ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Vocabulary Learning Strategies used by EFL Students: the Case Of 11th Grade High and Low Achievers at Jorgo Nole Preparatory School

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to assess vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by high and low achievers. Fifty four respondents (27 high achievers and 27 low achievers) who were attending 11th Grade at Jorgo Nole Preparatory School (JNPS) in 2005(E.C.) were involved in the study. Instruments employed were a five points Likert scale questionnaire adapted from Schmitt's (1997) VLSs questionnaire, open-ended questions and interview. Data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version-16.0. Frequency, percentage, mean and t-test were employed to analyze the data obtained through questionnaire, while the data obtained through open-ended questions and interview were analyzed qualitatively. The study showed that there is a relationship between the students' perception and their language achievement, and that there is a significant difference between the high and the low achievers regarding VLSs they used since many of the high achievers 'Usually' and 'Always' used almost all of the strategies provided, whereas many of the low achievers 'Never' and 'Rarely' used the majority of the strategies provided to discover the meanings of new English words and to consolidate the words they have learned. Finally, it is recommended that English language teachers should facilitate the teaching learning conditions in which the high achievers can help the low achievers practice different VLSs that help them to learn and consolidate new English words in order to speed up their English language acquisition.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning from the early 1960s, the issue of second language acquisition (SLA) has been emphasized by the emergence of research into language learning strategies (LLSs) that sprang from the first attempt at investigating reasons why some learners, under the same conditions, achieve better results than their classmates when they learn a foreign/second language (FL/L2). According to Saville-Troike (2012, p. 209), "it is only since the 1960s that scholars have formulated systematic theories and models to address the basic questions in the field of second language acquisition".

Schmitt (1997) argues that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the development in the area of SLA research turned attention away from a teaching-centered perspective to one which incorporates an interest in how the actions of learners might affect their acquisition of language. However, Skehan (1989, as cited in Schmitt, 1997) argues that the area of learner strategies is still in an embryonic state, and Schmitt also explained that this is especially true for VLSs due to lack of any comprehensive list of taxonomy of strategies in this specific area.

Authorities (e.g., Hatch & Brown, 1995) have expressed that the strategies of vocabulary learning that students use have greater an impact on the success of their vocabulary learning. Regarding vocabulary learning strategy, Catalan adopted the following definition from Rubin's (1987) and Oxford's definition of language learning strategy (1990):

> It is knowledge about the mechanisms (processes, strategies) used in order to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students (a) to find out the meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, and

(d) to use them in oral or written mode.(2003, p. 56)

Catalan's definition of vocabulary learning strategies sounds right because it sees vocabulary learning as a process of tasks that can be executed using a number of strategies applied for different purposes so as to help students to have a full knowledge of words they need to learn. VLSs are recognized as essential techniques that help students build up their vocabulary knowledge.

In discussing the benefits of VLS, Gu and Johnson (1996) stated that the most successful learners use a wide range of VLSs and this, in turn, help them to be successful vocabulary learners as well as effective language learners.

Currently VLSs strategies seem to have received attention in Ethiopia. This is clearly revealed in Ethiopian schools in general and preparatory schools in particular. For example, from the new 11th Grade student's English textbook published by FDRE, MOE (2003E.C.), one can see that it is designed in such a way to help students get opportunities to learn and practice new English words implicitly as well as explicitly. In the textbook, students are offered to learn words implicitly under different topics such as 'Introduction', 'Reading', 'Listening, 'Language Focus', 'Speaking', 'Study Skills' and 'Writing'. Moreover, some VLSs are provided explicitly to the students under topics like "Increase Your Word Power' and "Study Skills: Focus on Vocabulary' to the students in order to equip them with various strategies of vocabulary learning, and give them an equal chance to prefer the strategies so as to learn and practice new English words to enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

Although Jorgo Nole Preparatory School (JNPS) students learn English for five periods per week for forty minutes in each

session, they have no exposure to English outside the classroom which is essential to enhance their vocabulary as well as their English language proficiency. Though English is offered to students of JNPS like other students in Ethiopia from the very beginning of their class, that is, grade one, from the experience of one of the researchers, still many of them cannot express their ideas fluently, and cannot do English examinations well.

These days, most English language teachers in Ethiopia complain that many students do not have adequate vocabulary to improve their English language achievement. The inadequacy of the learners' vocabulary may result from their VLS use. According to Fan (2003), the inadequacy in lexical knowledge may hinder students' language proficiency development. Students may lack adequate vocabulary due to their inability to employ appropriate VLSs which, in turn, might make them lose interest in learning FL.

In addition, students may have low perception about the importance of vocabulary learning to enhance their English language achievement. Vocabulary learning perception may have its own impact on the extent to which students' prefer VLSs in particular and on their language achievement in general. Dornyei (2005) argues that the beliefs language learners hold considerably affect the way they go about mastering L2.

VSLs are found to be useful for developing vocabulary knowledge of EFL students because they make them independent learners who take responsibility for their own language learning. It was also found that vocabulary size is a significant indicator of language ability (Duin, 1983: Laufer, 1994).

However, in Ethiopia, there is limited research on different aspects of vocabulary learning strategies. For instance, to the knowledge of the researchers, Getnet (2008) is one of the few local researchers who investigated the relationship between VLSs, and students' English language achievement at college level and found out that there is a relationship between language achievement and vocabulary learning strategy use.

The present study investigated the similarities and differences between high and low achievers in using VLSs, the relationship between VLSs and the respondents' English language achievement at preparatory school level. In addition, it assessed whether or not there was a significant difference of perception between the high and the low achievers about the importance of vocabulary learning to improve their vocabulary knowledge as well as their English language achievement.

To achieve the objective of the study, the research attempts to address the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference of perception between the high and the low achievers about the importance of vocabulary learning?

2. What are the similarities and differences between the high and the low achievers in using VLSs?

3. Is there any relationship between VLSs and English language achievement?

4. What are the most and the least used sub-categories of VLSs for the high achievers, and for the low achievers?

METHODOLOGY

Participants of the study

High and low achieving grade 11 students at Jorgo Nole Preparatory School were involved in this study. The researchers selected JNPS because they felt that: the familiarity one of them had with the school community could help them to carry out the study smoothly; there was no research conducted in this school; and the researchers thought that this research work might benefit the school community by indicating some ways to overcome students' problems in using VLSs in order to enhance their vocabulary knowledge as well as their English language achievement. The researchers selected 11th grade using purposive sampling because 10th grade and 12th grade students were busy preparing themselves for national examinations, and 9th grade students might have had less experience in using VLSs.

Research design

A mixed methods design was employed to conduct this study. The researchers favored this design since they felt that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. Researchers (e.g., Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004 & Creswell, 2009) point out that a mixed methods design seems more convenient than quantitative or qualitative method alone.

Sampling Technique

In order to identify the high and the low achievers, the researchers used the students' 11th grade first semester English results which they also used as a reference for the respondents' English language achievement. Then, they used the procedure adapted by Oller (1979, as cited in Seyoum, 2009). The procedure follows the following steps:

- Arranging the scores of the population (all 11th Grade students of JNPS here) in a descending order,
- Counting the top scorers on the list downward (27.5% of the total population) who were nominated as high achievers (27 students from 96 students), and
- Counting the low scorers on the list upward starting from the bottom (27.5% of the total population) who were designated as low achievers (27 students from 96 students).

Thus, the researchers used 27 high achievers and 27 low achievers, totally 54 students in the study as respondents from the total population (96 students).

Data Collection Instruments

The researchers used five a points Likert scale questionnaire, open-ended questions and semi-structured interview to gather data from the respondents. First, English versions of the instruments were prepared and given to the experts for comments. Then, one of the researchers translated both the questionnaire and the interview into the respondents' L1 (Afan Oromo), and gave them to language (Afan Oromo) professionals for comments before applying them to the actual data gathering process of the study.

Questionnaire

A self-report (five points Likert scale) questionnaire, which was adapted from Schmitt's (1997) VLSs questionnaire, was used to gather data from the respondents on their VLSs. It contained 39 five points Likert scale items and two open-ended questions, and it had two types of scales: opinion scale ('strongly agree' up to 'Strongly disagree') and frequency scale ('Always' up to 'Never'). The items in the

questionnaire were classified under categories in order to make the analysis manageable. Item 1 focused on perception of respondents about the importance of vocabulary learning, items 2-7 were about 'Determination Strategies' used by respondents to discover meanings of new English words, items 8-12 were about 'Social Strategies' used by respondents to discover meanings of new English words. Items 13 and14 were about 'Social Strategies', items 15-25 were about 'Memorization Strategies', items 26-32 were about 'Cognitive Strategies', and items 33-39 were about 'Meta-cognitive Strategies' used by the respondents to consolidate words they have already encountered. Items 40 and 41 were open-ended questions which asked the respondents if they had more VLSs apart from those provided to them from items 2-39.

Interview

Semi-structured interview was used to obtain qualitative data from the respondents. The interview was conducted with ten respondents (five from the high achievers and five from the low achievers) who were selected using the lottery method from the participants (n=54). The interview took three hours in total and it was carried out by arranging convenient time for the interviewees through discussion. The interview incorporated five questions whose content was almost similar with that of the questionnaire so as to increase the validity of the findings.

Data Organization and Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to compute the results of the data obtained through questionnaire from 54 respondents. The data were entered into a computer and the frequency, percentage, mean, and t-statistic were calculated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version16.0). For the simplicity of the analysis, the data that were entered into SPSS were categorized according to the two main categories of VLSs of Schmitt's (1997), that is Discovery and Consolidation Strategies, and their sub-categories (determination, social for discovery, social for consolidation, memorization, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies) along with their items and results. The interview was recorded and transcribed by translating into English. Data gathered through open ended questions and interview questions were analyzed qualitatively in order to strengthen the data analyzed quantitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The perception of the respondents about the importance of vocabulary learning to enhance their English language achievement

The study compares mean scores of the high and the low achievers' responses on perception of the importance of vocabulary learning. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis show that the mean score of the perception of the importance of vocabulary learning for the English language achievement of the higher achievers (M= 4.63) is greater than the mean score of the low achievers (M= 3.44). This indicates that the high achievers seem to perceive the importance of vocabulary learning more than the low achievers do. To identify whether or not there was a significant difference between the two means of the two groups, the independent t-test was conducted and the results are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Independent samples t-test on perception of the respondents about the importance of vocabulary learning to enhance their English language achievement

t-test for equality of means (Equal variances assumed)			
Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. Learning vocabulary is important to improve my English language achievement.	7.132	52	.000

As shown in Table 1 above, the independent samples t-test result confirms that the t-calculated value (7.132) is greater than the critical t-value (2.0066) at $p < 0.05$. The results from the attitude scale also reveal that the majority of high achievers were found to perceive the importance of vocabulary learning as 26 (96.2%) of them rated 'Agree' or 'strongly agree'. This reveals that there is a significant difference of perception between the high and the low achievers about the importance of learning vocabulary to improve their English language achievement. This also indicates that there is a relationship between perception of students about vocabulary learning and their English language achievement.

The use of vocabulary learning strategies by high and low achievers

For the sake of simplicity for analysis, the responses to the 38 items (items 2-39) were entered into SPSS and were categorized according to the two main categories of VLSs of Schmitt's (1997), i.e. Discovery and Consolidation Strategies, and their sub-categories (determination, social for discovery, social for consolidation, memorization, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies). The discussion on the items and their categories follows.

Determination Strategies under the Discovery Strategy

Table 2: Group statistics for Determination Strategies used by the high and the low achievers

Respondents' Groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Determination Strategies under Discovery Strategy	High Achievers	27	3.60	.99
	Low Achievers	27	3.15	.81

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test on Determination Strategies used by the respondents to discover meanings of new words

t-test for equality of means (Equal variances assumed)			
Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
2. I analyze parts of speech of the new words (e.g. noun, verb, adjective) to discover their meanings.	2.977	52	.004
3. I analyze affixes and roots to guess meanings of the new words 'incomplete'. in- means 'not').	1.038	52	.304
4. I use available pictures or gestures to understand the meaning of words.	1.165	52	.249
5. I guess the meanings of words from textual context.	5.633	52	.000
6. I look up meanings of words in monolingual (English – English) dictionary.	4.147	52	.000
7. I look up meanings of words in bilingual (English – Afan Oromo/English-Amharic) dictionary.	-2.366	52	.023

When we see results of 'Determination Strategies', in Table 2, there is a mean score variation between the high and the low achievers. The data depict that the mean score of the high achievers (M=3.60) is greater than the mean score of the low achievers (M=3.15). This indicates that the high achievers use the Determination Strategies more frequently than the low achievers do as the frequency level falls in the 'High strategy use' for the high achievers and in the 'Medium strategy use' for the low achievers. This analysis was made based on Oxford's (1990) definition of level of strategy use. Oxford identified three levels of strategy use: strategies that have a mean value of 1.0–2.4 are categorized as 'Low strategy use', those with a mean value of 2.5 – 3.4 are grouped as 'Medium strategy use' and those whose mean scores are 3.5 – 5.0 are defined as 'High strategy use'

The results in Table 3 also indicate that the calculated t-values are greater than the critical t-value (2.0066) at p<0.05 for the majority of items/strategies provided to the respondents (items 2, 5, 6 and 7). The data from the frequency scale also reveal that the majority of high achievers (16 of them on average) reported that they "Always' or 'Usually' use these strategies. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the two groups in using these strategies.

Social Strategies under Discovery Strategy

Items 8 to12 were designed to assess how often the high and the low achievers use Social Strategies to discover meanings of new words in order to improve their vocabulary. The results of the responses to these items are presented in the tables below.

Table 4: Group Statistics for Social Strategies used by the high and the low achievers to discover meanings of new words

	Respondents' Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Strategies under Discovery Strategy	High Achievers	27	2.81	.78
	Low Achievers	27	2.15	.61

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test on Social Strategies under Discovery Strategy used by the respondents to discover meanings of new words

t-test for equality of means (Equal variances assumed)			
Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
8. I ask my teacher to translate meanings of words that I do not understand into first language.	-5.942	52	.000
9. I ask my teacher for synonyms or similar meanings of new words.	6.907	52	.000
10. I ask my English language teacher for sentences including the new words to discover their meaning.	8.913	52	.000
11. I ask classmates for meanings of new words.	3.320	52	.002
12. I discover meanings of new words through group work activity.	5.645	52	.000

The results of 'Social Strategies' under the 'Discovery Strategy' in Table 4 reveal that the high achievers' mean score (M=2.81) is greater than the low achievers' mean score (M=2.15). This means that the high achievers use the 'Social Strategies' under the 'Discovery Strategy' more frequently than the low achievers do since the frequency level falls in the 'Medium strategy use' for the high achievers and in the 'Low strategy use' for the low achievers. For the 'Social Strategies' under 'Discovery Strategy', the independent samples t-test data in Table 5 reveal that the calculated t-values for all the items/strategies (items 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12) are greater than the critical t-value (2.0066) at $p<0.05$. From this data, it is possible to say that there is a significant difference between the high achievers and the low achievers in using all these strategies. The results from the frequency scale also reveal that almost half of the high achievers (13 of them on average) reported that they "Always" or 'Usually' use these strategies. This implies that there seems to be a relationship between the use of these items/strategies and the students' English language achievement.

The data for the 'Social Strategies' under the 'Consolidation Strategy' depict that the

high achievers use these strategies more often than the low achievers do as the mean score of the high achievers (M=3.67) is greater than the mean score of the low achievers (M=2.04). The range of the mean score falls in 'High strategy use' for the high achievers while it falls in 'Low strategy use' for the low achievers. The results of the independent samples t-test for the 'Social Strategies' under 'Consolidation Strategy' (items 13 and 14) depict that the calculated t-values (6.559 and 9.902 respectively) are greater than the critical t-value (2.0066) at p<0.05. The results from the frequency scale also reveal that the majority of high achievers (17 of them on average) reported that they "Always' or 'Usually' use these strategies. This indicates that a significant difference exists between the high and the low achievers in using this VLS. Furthermore, the data indicate that there might be a relationship between the use of this strategy and the respondents' English language achievement.

Memorization Strategies under Consolidation Strategy

Items 15- 25 were prepared to gather data on how frequently the high and the low achievers use Memorization Strategies so as to consolidate meanings of words they have already encountered. Tables 6 and 7 below present their responses.

Table 6: Group Statistics for Memorization Strategies used by the high and the low achievers to consolidate meanings of words they have already learned

Respondents' Groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memorization Strategies under Consolidation Strategy	High Achievers	27	3.57	1.04
	Low Achievers	27	2.76	.72

Table 7: Independent Samples t-test on Memorization Strategies used by the respondents to consolidate meanings of words they have already learned

t-test for equality of means (Equal variances assumed)			
Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
15. I connect words to my own experience to remember them.	4.881	52	.000
16. I associate words to their synonyms (e.g. rich-wealthy) and antonyms (e.g. rich-poor) to remember them.	3.844	52	.000
17. I associate words with their cognates (e.g. word family) to remember words, e.g., child: children, childhood, childish, etc.	2.750	52	.008
18. I use semantic maps to remember words (e.g. vegetable: cabbage, carrot, tomato, potato, etc).	3.786	52	.000
19. I try to remember a new word by remembering its location (e .g, .on a page, on a board or a street sign where I first saw or heard it).	1.200	52	.235
20. I study spellings of new words to remember them.	3.927	52	.000
21. I list/arrange words by topic or their common features for reviewing (e.g., according to grammatical functions: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.).	5.738	52	.000
22. I use new words in sentences and in conversations so I can remember them.	10.632	52	.000
23. I remember words from their strange form, pronunciation or difficult spelling (e.g., psychology, mnemonics, bureau, etc).	6.783	52	.000
24. I say the new words aloud when studying in order to easily remember them.	-.723	52	.473
25. I use physical actions when I learn meanings of words (e. g. I jump to remember the meaning of the word "jump").	-2.577	52	.013

The results obtained from the data for 'Memorization Strategies' indicate that there is mean scores variation between the high and the low achievers for the use of these strategies. The data from Table 6 show that the high achievers' mean score (M=3.57) is greater than the low achievers' mean score (M=2.76). This indicates that the high achievers use these strategies more often than the low achievers do since the high achievers' mean score falls in 'High strategy use' and that of the low achievers' falls in 'Medium strategy use'. From the

independent samples t-test results, the calculated t-values of the majority of items/strategies provided under the 'Memorization Strategies' (items 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 25) are greater than the critical t-value (2.0066) at $p<0.05$. The results from the frequency scale also reveal that the majority of high achievers (16 of them on average) reported that they "Always' or 'Usually' use these strategies. This also indicates that there is a relationship between the use of these VLSs (whose calculated t-values are greater than the critical t-value) and the respondents' English language achievement.

Cognitive Strategies under Consolidation Strategy

Items 26 to 32 were devised to investigate how frequently the high and the low achievers use Cognitive Strategies to remember and consolidate the meanings of the words they have encountered once. Tables 8 and 9 present their responses.

Table 8: Group Statistics for Cognitive Strategies used by the high and the low achievers to consolidate meanings of new words they have already learned

	Respondents' Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cognitive Strategies under Consolidation Strategy	High Achievers	27	3.77	.89
	Low Achievers	27	2.74	.75

Table 9: Independent samples t-test of Cognitive Strategies used by the respondents to consolidate meanings of words they have already learned

t-test for equality of means (Equal variances assumed)

Item No.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
26. I paraphrase the meanings of new words to remember them.	9.136	52	.000
27. I use word lists to study and remember words.	3.042	52	.004
28. I say a new English word several times.	-.791	52	.433
29. I write a new English word several times.	6.217	52	.000
30. I take vocabulary notes in a classroom.	5.528	52	.000
31. I take vocabulary notes outside a classroom.	4.537	52	.000
32. I use the list of vocabulary (glossary) section in my textbook.	5.065	52	.000

The results gained from the data for 'Cognitive Strategies' in Table 8 reveal that the mean score of the high achievers (M=3.77) is greater than the mean score of the low achievers (M=2.74). This implies that the high achievers use the Cognitive Strategies more frequently than the low achievers do as the high achievers' mean score falls in 'High strategy use' and the low achievers' mean score falls in 'Medium strategy use'.

Regarding the Cognitive Strategies, the data from the independent samples t-test in Table 9 depict that there is a significant difference between the high and the low achievers in using almost all the strategies provided to the respondents (except Strategy/Item 28) since the calculated t-values for the rest of the items are greater than the critical t-value at p>0.05. The results from the frequency scale also reveal that the majority of high achievers (17 of them on average) reported that they "Always' or 'Usually' use these strategies. This shows that there is a relationship between the use of these VLSs (that have greater calculated t-values) and the respondents English language achievement.

Meta-cognitive Strategies under Consolidation Strategy

Items 33 to 39 were devised to investigate how frequently the high and the low achievers use Meta-cognitive Strategies to remember and consolidate the meanings of the words they have encountered them once. Tables 10 and 11 below present their responses.

Table 10: Group Statistics for Meta-cognitive Strategies used by the high and the low achievers to consolidate meanings of words they have already learned

	Respondents' Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meta-cognitive Strategies under Consolidation Strategy	High Achievers	27	3.64	.86
	Low Achievers	27	2.00	.70

Table 11: Independent samples t-test of Meta-cognitive Strategies used by the respondents to consolidate meanings of words they have already learned

t-test for equality of means (Equal variances assumed)			
Item	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
33. I listen to English radio or television programs, or read books, magazines or fictions, etc. written in English to develop my vocabulary knowledge.	3.899	52	.000
34. I test myself with word tests.	6,220	52	.000
35. I continue to study the words over time.	6.572	52	.000
36. I try to describe things in English.	7.429	52	.000
37. I try to find opportunities to communicate in English with people.	13.720	52	.000
38. I learn and consolidate meanings of words from my failure.	4.837	52	.000
39. I plan to learn vocabulary, so I will have enough time to study new words.	13.604	52	.000

For 'Meta-cognitive Strategies', the results obtained show that the high achievers use the Meta-Cognitive Strategies more frequently than the low achievers as the

mean score of the high achievers (M=3.64) is greater than the mean score of the low achievers (M=2.00). It is also possible to see that the mean scores fall in "High strategy use' for the high achievers and in 'Low strategy use' for the low achievers. The independent samples t-test results for the 'Meta-cognitive Strategies' also indicate that the calculated t-values of the items/strategies provided to the respondents are greater than the critical t-value (2.0066) at $p<0.05$. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the high and the low achievers in using Meta-cognitive Strategies. Further, the results from the frequency scale reveal that still the majority of high achievers (15 of them on average) reported that they "Always' and 'Usually' use 'Meta-cognitive Strategies'. This also implies that there is a relationship between the use of these strategies of vocabulary learning and the respondents' English language achievement.

Item 37 was offered to assess how frequently the high achievers and the low achievers find opportunities to communicate in English with people to practice and remember words. The results obtained revealed that 22 (81.4%) of the high achievers rated that they 'Usually' or 'Always' use this strategy. On the other hand, 25 (92.5%) of the low achievers responded that they 'Never' or 'Rarely' use the strategy. The remaining respondents, 5 (18.5%) of the high achievers and 2 (7.4%) of the low achievers, reported that they 'Sometimes' use the strategy. This indicates that the majority of high achievers frequently use this strategy since and none of the low achievers use it frequently.

The results of the open-ended questions and the interview also reveal that the high achievers use a variety of VLSs as compared to the low achievers. For example, some of the VLSs the high achievers listed that they use to discover the meanings of new words include the following:

➢ Marking the new words they have encountered while they read and/or write using their own marking systems (e.g., underlining, circling, highlighting, etc.).

➢ Listening to the teacher and other people when they speak, and guessing the meanings of new words from the gestures and facial expressions they use.

➢ Reading instructions, posters, announcements, sign posts, etc. and analyzing the meanings of new words by associating to situations.

Ranking of vocabulary learning strategies used by the high and low achievers
Table 12: Rank of VLSs sub-categories used by the high and the low achievers

No.	Sub-categories of VLSs	High Achievers		Low Achievers	
		Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
1	Determination Sub-category/Strategies	3.61	4	3.15	1
2	Social Sub-category under Discovery Strategy/Strategies	2.81	6	2.15	4
3	Social Sub-category/Strategies under Consolidation Strategy	3.67	2	2.04	5
4	Memorization Sub-category/Strategies	3.57	5	2.75	2
5	Cognitive Sub-category/Strategies	3.77	1	2.74	3
6	Meta-cognitive Sub-category/Strategies	3.64	3	2.00	6

As it can be seen from the table above, all sub-categories of VLSs provided to the respondents are not used equally by the high achievers and the low achievers. The data indicate that 'Cognitive Sub-category' (M= 3.77) is the most dominantly used sub-category. This means that the strategies under this category are the most preferred by high achievers and they might work best for them so that if these strategies are employed by the lower achievers, they can improve their language ability.

Another interesting point is that the high achievers seem least interested in using 'Social-Sub-category' under 'Discovery Strategy' (M= 2.81). This can be explained that asking others for help might be a face threatening act for these students. This finding is in line with Nosidlak's (2013) finding that students of higher level of proficiency are found to be least interested in asking others for help to discover the meaning of a new word.

The low achievers are likely to learn new words on their own since the most used sub-category for them is 'Determination Sub-category' (M= 3.15); however, the lowest mean value of 'Meta-cognitive Sub-category' (M=2.0), which is the least used sub-category for them, indicates that the low achievers may not plan and monitor their vocabulary learning. This might have contributed to their lower level proficiency. As explained by Nosidlak (2013), strategies used for planning learning process are quite useful for the students to develop their vocabulary knowledge.

The analysis of the two open-ended questions (items 40 and 41) also indicate that the high achievers have some strategies of their own apart from the ones provided to them to discover and to study the English words they have already encountered while the low achievers have hardly any strategies of their own apart from those provided to them.

The responses to one of the interview questions indicate that though both the high and the low achievers perceive the importance of vocabulary learning in

improving their English language achievement, the high achievers seem to attach more importance to vocabulary learning than the low achievers do. This can be inferred from the respondents' responses, i. e. all the high achievers said that learning English vocabulary is important to improve their English language achievement. On the other hand, some of the low achievers had some confusion about the importance of learning English vocabulary to improve their English language achievement. For example, S6 said, "I am interested in speaking English but I don't know how I will be successful. I think learning English words may help me to be successful in my English language achievement." S7 also replied, "English words are endless, so it makes me confused to learn all these words". This implies that the low achievers have less perception than the high achievers about the importance of learning English vocabulary so as to improve their English language achievement, and this confirms the result of the questionnaire on students' perception about the importance of Vocabulary learning to enhance their English language achievement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The high achievers' perception about the importance of vocabulary learning to improve their English language achievement is higher than the low achievers' perception as the mean value of the high achievers (M=4.63) is greater than that of the low achievers (M=3.44).

Both the quantitative and qualitative data obtained in this study show that the high achievers use a variety of VLSs than the low achievers do. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Fan (2003) and others.

The respondents' data indicate that there are differences between the high and the low achievers in using all the VLSs provided except some. In this study, both groups have similarities in using some strategies such as analyzing affixes and roots to guess meanings of the new words, using available pictures or gestures to understand the meanings of words, trying to remember new words by remembering the location/where they first encountered the words, saying new English words aloud and saying new English words several times.

The presence of a significant difference between the high and the low achievers in using VLSs also implies that there is a relationship between VLSs use and English language achievement. This can be inferred from the data presented previously, i.e. many of the high achievers seemed to use various VLSs 'Usually' or 'Always' while many of the low achievers reported that they 'Never' or 'Rarely' use the strategies.

When the sub-categories are ranked for both groups separately according to their uses, the most frequently used sub-category for the high achievers is 'Cognitive sub-category' (M= 3.77), and the least used sub-category is 'Social sub-category' under 'Discovery Strategy' (M= 2.81). On the contrary, 'Determination sub-category' (M= 3.15) and 'Meta-cognitive sub-category' (M= 2.00) are the most and the least used ones for the low achievers. Moreover, when the six sub-categories were examined, the high achievers use all of them more frequently than the low achievers as the mean scores of all sub-strategies fall in the 'High strategy use' except that of the Social Strategies under the Discovery Strategy that falls in the 'Medium strategy use'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ English language teachers should be committed to raise the awareness of the low achievers about the importance of learning English vocabulary, for instance, by orienting low achievers in to the importance of vocabulary for their achievement in language learning.

- ✓ English language teachers should facilitate the teaching learning conditions in which the high achievers can help the low achievers practice different VLSs so as to learn and consolidate new English words (e.g. by using mixed ability grouping method while the students are expected to work activities/tasks in groups on vocabulary). Furthermore, teachers should help low achievers by providing them vocabulary strategy use training on various VLSs that help them to learn and consolidate new English words easily.

- ✓ English language teachers should encourage low achievers to share vocabulary learning experiences of high achievers in order to learn and study new words as well as to enhance their English language achievement. As explained by Nosidlak (2013) "Using advanced students' experience and expertise in the field of vocabulary learning may save a lot of time and effort for their younger and less proficient colleagues"(p.655).

- ✓ English language teachers are responsible to identify the most and the least used sub-categories of VLSs by the high and the low achievers, and provide them with the necessary support to help the students use all the sub-categories in order to boost up the language achievement of both groups.

- ✓ It is recommended that future studies on this topic should incorporate more qualitative data collection instruments (e.g. classroom observation) to prove what the learners reported in questionnaire and/or interview is consistent with what they actually do.

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