



## The Impact of Individual Age Differences on the Use of EFL Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Zohreh. G. Shooshtari<sup>\*1</sup>, Samira Hayati Samian<sup>2</sup>, Saeed Khazaie<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Khuzestan, Iran

<sup>2</sup> Department of English, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Khuzestan, Iran

<sup>3</sup> Department of English, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Khuzestan, Iran

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### Abstract

The present study intended to identify Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning strategy use and to find out any relationship between the learners' age and their vocabulary learning strategy use or vocabulary test performance. To that end, 60 intermediate Iranian EFL learners, 25 males and 35 females, studying English at a well-known language institute were selected according to their performance on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Then, they were divided into 2 groups according to their age: teenagers and adults. Four instruments were used to collect the needed data, namely OPT, a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire, a vocabulary test, and an interview. The vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire and the vocabulary test were administered in two consecutive sessions. The results indicated that both groups of learners used rote learning (RL) strategies more frequently than other categories of memory strategy, but there were some differences in their ordering of other subcategories of memory strategy. While there was a negative relationship between the teenagers' age and their vocabulary test performance, no relationship was found between the adults' age and their vocabulary test scores. Overall, the findings imply the need for classroom pedagogy to integrate strategy instruction for students of different age and proficiency levels.

*Keywords:* Age, Iranian EFL learners, vocabulary learning strategy, rote learning strategy.

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\* Corresponding Author's Tel.: +989163001017

E-mail address: zshooshtari@scu.ac.ir

## **Introduction**

Vocabulary learning is the most fundamental part of learning any second or foreign languages. Wilkins (1972) argues that “Without grammar, very little can be conveyed and without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed” (p.11). According to Nation (2001), learners' final attainment in learning a foreign language depends on whether they can master a certain amount of vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is an incremental process in the sense that words are not simultaneously learned but are gradually acquired over a prolonged period of time through multiple exposures. Regarding the difficulties of vocabulary learning especially in foreign language contexts, one expects that vocabulary instruction would be at the top of the agenda for language teachers. However, this rarely happens in language classes. That is, “vocabulary is not explicitly taught in most language classes, and students are expected to pick up vocabulary on their own without any guidance” (Oxford & Crookall, 1989, p.410).

In order to master a language, learners make use of learning strategies. Rubin (1987) defines learning strategies as “the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used” (p.27). Since learners embark on vocabulary learning individually, vocabulary learning strategies are the most important among language learning strategies. Oxford (1990) classified vocabulary learning strategies into four main categories: cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social strategies. In fact, one of the first problems a foreign language learner encounters is how to learn the enormous number of vocabulary items. Mostly, the first and easiest strategy people use is to repeat new vocabulary items again and again until they can be remembered. This strategy is known as rote learning (RL). RL is learning in "a mechanical way without thought of meaning" (Macquarie Dictionary quoted from Biggs, 1997, p.1). No matter it is considered positive or negative, it is used by many language learners to learn a language and particularly vocabulary items (Li, 2004). The purpose of this study was to investigate high-intermediate Iranian EFL learners' use of memory strategies among vocabulary learning strategies. Besides, the study examined if there was any significant relationship between students' RL strategy use and their age group.

## **Review of Literature**

Recently, there has been a paradigm shift in language teaching from how teachers teach to how students learn, and the researchers in this field are dealing mostly with how students process the incoming information and how they store and retrieve it (Arani, 2005, as cited in Amora & Bernardo 2009). Among many areas of investigation, language learning strategies have been investigated considerably in recent second or foreign language (L2/FL) studies as they are believed to help learners to be in control of their own process of learning.

In order to learn an L2/ FL second or foreign language, vocabulary seems the most central and critical to the typical language learners (Zimmerman, 1997). Vocabulary items are the basic building blocks of any language and the meaning components forming larger structures like phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and the whole text (Read, 2000). Rivers (1983) maintains that vocabulary is a personal resource regarding both the amount of vocabulary that each individual learner finally acquires and the way he organizes his vocabulary knowledge. Not knowing enough vocabulary items, students may encounter many problems while conveying their meanings and interpreting others'. Vermeer (1992) points out that "knowing words is the key to understanding and being understood. The bulk of new language consists of learning new words. Grammatical knowledge does not make for great proficiency in a language" (p.142 as cited in Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2008). In spite of its integral role, vocabulary learning was somewhat a neglected area of investigation in L2/FL learning literature. However, recently interest in its role in language teaching and learning has increased (Richards & Rynandya, 2002). Therefore, it would be propitious to have a closer look at what the students exactly do while embarking on learning new vocabulary items.

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) are considered as a subset of learning strategies in foreign/second language acquisition and can be defined as specific plans used by learners to learn foreign or second language vocabulary. When learners are informed of a great number of various vocabulary learning strategies, they can make their minds about how to manage learning the new vocabulary items. Having good knowledge about various types of vocabulary learning strategies and applying them in appropriate situations, students can expedite the process of vocabulary learning (Ranalli, 2003). Applying strategies independently of a teacher is the most influential method to learn vocabulary (Nation, 1990, 2001). Brown and Payne (1994) maintain:

To acquire foreign or second language vocabulary, learners must go through five stages: having sources for encountering new words, (b) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, of the forms of the new words, (c) learning the meaning of the words, (d) making a strong memory connection between the forms and the meanings of the words, and (e) using the words (p.223).

Hence, vocabulary learning strategies should be associated with these five steps (Fan, 2003). In an attempt to develop a taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies, Schmitt (1997) collected 58 of strategies from three sources, namely student questionnaires, literature reviews of vocabulary references and textbooks, and introspection. He then organized these applying Oxford's inventory of general language learning strategies (1990), with some modifications. He proposed two major categories including five strategy groups: (a) discovery strategies, used to determine the initial meanings of words when learners first encounter them, such as determination strategies (DET) and social strategies (SOC); (b) consolidation strategies, used to

consolidate the meanings when learners come across the words again. This category includes memory strategies (MEM), cognitive strategies (COG), and metacognitive strategies (MET).

Cook (2008) classifies VLSs based on whether they are used to understand the meaning of words or acquiring the words. The strategies used to understand the meaning of words include using dictionary, making deduction from the word form, linking to cognates, and guessing from the context. To acquire words learners use strategies like repetition and RL, linking to existing knowledge, and organizing words in mind.

Various researchers have investigated factors affecting the use of VLSs including learners' level of proficiency, gender, field of study, personality, motivation, and so on. Gu's (2003) detailed case studies on the VLSs of two successful Chinese EFL students (who were not English majors) used reading tasks, think-aloud protocols, and interviews in order to document their observed use of VLS. Building on their preferred learning styles (auditory and visual), Gu's participants were highly motivated and employed a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and approaches in their EFL vocabulary learning. Gu (2003) concluded that the combination of these strategies and approaches created a "vocabulary-learning art" in which each participant exhibited "the flexible and skillful analysis, choice, deployment, execution, and orchestration of all strategies at their disposal in accordance with their own preferred style of learning" (p. 99).

Akbari and Tahririan (2009) investigated the VLSs used by Iranian EFL learners while learning specialized and nonspecialized vocabularies in different ESP courses. A triangulation of the data; that is, observation, interview, and questionnaire showed that the most frequent used VLS and language learning strategies were bilingual dictionary use and oral and written repetition, respectively.

In a study, Tabatabaei and Hossainzadeh Hejazi (2011) investigated the influence of freshmen Iranian EFL learners' gender on learning vocabulary through keyword method (Linguistic Mnemonics). The findings showed that female learners achieved higher percentage of scores in vocabulary immediate posttest. In addition, in the delayed posttest, females achieved significantly higher scores of retention than males. A within-group comparison showed that females achieved higher scores of both vocabulary immediate posttest and retention.

Aljdee (2011) investigated the Libyan EFL learners' range and frequency of vocabulary learning strategies using a VLSs questionnaire. The students' responses were correlated with their results on two vocabulary tests used to measure the students' reception and controlled production vocabulary knowledge. The findings showed that the students reported using a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies although the frequency of use was relatively low. Discovery strategies were used more frequently than consolidation strategies. In addition, there were highly positive correlations between the

learners' vocabulary knowledge and some vocabulary learning strategies such as using a monolingual dictionary, guessing from context, making lists of words, and using media.

Fahim and Komijani (2010) carried out a study to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' critical thinking ability, L2 vocabulary knowledge, and L2 vocabulary learning strategies. The results demonstrated that Iranian EFL learners' L2 vocabulary knowledge was significantly related to their critical learning ability. Moreover, the learners' critical learning ability also positively correlated with their self-assessed degree of determination, memorization, cognitive and metacognitive strategies of L2 vocabulary learning. In addition, the results revealed a positive relationship between the learners' L2 vocabulary knowledge and their vocabulary learning strategies use.

Rote learning (RL) is also considered as one of the vocabulary learning strategies since it is used by many language learners. For example, Hong Kong students learned meaningfully, then memorized the result to cope with examination requirements (Tang, 1991). In some cultures, RL is considered as a preference and an effective way of getting basic and fundamental knowledge in the initial stages of language learning. The positive beliefs about RL also suggest that RL does not necessarily have to be meaningless repetition: It may help consolidate knowledge and deepen understanding. Written and verbal repetition, repeatedly writing or saying a word over and over again, are common strategies in many parts of the world. They are so entrenched that students often resist giving them up to try other ones (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Li (2004) conducted a study on the learning beliefs of Chinese EFL university learners with regard to rote learning as a VLS. The results showed that the learners had a strong Chinese cultural belief rooted in Confucianism and preferred practicing, memorizing, reviewing and repetition. The findings further imply that this learning culture among the Chinese EFL university learners can be attributed to cultural learning traditions in China, which have their roots in Confucius' teachings.

Hayati Samian and Tavakoli (2012) carried out a study to investigate Iranian EFL learners' beliefs about the role of rote learning in vocabulary learning and if their English proficiency would influence learners' rote learning strategy use and overall vocabulary learning strategy use. The results indicated that Iranian EFL learners used rote learning strategies more frequently than other categories of memory strategy. The least frequently used strategy was applying images and sounds. However, quantitative data and think-aloud revealed that there were some differences between high-proficient and low-proficient learners regarding the order of other categories of memory strategy and how they used these strategies. Triangulation of the data showed no relationship between the learners' beliefs about rote learning and their achievement in vocabulary test.

Various researchers have investigated the influence of age on the acquisition of English as a FL/L2, the learners' general proficiency, motivation, attitudes, code-mixing, pronunciation, rate of acquisition, etc. (e.g., Cenoz, 2003; Matsuo & Smith, 2008; Munoz, 2006).

However, according to the literature few studies have investigated the influence of age on vocabulary learning strategy use. In the current study, expanding on this line of research, it was tried to discover any significant influence of age on the use of vocabulary learning strategies, in particular rote learning. We also investigated the potential effect of age on the learners' vocabulary test scores.

## **Research Questions**

Having reviewed previous studies on vocabulary learning strategy use, this study was conducted in an EFL context, Iran, to address the following questions:

1. Does age affect vocabulary learning strategy use of intermediate EFL learners?
2. Is there any relationship between the learners' age and their vocabulary test performance?

## **Method**

### *Participants*

A total number of 60 intermediate EFL learners, 25 males and 35 females, studying English in three branches of a well-known language institute participated in this study. Participants were selected based on their performance on an Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Then they were divided into two groups based on their age. The first group was the learners whose age ranged between 10-14 years with the average of 11.5 (group1). The second group was from age range of 30-34 with the average of 32 (group 2). The participants were all assured that their results and identities would be kept confidential.

### *Instruments*

To obtain the necessary data, four instruments were used in the present study as follows:

**Oxford Placement Test (OPT):** This test consists of 100-items for homogenizing the participants as the learners with the intermediate level of English language proficiency.

**Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire:** It was designed by the researchers using Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

(SILL), Gu and Johnson's (1996) Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ), and Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. The designed VLSQ consisted of 40-items of a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The VLSQ was first piloted on intermediate EFL learners in another institute. The reliability of VLSQ calculated using Cronbach's alpha was 0.70. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by a group of TEFL university professors. The Likert-type items were reliable, valid, and practical for VLSQ allowing the researchers to evaluate both the type and the frequency of the vocabulary strategies used by FL/L2 learners (Fahim & Komijani, 2010). The completion time for VLSQ was 30 minutes.

**Vocabulary Test:** A 30-item test which was used to measure the learners' vocabulary knowledge. The words and phrases for this test were based on the subjects' university 6000-word vocabulary list, and the question formats came from Watcyn-Jones (1990), Thomas (1991) and Li (2004) with some modifications and revisions. A set of words was selected from the university's EFL vocabulary list, and then divided into two sections: part 1 word discrimination (about 66% of the total score) and part 2 word formation (about 33% of the total score). Each correct answer was assigned one mark and scores indicated each participant's total number of correct answers in the test. Its reliability calculated, using Kr-21 formula, in a pilot test was about 0.72. The time limit for doing the vocabulary test was 20 minutes.

**Interview:** To delve into the participants' opinions about vocabulary learning strategies, the semi-structures interview was carried out after they completed the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire. Triangulation of the data was used in this study to obtain a comprehensive picture of the participants' opinions and actual use of different categories of vocabulary learning strategies particularly rote learning.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

At the first step the adapted VLSQ and the newly-designed vocabulary test were piloted using 30 intermediate EFL learners. At the second step, the actual data were collected in two successive sessions. In the first session, the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire was administered and the students were asked to complete it in the class, then the interviews were conducted. Before distributing the VLSQ and conducting the interviews, the researchers explained the total procedures to the participants briefly. The vocabulary test was distributed in the second session and the students did it without consulting each other or the dictionary.

### Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 16.00 was used in analyzing the data. In order to organize and summarize the students’ responses to the questionnaire items, for each group descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to reveal the students’ use of different vocabulary learning strategies in particular rote learning strategy. Next, the vocabulary tests were scored and the means and standard deviations were calculated for the participants of both age groups. The correlation was also run to see whether any significant relationship existed between the vocabulary test performances of the two different age groups. Finally, the interviews were transcribed and organized according to the most frequent strategies that the participants cited.

## Results

### Quantitative data analysis

In this study, the vocabulary learning questionnaire consisted of 40 items related to different categories of memory strategies (rote learning, creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds and reviewing well) in vocabulary learning. To find out any differences in vocabulary learning strategy use in the students of two groups, the mean and standard deviation of all the students’ responses were calculated. To calculate these, the responses, i.e., strongly agree (5points), agree (4points), no opinion (3points), disagree (2points), and strongly disagree (1point), for each category of strategies were entered into SPSS. The results of the descriptive analysis of the responses suggest that Iranian EFL learners use rote learning strategies more than other sub-categories of memory strategies for vocabulary learning. Table 1 and Table2 present the descriptive statistics of answers of the two groups in descending order by their mean values. Figure 1 displayspercentage of each of these strategy categories.

**Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Group One in Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire**

Strategy category	Rank	Mean	SD
Rote learning strategy	1	4.43	0.73
Creating mental linkages	2	4.34	0.70
Applying images and sounds	3	3.7	0.89
Reviewing well	4	3.14	1.2
Total		3.9	1.05

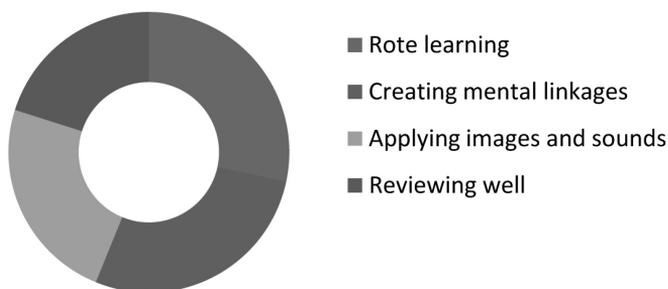


Figure 2. The percentage of each of the strategy categories

As it is illustrated in the Table 1, although for group one rote learning strategies had the top rank among all categories of memory strategies, the difference between rote learning strategy and creating mental linkages is negligible. In other words, these two strategies can be considered at the same level. They are followed by applying images and sounds  $m=3.7$  and reviewing well  $m=3.14$ . The total mean of different categories of memory strategies was 3.9 for group1 students. The percentage of each of these strategy categories is shown in Figure 2.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of GroupTwo in Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire

Strategy category	Rank	Mean	SD
Rote learning strategy	1	3.89	.67
Reviewing well	2	2.71	1.1
Creating mental linkages	3	2.4	8.1
Applying images and sounds	4	2.06	.93
Total		2.76	1.13

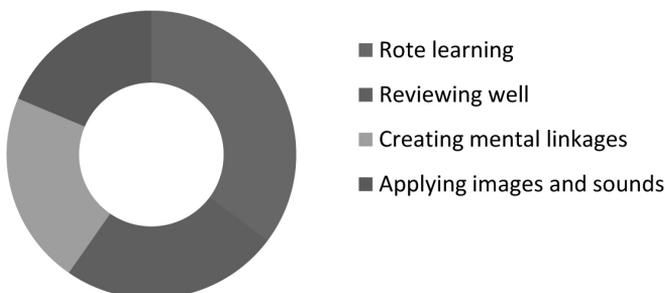


Figure 2. The percentage of each of the strategy categories

As can be seen in Table 2, the highest rank belongs to rote learning strategies, followed by reviewing well  $m=2.71$ , creating mental linkages  $m=2.4$ , and applying images and sounds  $m=2.06$ . In contrast to the students of group1, the difference between mean of RL and other categories of memory strategies is significant the total mean of different categories of memory strategies was 2.76 for group2 students. The percentage of each of these strategy categories is shown in the chart.

In order to examine the second research question, first the students' vocabulary tests were corrected and scored. All of the students' scores were fed into SPSS and the descriptive statistics of them were calculated. The results are shown in the Tables 3 and 4:

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Group one Vocabulary Test Scores**

Number	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum
30	24	23.5	18	3.8	15	14	29

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Group2 Vocabulary Test Scores**

Number	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum
30	22.9	22	20	2.9	16	14	30

Then, the Pearson Correlation was run using SPSS software for participants of both groups. The results are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5. Correlation between Group One Students' Age and their Vocabulary Scores**

		Group 1	Score
Group1	Pearson Correlation	1	-.642
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.01
	N	30	30
Score1	Pearson Correlation	-.642	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	
	N	30	60

Table 5 reveals that there exists a negative relationship between group1 students' age and their vocabulary test performance. The correlation coefficient between the students' age and their vocabulary test scores was  $r = -.642$  and  $\alpha=.01$  that is smaller than 0.05.

**Table 6. Correlation between Group Two Students' Age and their Vocabulary Scores**

		Group 1	Score
Group1	Pearson Correlation	1	0.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.814
	N	30	30
Score1	Pearson Correlation	-0.642	.0840
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	
	N	30	60

As depicted in Table 6, no relationship was found between group 2 students' age and their vocabulary test performance. For these students coefficient of correlation between their age and their vocabulary test scores was  $r = 0.84$  and  $\alpha = 0.814$  that it is much more than  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

### *Qualitative data analysis*

After completing the VLSQ, the students were asked these two open-ended questions. The subjects were asked to explain and elaborate on actual use of vocabulary learning strategies for vocabulary learning. The responses to these two questions for each group will be presented in the following.

#### *Group 1 Students' Responses to the Questions:*

#### **1. What are the most useful strategies for learning vocabulary in your point of view?**

The strategies which were predominant in most responses by students of group1 were "making vocabulary lists and cards and try to review them", "sometimes writing the English word and its Persian equivalent several times", "composing some sentences with the new words", "trying to put words of the same grammatical class (e.g. nouns, verbs, etc.) in different lists", "breaking up the word into components (e.g. suffixes, roots, prefixes)", " making an image of the new words in mind", and " paying attention to similar letters in spelling. (e.g. serious, strict, etc.).

#### **2. Have you used the same strategies from the beginning of your English learning up to now or have you changed them?**

Most of the subjects said that at the earlier levels they mostly used to repeat the new words since this was the only strategy at their disposal. However, after the passage of time and acquiring more words, they tried to use a variety of other strategies in addition to repetition depending on the situation. In their point of view, applying a mixture of strategies yielded more fruitful results.

### *Group 2 Students' Responses to the Questions:*

#### **1. What are the most useful strategies for learning vocabulary in your point of view?**

The majority of group2 subjects mentioned these strategies in response to this question: "using G5 cards: writing the new words on one side of a card and their explanations on the other side", "having regular and structured reviews of new words", "paying attention to the words and collocations that go with a word", "reviewing the words by my friends before each session", "try to memorize a word, repeating the new words aloud to myself during the day and before sleeping at night to memorize them", and "going through the vocabulary lists several times to make sure that I have learned all of them".

#### **2. Have you used the same strategies from the beginning of your English learning up to now or you have changed them?**

In response to this question, the majority of group2 subjects said that they have started English vocabulary learning at guidance school via rote learning. They continued learning vocabulary by relying mostly on the same strategy in the form of written or oral repetition. They stated it seemed the most useful strategy for them since it is a reliable way to stick the new vocabulary in their minds especially before taking exams. In addition, they said that they use other types of strategies but less frequently such as making guesses.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

As a result of data analysis, a number of findings emerged that will be delineated and discussed in this section. The quantitative results, supported by the interview data, demonstrated that the learners think that of all the memory strategies for vocabulary learning, rote learning strategies were preferable. This finding is consistent with those of Li's study (2004) and Hayati Samian and Tavakoli (2012). In Li's study, the Chinese learners preferred rote learning strategies to other categories of memory strategies and believed it was the most helpful strategy in vocabulary learning. According to Li, the learners' preference for rote learning may be attributed to factors such as Chinese educational/cultural background, EFL environment, traditional habit, national situation/examination demand, Chinese linguistic background/the way of learning mother tongue, and failure to try out "best" strategies (p.209).

Following Li (2004), Hayati Samian and Tavakoli (2012) considered the two factors "educational background and failure to try out 'best' strategies" as the probable reasons for Iranian EFL learners' reliance on rote learning strategies (p.629). The educational system in Iran and the course books even at higher level of education lead the learners toward rote learning strategies. Moreover, Iranian learners showed reluctance to trying new strategies and strategy training.

There were also some differences in the order of other sub-categories of memory strategies for the subjects of two age groups. Group 1 subjects rated creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds and reviewing well strategies respectively after rote learning. According to their comments in the interview, they preferred to make some sentences with the new words and organize the new material to learn them more efficiently. Group 2 participants used reviewing well, creating mental linkages, and applying images and sounds after rote learning and believed that reviewing is really useful and preferred regular reviewing before the exams. In addition, the mean difference between rote learning and other subcategories of memory strategies was insignificant for Group 1 participants,  $RL= 4.43$  and  $CML= 4.34$ . Therefore, it can be claimed that for participants in group 1 all subcategories of memory strategies were almost at the same level of importance. On the contrary, the difference between the mean of rote learning and other subcategories of memory strategies was considerable for Group 2 subjects,  $RL= 3.89$  and  $RW=2.71$ , indicating the point that these subjects rely mainly on RL for vocabulary learning. Furthermore, it was observed that group 2 subjects rated reviewing well as their second priority and it may imply that if rote learning strategies did not work well in learning the new vocabulary items, the students may apply these kinds of strategies that are very close to rote learning strategies practically. This is in line with Hayati Samian and Tavakoli's (2012) study in which reviewing well was used as the second strategy by Iranian EFL learners.

According to Ellis (2008) age appears to be a clear factor affecting the way strategies are used. The use of different types and frequencies of strategies may also depend on the learner and the setting in which learning occurs and the type of the language task to be completed, suggesting a need for more studies on different learners in different settings to get a comprehensive picture of the issue. Overall, the results of the first research question supported Politzer and McGroarty's (1985) and O'Malley and Chamots' studies (1990) who found that students from Asian backgrounds prefer rote learning and language rules as opposed to more communicative strategies.

The quantitative results of the second research question showed a significant difference between the participants of two groups regarding the relationship between their age and their vocabulary test performance. First, the mean of the subjects' scores was higher for Group 1 compared to group 2 subjects. Regarding the point that the level of proficiency of the two groups was the same, higher mean of group 1 can be attributed to the subjects' attributes. It is believed that in comparison with old learners, young learners take more risks. Therefore, if they do not know the exact answer of a question, they are likely to guess wildly. According to the results of Pearson Correlation, there exists a negative relationship between group 1 participants' age and their vocabulary test scores indicating that an increase in learners' age may have a negative influence on their vocabulary test performance. It may be due to the fact that older learners' full-grown ego prohibits them from making wild

guesses; therefore, they tend to be more conservative in this regard. No relationship was found between group 2 participants' age and their vocabulary test scores. Although group 2 participants mentioned "making guesses" as one of their less-frequently used vocabulary learning strategies and relied on it while doing the vocabulary test, it did not have any bearing on their vocabulary test scores. It seems that most of their guesses were just wild guesses with wrong answers.

The findings in this study have suggested some implications which might be very helpful for future research, and which are of significance to educators and policymakers as well as to teachers and researchers.

First and for most, it seems that making the students familiar with various vocabulary learning strategies may lead the students, especially the old learners, to use more varied strategies depending on the context and the task. Second, according to Oxford and Ehrman (1992), teachers of a second language (L2) should identify and comprehend the individual differences among the students if they want to provide them with the most useful instruction. These factors include: aptitude, age, gender, motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, risk-taking, and language learning styles.

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## Appendix: Vocabulary Test

In the name of God

Student's name(optional): .....

Age: .....

Gender: .....

### A. Choose the correct word for each space.

#### 1. misused/ disused

- (a) The cars were parked in a .....old big garage.
- (b) The factory.....since its closure three years before was used for storing goods.
- (c) Some new medicines may be.....by young addicts.
- (d) Most of the synonymous words are often.....in the real context.

#### 2. historic/historical

- (a) There was a ..... meeting changing most events in the world in 1960.
- (b) Today is a..... day in the history of our country. Our leader passed away ten years ago in this day.
- (c) I like to read..... books about 18<sup>th</sup> century in my free time .
- (d) Yesterday we discussed ..... events of Islamic countries in our meeting.

#### 3. story/ storey

- (a) Every night I tell three.....for my son.
- (b) We stayed in a three-.....in in the suburb of London.
- (c) My husband enjoys living in top .....of tall buildings.
- (d) Sara's.....won the first prize in the competition.

#### 4. unreadable/illegible

- (a) The young boy's handwriting was really.....for me.
- (b) To me the story was.....since the plot and the story were weak.
- (c) That writer's novels are all.....since they are always repetitive.
- (d) The doctor's prescription was .....for the pharmacist.

#### 5. dependent/ dependant

- (a) The results of the experiment is .....on the controlling all the variables.
- (b) You receive government allowance for every.....who is living with you.
- (c) Young babies are.....on milk for their growth.
- (d) Your final success is .....on the amount of your effort.

**B. Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the words given.**

**1. Explain**

- (a) The meeting was cancelled without any reasonable .....
- (b) There are..... notes at the end of each chapter.

**2. Advise**

- (a) I asked my financial .....for more comments.
- (b) Sara should have followed her father's.....

**3. Believe**

- (a) Although his story seemed strange, I tried to ..... it.
- (b) Most Muslims have strong..... in God.

**4. Destroy**

- (a) The last earthquake in Tokyo was really.....
- (b) The workers started.....of that old building in the morning.

**5. Compare**

- (a) Sara's marks have improved a lot in.....with last year.
- (b) We did a .....study of the two countries' industry.

