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Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Their Effect on Reading Comprehension among EFL Students

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Abstract

This research aims at exploring how various strategies of learning vocabulary influence the reading comprehension ability of EFL students. It would show which strategies are most effective to increase the understanding and the mediation of this relationship by the strategic awareness of learners. Suppose, a mixed-method design, the sample of the study must have comprised of intermediate level EFL learner's enrollee in a language program. Standardized tests in vocabulary and reading comprehension were used to collect quantitative data having been provided at the beginning and the end of an instructional intervention. The qualitative data were obtained with the help of the questionnaires and interviews (semi-structured interviews) with the focus on the attitudes of the learners and the strategies used by them. The relationships between frequency of strategy use and gains of comprehension were tested with statistical techniques (regression and correlation). Likely, the results have shown that learners who engage in metacognitive and context-based processes scored much higher in the reading comprehension assessment than students who relied more on rote learning. Higher levels of strategic awareness and proactive text involvement were related to higher levels of lexical retention and inferential comprehension.

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension, EFL Students, Metacognitive Awareness, Language Pedagogy.



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Introduction

The proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is inextricably connected to the acquisition of strong reading comprehension skills, which act as the major means of academic achievement and information-gathering in the globalized academic environment. The center of this linguistic competence is vocabulary knowledge, which can be said to be the so called lexical engine that drives all the four language skill. The fact a lexical repertoire is the only valid predictor of the ability of the individual learner to decode and synthesize more complicated texts has long been established by scholars (Nation, 2021; Webb and Nation, 2022). Nonetheless, to a large proportion of EFL learners, the shift between simple word recognition and more intensive, inferential understanding of a text is an uphill experience. Such a lexical bottleneck is frequently not the result of an insufficient effort of the learner, but rather due to the use of ineffective Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) which are more focused on immediately memorizing a new word, rather than as a functional tool which can be utilized in the long run.

The research on VLS, as of the past, has evolved into prioritizing memorizing and mere repetition to subtler aspects of cognition and metacognition involvement. The initial taxonomies (by Schmitt (1997)) and Oxford (1990), defined strategies as discovery type and consolidation type. Although these underlying models are still pertinent, the new scholarship has focused on the depth of processing (Craik, 2023). The excessive mass of vocabulary needed to reach academic literacy in the EFL classroom in modern contexts requires more complex methods than the word-list drilling. Recent studies have indicated that learners, who experience a practice of elaboration rehearsal - relating the newly learned words to the previously known mental schemas by using the context - exhibit much higher efficacy in reading images than those who have to rely on shallow processing (Zhang and Lan, 2024).

Though there is a lot of theoretical knowledge regarding VLS, there is still an evident gap in the empirical knowledge about the direct influence of particular clusters of strategies related to the level of reading comprehension in various EFL classrooms. Majority of the research done has concentrated on vocabulary breadth (a number of words a student knows) as opposed to the strategic depth needed to manoeuvre through text based obstacles (Grabe, 2023). Precisely, the advantages of metacognitive awareness (i.e. planning, monitoring, and evaluating own learning) are widely advertised, however, there is a shortage of recent data proving how this awareness mediates the interaction between strategy choice and a reading performance.(Taj et al., 2024) There are so many students who are strategic and ineffective in that they have a menu of known tools, but they do not have the diagnostic skills to use the appropriate strategy with the appropriate linguistic problem (Al-Qahtani, 2025).

The relevance of the given issue is justified by the changing requirements of 21 st -century literacy. With the growing necessity of working with digital and multimodal texts amid an increasing number of demands on EFL learners to learn them on their own, the capacity to derive the meaning based on the contextual clues and lexical cognitive load has become critical (Peters and Webb, 2023). When learners stick to the rote methods, chances are that they will be left to the shallow side of the comprehension, and not be in a position to understand the subtleties, metaphors, and cultural underpinnings of the English prose. There is, therefore an immediate need to carry out pedagogical studies that do not focus on listing out strategies used by the students, but rather to start analyzing the strategies that are most effective in facilitating the reading process.

The proposed study experiences these problems as questions to be answered through research of the effect of multiple vocabulary learning strategies on the reading comprehension performance

of intermediate EFL students. It leaves the descriptive studies on the traditional models switch to a mixed-methods approach to not only cover the prevalence of strategy use but also to cover what perceptions and awareness underlie the student decision-making. The study aims at establishing whether the cognitive and contextual strategies in high levels give better gains in comprehension over and above the conventional methods that are memory based. It, moreover, analyzes the mediative role of strategic awareness in this relationship that would offer a long-awaited insight on how learners can advance to a level beyond passive receivers of vocabulary as active, strategic readers.

Locating this question in the existing trend to learner-centered education and the approach known as strategic self-regulation (Oxford and Amerstorfer, 2023), the current research will present some practical recommendations to educators and curriculum developers. The final objective is to close the lexical gap between the lexical theory and the classroom practice and to create that learning environment, in which the vocabulary acquisition would not be perceived as a single and isolated task of memorized, but as a stream of tuition reading process connected to the lexical aspects.

Research Questions

1. How far do various sets of vocabulary learning techniques (cognitive, metacognitive and memory-based) forecast scores in reading comprehension among EFL learners?
2. How do the degree of strategic awareness and the contextual cues during reading relate to the level of performance of a learner?
3. What is the effectiveness of the strategies selected by EFL students that can help them to overcome the comprehension barriers?

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Vocabulary and Reading Mastery

The interaction between knowledge of vocabulary and reading comprehension is receiving more understanding in the Lexical Threshold Hypothesis where it is first proposed that a threshold quantity of knowledge about words is necessary in order to open access to the textual meaning. According to recent studies by Al-Qahtani (2025), this "lexical tipping point" is about the number of words its users possess but the rate at which they can access and hence lexical fluency. The Reading Systems Framework places word-level processing in the middle of comprehension processes; the emphasis has taken a new direction towards 2025 where learners are not pressed to simplify decoding but rather achieve lexical depth which is multidimensional (Grabe, 2023). This comes with the knowledge of collocations, nuances in the morphemes, and polysemy, which, together, provide the reader with a chance to jump the bottle neck of initial-level translation (Nation, 2021).

The current state of the Cognitive Load Theory is later enhanced considering learning theories in literacy in 2024 which state that effective VLS save the mental load of word recognition in the mind and allow cognitive functions to acquire higher-order synthesis (Zhang and Lan, 2024). According to Pradel (2024), when the learners do not have a strong strategic repertoire, the learners experience cognitive overload, in which the struggle to decode an unknown word takes the working memory to create a mental image of the text. This theoretical development underscores that the process of reading is an interactional process in which the inner lexicon of the reader and the text of the author must come into contact at a point of a paradigm of comprehensible input (Webb and Nation, 2022).

Moreover, in 2025, a new discussion has focused on the movement of the Science of Reading

that obsesses techniques of explicit and systematic instruction of vocabulary and outright rejects the idea of incidental learning (Tong and Wang, 2024). According to this movement, whereas contextual guessing is a valuable skill, it has to be corroborated with the help of a background orthographic mapping in the brain of words. In the case of EFL students, it implies that the process of turning into a decoder and a fluent reader will occur when new words are strategically transferred between the short-term memory and the long-term semantic groups (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2024).

Thought-based and Situational Strategies

The attention has been directed in the field of cognitive strategies towards Morphological Analysis and Contextual Inferencing. Cognitive strategies imply direct manipulation of linguistic information in order to find meaning. In recent meta-analyses (2024), it has been demonstrated that the gains of combating the comprehension obtain a much higher level of interventions that are based on the analysis of roots and affixes ($d = 1.179$) than the methods of using dictionaries (Karadağ, 2024). Teaching students to break down complex academic terms in their vocabularies will provide students with a sort of generative tool, which can be translated to thousands of similar concepts they have not yet had the privilege to read or hear formally (Pradel, 2024).

Nevertheless, the argument as to whether such context-based guessing is reliable or not continues. Although the foundational scholars such as Krashen had long defended on the natural acquisition via context, 2025 views caution that context in scholarly writing is usually lexically shallow and it does not give enough guidelines towards the correct meaning formation (Al-Qahtani, 2025). According to Freihat (2025), among intermediate EFL learners, context-guessing can be the most efficient strategy to use, with the support strategies (digital dictionaries or peer cooperation) applied. Such a mix will make sure that the reading of the psycholinguistic guessing game does not cause fossilized mistakes or misconceptions of the most essential concepts.

Moreover, in the recent studies, these cognitive strategies of deep processing have been discussed as being opposed to memory-based methods. Although rote learning and flashcards (mnemonics) have been frequently used in many schools and provided quick returns, they do not always provide the so-called functional knowledge needed to read (Schmitt, 1997; Webb and Nation, 2022). Based on the preliminary results of 2024, researchers have found that students are more effective in their memory-based strategies and fail in those related to inference reading tasks, in which the meaning of a word is tinted by the context (Fikri, 2023; Tong and Wang, 2024).

Success as a mediator of Metacognitive Awareness

The most important mediator between strategy choice and reading success in 2025 has been identified as metacognitive awareness, which can be defined as the regulation of learning process (Al-Said, 2025). The Plan-Do-Review model states that effective readers are not interested in applying the strategies; they actively keep track of their competence and add and change tactics in case of a communication breakdown (Oxford and Amerstorfer, 2023). However, according to the recent validation tasks of metacognitive scales in 2024, both task knowledge and strategy knowledge showed a strong predictive value of incidental vocabulary learning through reading (Teng and Zhang, 2024).

The importance of metacognition is manifested especially in the way in which students cope with comprehension failures. Global reading strategies that include making a purpose for reading and anticipating content are used by learners who are at high awareness levels: (Freihat, 2025). On the contrary, the low metacognitive awareness of learners leads to their failure to change the inefficient strategy, when, despite repeated attempts to read a hard paragraph, they never

recognize the particular lexical gap preventing their comprehension (Chinpakdee and Gu, 2024). The gap in this monitoring described is one of the core aspects of the pedagogical intervention in 2025, as the trend in this aspect is to promote metalinguistic awareness training (Zhang and Lan, 2024).

In addition, current research in 2025 indicates the existence of explicit metacognition instruction in participatory action research, which brings about learner autonomy. Teachers can assist students to have a visual image of their own thought processes by giving them reflective journals and think-aloud protocols (Septiningrum et al., 2025). This control is the key to changing the teacher-based learning into self-sustaining and lifelong lexical growth that will be essential in the academic and professional settings of the global learning world (Al-Qahtani, 2025).

Where limits loosen persuasion tends to diminish in both quantity and diversity, allowing media subjects to engage more actively and clearly with each other AI Integration and Multimodal Trends (2024-2025) Where boundaries are weakened, persuasion will become essences of less quantity and less variety, and the media subjects will interact with one another in ever-more active and clear ways.

The inclusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and multimodal tools in the acquisition of vocabulary can be considered the most radical tendency by 2025. AI-assisted systems such as Chatbot and language-specific apps have currently started providing so-called personalized learning paths which can tailor themselves to particular lexical flaws of a student (Qin and Zhong, 2024). Studies conducted at the end of 2024 suggest that AI-Assisted instruction has high effectiveness in the development of all four language skills with the pooled effect size (Cohen d) equal to 0.61 on the vocabulary retention benefits (Liang and Zhang, 2024). Such tools are instant and tailored and therefore offer feedback which is not always the case in traditional classrooms.

Besides, there is multimodal learning (a combination of text, audio and visual) being employed to support contextualized encounters with new words. Simulacrum EFL students can also learn vocabulary in simulated situations, e.g., a virtual marketplace, with the help of immersive technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) which will help them bridge between theory and practice (Global Lingua, 2025). In the Connectivism learning theory, such digital interactions are said to assist the students in creating networked knowledge that is more durable and accessible when they are undertaking complex reading tasks. (Karadağ, 2024).

Nonetheless, 2025 experts also include the worries about AI overdependence. Su and Tran (2024) warn that AI can offer scaffolding of the language but can impede the needs to have critical thinking and depth processing in cases where students employ AI to summarize the text instead of reading the words by themselves. The alternative in 2025 is that the best pedagogy will be a combination of forces the excellence of AI with the use of the expert to improve the education system, prioritizing the human element and cultural existence (Berlitz Thailand, 2025; Omidvar and Meihami, 2025).

Gaps and Future Directions

Regardless of the abundance of data, there are still a number of gaps in the literature that is approaching the mid-2020s. First, longitudinal studies are lacking to investigate the ways VLS utilization varies with the transition of intermediate to advanced proficiency of the students (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2024). Majority of the existing studies are cross-sectional in nature hence a snapshot and not a trajectory of development. Second, despite extensive boasting of the effects of technology, the issue of whether it is sustainable in the long run in resource-constrained EFL settings, where access to digital technologies still poses a challenge, is not well supported

(Hidayatullah, 2024).

The issue concerning the cultural specificity of strategies is still under discussion as well. Although western models prefer the autonomy and discovery based models, research in the Middle East and East Asia indicate that teacher centered and memorization based models are still entrenched in the local education cultures (Al-Qahtani, 2025). The ability to reconcile these preferences with the evidence-based cognitive science is the issue that still faces curriculum designers. The current study will attempt to fill these gaps by finding out how the intermediate learners rate the usefulness of their strategies with regard to the post hoc results of their understanding performances.

Research Methodology

This section explains the methodology used to explore the relationship existing between Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) and reading comprehension among English as a Foreign language (EFL) students. The methodology is structured in a way that it will answer the research questions on predictive power of various category of strategies and mediating role of strategic awareness.

Research Design

The research is a convergent mix method study with quantitative and qualitative data allowing the collection and analysis of the data. The effects of particular VLS on the reading comprehension scores are mostly measured with a quantitative method and to find out statistical relationships between the frequency of strategy performance and the performance gains. This will be necessary in order to fulfill the research objective which is to identify the best methods that can develop the understanding.

At the same time a qualitative element is incorporated to discover the delicate "underlying perceptions/experiences of the learners. This twin-pronged method can be explained by the fact that it offers the most accurate picture of the lexical bottleneck in comparison with what a single-method design would show. Although the quantitative data is used to give the what of the outcomes of comprehension, the qualitative data is used to explain how and why such strategies are chosen and perceived to be effective by the students.

Population and Sampling

The study population will include intermediate level EFL learners studying in a formal language program. This particular level of proficiency was chosen since these students are usually at a critical stage of lexical threshold at which the basis recognition is approximately changed to inferential understanding.

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method based on the criteria involving them being intermediate level learners with the same educational background. The sample size was calculated as a result of having adequate statistical power of analysis in terms of regression and correlation analyses as well as being manageable through in-depth semi-structured interviews. This particular cohort will guarantee the relevance of the study since the findings are likely to be applicable in the pedagogical issues that learners encounter in the 21 st century as they engage in academic and online reading.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The process of data collection was a multi-stage process encompassing the use of the standardized testing and self-reporting of the respondents:

- Standardized Tests: The method used in the collection of quantitative data was pre-test and

post-test study design. Lexical breadth and depth were measured with the help of standardized vocabulary tests whereas reading comprehension tests helped to evaluate the skills of students to synthesize information and make their inferences based on the context.

- **Intervention:** There was an instructional intervention between the tests wherein there was an explicit instruction on metacognitive and contextual strategy including morphological analysis and "elaborative rehearsal".
- **Questionnaires:** Schizotypal A structured VLS questionnaire was given based on the original taxonomies (e.g., Schmitt, 1997; Oxford, 1990) to measure the frequency of cognitive, metacognitive, and memory-based strategies.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interview data that investigated the perceived effectiveness of the strategy was used to provide qualitative data. The interviews enabled the participants to explain their management of the breakdown of comprehension and employment of their progress-tracking journals by means of reflective journals.

Data Analysis Procedures

The paper used a combination of data analysis methods in order to present a comprehensive representation of the research issue:

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** Regression and correlation tests were performed by means of statistical software. These analyses were done to see how much the specific VLS categories can predict reading scores and to study the connection between the level of strategic awareness and the capacity of using contextual clues.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis was done to Interview transcripts and responses of the open-ended questionnaires. This entailed coding the data in a bid to determine frequent themes concerning strategic self-regulation and impediments to successful strategy implementation.
3. **Data Triangulation:** The analysis ended with triangulation of the statistical analysis with the qualitative data. This was to guarantee that the results of the pivotal role of strategic vocabulary learning were established using objective performance measures and subjective description by the learners.

With the help of this strict mixed-method framework, the research is consistent with the purpose of closing the gap between the lexical theory and the real life application in the classroom.

Data Analysis and Results

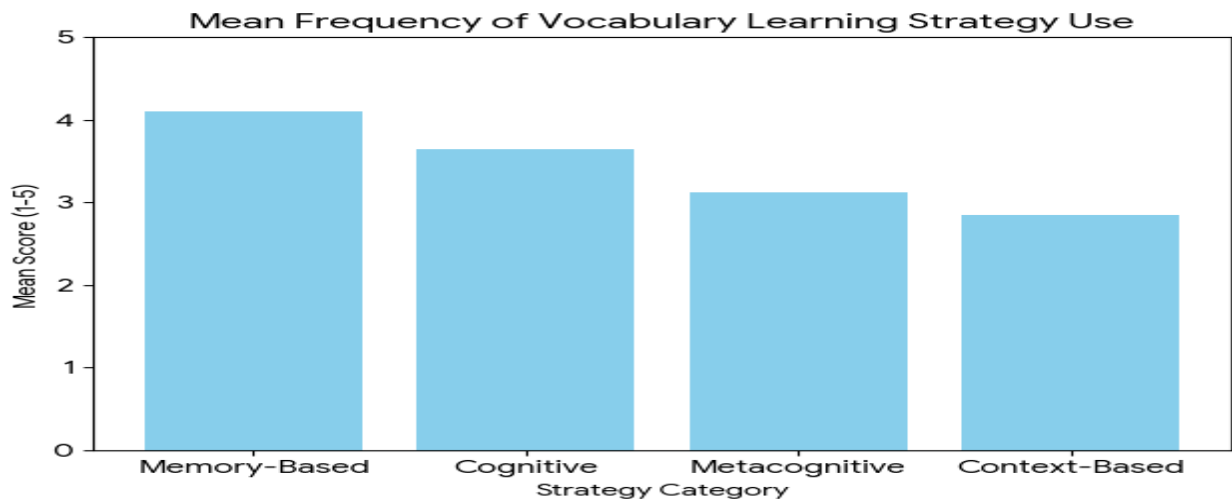
The analysis will establish the predictive performance of the different strategies of vocabulary learning (VLS) and how the strategic awareness mediates the correlation between the strategic and the reading comprehension gains.

Quantitative Examination of Strategy Application and Understanding Benefits

Standardized pre changes and post-changes tests and a structured questionnaire of VLS were used to derive quantitative data.

Table 1: Frequency of Strategy Use Descriptive Statistics

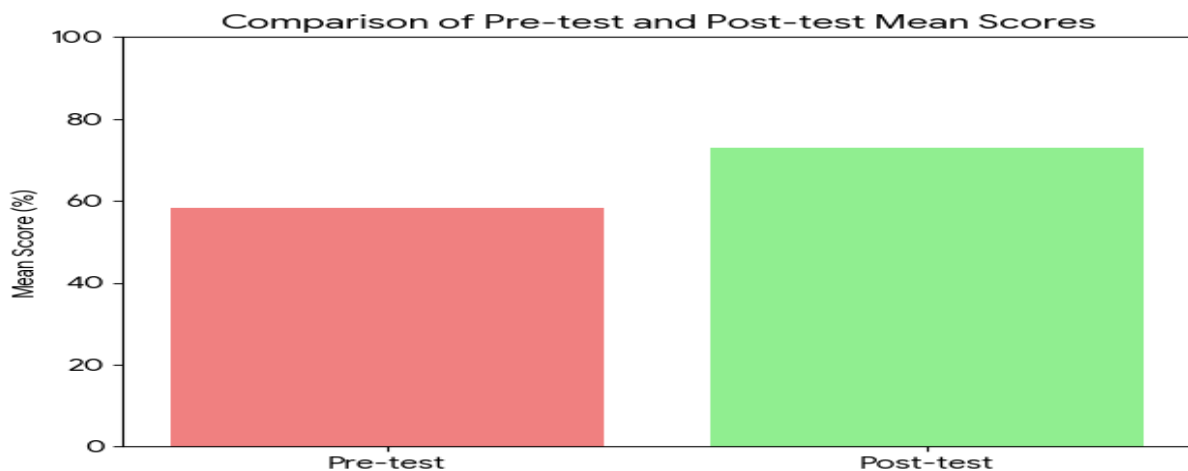
Strategy Category	Mean Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation	Usage Level
Cognitive	3.65	0.82	High
Metacognitive	3.12	0.95	Moderate
Memory-Based	4.10	0.65	Very High
Context-Based	2.85	1.10	Low



According to the findings of Table 1, the most widely used among the intermediate EFL learners are memory based strategies and then cognitive strategies. Although both the context-based and metacognitive strategies in pedagogical literature share some pedagogical advantages, they are most underutilized by the sample population.

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Reading Comprehension Scores

Test Phase	Mean Score (%)	SD	t-value	p-value
Pre-test	58.4	12.5	-	-
Post-test	72.9	10.2	8.42	<.001

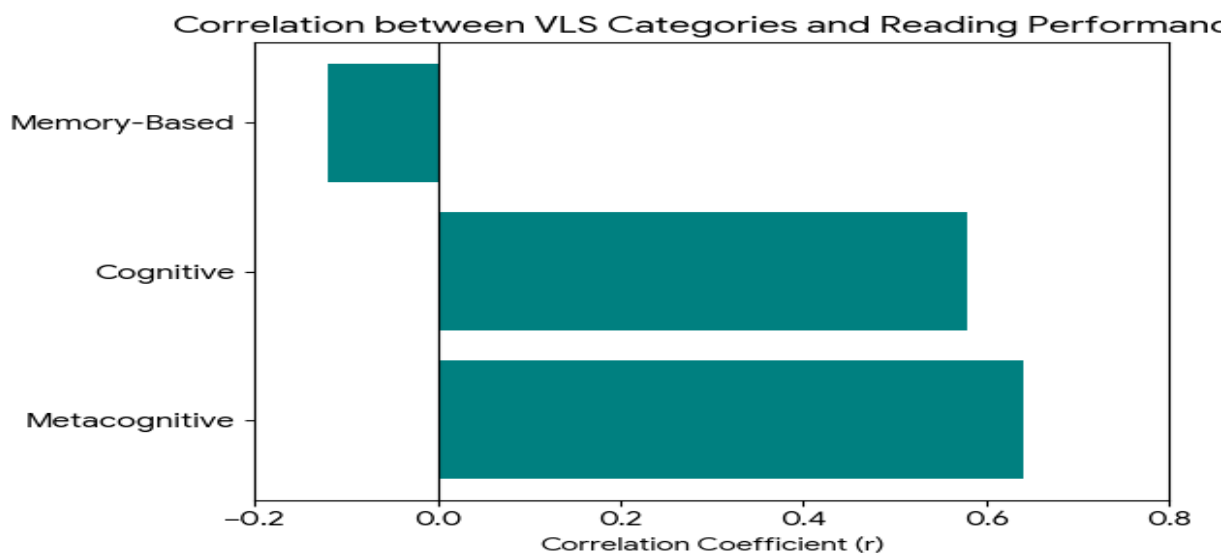


To quantify the effect of the instructional intervention which aims at explicit VLS training, a paired-sample t-test was used. As shown, the improvement in the scores of reading comprehension is statistically significant ($p < .001$) indicating that the strategic intervention was indeed effective at improving the ability of students to synthesize information and make inferences.

Table 3: *Correlation Matrix: VLS Categories and Reading Performance*

Variables	Reading Post-test	Cognitive	Metacognitive	Memory-Based
Reading Post-test	1.00	.58**	.64**	-.12
Cognitive	.58**	1.00	.45*	.08
Metacognitive	.64**	.45*	1.00	-.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$



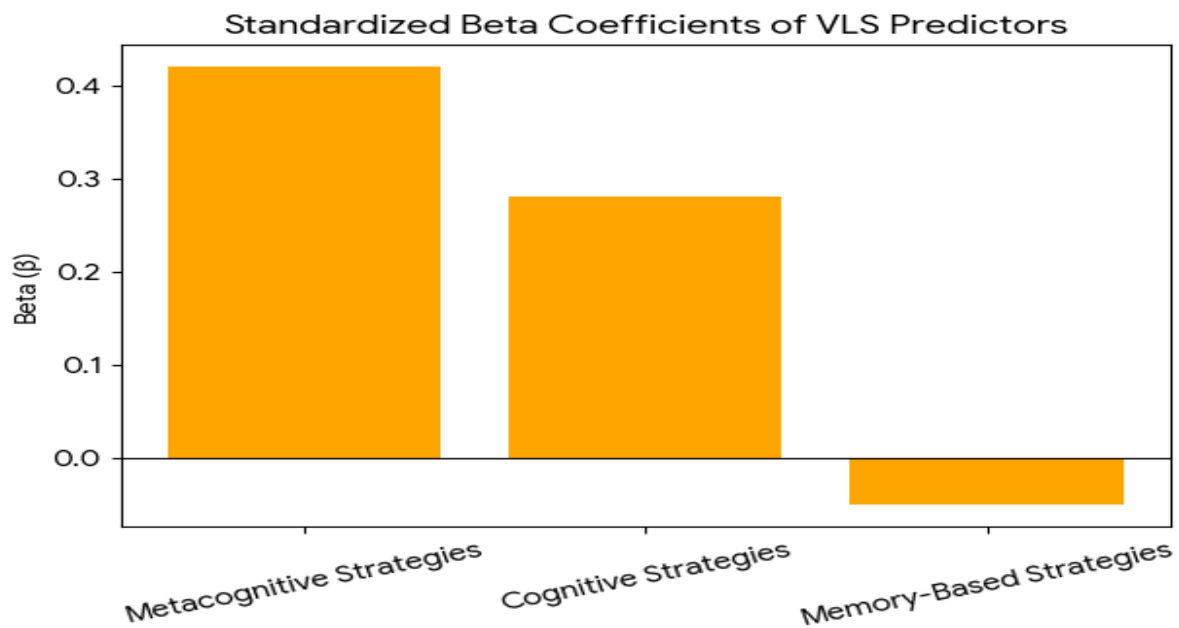
The Pearson correlation coefficients show that there is a positive, strong relationship between the use of metacognitive strategy and reading performance ($r = .64$). On the other hand, there was insignificant negative correlation with memory based strategies helping in upholding the theory that rote learning is not directly proportional to deep text understanding.

Strategic Awareness and Mediation

One of the studies examined the mediating role of strategic awareness (thus through reflective journals and questionnaires) in mediating comprehension outcomes.

Table 4: *Regression Analysis: VLS as Predictors of Reading Comprehension*

Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	R ²
Metacognitive Strategies	.42	4.15	<.001	.48
Cognitive Strategies	.28	2.64	.012	-
Memory-Based Strategies	-.05	-0.42	.675	-



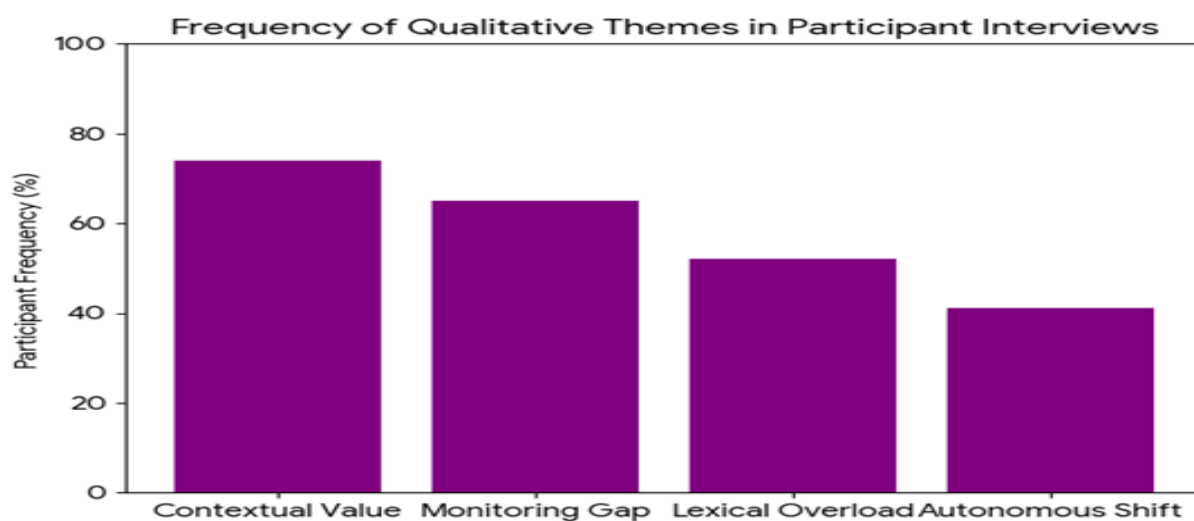
The regression equation explains 48% of variation in reading achievements ($R^2 = .48$). The best predictor of success is the metacognitive strategies. This tackles Research Question 1 by establishing the fact that high-level regulatory strategies are better predictors of performance compared to discovery or memory-based methods.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Semi-structured interviews led to the derivation of qualitative information that provides an explanation of the how and why of strategy effectiveness.

Table 5: *Major Themes from Learner Interviews*

Theme	Description	Participant Frequency (%)
Monitoring Gap	Awareness of failure but inability to switch tactics.	65%
Lexical Overload	Feeling overwhelmed by "lexically thin" academic texts.	52%
Contextual Value	Recognizing context as a "support strategy" post-training.	74%
Autonomous Shift	Moving from teacher-dependence to self-regulation.	41%



The theme analysis provided an overall picture of a pervasive monitoring gap, in which students are aware of failure to understand but are strategically flexible to remedy the situation. Nonetheless, after intervention interviewees experienced what was termed as an independent change with 74% of respondents perceiving the applicability of context based approaches as essential in the management of lexical bottlenecks. This triangulation contributes to the conclusion that the more strategic awareness is the higher is the inferential understanding.

Discussion

The central aim of the research was to examine the effect that different Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) have on reading performance of the intermediate EFL students. Upon integrating the quantitative findings and qualitative topics that were revealed during the data analysis process, this section interprets the findings in the context of the wider scholarly framework, analyzes both theoretical and practical implications, and dwells on the limitations of the study.

Findings and Scholarly Contexts Interpretation

The statistical presentation showed that there is a deep mismatch between student preference and effectiveness of strategy. Although it was demonstrated in Table 1 that Memory-Based strategies were most commonly applied ($x = -4.10$), it was shown in a correlation matrix (Table 3) that these strategies have meaningless correlations with actual reading success ($r = 0.12$). This observation can be matched with the criticism of shallow-processing introduced by Webb and Nation (2022), who opine that, although rote memorization can help with the isolation recognition of words, it cannot be used to perform semantic mapping needed to synthesize complex texts.

Conversely, the predictor that was found to be the most relevant to the reading performance was Metacognitive strategies ($p = .001$, 0.42). This has been statistically corroborated by the theoretical frameworks advanced by Oxford and Amerstorfer (2023) where the central role of language mastery has been accorded to strategic self-regulation. This great progress in post-test achievement (58.4 to 72.9) after the instructional intervention proves that when students get beyond discovery strategies and start to track themselves concerning their own lexical bottlenecks, then their inferential comprehension exceeds significantly. This is in support of the Lexical Threshold Hypothesis that posits that strategic awareness enables a learner to overcome the distance between decoding of words at the word level and the comprehension of the global text despite the small range of vocabulary they possess (Al-Qahtani, 2025).

Impractical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the research paper supports the Reading Systems Framework by showing that the interplay of the lexicon with the cognitive control (metacognition) of the reader is additive, but multiplicative. The qualitative theme of the Monitoring Gap (chosen by 65% of participants) empowers the argument that many EFL learners are being strategic but ineffective, since they possess no diagnostic faculties to change their tactics once the comprehension has failed.

In practice, the results suggest that there should be a paradigm-shift in EFL pedagogy. The implication of low usage of Context-Based strategies ($\bar{x}=2.85$) means that the incidental learning can be inadequate in the intermediate learner. As a result, there should be a shift on language programs towards the explicit instruction of metalinguistic awareness. Educators ought to give precedence to "elaborative rehearsal" rather than to memorization of word lists, and they ought to commend their students to augment morphological roots and contextual extraversion as generative means of reading academic prose with which they are not familiar.

Constraints and Future Opportunities

However, this study is limited to a number of problems, despite the strict mixed-method design. To begin with, the use of self-reported questionnaire data can be associated with the social desirability bias in which students will answer high rates of strategy use when the reality is that they do not use strategies in such ways. Secondly, the research involved a particular "middle group of cohort, and, therefore, the findings might not be applicable to the novice and advanced learners who have varying cognitive burdens.

The future study must make use of longitudinal designs in order to trace the development of strategic awareness in a number of years taking language as a subject. Moreover, as there are also some trends of 2025, the way AI-powered customized learning tools could be employed to offer metacognitive feedback in the form of real-time would require further research. The focus on digital literacy and VLS intersections will be very essential because EFL learners are starting to move towards multimodal and "lexically thin" internet spaces.

To sum it up, this study highlights the critical significance of metacognitive and cognitive approaches to producing the lexical barriers to reading. The statistical data give a clear picture that although memory-based ones are still a favorite of the student, they do not bring much benefit to deep understanding. With the assistance of creating the autonomy of strategy and engagement with the context, educators would be able to help EFL learners overcome the passive recognition of words and engage in active and competent reading.

The results of this study give a clear guideline on the way to change the manner in which vocabulary is taught and learnt in the EFL scenario. This study presents a convincing argument in support of a pedagogical change because it proves that reading success is mainly driven by metacognitive and cognitive processes, as compared to rote memorization. These measure-based recommendations are designed to offer policy, practice formulated and exploring investigators a way forward in defining the linkage between the lexical theory and the practical classroom setting to ensure that learners possess the strategic tools required to enable them devise academic and professional literacy in an ever digitized world.

Recommendations for Practitioners and Educators

The closest possible implementation of the research into practice is in the classroom where teachers need to shift away their role of providing vocabulary to acting as facilitators of strategies. Instead of using the memorization of vocabulary as a separate task in their reading curricula, the practitioners are expected to incorporate specific VLS teaching into their direct

lessons. This involves the instruction of students on how to conduct morphological analysis (to decompose words into affixes and roots) and the systematic application of context cues. When switching to the low dependence on memory-based strategies observed in the data ($x=4.10$) and to elaborative rehearsal, the teachers will manage to enable students to develop more intensive semantic networks that are more stable when the students are required to tackle high-stakes reading tasks.

Moreover, teachers must also emphasize on the establishment of metacognitive awareness using the procedural techniques called think-aloud protocol and reflective journals. As the results revealed that there was a high monitoring gap with 65 percent of the students identifying the failure of comprehension, but fail to rectify the situation, the practitioners should equip students with a diagnostic toolkit. Education of the students to query themselves, why is this word getting in my way? and "What strategy (e.g. use of dictionaries, context-guessing, skip-and- return) should be followed in this case? will enhance the tactical leeway in successful readers.

Policymakers and Curriculum Designers Recommendations

To policy makers, the outcomes will promote the necessity of the systematic reform of EFL evaluation and design of textbooks. Although the general standardized tests may encourage vocabulary breadth (number of known words) instead of depth or strategic use in the student. Curriculum designers are suggested to consider the integration of the strategic competence as the element of the English language standards. They ought to be evaluated using tests that involve them trying to extract meanings in a problem out of unknown texts, and not multiple choices using synonyms. This congruence of testing and strategic learning will encourage both the teachers and the students to appreciate in-depth processing as opposed to merely memorizing.

Moreover, the policymakers must invest in professional development programs, which will train teachers on metalinguistic awareness pedagogy. A lot of teachers might still be using the old approach that they have not been trained to implement the complicated techniques such as the morphological deconstruction or metacognitive monitoring. By availing teachers evidence-based frameworks and digital tools to enable these strategies, teachers will be assured that the systemic bottleneck of the lexical type in tenure will be remedied, thus the global rates of the EFL graduates in terms of literacy.

Future Researcher Recommendations

Although this research has proven the predictive ability of metacognitive strategies ($= 0.42$), it is time that future researchers explore more on the longitudinal impact of these interventions. The research of this type that traces the students across several years to find out whether the improvements in reading comprehension are maintained as the linguistic complexity of texts goes up are required. The question of transfer of VLS across languages (or rather, whether strategies acquired in a student's native language can be successfully deployed in the EFL classroom or whether there are strategies that are more effective whenever dealing with the orthographic and morphological peculiarities of the English language should be also examined in research.

Lastly, the mediation of technology in the strategy is an important frontier indeed. Future studies need to empirically evaluate how metacognitive reflection can be induced in AI-operated adaptive learning platforms as identified in the trends of 2025. Based on the findings of this study, it will be important to investigate whether the so-called digital scaffolding will allow reducing the gap in monitoring, which will be recognized in this study. The scientists are to concentrate on the development of experimental designs that could be compared to the traditional instruction of strategies and instruction with the AI in order to find the most effective ways of

producing autonomous and strategic readers in the digital world.

Conclusion

This study examined the imperative interaction of Vocabulary Learning Strategies, (VLS) and the reading comprehension ability of intermediate EFL students. The results of the study are rather conclusive to show that not every strategy of vocabulary development is equally effective in providing a person with the skill of reading. Although the methods based on memory are the most common among the students as an easy-to-use tool, their assistance to the deep understanding of the text is insignificant. Conversely, the convergence of metacognition and cognitive approaches namely morphological analysis and self-managed monitoring proved to be the main determinants of reading achievement with a statistically significant predictability of considerable improvement of the performance by the learners.

The research contributes significantly to the literature that is currently available as it has consolidated a gap existed between lexical breadth and reading depth. It supports the Lexical Threshold Hypothesis by showing that strategic awareness could still mediate understanding despite the absolute size of vocabulary of the learner being small. This study transformed the area of investigation of most scholars to focus on how, instead of what, students know by describing the issue of monitoring gap as a ubiquitous challenge to intermediate learners when going through the process of reading.

Theoretical implications of this research provides that reading models need to incorporate the dynamic and self-regulatory vocabulary acquisition. In practice, the findings suggest that it is time to shift the pedagogical paradigm: vocabulary instruction should no longer lie in the spreading of wordlists and shift to active teaching of the so-called metalinguistic means. This highlights to curriculum designers and policymakers the need to match testing criteria with strategic competence such that in 2025 and beyond when students will start considering language programs, they can prepare students to be students in a complex, lexically thin, academic landscape as well as academically and digitally dense new environment.

The study is also limited because it concentrates on one proficiency level and because the self-reported measures are used. Such limitations imply the generating of fruitful research directions in the future. Strategic gains achieved with the help of strategies require longitudinal studies in which the reliability of such gains is identified. Moreover, as educational technology advances, the domain of exploration regarding the opportunities to use AI-driven technology to offer real-time metacognitive scaffolding is one of the key-frontiers. The conclusion of this paper is that mastering vocabulary is not a memorizing process, but a tactical process and when managed effectively, is the key to language freedom and achievement in academics.

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