Vocabulary Learning Anxiety and Its Relationship with Vocabulary Learning Strategies among EFL Libyan Undergraduate Students at Misurata University

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قلق تعلم المفردات وعلاقته باستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية
في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة مصراتة

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Abstract:
Vocabulary learning and mastering remains one of the most remarkable challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning context due to several factors. As a result, EFL learners tend to rely on applying several language learning strategies that would shape their language learning behaviors. Thus, this study investigates EFL undergraduate students' vocabulary learning strategies and the role of vocabulary anxiety in their implemented strategies. Descriptive quantitative research design is used in this study. The data was collected using a structured online questionnaire. After the data cleaning and data screening, the total number of 97 valid simple random sample responses obtained to answer the research questions using SPSS analysis. The findings reveals students apply memory strategies with highest mean (M=2.3780) such as classifying words according to synonyms and antonyms, and reptations, followed by social strategies (M=2.3564) such as practice the language with their teachers peers, metacognitive (M=2.2430) such as learning the language via advertising, enrolling in additional curriculum programs, cognitive (M=2.1546) such as associating new words with physical objects and determination (M=2.1392) such as guessing the meaning of a word by analysing the structure strategies accordingly. Additionally, while implementing these strategies, moderate vocabulary anxiety was reported (M=2.7951) particularly during listening and speaking. Thus, the result reported significant correlation between vocabulary anxiety and vocabulary strategies (r=.233*, p>0.05). More closely, the strongest correlation was reported between vocabulary anxiety and determination strategies (r=.260*, p>0.05) followed by vocabulary anxiety and memory strategies (r=.224*, p>0.05). These results indicate that students tend to rely on memory strategies to manage their fears of making mistakes, uncertainty and to lower their anxiety. Thus, by identifying students' strategies and shedding light on the role of anxiety in blocking and impeding students from their learning vocabulary success and the use of several strategies through their self-regulation. This study calls for explicit and intensive different language teaching methods and communicative competence techniques to reduce students' anxiety and support students to learn and master the language effectively via listening and reading which will result in supporting the learners in using and dealing with the language in different cases, e.g. in their speaking and writing professionally.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning strategies, vocabulary anxiety, EFL learners, self-regulated learning.

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الملخص

لايزال تعلم المفردات وإتقانها من أهم وأبرز التحديات في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) لعدة أسباب. نتيجة لذلك يميل متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية إلى الاعتماد على استراتيجيات تعلم لغوية متعددة متنوعة وتطبيقها، مما يؤثر على سلوكياتهم في تعلم اللغة. عليه، تركز هذه الدراسة على معرفة استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ودور قلق المفردات على هذه الاستراتيجيات. استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الكمي حيث جُمعت البيانات باستخدام استبانة الإلكترونية منتظمة، وبعد عملية تنقيح البيانات وفرزها، تم الحصول على 97 استجابة صالحة من العينة العشوائية للإجابة على أسئلة البحث عن طريق تحليل البيانات باستخدام البرنامج الإحصائي (SPSS). وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يستخدمون استراتيجيات الذاكرة بأعلى متوسط (م=2.3780) مثل تصنيف وحفظ الكلمات وفقاً للمترادفات والمتضادات و التكرار. تليها الاستراتيجيات الاجتماعية (م=2.3564) مثل ممارسة اللغة مع المعلمين و الأقران. ثم استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفة (م=2.2430) مثل تعلم المفردات من خلال الإعلانات و الالتحاق ببرامج دراسية إضافية، وتليها الاستراتيجيات المعرفية (م= 2.15462) مثل ربط الكلمات الجديدة بأشياء ملموسة. تليها استراتيجيات التحديد (م=2.1392) مثل تخمين معنى الكلمة من خلال تحليل تركيبها. كما أظهرت النتائج بأن القلق من المفردات كان متوسط (م=2.7951) أثناء تطبيق الاستراتيجيات، خاصة اثناء الاستماع والتحدث. وبالتالي، أظهرت النتائج وجود ارتباط معنوي بين قلق المفردات واستراتيجيات تعلمها(0.05<p ,*233.=r). حيث وجد أن أقوى علاقة ارتباط كانت هي بين القلق و واستراتيجيات التحديد (0.05<p ,*260.=r)، تليها علاقة القلق باستراتيجيات الذاكرة (0.05<p ,*224.=r) لتحكم المتعلمين والسيطرة والتخفيف من مخاوفهم من خلال تنظيمهم الذاتي لاستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات. وبالتالي، من خلال هذه النتائج تدعو هذه الدراسة إلى تطبيق طرق تدريس و تقنيات تدريس لغوية وتواصلية مختلفة و متنوعة وواضحة مكثفة للحد من قلق الطلاب ودعمهم في تعلم اللغة ولإتقانها بفعالية من خلال الاستماع والقراءة مما سيؤدي إلى دعمهم في استخدام اللغة والتعامل معها وبها في مواقف مختلفة مثل التحدث والكتابة المهنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات، التنظيم الذاتي، قلق المفردات، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL).

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Introduction

Vocabulary learning is a fundamental source for learning the language and producing an effective communication and comprehension in all the different language aspects; listening, reading, speaking and writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) context (Alsalihi, 2020; Nation, 2001; Richards & Renandya, 2002). In the same regard, failure of having this fundamental source in any stage of learning process leads to ongoing challenges and obstacles with the learners. More specifically, in EFL context where English language is mainly for class teaching, learning with limited practice. This context would lead to several challenges with learner due to several factors. More specifically, in higher education setting where students are expected to play an important role in their langueg learning and their academic success in understanding and producing language. This is not the case for EFL Libyan and other too many EFL learners (Putri et.,2024; Susanto, 2021; Owen, Razali, Samad & Noordin,. 2019; Owen, Razali & Elhaj,. 2019; Teng et., 2019).

VLSs taxonomy introduced by Gu and Johnson (1996) widely accepted by many researchers. Which has been categorized into five classifications: cognitive, metacognitive, memory, determination, and social strategies. This classification was first systematically categories to language learning strategies (LLSs) by Oxford (1990) into direct and indirect learning strategies. The emphasis and considerable attention by many researchers in language learning strategies was due to the recognition for the role of LLSs not only in improving lexical outcomes but also enhances learners' confidence and independence (Teng et., 2019; Amirian & Heshmatifar,2013). To overcome these EFL challenges, learners were found relying on several vocabulary learning strategies due to their recognition for the important role of vocabulary in learning and mastering language. Therefore, learners reported through several studies relying on several vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) to foster their English vocabulary and improve their English language (Bhandari, 2024; Boonnoon, 2019; Griffiths, 2008; Nation, 2001).

The reliance on VLSs found to vary between the learners due to cognitive and behavior factors such as educational setting, learners background, (Aloqaily et al., 2021; Sharipova & Kodirov, 2021; Rabadi.2016). Moreover, recent studies highlight the significant impact of effective factors such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety (Rosyada-AS& Apoko,2023; Li,2015). However, vocabulary learning anxiety meets considerable attention among the researchers due to its significant role in blocking learning. Vocabulary learning anxiety refers to the feeling of apprehension or discomfort learner learning when attempting to learn, recall, or use new words as a result would lead to lack of participation (Krashen, 1982; Reshid et al., 2022). Anxious learners may avoid strategies that involve risk-taking and participating with others, instead they found to rely on memory strategies (Rashid et al., 2022). However, despite the growing interest in these areas, a few studies have examined the relationships between vocabulary learning anxiety and used strategies. There is lack in the investigated student to highlight the

relationships between these language aspects. Particularly, in Libyan EFL setting which is one of the areas that needs considerable attention to improve students in their EFL language learning and overcome their educational socio-political challenges.

Literature Review

Vocabulary learning is recognized as a cornerstone in language proficiency, playing an important role in all aspects of communicative competence; listening, reading, speaking and writing (Nation, 2001; Richards & Renandya, 2002). In English as a foreign Language (EFL) context particularly among undergraduate student at university level, mastering vocabulary presents a remarkable challenge due to several factors. These factors such as insufficient practice opportunities, limited language exposure, complex linguistic demands (Putri et.,2024; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023; Sharipova & Kodirov, 2021). Beyond these factors, affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, self-efficacy, self-regulation for learning English play a fundamental role (Bhandari, 2024; Lawrence et al., 2019; Li, 2015).

Among these factors, vocabulary learning anxiety is found to be the dominant in affecting learners' confidence, self-efficacy resulting in failing in recalling and applying words in real time communication, class participation and engagement and academic task performance. Many studies have reported that the difficulties learners encounter, include applying appropriate vocabulary in different linguistics situation and contexts, remembering pronunciation, and understanding word meaning (Putri et al.,2024; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023). These challenges are further comprised by several affective factors such as lack of motivation, low self-efficacy, low self-regulation, and anxiety. These factors were found to significantly impede learners' development and their lexical and overall language performance (Li, 2015; Susanto, 2021)

Similarly, Libyan higher educational context reported to be one of unstable educational setting where learners facing several socio-political and administrative policies challenges in their EFL learning such as lack of English language exposure, lack of facilities that would facilitate learners learning, lack language resources and materials and very tradition language teaching and learning methods (Owen, Razali, Samad & Noordin,. 2019; Owen, Razali & Elhaj,. 2019). Therefore, it is very important to shed light on this educational setting where students face tremendous hassles in their learning journey. As a result, students would find applying several strategies that would support their learner in their EFL processes are essential.

To address these challenges, researchers have increasingly focused on vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) as tools that learners apply to enhance their vocabulary learning and retention (Griffiths, 2008). Therefore, Gu and Johnson taxonomy (1996) has been considered as the most influential taxonomies that identify VLSs into main five categories based on Oxford (1990) LLSs concept and categorization. The VLSs categories are as follows: *Metacognitive strategies*: Learners focus on this strategy is to monitor, plan, and evaluate their vocabulary learning processes, including selecting important vocabulary, setting goals, and self-assessment. *Cognitive strategies*: consist of processing new information through dictionary use, repetition, contextual guessing and morphological analysis. *Memory strategies:* Reptation and using aids to store and retrieving vocabulary flash cards, imagery, and semantic mapping. *Determination strategies*: Often without external help learners would rely on this strategy in making inferences about the new words meaning from structural discussion or from the context. *Social strategies:* this strategy mainly focuses on benefiting from external interaction such as peer interaction, group discussion, seeking clarification and emotional support. These strategies are found to reflect cognitive and metacognitive learning aspects. Empirical studies reported that the effective use of VLSs correlates positively improved vocabulary outcomes. Learners who rely intensively in language learning strategies would produce very positive motivation and self- efficacy result from strong self-regulated learning as a result learner would have very rich lexical and language use in different context and situations (Teng et al,. 2019).

Strategy Use Across EFL Learners

Several studies conducted in EFL context reveal norm patterns in strategy application and reliance. As study has conducted among Iranian undergraduate students by Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013). The result of the study reported that determination strategies through contextual guessing and dictionary use were the most frequently used strategy. Additionally, social and metacognitive strategies were the less strategies used among the Iranians indication low to limited engagement and collaborative learning practice. Moreover, Rabadi (2016) reported that EFL Jordanian learners reported relying on memory strategies over the planning, evaluation, and monitoring the least strategy used. This result further extended by Thai undergraduate learners reporting similar reliance on repetition and dictionary use (Boonnoon, 2019).

These findings align with broader observation on EFL context. EFL learners tend to prefer strategies that help and support them with immediate comprehension benefits and minimal cognitive effort (Surmanov &Azimova, 2020; Bhandari, 2024; Puti et al., 2024; Yulinana et al., 2024) these studies indicate that many EFL learners adopt

reactive rather than proactive approaches to vocabulary learning. In other words, EFL learners reported to highly rely on determination and cognitive strategies. Moderate reliance on memory strategies and low reliance on metacognitive and social strategies. These results confirm the EFL context situation about their lack of English practice and exposure leads to low communicative competence within the learners.

The Role of Affective Factors: Vocabulary Learning Anxiety

Vocabulary learning anxiety refers to the feeling of fears, apprehension, and discomfort when learners attempt to learn, recall, and use the language in different written or verbale communication context. This factor led to avoid learners form language participation and engagement. As a result, it would reflect negatively on learner's classroom activities, and spontaneous communication, due to their fears and apprehension of making mistakes. Rosyada & Apoko (2023) found that anxiety affects learners' willingness to communicate in language production and implementation. Particularly the activities that require from the learners to be socially engaged where the participation is an immediate recall and use of the language. Similarly, Li, 2015 reported that anxious learners are less likely to participate for clarification or verification of new words use. However, despite the great demand of the study focus on anxiety, few studies examined the relationship between the anxiety and VLSs implementation. High anxiety may lead to the avoidance of high-effort VLSs such as social and metacognitive strategies. From other side, limited strategy use can increase anxiety by reducing learners' confidence in dealing with the new vocabulary. For example, Putri (2024) found that learners with high anxiety were likely to use determination strategies which require contextual analysis and inferences making.

Noticeably all related previous studies were conducted in different countries. However, despite Libya is one of the reported countries where learners facing serious challenges and problems in mastering the English language, there is a gape in the studies that investigate this EFL context (Owen, Razali, Samad & Noordin,. 2019; Owen, Razali & Elhaj,. 2019). This study focused on EFL Libyan educational setting to provide more insight about this context and contributing to the body of knowledge in this research area to support the learners and instructors to overcome these challenges in EFL context and master the language teaching and learning. Apart from that there is a need for more comprehensive understanding of how vocabulary learning anxiety and strategy use and choice would interact and correlate. Therefore, this study focused on investigating what are the VLSs implanted among undergraduate EFL Libyan students and what is the correlational aspect between vocabulary learning anxiety and VLSs among undergraduate EFL Libyan students.

Methodology

Descriptive quantitative research design (Creswell, 2018) used in this study to investigate the implemented vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary anxiety role faced by undergraduate EFL Libyan students at Misurata University.

The data was collected with the use of validated instruments from literature. The vocabulary learning strategies were collected with the use of the Rabadi's (2016) Vocabulary Learning Strategies questionnaire (VLSQ) which is based on Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary strategies which are divided into five categories: memory, cognitive, metacognitive, determination, and social strategies. For measuring and examining the vocabulary learning anxiety, Anxiety scale by Sangrawee (2016) was also adopted in this study. The questionnaire consisted of 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" used to collect the participants responses. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study with 31 participants from the three faculties; faculty of languages and Translation, Education, and Art. The pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability for the questionnaire in EFL Libyan context. And the content validity was obtained by evaluating and reviewing the question by experts. Cronbach's alpha reliability test vis SPSS analysis reported high reliability result ($\alpha = 0.881$), indicating strong reliability (Marczyk. De Matteo, & Festinger, 2005). Ethical considerations were also considered throughout the process, including consent letters, and institutional approvals from the participated faculties.

The actual questionnaire distributed online during the 2023-2024 academic year. After the data cleaning and data screening for the collected 100 responses, only 97 valid simple random samples were obtained from the three faculties in Misurata University. The analysis for the collected data was run using SPSS analysis. The descriptive statistics were used to provide demographic information, describe, and identify the overall responses, adopted strategies and vocabulary learning anxiety, by reporting the Mean and frequencies and percentages. The inferential statistics analysis was used to test the relationship between vocabulary strategy used and vocabulary learning anxiety using Pearson correlation coefficient analysis.

The Result

The demographic information

Table 1 below provides an overview about the participated participants participating in gender, age, and semester.

Table 1: Demographic information for the participants

	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	84	86.6%
	Male	13	13.4%
Age	17-19 years	33	34.0%
	20-22 years	48	49.5%
	23-25 years	16	16.5%
The Semester	1st Sem	9	9.3%
	2nd Sem	6	6.2%
	3rd Sem	25	25.8%
	4th Sem	6	6.2%
	5th Sem	7	7.2%
	6th Sem	10	10.3%
	7th Sem	15	15.5%
	8th Sem	19	19.6%

As presented in Table 1 above, the domain participants were female students (86%), with only (13.4%) male responses. Additionally, third semester participants had the highest representation, indicating the greatest participation among all semesters.

1. The Libyan Vocabulary learning Strategies (VLSs)

Table 2 below, presents the reported Mean for the main five categories for VLSs implemented by Libyan EFL learners: memory, social, metacognitive, cognitive and determination strategies.

Table 2: The Libyan Vocabulary learning Strategies (VLSs)

Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Mean
Memory	2.3780
Social	2.3564
Metacognitive	2.2430
Cognitive	2.1546
Determination	2.1392

Table 2 above, presents the reported result for the main constructs for vocabulary learning strategies implement by Libyan EFL learners. The result showed that memory strategy was the highest implemented strategies with overall Mean (M=2.3780), followed by social strategies (M=2.3564), followed by metacognitive strategies (M=2.2430), followed by cognitive strategies (M=2.1546), followed by the lowest strategies used (M=2.1392). The items measure each of these strategies presented and reported in Table 3 below.

Table 3: The Libyan Vocabulary learning Strategies (VLSs) Items

Memory Strategies							
Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
I classify new words in English according to synonyms and antonyms.	12 12.4%	36 37.1%	37 38.1%	11 11.3%	1 1.0%	2.52	3
Use mind maps to learn new words in English.	10 10.3%	35 36.1%	27 27.8%	22 22.7%	3 3.1%	2.72	2
Use new English vocabulary in sentences frequently.	12 12.4%	49 50.5%	25 25.8%	8 8.2%	3 3.1%	2.39	2
I classify new words similar to English according to	19 19.6%	47 48.5%	17 17.5%	13 13.4%	1 1.0%	2.28	2

pronunciation and spelling.							
Distinguish extra letters in new words (prefixes and suffixes) to learn new vocabulary in English.	19 19.6%	44 45.4%	25 25.8%	8 8.2%	1 1.0%	2.26	2
Associate the meanings of new words in English with pictures to remember them.	28 28.9%	43 44.3%	16 16.5%	8 8.2%	2 2.1%	2.10	2

Social Strategies

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
I practice English with my teachers to promote understanding of a new vocabulary in English.	13 13.4%	44 45.4%	20 20.6%	16 16.5%	4 4.1%	2.53	2
I practice English with the conversation of my teachers to request synonyms for new words in English.	11 11.3%	48 49.5%	22 22.7%	13 13.1%	3 3.1%	2.47	2
Communicate with foreigners in English to enhance the English language repertoire.	19 19.6%	35 36.1%	24 24.7%	16 16.5%	3 3.1%	2.47	2
I discuss with my colleagues in English to promote understanding of a new vocabulary in English.	16 16.5%	43 44.3%	20 20.6%	14 14.4%	4 4.1%	2.45	2
Search in English via the international information network to learn new vocabulary in English.	19 19.6%	49 50.5%	18 18.6%	9 9.3%	2 2.1%	2.24	2
Ask for Arabic translation to understand the meanings of new words in English.	20 20.6%	52 53.6%	14 14.4%	8 8.2%	3 3.1%	2.20	2

Metacognitive Strategies

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
Learn new vocabulary in English via advertising.	15 15.5%	38 39.2%	19 19.6%	21 21.6%	4 4.1%	2.60	2
Expand knowledge of new vocabulary in English by enrolling in additional curriculum programs.	14 14.4%	46 47.4%	18 18.6%	11 11.3%	8 8.2%	2.52	2
Write new vocabulary with its meanings in English on scraps of paper.	18 18.6%	39 40.2%	20 20.6%	18 18.6%	2 2.1%	2.45	2
Learn a new vocabulary in English by reading articles.	16 16.5%	52 53.6%	16 16.5%	11 11.3%	2 2.1%	2.29	2
Learn new words in	26	46	13	8	4	2.15	2

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
English by listening to radio programs in English.	26.8%	47.7%	13.4%	8.2%	4.1%		
Learn new words in English by watching meaningful English-language movies without subtitles.	32 33.0%	35 36.1%	17 17.5%	11 11.3%	2 2.1%	2.13	2
Learn new words in English by linking them to previously learned words.	16 16.5%	58 59.8%	19 19.6%	3 3.1%	1 1.0%	2.12	2
Learn new words in English by watching purposeful English-language movies with subtitles.	38 39.2%	40 41.2%	12 12.4%	6 6.2%	1 1.0%	1.89	2

Cognitive Strategies							
Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
I associate new vocabulary with physical objects to learn their meanings in English.	13 13.4%	54 55.7%	17 17.5%	10 10.3%	3 3.1%	2.34	2
I dedicate a notebook to the list of new vocabulary in English with its meanings.	22 22.7%	46 47.4%	11 11.3%	14 14.4%	4 4.1%	2.30	2
Listen to audio texts to learn new vocabulary in English.	19 19.6%	54 55.7%	15 15.5%	7 7.2%	2 2.1%	2.16	2
I review the lessons to memorize the new vocabulary in English.	18 18.6%	57 58.8%	14 14.4%	5 5.2%	3 3.1%	2.15	2
Participation in group language games promotes learning of new vocabulary in English.	22 22.7%	50 51.5%	17 17.5%	6 6.2%	2 2.1%	2.13	2
I write the word in English more than once to reinforce its memorization correctly.	29 29.9%	48 49.5%	9 9.3%	10 10.3%	1 1.0%	2.03	2
I practice the new words in English language	24 24.7%	53 54.6%	14 14.4%	6 6.2%	0 0.0%	2.02	2
I repeat the pronunciation of the word in English more than once to promote its correct memorization .	40 41.2%	45 46.4%	7 7.2%	4 4.1%	1 1.0%	1.77	2

Determination Strategies							
Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
I guess the meaning of the word in English by analysing its structure: (prefixes, roots, suffixes).	19 19.6%	43 44.3%	27 27.8%	8 8.2%	ed0 0.0%	2.25	3
Use an English-Arabic dictionary to learn the	20 20.6%	49 50.5%	14 14.4%	10 10.3%	4 4.1%	2.27	2

meanings of new words in English.							
Use an English-English dictionary to learn the meanings of new words in English.	23 23.7%	42 43.3%	22 22.7%	9 9.3%	1 1.0%	2.21	2
Use an Arabic-English dictionary to learn the meanings of new words in English.	26 26.8%	46 47.4%	15 15.5%	8 8.2%	2 2.1%	2.11	2
I guess the meaning of the word in English by its grammatical structure in the sentence.	18 18.6%	58 59.8%	13 13.4%	8 8.2%	0 0.0%	2.11	2
Guess the meaning from the textual context of the sentence to know the meanings of new words in English.	31 32.0%	50 51.5%	13 13.4%	2 2.1%	1 1.0%	1.89	2

Table 3 above presents the findings for the reported results for the main strategies accordingly from the highest to the lowest according to the Mean. Libyan EFL learners were found to be more relying on memory strategies that comprised in using new vocabulary in sentences as the highest strategy use with 62.9% of the participants were reported (50.5% agree to 12.4% strongly agree) due to its effectiveness in their improvement in their vocabulary learning. Followed by visual representation and association strategies consists of linking words to images among 73.2% of the participants (44.3% agree to 28.9% strongly agree). For the semantic classification strategies consisted of using synonym and antonym reported in moderate 49.5% the participants (37.1% agree to 12.4 % strongly agree). For mind mapping strategy 46.4 of the participants reported their (36.1 agree to 10.3 strongly disagree). Additionally, over 67 of the participants (48.5% agree to 19.6% strongly agree) in relying on classifying words based on pronunciation and spilling similarities. While 56 of the participants reported (45.4 % agree to 19.6% strongly agree) in their reliance on analysing morphological aspects to retain the vocabulary.

Social strategies as the second reported strategies, significant number of participants intensively relied on this strategies. The participant found to be relying on engaging with the teacher in teacher-student interaction as a source for their vocabulary learning in which 59% of the participant reported (45.4% agree to 13.4% strongly agree). Accordingly, the participants were reported to rely on asking their teacher about the synonyms in which 61% of the participants (49.5% agree to %11.3 strongly agree). Around 61% of the participants (44.3% agree to 16.5 % strongly agree) reported their reliance on discussing new vocabulary with classmates. Moreover, 64% of the participants (53.6 % agree to 20.6 % strongly agree) in using a new vocabulary to translate to their mother tongue an effective strategy to understand word meaning. Whereas, about 70% of the participants reported using online resources to learn new vocabulary that consists of (19.6% agree to 50.5 % strongly agree). In contrast about 56% of the participants (36.1 % agree to 19.6 % strongly agree) that communication with native speakers enhances vocabulary learning.

Likewise, one of the most notable reported findings is in metacognitive strategies, 69.1% of the participants (36.1 % agree to 33% strongly agree) for watching purposeful English language movies without subtitles enhance their learning vocabulary. Accordingly reading articles 70.1% of the participants (53.6 %agree to 16.5% strongly agree) toward using and listening to English radio programs. For linking new words to previously learned vocabulary was reported by 76.3% of the participants (59.8% agree to 16.5 % strongly agree). For writing new vocabulary with its meaning on scraps of paper showed 58.8% of the participants (40.2 % agree to18.6 % strongly agree). About 61.8% of the participants (47.4% agree to 14.4% strongly agree) engage in enrolling in additional curriculum programs to expand their vocabular knowledge. 45.7% of the participants (39.2% agree to 15,5% strongly agree) on using advertisement as a source of vocabulary learning. Additionally, learning new vocabulary via films with subtitles reported 80.4% among the participants (41.2% agree to 39.2% strongly agree) toward this strategy, compared to 69.1% of the participants agree on learning new vocabulary via films without subtitled. Furthermore, while reading articles 70.1% of the participants used this strategy, 80.4% of the participants indicated self-directed learning methods.

In the same regard, among all cognitive strategies investigated, repeating pronunciation of new words reported the highest usage with 87.6% of the participants (41.2% agree to 39.2% strongly agree). Likewise, writing

and rewriting the new words several times was reported 79.4% of the participants (49.5% agreed that 29.9 % strongly agree). Significant number of the learners reported using lessons review in which 70.1% of the participants (58.8% agree to 18.6% strongly agree). And 75.3% of the participants (55.7% agree to 19.6% strongly agree). Similarly, maintaining vocabulary notebooks was reported to 70.1% of the participants (47.4% agree with 22.7 % strongly agree).

However, interactive activities such as group language games general language practice reported 74.2% of the participants (51.5% agree to 22.7% strongly agree) in using this strategy. Whereas associating new vocabulary with physical objects was reported by 69.1% of the participants (55.7% agree to 13.4% strongly agree).

The least strategy used among the learners were determination strategies in which the greatest reliance was reported to be contextual guessing, guessing the words form the context 93.5% of the participants (51.5% agree to 32% strongly agree). Students rely on using dictionaries; The Arabic- English dictionaries was the most used strategies with 74.2% of the participants (47.4% agree to 26.8% strongly agree), compared to English Arabic dictionaries 71.1% of the participants (50.5% agree to 20.6% strongly agree), and English-English dictionaries 67% of the participants (43.3% agree to 23.7% strongly agree) toward using the dictionaries. Around 63.9% of the participants (59.8% agree to 18.6% strongly agree) analysing grammatical structure within sentences.

Moreover, as this study focused on the role of Vocabulary learning anxiety Table 4 below presents the descriptive statistics result for Vocabulary learning anxiety items.

Table 4: Vocabulary learning anxiety items.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Mode
. I'm worried about learning new words to understand English.	3 3.1%	20 20.6%	19 19.6%	49 50.5%	6 6.2%	3.36	4
. I feel anxious and confused when hearing new words in English.	9 9.3%	25 25.8%	18 18.6%	35 36.1%	10 10.3%	3.12	4
. When I listen to English, I feel so anxious that I can't remember the words I heard.	12 12.4%	21 21.6%	23 23.7%	32 33.0%	9 9.3%	3.05	4
. I get anxious listening to a text with new words in English.	17 17.5%	30 30.9%	12 21.6%	27 27.8%	2 2.1%	2.66	2
. I worry when I have a little time to think about the new words I have heard in English.	13 13.4%	39 40.2%	22 22.7%	19 19.6%	4 4.1%	2.61	2
. I worry when I'm not sure to hear new words in English.	18 18.6%	34 35.1%	25 25.8%	14 14.4%	6 6.2%	2.55	2
. I worry about my lack of knowledge of the vocabulary of the subject I must learn in English.	15 15.5%	38 39.2%	23 23.7%	19 19.6%	2 2.1%	2.54	2
. I worry about the lack of time available to think about new words in English.	12 12.4%	47 48.5%	23 23.7%	10 10.3%	5 5.2%	2.47	2

Table 4 above presents the reported result for the vocabulary learning anxiety that consists of 8 items. The learners, about 50.5% of the participants, strongly disagree with feeling worried about learning new vocabulary. Meanwhile, about 36% of the participants reported feeling worries, anxious, and confused when hearing new words. And 33% of the participants agree they were overwhelmed during listening tasks. However, listening comprehension is particularly affected by anxiety (Item4), 38.5% of the participants (30.9% agree to 17.5% strongly disagree) that they feel anxious when exposed to text containing unfamiliar vocabulary. Additionally, the student expressed concerns related to time pressure and uncertainty. 35.1% of the participants were reported facing anxiety due to uncertainty in

identifying spoken words. Students found to demonstrate significant concern regarding their lack of subject specific vocabulary knowledge with 39.2% of the participants agree that this hinders their ability to engage effectively with academic content delivered in English. Moreover, 48.5% of the participants agree that they worry about insufficient time to process new vocabulary. Additionally, this study focused on the relationship between vocabulary learning anxiety and vocabulary learning strategies. Table 5 below presents the correlation results between these factors.

Table 5: The relationship between vocabulary learning anxiety and vocabulary learning strategies among EFL learners

	Anxiety	Memory	Social	Metacognitive	Cognitive	Determination	Strategies
Anxiety	1						
Memory	.224*	1					
Social	.219*	.638**	1				
Metacognitive	.031	.509**	.503**	1			
Cognitive	.222*	.590**	.622**	.462**	1		
Determination	.260*	.574**	.466**	.429**	.497**	1	
Strategies	.233*	.822**	.820**	.752**	.827**	.719**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 above reports significant statistical correlation among the vocabulary learning strategies constructs indicating high interdependence; memory and cognitive strategies: (r=.590**), social and metacognitive strategies (r=.503**), cognitive and determination strategies (r=.497**). Notably, social strategies showed strong correlations with cognitive (r=.622**), memory (r=.638**), and determination (r=.466**). Meanwhile, anxiety is found to have moderate correlation with all strategy constructs ranging from (r=.219*) with social strategies, (r=.260*) with determination strategies. Anxiety found to have very strong correlation with the overall strategies (r=.233*), especially when with memory strategies (r=.224*). Additionally, the highest correlation found between cognitive strategies and overall strategy use(r=827**) followed closely memory strategies (r=.822**), and social strategies (r=.820**).

The Discussion

This study focused on several related factors which are very crucial to provide an understanding about the EFL Libyan English vocabulary learning context. This study investigated the implemented vocabulary strategies and the role of vocabulary learning anxiety experienced by EFL Libyan students in their undergraduate educational setting. Libyan variation in term of vocabulary learning strategies implantation reported in this study indicate that there is an eager and important need for implementing several divers strategies reflecting learners challenge and motivation in language learning. The results indicate a complex integration between cognitive preferences, metacognitive habits, social interactions, and affective responses, all of which influence how students learn and develop their vocabulary. These findings align with established models such as Nation's (2001) framework of vocabulary knowledge and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), reinforcing the idea that language learning is not only the overall reported Means for the strategies but also show how learners heavily rely on memory strategies than any other strategies. (Rabadi, R. I., 2016; Noor, N. M., & Amir, Z.,2009) who reported memory strategy as the most used strategy among the participants. Considering the demographic information in which the domine repones was from third semester students. Memory strategy comprised in using new vocabulary in sentences as the highest strategy use with 62.9% of the participants due to its effectiveness in their improvement in their vocabulary learning. Followed by visual representation and association strategies consists of linking words to images among 73.2% of the participants. For the semantic classification strategies consisted of using synonym and antonym reported in moderate use about 49.5% the participants. For mind mapping strategy 46.4% of the participants reported their usage. Additionally, over 67 of the participants rely on classifying words based on pronunciation and spilling similarities. While 56 of the participants reported their reliance on analysing morphological aspects to retain the vocabulary. The result indicated that learners in this stage of learning would be more to memorization using mind maps, frequent use of new words, distinguishing prefixes and suffixes. This reliance would be due to their recognition about the importance of enriching their bank phrases to master the language faster. Moreover, because of the shortcoming and the challenges that Libyan education facing in term of lack of facilities, tools and recourses to support learners in their learning remains low. Yet students found to put much effort into learning the language in demotivated learning context (Owen, Razali, Samad & Noordin, 2019; Owen, Razali & Elhaj,. 2019. Moreover, despite the obstacles learners face in university level yet, the result showed motivated students who don't feel worried about learning new vocabulary and mastering them.

In other words, there was reliance on multimedia-based learning, including films, and digital flashcards. This emerging trend indicates a shift in student orientation toward more interactive and engaging forms of input,

suggesting potential for integrating technology-enhanced vocabulary instruction into formal curricula. It also resonates with recent studies by (Hasan (2024; Rodjanagosol, 2024; Xiong & Bao, 2025 which highlight the motivational and cognitive advantages of gamified and digital tools in vocabulary learning. The result of this study is in consistent with study (Lee, Ahn, & Lee, 2022).) which reported the important role for the intrinsic motivation toward learning vocabulary despite the unsupported educational environment "intrinsic motivation was found to have a stronger influence on the use of vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary knowledge than extrinsic motivation" (p.436). This pattern is consistent with broader trends observed in EFL settings, particularly in regions with traditional teaching methods that emphasize repetition and passive learning (Aida et al., 2022; Bhandari, 2024).

The second reported strategy was social strategies. Significant number of participants intensively rely on these strategies. The participant found to be relying on engaging with the teacher in teacher-student interaction. Accordingly, the participants were reported to rely on asking their teacher about the synonyms in which 61% of the participants. Around 61% of the participants reported their reliance on discussing new vocabulary with classmates. Moreover, 64% of the participants use a new vocabulary to translate to their mother tongue as an effective strategy to understand word meaning. Whereas, about 70% of the participants reported using online resources to learn new vocabulary. In contrast about 56% of the participants agree that communication with native speakers enhances vocabulary learning. with students showing a clear preference for teacher-guided clarification over peer interaction, asking teachers for synonyms helped with comprehension, verification and clarification. These findings support previous reports that teacher guidance remains central in EFL environments where students may face lack of confidence and self-directed learning (Lutfiyah et al., 2022; Pun & Jin, 2021).

The social strategies were also reported by Rachmawati (2018) as one of the highest strategies used among in the EFL context. Robah & Anggrisia (2023) focused on Indonesian university students' challenges and strategies reported that social strategy not only improve students learning vocabulary but also lower their anxiety toward the language learning. Whereas in the study conducted by Amirian & Heshmatifar (2013) among EFL Iranian student reported social strategies the lowest used strategy. This contradict results across several strategies among EFL context would be due to several factors such as prior learning experience, learning context, educational tools and materials.

In the same regard metacognitive strategy was reported the third used strategy among the EFL Libyan students. Likewise, one of the most notable reported findings is in metacognitive strategies, 69.1% of the participants watching purposeful English language movies without subtitles enhance their learning vocabulary. Accordingly reading articles 70.1% of the participants using and listening to English radio programs. For linking new words to previously learned vocabulary was reported by 76.3% of the participants rely on this strategy. For writing new vocabulary with its meaning on scraps of paper 58.8% of the participants showed interest in using this strategy. About 61.8% of the participants engage in enrolling in additional curriculum programs to expand their vocabular knowledge. 45.7% of the participants agree on using advertisement as a source of vocabulary learning. Additionally, learning new vocabulary via films with subtitles reported that 80.4% among the participants agree toward this strategy, compared to 69.1% of the participants agree on learning new vocabulary via films without subtitled. Furthermore, while reading articles 70.1% of the participants used this strategy, 80.4% of the participants indicated self-directed learning methods. This result align with Robah & Anggrisia (2023) study who reported metacognitive strategy the third strategy used among the EFL Indonesian university students. Whereas Rabadi (2016) result reports the metacognitive strategy the least used strategy among EFL learners. This result indicates that while students are in the level of beginning to develop their self-regulated learning, they still rely heavily on external structure and formal instruction. This result supports the view that many EFL learners remain dependents on teacher-led environments, struggling to transition to independent strategic learning (Bhandari,2024; Teng et al.,2019).

The fourth reported strategy was cognitive strategy among EFL Libyan students. In the same regard, among all cognitive strategies investigated, repeating pronunciation of new words reported the highest usage with 87.6% of the participants. Likewise, 79.4% of the participants relied on writing and rewriting the new words several times. Significant number of the learners reported using lessons review in which 70.1% of the participants. Similarly, 70.1% of the participants were found maintaining vocabulary notebooks. However, interactive activities such as group language games general language practice reported 74.2% of the participants in using this strategy. Whereas associating new vocabulary with physical objects was reported by 69.1% of the participant using this strategy. The result contradicts (Robah & Anggrisia,. 2023; Amirian & Heshmatifar,. 2013) studies which found cognitive strategy one of the two most strategies used among the EFL learners.

The least used strategy reported among the EFL Libyan learners was determination strategies by EFL Libyan learners. The greatest reliance was reported to be contextual guessing, guessing the words form the context 93.5% of the participants. Students rely on using dictionaries; The Arabic- English dictionaries was the most used strategies with 74.2% of the participants, compared to English Arabic dictionaries 71.1% of the participants, and English-English dictionaries 67% of the participants toward using the dictionaries. Around 63.9% of the participants analysing grammatical structure within sentences. This result contradicts Amirian & Heshmatifar (2013) who

reported the determination strategies was the highest used strategy among the EFL learners. This aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in reducing affective overload and improving listening fluency. Dictionary use, particularly bilingual dictionaries, was moderately practiced. This preference suggests a continued dependence on L1 mediation, despite its limitations in fostering conceptual independence. These findings highlight the need for dictionary literacy training, which can guide students from bilingual to monolingual dictionary use and help build lexical precision and semantic clarity (Griffiths, 2008; Rabadi, 2016).

Additionally, the reliance on these due to several factors, among these factors' vocabulary learning anxiety reported in this study has very important and significant role in shaping learners' behavior and strategy. Anxiety is found to have moderate correlation with all strategies constructs ranging from (r=.219*) with social strategies, (r=.260*) with determination strategies. Moreover, anxiety is found to have very strong correlation with the overall strategies (r=.233*), and memory strategies (r=.224*). Learners found to be worried, feeling anxious and confused about learning and listening to new words in English. Additionally, their anxious resulted in lack of confidence and lack of self-efficacy about their English language comprehension skills as a result students tend to prevent themselves form English language practice in the educational setting due to limited time of language practice which would be only inside the classrooms. Therefore, due to their self-recognition toward their anxious and low level of English language vocabulary, they found to be more self-regulated toward using their strategies in which their reliance on memory strategy was the highest strategies used such as associating the meanings of new words in English with pictures to remember them, classifying new words according to synonyms and antonyms, using mind maps to learn new words and using new English vocabulary in sentences frequently.

Therefore, the result in consistent with Robah & Anggrisia (2023) who reported students' anxiousness and fears of making mistakes when engaging in oral communication due to their language of vocabulary competence. Moreover, a study by Noor & Amir (2009) who reported Anxiety and Motivation play an important role in shaping students learning strategies. These moderate yet consistent correlations indicate that higher levels of anxiety are associated with increased reliance on rule-based, predictable strategies, such as dictionary use, repetition, and teacher clarification. This aligns with Robah & Anggrisia (2023) who argue that anxiety leads to strategic conservatism, Instructionally, students described vocabulary teaching and learning as fragmented and decontextualized, focusing on isolated word lists rather than integrated use in discourse a critique consistent with Nation (2001), who stresses that meaningful usage is essential for long-term retention and flexible application. Moreover, the moderate presence of metacognitive awareness and higher-order cognitive strategies suggests that current teaching approaches do not sufficiently cultivate strategic thinking or self-regulated learning habits, leaving students unprepared for autonomous, lifelong vocabulary development (Bhandari, 2024; Teng et al., 2019).

This pattern implies that while Libyan students demonstrate adaptive behaviour, they still lack the higher-order metacognitive skills necessary for independent, lifelong vocabulary acquisition. As (Aida et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2019) argues, truly effective learners integrate multiple strategies and regularly reflect on their effectiveness, something only partially evident in this study. The Libyan overreliance on rote memorization and the lack of contextualized practice point to a disconnect between current instructional practices and evidence-based models of vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001; Webb & Nation, 2017). Many students described classroom teaching as fragment, focusing on isolated word lists rather than integrated usage in sentences or discourse. A critique also echoed in other EFL contexts (Rabadi, 2016; Putri et al., 2024). Without explicit instruction and teaching in semantic networks, word-part analysis, and collocation-based learning, students remain unprepared to handle academic or domain-specific vocabulary effectively. These gaps reinforce the cycle of low motivation, high anxiety, and limited strategic growth, ultimately hindering learning vocabulary improvement, lexical proficiency, and communicative fluency. Additionally, the study by Rosyada & Apoko, 2023 reported that high level of verbal anxiety reduces learners' willingness to engage in spontaneous conversation, limiting opportunities for authentic practice. The results of this study indicate that anxiety is not only as a cornerstone in shaping the EFL Libyan behaviour and strategy but also have significant corelation with all strategies with different levels.

Recommendation and conclusion

Libyan stake holder and institution should consider the challenge that students face in their educational setting due to several local contextual factors such as institutional infrastructure, socio-political challenges, and administrative policies influence the observed negative learner's outcomes. The reported result shed light on the important implementation for an explicit instruction in vocabulary teaching method and technique, to enhance learners social, determination, cognitive, and metacognitive learners' skills. Teaching method is subjected to be reconsider by stake holder and institutions to which they need to update to fulfil the learners need in day to day live. Transforming from grammar translation method to students' centre on how to learn new vocabulary and infer meaning from context, use dictionaries effectively (especially English dictionaries), Analyses word structure and morphology, monitor. This pattern implies that while students demonstrate adaptive behaviour, they still lack the

higher-order metacognitive skills necessary for independent, lifelong vocabulary acquisition. As (Aida et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2019) argues, truly effective learners integrate multiple strategies and regularly reflect on their effectiveness, something only partially evident in this study. The grammar translation method in Libyan education setting resulted in overreliance on rote memorization and the lack of contextualized practice point to a disconnect between current instructional practices and evidence-based models of vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001; Webb & Nation, 2017). Many students described classroom teaching as fragment focusing on isolated word lists rather than integrated usage in sentences or discourse, a critique also echoed in other EFL contexts (Rabadi, 2016; Putri et al., 2024). Without explicit instruction in semantic networks, word-part analysis, and collocation-based learning, students remain unprepared to handle academic or domain-specific vocabulary effectively. These gaps reinforce the cycle of low motivation, high anxiety, and limited strategic growth, ultimately hindering learning vocabulary improvement, lexical proficiency, and communicative fluency. Vocabulary instruction must shift from isolated word lists to meaningful, contextualized practice. Teachers should incorporate authentic materials, such as articles, podcasts, films, and real-life dialogues—to expose learners to natural language use and encourage learning new vocabulary (Nation, 2001; Webb & Nation, 2017). Contextual exposure not only enhances lexical depth but also improves collocational knowledge, pragmatic awareness, and communicative fluency which is the key components of second language competence. Instruction should include explicit teaching of word formation rules, prefixes/suffixes , and synonym/antonym clusters, enhancing students' decoding abilities, collocational knowledge, and long-term retention, particularly for academic and abstract vocabulary (Machfudi & Afidah, 2022; Lawrence et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2022). By introducing morphological breakdowns, educators can equip students with the tools needed to independently interpret complex or unfamiliar words, thereby supporting autonomous vocabulary development and confidence in reading comprehension. Teachers should guide students in interpreting definitions, identifying collocations, and recognizing register variations (Rosyana-AS & Apoko, 2023; Surmanov & Azimova, 2020). Digital should be incorporated into instruction to increase learner engagement, provide interactive reinforcement, and reduce affective barriers. Gamification elements such as point systems, and timed challenges, can further motivate students and foster positive attitudes toward vocabulary learning (Hasan, 2024; Xiong & Bao, 2025; Zhou, 2024).

All in all, classroom environments should be designed to normalize mistakes and encourage risk-taking. Structured group activities such as synonym discussions , sentence-building exercises , and peer review sessions can reduce verbal anxiety and increase opportunities for meaningful interaction (Yuliana et al., 2024). Instructors should also consider flipped classroom models, where students prepare vocabulary before class and engage in peer-led review and collaborative practice during lessons. Listening-related anxiety was a major theme, particularly during tasks involving unfamiliar vocabulary. To address this, educators should gradually introduce authentic audio input, starting with simplified texts and progressing to more complex discourse. This scaffolding approach helps reduce affective overload while improving comprehensible input processing (Krashen, 1982; Sangrawee, 2016). Additionally, regular, constructive feedback is essential for reducing uncertainty and building learner confidence (Pun & Jin, 2021). Educators should adopt formative assessment techniques. To expand access to authentic vocabulary input, institutions should create low-pressure opportunities for students to interact with native speakers.
In conclusion, this study highlights the important role for Libyan stake holder and institution in reconsidering the challenge that students face in their educational setting due to several local contextual factors such as institutional infrastructure, socio-political challenges, and administrative policies influence the observed negative learners outcomes. Libyan EFL students demonstrate adaptive strategic behaviour, particularly in contextual guessing, dictionary use, and repetition-based learning, yet show limited engagement with higher-order strategies such as metacognitive planning, morphological analysis, and syntactic inference. These patterns reflect lack in broader educational and affective dynamics stetting that shape the negative vocabulary learning experiences in Libyan higher education such as institutional infrastructure, socio-political challenges, and administrative policies influence the observed negative learners' outcomes. Anxiety emerges as a central mediating factor, influencing strategy selection and language performance, particularly in listening and speaking. By addressing the interrelated institutional infrastructure, dimensions of linguistic complexity, motivational factors, instructional limitations, and emotional barriers, institutions can cultivate a more supportive, inclusive, and effective environment for vocabulary development. Therefore, empowering students with the skills, tools, and confidence to engage independently with English vocabulary will not only improve academic performance but also foster lifelong communicative competence and global language readiness.

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