via social media implies consistency in the proportion of individuals who prefer not to engage in such interactions across genders.

➢ **Memory and Cognitive Strategies:**

Question 09: How do you memorize new vocabulary?
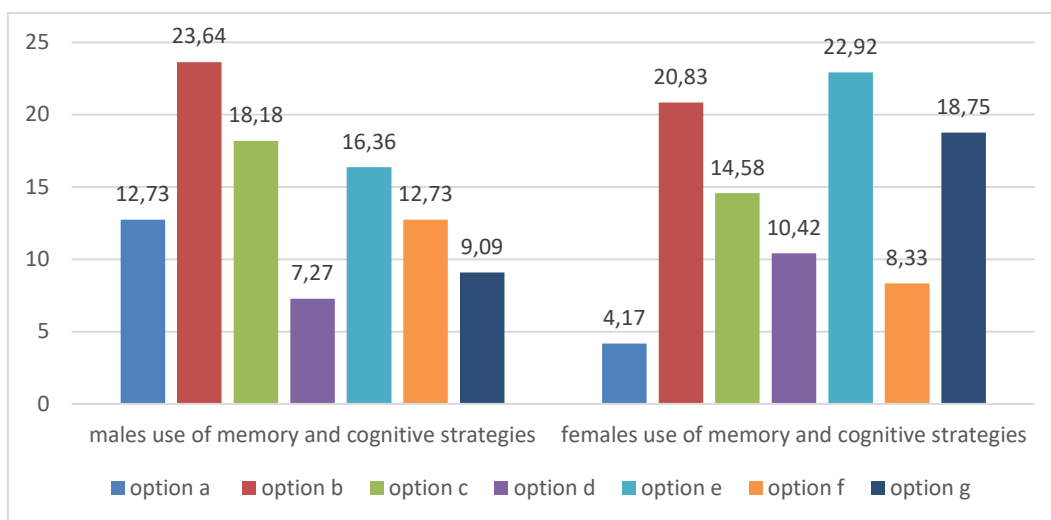
Graph 38. Gender Differences in Using Memory and Cognitive Strategies

Based on the results presented in Graph 9 of Gender differences in using Memory and Cognitive Strategies it can be observed that male students use more Memory Strategies like connecting the words to their synonyms and antonyms which helps in expanding vocabulary and memorizing the spelling of the new words. And Cognitive Strategies like writing words several times more frequently than females. However, female students use Memory Strategies like grouping words, and saying the word aloud, and Cognitive Strategies like repeating words several times which helps in enhancing retention, and using notebooks to write the new words more frequently than males.

➤ **Metacognitive Strategies:**

Question 10: What strategies do you think are effective for consolidating new vocabulary?
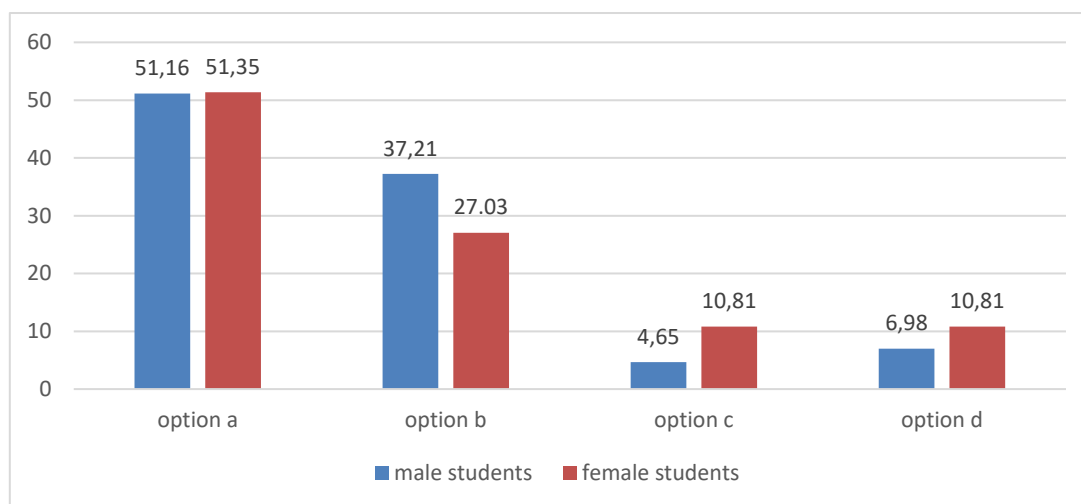
Graph 39. Gender Differences in Using Metacognitive Strategies

Based on the results presented in Graph 10 of gender differences in using Metacognitive Strategies, it can be observed that males and females share common strategies such as watching English movies, podcasts and listening to songs, and audiobooks. However, there are notable differences in their approaches to consolidating new vocabulary, females tend to use strategies like studying the new word over time and using online word tests more than males which clarifies that females are focusing more on self-assessment.

Question 11: do you think that vocabulary learning strategies are important?
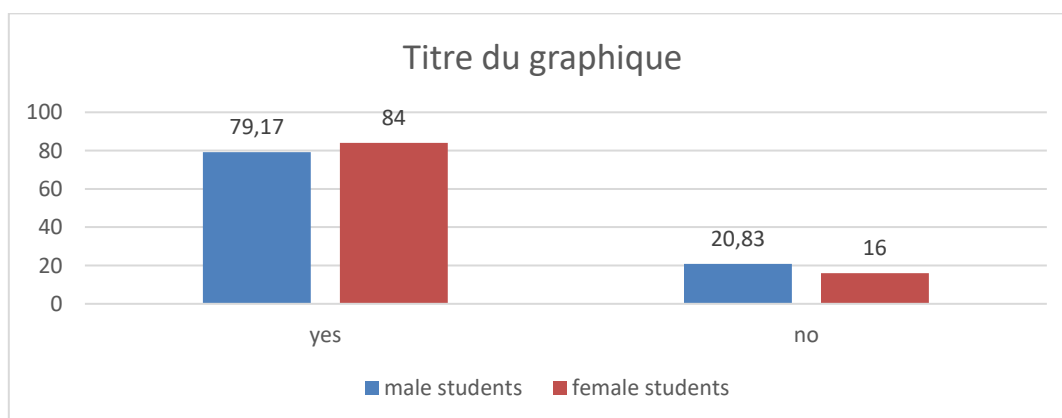
Graph 40. Males and Females opinion about Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Based on the results presented in Graph 11 it can be observed that male and female students recognize the importance of Vocabulary Learning Strategies, with a slightly higher percentage among female students.

2.2.5. Discussion of Students Questionnaire

The aim of this dissertation is to explore Gender differences in using Vocabulary Learning Strategies. It also seeks to find out whether male and female students employ the same amount of VLSs. For that, we administered a questionnaire to first-year EFL students, and to obtain valid results our participants were divided into 50% males and 50% females.

Following the collection of student's questionnaire responses, it is noted that there is a balanced representation of both genders among the participants, with 24 males and 24 females. Regarding the second segment of the questionnaire, it is determined that the age variable does not influence the results. The findings indicate that students employ a variety of Vocabulary Learning Strategies, demonstrating their understanding of the importance of these strategies in enhancing their vocabulary skills. In the determination strategy DET, both genders indicate that they tend to discover the meaning of new words by extracting meaning from context. However, males often rely more on bilingual dictionaries and visual aids like pictures and gestures, while females tend to prefer using monolingual dictionaries. Furthermore, regarding the correlation between words and their part of speech, the data suggests that a greater percentage of females 91% compared to males 83% tend to make this association.

In Social Strategies SOC, when facing a new word males lean towards seeking help from classmates, while females prefer seeking guidance from teachers for a more structured learning experience. Additionally, both males and females favour obtaining synonyms of new words from their teacher, yet females demonstrate a stronger inclination towards

paraphrasing, whereas males slightly lean towards translating to their first language L1. In Social Strategies SOC, there is a notable gender difference in the preference for group work when encountering new words. While males are divided in their preference for group collaboration, females overwhelmingly favour working groups. Furthermore, there is a high level of similarity in social strategy between males and females regarding interacting with native speakers via social media.

In Memory MEM and Cognitive COG Strategies, when it comes to memorizing new vocabulary both male and female students connect the words to their synonyms and antonyms. However, Females give importance to remembering the spelling of new words, saying words aloud, and using notebooks to write down the new words. This suggests that females have a stronger focus on visual and written forms of learning. On the other hand, males rely more on grouping words, writing words several times, and repeating the words, this suggests that males prefer strategies that involve making repetitions and connections to remember the new vocabulary.

In Metacognitive Strategies, male and female students watch English movies, and podcasts and listen to songs and audiobooks to consolidate new vocabulary. These can be entertaining strategies for both genders to acquire new words and develop their listening and speaking skills. However, there is a gender difference in using online word tests and studying new words over time. Females are more interested and prefer these strategies more than males.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals distinct gender-specific tendencies in Vocabulary Learning Strategies. Males demonstrate a preference for Determination Strategies, relying on practical tools like bilingual dictionaries and visual aids,

while females lean towards more structured approaches such as using monolingual dictionaries and seeking guidance from teachers. Conversely, females exhibit a stronger inclination towards Social Strategies, favoring collaborative learning environments like group work, while males tend to seek help from peers and translate words into their first language. Despite these differences, both genders share common practices such as seeking synonyms from teachers and utilizing social media to interact with native speakers. Nevertheless, males prefer using Memory and Cognitive Strategies, relying on grouping words, connecting words to their synonyms and antonyms, memorizing the spelling of new words, and writing words repeatedly. females lean toward strategies that improve speaking and writing skills like saying words aloud, using notebooks, and writing words repeatedly. Metacognitive Strategies are used differently to consolidate new vocabulary, females rely on studying new words over time and use word tests.

It is evident from students' responses that they recognize the significance of VLSs in expanding their vocabulary size. This acknowledgment underscores the effectiveness of employing diverse strategies tailored to individual learning preferences. By leveraging VLSs students can enhance their vocabulary acquisition, leading to improved language proficiency and communication skills. This underscores the importance of incorporating a variety of VLSs into language instruction to empower students in their language-learning journey.

General Conclusion

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the questionnaire responses, here are some recommendations for vocabulary instruction that take into account gender-based differences:

➢ Design vocabulary instruction that incorporates diverse strategies to accommodate both genders. For example, provide opportunities for males to utilize bilingual dictionaries and visual aids while offering females access to monolingual dictionaries.

➢ Emphasize the importance of extracting meaning from context in vocabulary acquisition for both genders. Encourage students to engage actively in contextual analysis during reading activities.

➢ Provide differentiated support based on gender preferences. For males, facilitate peer collaboration opportunities, while for females, prioritize structured guidance from teachers.

➢ Utilize social media platforms as a means for students to interact with native speakers, fostering authentic language use and providing opportunities for both genders to enhance their vocabulary skills in a social context.

➢ Continue emphasizing spelling memorization and verbal repetition, as these methods align with your visual and auditory learning preferences.

➢ Utilize notebooks for writing down new words and saying them aloud to reinforce memory.

➢ Focus on grouping words and making connections between them, as this aligns with your preference for associative learning.

Limitations

Time constraints: time was not enough to deal with a larger sample which limited the generalizability of the findings, and it was hard to use other tools to collect data.

One limitation of not being able to find the number of male students to answer the questionnaire which barely caused an unbalanced dataset. It took us two weeks to find the closest number of male students.

General Conclusion

Vocabulary is an important aspect of language, though, vocabulary acquisition is very important to foreign language learners. The present study is about exploring gender differences in using Vocabulary Learning Strategies. It also attempts to discover whether male and female students employ the same amount of VLSs. The present study is divided into two main chapters, the first chapter is the theoretical part, while the second chapter is the fieldwork. The first chapter is divided into two sections Language Learning Strategies, and Vocabulary Learning Strategies. The second chapter fieldwork provides the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data gathered from students' questionnaire. The study was conducted at the Department of Foreign Languages at Mila University Center, and the questionnaire was administered to first-year EFL students. The data gathered from the questionnaire confirms the hypotheses and answers the research questions. First-year EFL students at Mila University Center use Vocabulary Learning Strategies, and there are differences between genders in using VLSs. However, it also rejects the hypothesis that male and female students employ the same amount of VLSs. VLSs are important tools for improving language proficiency and facilitating vocabulary acquisition.

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Student's Questionnaire

Dear student,

      You are kindly requested to answer the following questions, this questionnaire is an important part of master's degree dissertation entitled " Exploring gender differences in Using Vocabulary Learning Strategies". Your participation is important and your cooperation is appreciated. Please feel free when answer the questions.

      Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

      Researchers.

Section one: Background Information: Please, answer the following questions.

Item 1: Gender :

male ☐   female ☐

Item 2: Age :

18-22 ☐   23-25 ☐   26-29 ☐

Item 3: How long have you been studying English?

………………………………………………………………………

Item 4: how do you consider your level in English?

Average ☐ Good ☐ Very good ☐ Excellent ☐

Section two: Vocabulary learning strategies:

Please put a tick (√) on the options that suit your opinion (you may tick more than one option).

Q 1: Where do you find difficulties when learning a new word?

a. Spelling ☐

b. Pronunciation ☐

c. Meaning ☐

Q 2: Do you think that participation inside the classroom is important in the process of learning vocabulary?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q 3: How do you discover the meaning of the new word?

a. Guess the meaning from the context ☐

b. Use a bilingual dictionary ☐

c. Use a monolingual dictionary ☐

d. You analyze the available pictures or gestures matching the word ☐

Q 4: Do you usually relate the new word to its parts of speech (E.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc…)

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q 5: When you face a new word from whom do you get help?

a. Ask classmates for the meaning ☐

b. Ask the teacher for the meaning ☐

Q 6: When you face a new word do you prefer the teacher to give you the following:

a. Translation of the new word to L1 ☐

b. Paraphrasing ☐

c. Synonyms of the new word ☐

Q 7: Do you work in groups with your classmates to find the meaning of the new word?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q 8: Do you interact with native speakers through social media?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Q 9: How do you memorize new vocabulary?

a. You group the words (E.g. relating the new word to other words from the same class, meaning, etc…)   ☐

b. You connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms ☐

c. You memorize the spelling of the new word ☐

d. You say the word aloud ☐

e. You repeat the word several times ☐

f. You write the word several times ☐

g. You use a notebook to write the new words ☐

Q 10: What strategies do you think are effective for consolidating new vocabulary?

a. You watch English movies, podcasts, etc. ☐

b. You listen to songs, audiobooks, etc. ☐

c. You keep studying the new word over time ☐

d. You use online word tests ☐

Q 11: Do you think that vocabulary learning strategies are important?

Yes ☐   No ☐

 If yes, justify your answer.

………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your cooperation

ملخص

أن اكتساب المفردات يمثّل جزءًا أساسيًا في رحلة تعلّم اللغة، ويواجه المتعلمون تحديات متعددة في هذا الصدد، ممّا يؤثّر على قدرتهم على التواصل والفهم الصحيح. لذا، يصبح من الضروري تطوير استراتيجيات فعّالة لتعلّم المفردات لتعزيز مهارات اللغة لديهم. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف استراتيجيات تعلّم المفردات المستخدمة من قبل طلاب الجامعات في الجزائر، مع التركيز على طلاب جامعة ميلة، وتحليل الفروق بين الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة من قبل الذكور والإناث. استنادًا إلى أسئلة البحث، يُفترض أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في المركز الجامعي ميلة يستخدمون استراتيجيات مختلفة لتعلم المفردات، وقد يفضل بعض الطلاب استخدام بعض الاستراتيجيات على غيرها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يمكن أن يكون هناك اختلاف في استخدام الاستراتيجيات بين الذكور والإناث. قد تكون الاستبانة أداة مناسبة لجمع البيانات في هذه الدراسة. توضح النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من هذه الدراسة أن الطلاب يستخدمون مجموعة متنوعة من استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات، ويفضل بعض الطلاب استخدام بعض الاستراتيجيات على غيرها، وأن هناك تأثيرا للجنس على اختيار الاستراتيجية. بناءً على البيانات المستخرجة من الاستبيان، يتبادر إلى الأذهان زيادة الوعي بأساليب تعلم المفردات لمساعدة الطلاب، بغض النظر عن جنسهم، على تحسين كفاءتهم. وعلاوة على ذلك، ينبغي على المعلمين تشجيع الطلاب على استخدام هذه الأساليب وتوجيههم حول كيفية الاستفادة القصوى منها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يجب توجيه الطلاب حول كيفية تطبيق هذه الاستراتيجيات بشكل فعّال لتعزيز مهاراتهم، بغض النظر عن جنسهم. ويمكن للمعلمين توفير توجيه مفصل حول تطبيق هذه الاستراتيجيات بشكل مناسب وفعّال وفقاً لاحتياجات كل طالب على حدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات التعلم، طلاب الجامعة، الفروق الجنسية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

Resumé

L'acquisition du vocabulaire s'avère être une partie essentielle du parcours d'apprentissage des langues, et les apprenants sont confrontés à de multiples défis à cet égard, affectant leur capacité à communiquer et à comprendre correctement. Par conséquent, il devient nécessaire de développer des stratégies efficaces d'apprentissage du vocabulaire pour améliorer leurs compétences linguistiques. Sur la base de questions de recherche, les étudiants ESL du Centre universitaire Mila sont censés utiliser différentes stratégies pour apprendre le vocabulaire, et certains étudiants peuvent préférer utiliser certaines stratégies plutôt que d'autres. De plus, il peut y avoir une différence dans l'utilisation des stratégies entre les hommes et les femmes. Le questionnaire peut être un outil approprié pour la collecte de données dans cette étude. Les résultats obtenus de cette étude montrent que les élèves utilisent une variété de stratégies d'apprentissage du vocabulaire, que certains élèves préfèrent utiliser certaines stratégies plutôt que d'autres, et qu'il y a une influence du sexe sur le choix de la stratégie. De plus, les enseignants doivent encourager les élèves à utiliser ces méthodes et les guider sur la façon d'en tirer le meilleur parti. De plus, les élèves doivent être guidés sur la façon d'appliquer efficacement ces stratégies pour améliorer leurs compétences, quel que soit leur sexe. Les enseignants peuvent fournir des conseils détaillés sur l'application appropriée et efficace de ces stratégies en fonction des besoins de chaque élève.

Mots-clés : stratégies d'apprentissage du vocabulaire, étudiants universitaires, différences entre les sexes, anglais langue seconde.