

**Original Research****Palestinian EFL Students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies***Mohammed Farrah\*<sup>1</sup>, Ghadeer Atef Imteer Darabee<sup>1</sup>*<sup>1</sup>Hebron University, Palestine

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**Abstract**

This study investigated the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Palestinian EFL students at Hebron University, focusing on cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. The researchers employed the quantitative approach to achieve the aims of the study. A total of 100 participants were surveyed through a 23-item questionnaire to explore their usage of the various strategies. The results showed that Palestinian EFL students employ a range of strategies, with observable variations in their frequency and efficacy. Cognitive strategies appeared to be highly favored as participants indicated using English words in different contexts and watching English media. Metacognitive strategies like paying attention during English speech and reflection on their language progress appeared to be among the most frequently employed strategies by Palestinian EFL students. Finally, the findings revealed that participants employed social strategies though they favored learning about the culture of English speakers over asking questions or seeking feedback from native speakers. The researchers concluded that participants have high employment for cognitive and metacognitive strategies and moderate to high use of social strategies. The participants' emphasis on cultural understanding underscores their recognition of the broader context of language use in the process of vocabulary acquisition. Finally, the researchers recommended integrating cultural content into the curriculum and providing more opportunities for participants to interact with native speakers to promote vocabulary acquisition.

**Keywords:** Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social vocabulary learning strategies, Language proficiency, Palestinian EFL students.

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## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is considered to be a very important aspect of language learning. Students who study English as a foreign language consider expanding their vocabulary a very important component that help them to master the English language. Palestinian EFL students face various challenges in trying to increase their vocabulary in English, just like many other learners worldwide. These difficulties are caused by several things, including a lack of exposure to real English environments, the inherent distinctions between the linguistic structures of Arabic and English, and inconsistent access to educational materials. It is important to comprehend the vocabulary learning strategies that these students are using. The purpose of this study is to look into the strategies they used and the variables that affected their decisions. The study looks at specific strategies employed by Palestinian EFL learners to shed light on the different linguistic and cultural elements influencing their vocabulary acquisition methodology. Furthermore, the study will investigate the possible effects of various instructional strategies and educational settings on the vocabulary acquisition process of EFL students from Palestine. Current research indicates that Palestinians may not speak English as well as they would like. The current emphasis in education, which puts more emphasis on reading and writing than speaking and listening, may have an impact on this. However, a more thorough comprehension of the methods Palestinian students use to learn language and how effective they are still needs to be established.

Since expanding one's vocabulary is a necessary part of learning English, Palestinian EFL students face several challenges in their attempt to do so. Enough vocabulary strategies for instruction may have contributed to this issue by influencing students' vocabulary acquisition and retention. Understanding the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Palestinian EFL students is necessary to address these problems and enhance their language proficiency.

What makes the study interesting is its potential relevance to the domains of language instruction and curriculum development. This research can aid in the creation of more specialized and effective language learning materials and teaching techniques by identifying and assessing the most common vocabulary learning strategies among EFL students in Palestine. By creating their instruction, including interactive activities, and understanding which strategies are most effective for Palestinian EFL learners, teachers can improve

vocabulary acquisition. Eventually, this can improve the general English proficiency of Palestinian EFL students and help them have more successful language learning experiences. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the strategies that Palestinian EFL students employed to acquire vocabulary and to find out how different teaching approaches and classroom environments impact these students' vocabulary development.

## **2. Literature review**

Vocabulary acquisition is considered a crucial aspect of mastering a foreign language. Understanding how learners retain vocabulary and the strategies they follow has become of significant interest to researchers. There are numerous studies that were conducted on vocabulary learning and acquisition. Such research shed light on the various techniques and methods that are used by learners to facilitate their acquisition of vocabulary. The following literature review explore present the theoretical frame work about vocabulary acquisition strategies and review some studies that investigate different earning strategies employed by EFL learners.

### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

The theoretical framework in deeply rooted in metacognitive and cognitive learning theories. These theories elucidate the process of retrieving and retaining new information by learners.

According to Anderson (1983), cognitive learning theory involves mental processes such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. These processes are considered to be a fundamental aspect in vocabulary acquisition. In the same vein, Schmitt (1997) suggested that strategies like repetition, context guessing, and imagery are cognitive tools that facilitate internalizing new words by learners.

On the other hand, metacognitive strategies included information on how learners have self-regulation and reflect on their learning processes. As indicated by Flavell (1979), metacognitive strategies help learners plan, monitor and evaluate their vocabulary learning efforts. They make certain judgments in order to improve the vocabulary learning outcome. For instance, Wahyudin, Pustika and Simamora (2021) reported that metacognitive strategies like using dictionaries, having vocabulary lists, and setting specific learning goals contribute to vocabulary acquisition.

Furthermore, Vygotsky in his sociocultural theory (1978) emphasized the role of the

social and contextual dimensions of vocabulary learning such as social interaction, peer collaboration and cultural influences. Such dimensions are considered vital to language development.

The theoretical framework contributes to a better knowledge for the various learning strategies used by EFL learners and the influence of these strategies on the vocabulary learning outcome (Asgari & Mustapha, 2011; Ivanovska and Xhaferri, 2023).

## **2.2 Related studies**

The studies reviewed in this section shed light on how the cognitive and metacognitive strategies are applied in different educational contexts by learners. The studies investigated the strategies employed by learners to improve their vocabulary learning, retention and comprehension. Accordingly, this section explores some articles that are relevant to vocabulary learning strategies, including the most recent studies on vocabulary learning strategies for English language learners. It covers the various methods that students have employed singly or in groups to pick up new vocabulary. Laufer (1992) investigates the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary size. He looks into the threshold vocabulary size required for sufficient comprehension as well as the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. According to his research, proficient vocabulary is necessary for efficient reading comprehension. It emphasizes how important vocabulary growth is to raising reading comprehension and skill levels. The results highlight how important vocabulary size is for improving comprehension when reading assignments are assigned. Laufer asserts that when learning a second or foreign language, vocabulary is essential. Nevertheless, the focus of Laufer on reading comprehension may ignore the variable strategies used by learners as demonstrated in other studies that explored vocabulary acquisition in depth. For example, Wahyudin, Pustika, and Simamora (2021) explored how EFL learners take part in certain strategic approaches to acquire vocabulary. They conducted a study on the vocabulary learning strategies of EFL learners at the tertiary level. One hundred and twenty non-majors in English participated in the study by answering questions about four different approaches to learning vocabulary: cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and determination. The findings reveal that the most commonly employed strategy is the cognitive one. Respondents occasionally employ new words in a sentence to help them remember them while visualizing the words in their mind is the least common method of

word memory. The study's conclusions may assist practitioners and teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in considering modifications to their pedagogical approaches. In the same vein, Rahimy and Shams (2012) carried out a study to explore the impact of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary test scores, with a focus on Intermediate level students. The research question examines whether VLSs affect learners' test performance, rejecting the null hypothesis that they do not. Participants were divided into high-score (15-20) and low-score (9-14) groups based on test results, with the mean score being 15.6. The Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire (VLSQ) categorized responses into cognitive, memory, metacognitive, determination, and social strategies, revealing that high-score students applied these strategies more effectively, leading to improved test scores compared to low-score students who preferred translations and peer group study. According to the researchers, the learners who employed various strategies were able to perform better on the vocabulary test. They suggested proficiency is not only an outcome of vocabulary size but from employing VLSs. This suggests that in addition to increasing words count, strategic thinking plays vital role in vocabulary acquisition.

Ivanovska and Xhaferri (2023) and Gu and Johnson (1996) underscored the importance of metacognitive strategies. For example, Ivanovska and Xhaferri (2023) conducted a study to highlight the importance of learning English as a second language, emphasizing its vocabulary and teaching methods. The study aimed to assist educators in creating suitable vocabulary exercises and to inform learners of various methods for improving their lexical competency. The study was conducted on EFL students at the South East European University in Tetovo, Macedonia, aiming to determine their views the importance and actual application of vocabulary learning strategies. According to the findings, students most frequently employed the strategies of "guessing the word from the context" and "dictionary use," whereas they rarely utilized the "keyword method". Gu and Johnson (1996) conducted a study aimed at determining the vocabulary acquisition techniques employed by Chinese university students and the connection between their techniques and English language learning results. They distributed a vocabulary learning questionnaire to 850 sophomores at Beijing Normal University who were not majoring in English. The participants disclosed employing an extensive range of strategies for learning vocabulary. Two metacognitive techniques, Self-Initiation and Selective Attention, were found to be positive predictors of CETBAND2 scores in a multiple regression analysis. The

two test scores also positively correlated with contextual guessing, deft dictionary use, taking notes, focusing on word formation, contextual encoding, and activating recently learned words. On the other hand, the most powerful negative predictor of vocabulary size and overall proficiency was the visual repetition of new words. Additionally, vocabulary retention techniques had a stronger correlation with vocabulary size than with English proficiency.

There are other studies, such as Schmitt (1997), Asgari and Mustapha (2011), Ali and Kalajahi (2012) and Tahmina (2023), that indicated that the learners who use social, cognitive and metacognitive strategies are more successful in vocabulary acquisition. In his study, Schmitt (1997) surveyed 600 Japanese students and found that learners who believe that dictionary and repetition strategies are the most effective for learning vocabulary are more likely to demand and use them, while those who believe that imagery and semantic grouping strategies are the least effective. In a similar vein, Asgari and Mustapha (2011) explored the vocabulary learning strategies actively utilized by undergraduate ESL students at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) through qualitative research methods, specifically individual interviews with ten students. The findings revealed that while students were not fully aware of most vocabulary strategies, they utilized them with medium to low frequency. The most common strategies included determination, cognitive, social, and metacognitive strategies such as using monolingual dictionaries, guessing from context, and learning through English media.

Ali and Kalajahi (2012) carried out a study to investigate the vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary size of undergraduate English Language Teaching students at Eastern Mediterranean University. The study involved 125 participants. The results revealed that the majority of ELT students effectively employed psycholinguistic strategies, while some utilized metacognitive strategies. Overall, the student's vocabulary size was found to be somewhat average for handling advanced coursework at the university level. Moreover, the results revealed that there was no significant correlation between psycholinguistic strategies and vocabulary size. On the contrary, weak and inverse correlations were found between vocabulary size and both metacognitive strategies and the VLS questionnaire. Finally, the results indicated that students tended to employ a range of strategies rather than relying on a single one. Tahmina (2023) investigated the vocabulary-learning strategies employed by highly proficient English language learners at Jagannath University in

Bangladesh aiming to assess the reasons behind their strategy choices. Thirteen highly achieving undergraduate students from the English Department participated in this study. The findings indicated that in their language learning activities, successful learners predominately utilized Cognitive and Determination strategies, which were effective in helping both stronger and weaker learners acquire new vocabulary efficiently.

There are other studies which focused on the role of context. Bastanfar and Hashemi (2010) and Al Zahrani and Chaudhary (2022) emphasized the importance on incorporating pedagogical material and instruction in VLS training. Bastanfar and Hashemi (2010) explored the importance of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) in enhancing self-directed learning and transferability to new situations. They discussed how learners must be trained in VLS and how ELT course books can help incorporate learner training based on insights from VLS research. A subjective system of ratings ranging from 0 to 3 was employed to evaluate how well each course book met the requirements. Seven Iranian General Education course books that addressed VLS treatment and training were included in the analysis. Independent assessments by a colleague were used to guarantee inter-reliability. The objective was to determine how much VLS was integrated into the sampled course books and how well users were trained to use them. The study found that the new edition of the Pre-University course book in Iran has made good progress in incorporating insights from Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) research. However, there is still a need for improvement in addressing VLS throughout all the course books in the series. It is crucial to integrate VLS and training in using them effectively in ELT course books to enhance language learning strategies overall. Likewise, Al Zahrani and Chaudhary (2022) investigated the knowledge and preferences of EFL university students enrolled in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses about vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs). Twenty students from a complete class were included in the sample for the study. The results show that, in the setting of an English for Specific Purposes classroom, the application of different vocabulary learning strategies significantly affects the performance of English language learners. The results have educational ramifications for vocabulary instruction in the context of ESP. the finding of the above studies revealed the importance of providing instructions explicitly in strategy use within English language teaching course materials.

This pedagogical aspect is emphasized by Bruen (2001) who examined the language-learning techniques that helped 100 Irish students, preparing to finish their second year at

Dublin City University, attain higher levels of oral proficiency in German. The study also investigates the application of these techniques by individuals at varying proficiency levels. The findings demonstrate that more skilled language learners employ a range of techniques, especially cognitive and metacognitive ones. There is a strong correlation between ten strategies—metacognitive, cognitive, memory-related, social, and affective—and higher levels of oral proficiency. Proficient students apply these tactics in an organized way to a variety of assignments and circumstances. According to the results, effective strategic behavior entails applying a variety of language-learning techniques, with an emphasis on cognitive and metacognitive techniques, to improve oral proficiency. This research underscores the importance of training learner to employ strategies not only in acquiring vocabulary but also in wider language learning tasks. They suggested that there is an overlap between strategic learning and overall language proficiency. Similarly, Sanaoui (1995) investigated how adult learners acquire vocabulary in second languages distinguishing between those who adopted a systematic approach and those who did not. Sanaoui's research suggested that students who followed a structured method of learning vocabulary outperformed those who did not.

In the Jordanian context, and by using Schmitt's taxonomy (1997), Rabadi (2016) examined the different vocabulary learning strategies employed by undergraduate Jordanian students, particularly focusing on Memory, Determination, Social, Cognitive, and Metacognitive strategies. The findings revealed medium strategy use with metacognitive strategy were the least used and memory strategies and the memory strategies were most frequently employed. The social strategies got medium ranking with items like "Ask instructors of English for Arabic translation of new lexical items" getting high rating and items like "Communicate with foreigners in English through different types of media to develop new vocabulary" getting medium rating. The researcher recommended language instructors to improve effective vocabulary teaching techniques and curriculum designers to provide learners with preferable vocabulary learning strategies. Likewise, In the Palestinian context, Khalil (2005) assessed the language learning strategies utilized by Palestinian EFL learners, involving 194 high school students and 184 university students in Palestine. The research aimed to evaluate overall strategy use, use of strategy categories, and individual strategy items, considering proficiency level and gender as influencing factors. The results demonstrate that gender and proficiency level have significant effects on the overall use of



strategies, with differences in the application of specific strategies and strategy categories. Gender has an impact on memory and metacognitive strategies, whereas proficiency level influences memory, cognitive, metacognitive, compensatory, and social strategies.

The above mentioned studies on Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) show varied insights into how different methods influence language learners. Rahimy and Shams (2012) suggested that students who effectively used cognitive, memory, metacognitive, determination, and social strategies performed better. Ivanovska and Xhaferri (2023) emphasized the frequent use of context guessing and dictionary use among Macedonian EFL students, while Schmitt (1997) noted Japanese students' preference for dictionary and repetition strategies. Ali and Kalajahi (2012) discovered that although psycholinguistic strategies were common among ELT students in Cyprus, vocabulary size remained average, with no significant correlation between strategy use and vocabulary size. Asgari and Mustapha (2011) revealed that Malaysian ESL students were only moderately aware of various strategies, yet commonly used determination and cognitive methods. Tahmina (2023) found that successful Bangladeshi learners predominantly utilized cognitive and determination strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996) identified self-initiation and selective attention as positive predictors of English proficiency among Chinese students. Bastanfar and Hashemi (2010) stressed the importance of integrating VLS training in Iranian course books to enhance self-directed learning. Al Zahrani and Chaudhary (2022) demonstrated that diverse VLS applications significantly improve ESP learners' performance. Sanaoui (1995) highlighted the better performance of adult learners who employed a systematic method of vocabulary acquisition. Finally, Khalil (2005) and Rabadi (2016) showed significant differences in strategy use among Palestinian and Jordanian EFL learners. The above literature review explored key studies that examined different vocabulary learning strategies used by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The studies highlighted the efficiency of such strategies on improving learners' vocabulary comprehension and retention.

This study will try to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do Hebron University students use cognitive strategies?
2. To what extent do Hebron University students use metacognitive strategies?
3. To what extent do Hebron University students use social strategies?

### 3. Methodology

This section describes the research design of the study. It also discusses the research population, and instrumentation. Finally, it presents information about the data collection the procedure and the analysis of the data of the study.

#### 3.1. Research Design

This is a descriptive study. The researchers employed the quantitative approach in which a questionnaire was adopted to determine Hebron University Palestinian EFL students' vocabulary learning strategies The researchers adopted and adapted a questionnaire utilized in Aziz Khalil's study that is entitled Assessment of Language Learning Strategies Used by Palestinian EFL Learners (2005) (See Appendix).

#### 3.2. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 100 Palestinian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. They are native Arabic speakers, ranging in age from 20 to 24 years. The table below provides demographic data of the participants in this study, including gender, academic level, and major.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic Data*

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	18	18.0
	Female	82	82.0
	Total	100	100.0
Level	Freshman	13	13.0
	Sophomore	3	3.0
	Junior	26	26.0
	Senior	58	58.0
	Total	100	100.0
Major	English literature	14	14.0
	Simultaneous interpretation	16	16.0
	teaching methods	7	7.0
	English Literature and Translation track	13	13.0
	English - Minor French	50	50.0
Total	100	100.0	

As Table 1 shows, there is a significant gender disparity among the 100 participants,

with 18 (18.0%) being male and 82 (82.0%) female. This higher representation of female participants aligns with the overall student demographics at Hebron University, where the student body is 80% female and 20% male (Farrah).

In terms of academic level, the participants were distributed across different stages of their academic journey, with 13% being freshmen, 3% sophomores, 26% juniors, and the majority, 58%, seniors. Additionally, the participants came from different majors within the English Department, including English literature, simultaneous interpretation, teaching methods, English literature and translation track, and English with a minor in French. The most common major among participants was English with a minor in French, representing 50% of the sample.

Finally, regarding their major, Participants have different majors, such as English literature (14.0%), Simultaneous interpretation (16.0%), Teaching methods (7.0%), English literature and translation track (13.0%), and English - Minor French (50.0%). The most common major among participants is English - Minor French, accounting for 50.0% of the sample. Other majors such as English literature, simultaneous interpretation, teaching methods, and English literature and translation track have relatively smaller but still notable representations in the sample.

### **3.3. Instrument**

The method of data collection used in this study was questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-four items with multiple unique items representing each strategy (See Appendix). These items served as a representation of the vocabulary learning strategies and methods used to acquire new words in English, including the cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. The cognitive strategy consisted of 10 items. The metacognitive strategy consisted of nine items and the social strategy consisted of six items. The questionnaire items were distributed on a Likert scale and the participants were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement from 1-4 which were: strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

The researchers employed a survey questionnaire for the present study using Google Forms. Utilizing Gmail and WhatsApp groups, they distributed the questionnaire to the University's English majors during the second semester of the 2023–2024 academic year. The selection

of the participants followed the convenient sampling approach. In this sampling, the researchers selected participants who are easily accessible and readily available to answer the questionnaire through the WhatsApp groups. The students responded to the questions on the questionnaire. These students are at various levels of their studies. Results were gathered on March 25, 2024. The researchers published the results on March 18, 2024. The SPSS program was used to analyze the data.

### 3.5 Data Analysis procedure

To analyze the obtained data, a statistical procedure was used. First of all, the data were analyzed using SPSS 24 program. Then, Descriptive analyses (frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation) were run. To check the validity of the questionnaire, it was sent to two professors in the English Department. They reviewed and checked in terms of its validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, a coefficient that measures the internal consistency of items across scales. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.90, indicating a high level of reliability. This result suggests that the questions within the questionnaire are consistent and trustworthy.

## 4. Results

This section presents the results gained from the analysis of student responses to the questionnaire. It addresses the three research questions posed in the study. The **first research question** investigates the extent to which Hebron University students employ metacognitive strategies. The following table illustrates the degree to which these students utilized cognitive strategies.

**Table 2.**

*Cognitive Strategies Descriptive Statistics*

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
2	I use the English words I know in different ways.	3.37	.677
1	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English	3.29	.640
9	I try not to translate word-for-word.	3.26	.747
4	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	3.25	.672
7	I try to talk like a native English speaker.	3.24	.830
10	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.16	.762
3	I read for pleasure in English.	3.14	.711

8	I start conversations in English	3.14	.752
5	I practice the sounds of English.	3.08	.813

Table 2 presents data on cognitive strategies, we see that the range of mean scores (3.08 - 3.37) and standard deviations (.640 - .830) suggests some students might favor certain strategies more than others. The discussion of the findings of this table focuses on the cognitive strategies used by participants, including active engagement with the language through various endeavors such as media consumption, writing, speaking, and phonetic practice. While there is general agreement on the efficacy of many of these strategies, attitudes toward specific approaches vary, reflecting the participants' diverse preferences and learning styles.

Active engagement strategies, including item (2) “using English words in various contexts” (Mean = 3.37), and item (1) “watching English language TV shows or movies” (Mean = 3.29), garnered higher mean scores, reflecting their perceived effectiveness. Item (9) “Trying not to translate word-for-word (Mean = 3.26)” emphasizes the value of thinking directly in English rather than relying on a translation from one's native language. The high mean score indicates that participants are aware of the limitations of translation and aim for a more direct understanding of English. The moderate standard deviation indicates that attitudes toward this strategy vary among participants.

Item (4) “Writing in English (Mean = 3.25)” emphasizes the importance of written communication as a form of language practice. The high mean score indicates that many participants choose writing activities to strengthen their language abilities. The low standard deviation indicates a high level of agreement among participants about the effectiveness of this strategy.

Item (7), "Trying to talk like a native English speaker" (Mean = 3.24), reveals that while many participants aspire to achieve native-like fluency, there is considerable variation in their attitudes, as indicated by the higher standard deviation. In contrast, Item (10), "Dividing English words into parts for meaning" (Mean = 3.16), demonstrates a general consensus among participants regarding the effectiveness of this strategy. The data suggest that, although participants recognize the value in both strategies, their enthusiasm and uniformity of opinion are stronger for the latter approach.

Items (3) and (8) both received a mean score of 3.14, indicating positive attitudes toward these activities. Item (3), "Reading for pleasure in English," suggests that many

participants find enjoyment in leisure reading in English. Similarly, item (8), "Starting conversations in English," indicates that participants are generally comfortable or willing to initiate conversations in English. These results reflect a balanced appreciation for both reading and speaking practices as integral parts of their English language engagement.

Finally, item (5), "Practicing the sounds of English," was the lowest-rated strategy, with a mean score of 3.08. Though this score is above the neutral point of 3, it implies a fairly lower level of agreement among participants on the importance of phonetic practice. The relatively high standard deviation of 0.813 further signifies the variability in participants' attitudes toward this strategy, demonstrating that opinions on the value of practicing English phonetics are more diverse compared to other strategies. To conclude, the responses of the participants indicate that, generally, they have favorable attitudes towards employing the cognitive strategies towards vocabulary acquisition.

The **second research question** investigates the extent to which Hebron University students employ metacognitive strategies. The following table illustrates the degree to which these students utilized metacognitive strategies.

**Table 3.**

*Metacognitive Strategies Descriptive, Statistics*

No		Mean	Std. Deviation
3	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	3.41	.621
9	I think about my progress in learning English	3.38	.708
2	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	3.30	.659
4	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	3.28	.753
1	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	3.27	.737
7	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.21	.795
8	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	3.14	.804
6	I look for people I can talk to in English.	3.09	.818
5	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	2.99	.870

The range of mean scores (2.99 - 3.41) and standard deviations (.621 -.870) in this table, which displays data on metacognitive strategies, suggests that some students may employ particular strategies more successfully than others. The metacognitive strategies data show a variety of strategies used by participants to increase their vocabulary in English.

Paying attention during English speech (Mean = 3.41) and reflecting on their learning progress (Mean = 3.38) rank highly among the most used strategies, indicating a strong interest in actively engaging with language input and tracking their linguistic development over time. Item (2) "Noticing English mistakes and using them for improvement" garnered a mean of 3.30. This strategy involves actively identifying errors in English usage and using them as learning opportunities. The mean score indicates that many participants are aware of their mistakes and seek to learn from them.

Items (4) and (1) both highlight participants' proactive approaches to improving their English skills, with mean scores of 3.28 and 3.27, respectively. Item (4), "Trying to find out how to be a better learner of English," suggests that participants are keen on looking for resources and information to boost their language learning strategies, notwithstanding some variation in engagement levels, as shown by the moderate standard deviation. Likewise, Item (1), "Finding as many ways as possible to use English," mirrors participants' active efforts to employ English in different contexts. Together, these results demonstrate a strong commitment among participants to both self-directed learning and practical application of their English skills.

In item (7) "Looking for opportunities to read as much as possible in English got a mean = 3.21. This strategy emphasizes extensive reading as a method of language exposure and vocabulary development. The average score indicates that participants value reading in English as a language-learning activity. The relatively high standard deviation indicates variability in attitudes toward reading among participants.

Items (8) and (6) underscore participants' approaches to setting goals and engaging in interpersonal communication for language improvement, with mean scores of 3.14 and 3.09, respectively. Item (8), "Having clear goals for improving English skills," suggests that many participants recognize the importance of setting goals, although there is considerable variation in the clarity and specificity of these objectives, as evidenced by the higher standard deviation. Similarly, Item (6), "Looking for people to talk to in English," highlights participants' active efforts to find opportunities for verbal interaction in English. The relatively high standard deviation indicates significant variability in participants' attitudes towards seeking conversation partners. Collectively, these findings reveal a commitment to both goal-setting and practical communication, despite differences in how consistently these strategies are applied.

Finally, item (5) got the lowest rated strategy "I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English" with a mean score of 2.99. This strategy requires time management to ensure consistent language study and practice. The mean score indicates that, while participants recognize the importance of scheduling study time, there is some variation in how effectively they implement this strategy, as evidenced by the higher standard deviation. reflecting some inconsistency in participants' implementation of structured learning routines. To conclude, the responses of the participants are similar to the responses towards the cognitive strategies. This indicates that, they have favorable attitudes towards employing the metacognitive strategies towards vocabulary acquisition.

Finally, the **third question** in this study investigates the extent to which Hebron University students employ the social strategies. The following table illustrates the degree to which these students utilized social strategies.

**Table 4.**  
*Social Strategies Descriptive Statistics*

No		Mean	Std. Deviation
6	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers	3.04	.828
1	If I don't understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	2.93	.742
5	I ask questions in English.	2.90	.810
3	I practice English with other students.	2.89	.751
2	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	2.82	.744
4	I ask for help from English speakers.	2.73	.827

The data presented in Table 4 presents a variety of strategies that participants used to improve their ability to learn English vocabulary through social interactions, with mean scores ranging from 2.73 to 3.4 and standard deviations from 0.742 to 0.827. Moreover, the data indicates that the most reported agreement on student's perceptions about the social strategies is Item (6) "I try to learn about the culture of English speakers," with a mean of 3.04. This indicates that students recognize the significance of understanding the cultural context in which the language is spoken, which can greatly aid in their vocabulary acquisition process.

Item (1) "If I don't understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again" comes in a close second, with a mean score of 2.93, suggesting that,



on average, participants agree with this statement. It implies that the majority of them are likely to intervene in a conversation when they are having difficulty understanding English, asking the speaker to slow down or repeat what was said. Likewise, item (5) "Asking questions in English" garnered a mean = 2.90. This mean score is also quite high, indicating that most participants agree on the value of asking questions as a means of language practice.

Both Items (3) and (2) emphasize the significance of the social strategies in language learning, with mean scores of 2.89 and 2.82, respectively. Item (3), "Practicing English with other students," accentuates the importance of peer interaction, with the mean score signifying a largely optimistic attitude towards this strategy. Correspondingly, Item (2), "Asking English speakers to correct one's speech," underscores the value of corrective feedback from native or proficient speakers. While the mean score is relatively high, it is slightly lower than for peer practice, suggesting that participants may feel less comfortable with direct corrections. Overall, these results reflect a positive attitude towards interactive learning strategies, with a preference for peer interaction over corrective feedback from more proficient speakers.

The strategy with the lowest use among the social strategies is "I ask for help from English speakers" (Item 4), with a mean score of 2.73, indicating that it is the least commonly employed strategy among the participants. This suggests that, while still widely accepted, asking for help may be perceived as a less preferred strategy when compared to other proactive approaches. To conclude, the responses of the participants indicate that, generally, they have moderate opinions towards employing the social strategies towards vocabulary acquisition.

## 5. Discussion

This study's main goal was to look into the vocabulary acquisition strategies employed by Palestinian students taking English as a second language (EFL). Specifically, we identified the most widely used strategies and evaluated their effectiveness for vocabulary acquisition in this population. The three strategies that are the subject of this study are cognitive, metacognitive and social. This study reveals that Palestinian EFL learners employ a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies, with notable variations in the strategies selected and the frequency of their use.

Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies is used to categorize the

vocabulary learning strategies demonstrated by the data of the current study. The study's findings showed that cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies—the most commonly utilized comprehensive strategies among study participants—were utilized by Palestinian EFL students with varying degrees.

The results obtained in this study align with the literature related to vocabulary acquisition strategies. This underscores the role of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies in acquiring vocabulary in the context of EFL learners. The high agreement among the participants with employing cognitive strategies such as watching media in English, writing in English, and using English in context demonstrates the extent to which the EFL learners have active involvement with the language. Item number (2) 'Using English words in different ways' (Mean = 3.37) reveals that the students in a way like using this strategy in their vocabulary learning process. This is consistent with the results of Baskin et al. (2017) who found that one of the most common cognitive strategies employed by their participants is practicing new words repeatedly. The results here also mirror those of Wahyudin et al. (2021) and Tahmina (2023) who reported that cognitive strategies were the most frequently employed among EFL learners.

The result of item 1 in the cognitive strategies shows that the students like watching English language TV shows or movies. There is an agreement between this result and the result of Asgari and Mustapha (2011) who found that students prefer using English-language media (songs, movies, internet, computer games, TV programs, etc.). The findings are also consistent with the results found by Schmitt (1997) who suggested that context-based learning, active usage and repetition are efficient techniques that facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

Moreover, the high usage of the metacognitive strategies as evidenced in the results, mainly thinking about their progress in mastering the language and concentrating in the course of English conversations is consistent with Flavell's (1979) self-regulation strategies. "Paying attention when someone is speaking English" (Item 3) is the most commonly used metacognitive strategy. This suggests that participants use it frequently. The frequent use of the metacognitive strategies highlights learners' aspiration to enhance their vocabulary through continuous evaluation and self-monitoring. These findings are similar to Gu and Johnson (1996) who suggested that metacognitive strategies like self-initiation and selective attention were found to be positive predictors of the success in vocabulary acquisition.

However, the results demonstrated that students may face problems in implementing consistent time management strategies as revealed in item (5) that got the lowest rated strategy "I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English" with a mean score of 2.99. This strategy requires time management to ensure consistent language study and practice. This is consistent with Bastanfar and Hashemi (2010) who opined that in order to develop self-directed learning students need to be exposed explicit instruction in vocabulary acquisition strategies. This means that integrating time management into the English curriculum is necessary to promote learners' vocabulary learning outcome.

Regarding the social strategies, the results demonstrated that participants employ varied strategies for vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, the results indicated that some strategies received high agreement and others got moderate agreement. The students rated the strategy of learning about the culture of other speakers. This highlights that participants have high acceptance towards culture and its importance in the context of vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, other strategies like repeating themselves and asking speakers to slow down got somehow moderate to high mean scores. This emphasizes the fact that students are interested to be engaged in active conversations. Nevertheless, the responses of participants revealed that they value corrective feedback and peer interaction but it appears they are hesitant to seek direct help from proficient English speakers. This is consistent with Rabadi (2016) who found that student have medium rating for the social strategies and somehow low rating for strategies like communicating with native speakers. Generally, the results indicate that participants believe that social strategies are important in the process of vocabulary acquisition. Overall, the findings suggest that social strategies play a significant role in vocabulary learning though they demonstrated a preference for the strategy of learning about the culture of native English speakers over seeking direct assistance or corrective feedback from them.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, this study highlights the various techniques used to improve English vocabulary proficiency while shedding light on the vocabulary learning strategies used by Palestinian EFL learners. It appears from a study of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies that EFL students studying in Palestine employ a variety of strategies, though at different frequency ranges and with different degrees of achievement. The findings indicate

that strategies such as using English words in different contexts, paying attention during English speech, and learning about the culture of English speakers are among the most commonly employed. However, the study also reveals differences in strategy preferences and usage frequency among participants, emphasizing the individualized nature of vocabulary acquisition. These findings imply that specific instruction that takes into consideration students' varied learning preferences and styles is necessary, which has significant implications for language teachers. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in language learning initiatives.

Despite the significant findings, it is critical to acknowledge the study's limitations, such as the sample's majority of university students, which may limit how broadly the findings can be applied. Future research should aim to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of vocabulary learning strategies in this context by including participants from a range of age groups and proficiency levels within the Palestinian EFL learner population.

Based on the results of the study, the researchers recommend instructors and decision makers vary their vocabulary instruction strategies to meet the different learning styles of Palestinian EFL learners. In addition, they need to incorporate cultural issues into the curriculum to promote learners' vocabulary acquisition, improving language skills as well as cultural tolerance. Furthermore, there is a need to provide students with opportunities to interact with native speakers. Finally, the researchers recommend conducting future studies that include a broader range of learners to get valuable insights into the vocabulary acquisition strategies employed by Palestinian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

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**Appendix**

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English				
2	I use the English words I know in different ways.				
3	I read for pleasure in English.				
4	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.				
5	I practice the sounds of English.				
7	I try to talk like a native English speaker.				
8	I start conversations in English				
9	I try not to translate word-for-word.				
10	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.				
1	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.				
2	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.				
3	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.				
4	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.				
5	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.				
6	I look for people I can talk to in English.				
7	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.				
8	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.				
9	I think about my progress in learning English				

1	If I don't understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.				
2	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.				
3	I practice English with other students.				
4	I ask for help from English speakers.				
5	I ask questions in English.				
6	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers				