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## **English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by The Eleventh-Grade Students of *MAN 1 BIMA***

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**Abstract:** This study used a descriptive qualitative method to describe the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) and discover the most dominant strategies used by the eleventh-grade students of *MAN 1 Bima*. The subjects were 15 male and 15 female students. The data were collected using a questionnaire of 40 items selected from Schmitt's (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ). Interviews were also conducted to obtain more information from the students. The data was calculated using the Likert scale formula in the MS Excel software package. The result shows that male and female students employed more than one strategy in learning vocabulary. The dominant Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) used by male students was metacognitive strategies (63%), and the least is memory strategies (47%). Meanwhile, the dominant Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by female students were metacognitive strategies (72%), and the least determination strategies (54%). This finding also revealed no statistically significant difference in male and female students' use of the five categories and individual VLSs.

**Keywords:** Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Male students, Female students

## **INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is considered one of the most essential in comprehending instructional materials, especially when learning a foreign language. Heidari, et al (2012), states that vocabulary is the core and cornerstone of language learning. Students can grasp the meaning of foreign words if they can comprehend them. However, vocabulary comprehension, as an essential aspect of language learning, poses numerous challenges (Zhi-liang, 2010). A lack of vocabulary often makes students passive during English classes, negatively impacting their learning behavior. The size of a learner's vocabulary significantly influences their academic performance. Therefore, learners must adopt Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) to enhance their vocabulary knowledge.

According to Asgari and Mustapha (2011), a vocabulary learning strategy (VLS) refers to the methods learners use to acquire new words. When students come across unfamiliar English words during the learning process, they must actively work to understand these words to better grasp the learning materials and produce

vocabulary to speak and write their ideas. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) are crucial for senior high school students as they aid in understanding new words, expanding their vocabulary, and fostering independent learning. However, English lessons at the senior high school level often do not include dedicated classes focused on technical vocabulary. Students soon face difficulties in learning so many new words once they enter senior high school. The students cannot consistently depend on their teachers. As a result, they need to utilize Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) to independently determine the meanings of unfamiliar words, enabling them to comprehend their class materials better.

Many studies have discussed vocabulary learning strategies, but not many have discussed vocabulary learning strategies among gender specifically, especially second-year students from *MAN 1 Bima*. Research by Na (2016) on gender differences in English vocabulary learning strategies among Chinese senior high school students revealed that male students often employ strategies within a social context. In contrast, female students use meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies more frequently. Similarly, a

study by Shadikah (2020), titled "Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Male and Female Learners of Higher Intermediate Level" found that female learners relied more on dictionary strategies than other methods, while male learners preferred guess strategies over different strategies.

VLS are strategies for learning a new word. Therefore, it can be described as the individual learning style that learners adopt to improve their learning process effectively (Letchumanan, et al, 2016). In other words, VLS is needed in learning to improve our vocabulary effectively. In this study, the researcher intended to distinguish the male and female students in terms of learning vocabulary because, in the context of learning English vocabulary, the selection of vocabulary learning strategies differs in extent between male and female students. Considering the individual differences, male and female students might employ different learning strategies. In the study on Chinese Senior High Schools by Wei Na (2015), she states that the strategy employed by male and female students are different, especially senior high school students.

According to the English teacher at *MAN 1 Bima*, most students in grade eleven have relatively poor vocabulary. It was proven when the teacher gave a vocabulary test. The teacher believes that most students are unaware of vocabulary learning strategies even though they have been using them unconsciously. In this study, the researcher is interested in analyzing students' vocabulary learning strategies by using the VLS taxonomy from Schmitt (2000). The writer chooses Schmitt's taxonomy because it is helpful in classifying the strategies that are used by the students in more detail. The more students apply VLS in learning vocabulary, the more likely they understand their target language. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze students' VLS to raise student awareness of the importance of VLS to increase their vocabulary mastery. Thus, this study is expected to describe the vocabulary learning strategies used by male and female students at *MAN 1 Bima* and the

most dominant vocabulary learning strategies they used.

## METHODS

This research used a qualitative design because it describes the students' VLS in eleventh-grade students at *MAN 1 Bima*. According to Urdan (2009), qualitative research is a method used to describe the characteristics of a particular set of data. The subjects in this study were second-grade students of *MAN 1 Bima* in the academic year 2023 consisting of 218 students. In this study, there were 30 students taken purposively by using the criteria below:

- 1) Second-grade students of *MAN 1 Bima* in the academic year of 2023.
- 2) Students with a minimum score of 80 on the latest daily English test given by their English teacher.

Hence, this research took 30 students as subjects, 15 male and 15 female students. Meanwhile, the object of this study is vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by 15 male and 15 students. The instruments used to collect the data were questionnaires and interviews. The students were given a questionnaire comprising 40 statements about Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) adopted from Schmitt's (1997) study. The students were asked to rate their frequency of usage of the VLS according to a scale of five choices as the Liker-scale questionnaire (Nunan, 1992) for each question that is never (0 point), seldom (1 point), sometimes (2 points), often (3 points), and always (4 points). The interview aims to obtain more information about their reason for using VLS. The interview was conducted during the student's free time and used Indonesian to make them feel more comfortable. The data in this study were analyzed in several stages. First, to calculate the data from the questionnaire, the researcher used the Likert scale formula:  $\frac{\text{respondent answer}}{\text{all respondents}} \times 100$ . Second, the percentage of each strategy was calculated and categorized into five levels based on the Likert Scale presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Interpretation Data of Frequency Use in VLS

Likert Scale	Value Range allocation	Statement	Level
0	0% - 19.99%	Never	Very low
1	20% - 39.99%	Seldom	Low
2	40% - 59.99%	Sometimes	Medium
3	60% - 79.99%	Often	High
4	80% - 100%	Always	Very high

Then the highest-ranked frequency used in learning strategy is considered the most dominant strategy. Third, the recorded interview results were transcribed, analyzed, and then matched with the questionnaire results. The last step was concluding a comparison by analyzing the questionnaire and interview results from two different genders in learning English vocabulary of the data used by male and female students.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) Used by Male and Female Students of MAN 1 Bima

The data from the questionnaire are presented briefly in the form of tables. The average percentage and the frequency category of each vocabulary learning strategy used by male and female students is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Frequency of VLS Used by Male Students

No.	Vocabulary Learning Strategies VLS	Percentage score (%)	Level
<b>Determination Strategies</b>			
1.	Analyzing the part of speech	33%	Low
2.	Analyzing affixes and root words	33%	Low
3.	Using pictures illustrated in the textbook	33%	Low
4.	Checking if the word that is similar and an absorption word for Indonesian	60%	High
5.	Guessing the word's meaning from the text/context	13%	Very low
6.	Using a bilingual dictionary	93%	Very high
7.	Using monolingual dictionary	0%	Very low
8.	Deducing the meaning from flashcards and posters	33%	Low
<b>Social Strategies</b>			
9.	Asking my teacher to translate the meaning of difficult words only	80%	Very high
10	Asking my teacher for a paraphrase or synonym	60%	High
11	Asking my teacher for a sentence including the new word	40%	Medium
12	Asking my classmates for the meaning of the new word	53%	Medium
13	Studying the words' meaning in a group	33%	Low
14	Asking my teacher to check my flashcards or word lists for accuracy	66%	High
15	Using the new word in interactions	33%	Low
<b>Memory Strategies</b>			
16.	Studying the word with a pictorial representation of its meaning	0%	Very low
17.	Studying the word by forming an image of it	0%	Very low
18.	Connecting the word meaning to a personal experience	7%	Very low
19.	Connecting the word to its synonym and antonyms	53%	medium
20.	Using the new word in a sentence	40%	Medium
21.	Studying the spelling of the word	67%	High
22.	Studying the pronunciation of the word	86%	Very high
23.	Saying the new word aloud when studying them	54%	Medium
24.	Trying to remember the word affixes and roots	0%	Very low
25.	Trying to relate the word to its part of speech	7%	Very low
26.	Paraphrasing the word's meaning	0%	Very low
27.	Learning the words of an idiom together	27%	Low
28.	Using physical action to learn a new word	13%	Very low
<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>			
29.	Using verbal repetition	67%	High

30.	Writing the word several times	53%	Medium
31.	Making a word list that I have learned	27%	Low
32.	Underline an important and difficult word	53%	Medium
33.	Listen to tapes of a word list	0%	Very low
34.	Putting English labels on physical objects	53%	Medium
35.	Keeping a vocabulary notebook anywhere I go	0%	Very low
<b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>			
36.	Learn the word from the internet	94%	Very high
37.	Testing self	20%	Low
38.	Using gestures	66%	High
39.	Skipping or passing the new word which likely does not need	80%	Very high
40.	Continuing to study the word over time	0%	Very low

It can be seen in Table 1 that male students used all strategies but with different percentages and levels. There were four most common vocabulary learning strategies used by male students in this study, five strategies in items 6, 9, 22, 36, and 39 have the highest percentage than other strategies. The result shows that the metacognitive strategy “learn the word from the internet” is the most common strategy used among students with a percentage of 94%. The second most common strategy used is the determination strategy “using a bilingual dictionary” with a percentage of 93%. Then it was the memory strategy “studying the pronunciation of the word” with a percentage of 86%. Last, it was followed by the social strategy “Asking my teacher to translate the meaning of difficult words only” and the metacognitive strategy “skipping or passing the new word” with the same percentage of 80%. It is only five items on the most common strategies used by male students because other strategies have ranked below the "very high" level.

In comparison, the result shows items 5, 7, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28, 33, 35, and 40 are the least common vocabulary learning strategies used by male students in this study. The result

shows that the determination strategy “using monolingual dictionary”, the memory strategy “Studying the word with a pictorial representation of its meaning”, “Studying the word by forming an image of it”, “Trying to remember the word affixes and roots”, “Paraphrasing the word’s meaning”, the cognitive strategy “listen to tapes of word list”, “keeping a vocabulary notebook anywhere I go”, and the metacognitive strategy “continuing to study the word overtime” was the least common strategy with 0% of the male student used this strategy in this research. Many strategies included in the “very low” level because the students were not aware of the vocabulary strategies mentioned in this study. The second least common strategy used is the memory strategy “connecting the word meaning to personal experience”, and “trying to relate the word to its part of speech” with a percentage of 7%. Then, it was followed by the determination strategy “guessing the word’s meaning from the text/context”, and the memory strategy “using physical action to learn a new word” with a percentage of 13%. Furthermore, Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of vocabulary learning strategies for female students.

Table 2. The Frequency of VLS Used by Female Students

No.	Vocabulary Learning Strategies VLS	Percentage score (%)	Level
<b>Determination Strategies</b>			
1.	Analyzing the part of speech	27%	Low
2.	Analyzing affixes and root words	27%	Low
3.	Using pictures illustrated in the textbook	40%	Medium
4.	Checking if the word that is similar and an absorption word for Indonesian	40%	Medium
5.	Guessing the word’s meaning from the text/context	33%	Low
6.	Using a bilingual dictionary	100%	Very high
7.	Using monolingual dictionary	0%	Very low
8.	Deducing the meaning from flashcards and posters	40%	Medium
<b>Social Strategies</b>			
9.	Asking my teacher to translate the meaning of difficult	87%	Very high

	words only		
10	Asking my teacher for a paraphrase or synonym	67%	High
11	Asking my teacher for a sentence including the new word	20%	Low
12	Asking my classmates for the meaning of the new word	53%	Medium
13	Studying the words' meaning in a group	53%	Medium
14	Asking my teacher to check my flashcards or word lists for accuracy	60%	High
15	Using the new word in interactions	0%	Very low
<b>Memory Strategies</b>			
16.	Studying the word with a pictorial representation of its meaning	20%	Low
17.	Studying the word by forming an image of it	20%	Low
18.	Connecting the word meaning to a personal experience	53%	Medium
19.	Connecting the word to its synonym and antonyms	53%	Medium
20.	Using the new word in a sentence	60%	High
21.	Studying the spelling of the word	73%	High
22.	Studying the pronunciation of the word	80%	Very high
23.	Saying the new word aloud when studying them	47%	Medium
24.	Trying to remember the word affixes and roots	33%	Low
25.	Trying to relate the word to its part of speech	0%	Very low
26.	Paraphrasing the word's meaning	20%	Low
27.	Learning the words of an idiom together	53%	Medium
28.	Using physical action to learn a new word	13%	Very low
<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>			
29.	Using verbal repetition	60%	High
30.	Writing the word several times	40%	Medium
31.	Making a word list that I have learned	20%	Low
32.	Underline an important and difficult word	80%	Very high
33.	Listen to tapes of a word list	13%	Very low
34.	Putting English labels on physical objects	60%	High
35.	Keeping a vocabulary notebook anywhere I go	40%	Medium
<b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>			
36.	Learn words from the internet	100%	Very high
37.	Testing self	20%	Low
38.	Using gestures	73%	Very high
39.	Skipping or passing the new word	100%	Very high
40.	Continuing to study the word over time	33%	Low

Based on Table 2, female students also applied all strategies even though some were still unfamiliar. Seven strategies in items 6, 9, 22, 32, 36, 38, 39 are the most frequently used strategies by female students. It was found that the determination strategies “using a bilingual dictionary”, metacognitive strategies “learn words from the internet”, and “skipping or passing the new word” was the most frequently used by female students with an average percentage of 100%. The second most frequently used strategy was the social strategy “Asking my teacher to translate the meaning of difficult words only” with a percentage of 87%. Then, it was memory strategies “Studying the pronunciation of the word” and cognitive strategies “Underline an important and difficult word” with an average percentage of 80%. Last, it was followed by metacognitive strategies

“Using gestures” with an average rate of 73%. This result indicates that female students are familiar with and consider these strategies helpful in learning vocabulary. In contrast, the results show that strategies 7, 15, 25, 28, and 33 were the least used by female students in this study. The results show that the memory strategy “Using physical action to learn a new word” and cognitive strategy “Listen to tapes of a word list” were the least used strategies with an average percentage of 13%. Then, it was followed by determination strategies “using monolingual dictionary”, social strategies “Using the new word in interactions”, and memory strategies “trying to relate the words to its part of speech”. These strategies were included in the “very low” level because they had the lowest percentage compared to other strategies.

## The Most Dominant Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) Used by Male and Female Students of MAN 1 Bima

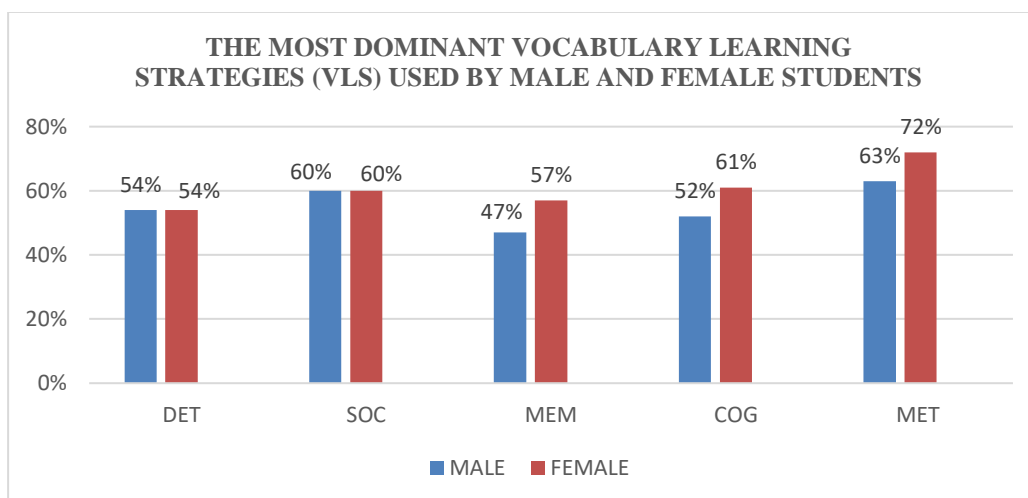


Figure 1. The Most Dominant VLS Used by Male and Female

Based on the graph above, it shows the most dominant strategies from all types of vocabulary learning strategies used by male students. It can be seen that metacognitive strategies (MET) were the most frequently used by male students and considered dominant strategies with an average percentage of 63%. The second most commonly used strategy by male students was statement social strategies (SOC) with an average of 60%. The third most frequently used strategy was determination strategies (DET) with an average of 53%. Then, it was followed by cognitive strategies (COG) with an average of 52%. The least frequent strategy used by male students was memory strategies (MEM) with an average of 47%. In addition, metacognitive strategies (MET) were the most frequently used by male students and considered the dominant strategies with an average percentage of 72%. The second one is cognitive strategies (COG) with an average of 61% and the third is social strategies (SOC) with an average of 60%. Then, it was followed by memory strategies (MEM) with an average of 57% and the last one is determination strategies (DET) with an average of 54%.

### Discussion

Based on the findings of the students' vocabulary learning strategies, there are several individual strategies with the most frequent use and some are the least used by the students. In this case, male and female students use the same strategies. The first strategy most often used by

male and female students is "using a bilingual dictionary" in determination strategies. This result is supported by the students' answers in the interview. The students stated that using a bilingual dictionary to find word meanings is quicker and more practical. This result aligns with Bristi (2015), who stated that language learners show great interest in using dictionaries to expand their vocabulary knowledge and repertoire. Hence, they are more comfortable with bilingual dictionaries in learning new words.

The second strategy is "Asking my teacher to translate the meaning of difficult words only" in social strategies. This result is supported by Nation's (2008) theory, which explains that certain words are frequently used in specific fields but are rarely encountered in others. The meaning of such specialized words, which may not appear in students' dictionaries, can only be provided by someone with a background in English. Hence, Using English as the medium of instruction in the classroom created opportunities for students to ask their teacher about the meanings of new words.

The third strategy is "Studying the pronunciation of the word" in the memory strategies. Most students believed that English pronunciation is important, so paying attention to how a word is pronounced can help to memorize vocabulary. According to Syszka (2017), Students who learn proper pronunciation can communicate more successfully with others in English. This highlights the significance of

studying pronunciation as a crucial part of the language-learning process. Mastering pronunciation can greatly influence their speaking abilities and overall communication. So, the students can easily communicate with others using correct pronunciation. Hence, the students need to use this strategy to enhance their skills.

The fourth strategy is “Underline an important and difficult word in my English textbook” in cognitive strategies. In the interview, the students said that utilizing the vocabulary section in the student textbook can make it easier for students to remember the vocabulary they have underlined in the book every time they open it again. The last is the individual strategies in metacognitive strategies. Three individual strategies are most often used by the students in this metacognitive strategy: “learn words from the internet”, “skipping or passing the new word”, and “using gesture”. The majority of the students stated that learning English through the internet is very useful and enjoyable because the internet has various features and covers all aspects needed to learn English, especially for learning vocabulary.

Apart from learning words through the internet, skipping or passing the new word is also one of the strategies used by the students when faced with vocabulary that they think does not need to be memorized or paid attention to. For example, when read short stories in English, they often skip the difficult word as long as they can understand the story’s meaning by understanding the surrounding words. This statement is supported by the interview answers given by the students when they were asked about the strategy. Furthermore, the most dominant strategy male and female students use is metacognitive strategy. Metacognitive strategy was the highest commonly used by male students to improve their vocabulary with an average of 63%. This strategy involves students managing their learning process by monitoring their mistakes, focusing, and finding ways to learn and use English vocabulary. This finding is aligns with Ansyari and Rahmi’s (2016) study, where male students choose metacognitive as the most frequent strategy to improve their vocabulary. Serkan and Veli (2010) conducted a survey that found that Turkish EFL learners regarded metacognitive strategies as more effective than other of strategies. Moreover, Jamaris (2013) noted that

metacognitive strategies are students’ primary tools to enhance their vocabulary. In addition, Schmitt (1997) explained that metacognitive strategies enable students to manage and assess their learning by maintaining a broad perspective on the overall learning process. By using metacognitive strategies, learners are expected to be able to control their learning. In this study, the most used metacognitive strategies involve using English language media and skipping or passing the new word that may not be needed.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the research data described, it can be concluded that male and female students of *MAN 1 Bima* used Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) with different frequencies. There were five strategies applied by male and female students in learning vocabulary. Those were determination strategies (8 strategies), social strategies (8 strategies), memory strategies (13 strategies), cognitive strategies (7 strategies), and metacognitive strategies (5 strategies). Moreover, male students used the dominant Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) was metacognitive strategies with an average percentage of 63%, and social strategies with an average percentage of 60%. Then, it was followed by determination strategies (53%), cognitive strategies (52%), and the least is memory strategy (47%). Meanwhile, female students used the dominant Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) was metacognitive strategies with an average percentage of 72% and cognitive strategies with an average percentage of 61%. Then, it was followed by social strategies (60%), memory strategies (57%), and the least is determination strategy (54%). This finding also revealed no statistically significant difference in male and female students’ use of the five categories and individual VLSs.

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