

The Relationship Between the Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Gender of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The present study examined the frequency of the use of vocabulary learning strategies by Iranian male and female EFL learners and it also examined the relationship between gender and the use of these strategies. Eighty intermediate EFL learners who studied English in Shokouh Language Institute participated in the current research. The present study used Kudo's (1999) classification of vocabulary learning strategies including metacognitive and psycholinguistic strategies. Kudo's (1999) likert-scale questionnaire was also used in the present study. In order to analyze the data and answer the research questions, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were used to summarize the male and female learners' responses to the vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire. Moreover, Mann-Whitney U test was employed to examine the null hypothesis of the study. The finding revealed that the frequencies mean for the use of psycholinguistic and metacognitive strategies as well as the overall frequency mean were slightly higher for the female learners. However, no significant difference was found between Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners in the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Keywords: EFL learners, Gender, Language learning strategies, Vocabulary learning strategies

1. Introduction

Nowadays there is a high tendency to learning English in Iran and there are many EFL institutes with many EFL learners that try to learn English but they do not know the different language learning strategies and how to use these strategies for better

learning. With the emergence of the concept of language learning strategies (LLS), scholars have attempted to link these strategies with language learning skills believing that each strategy enhances learning of vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. Researches on vocabulary learning

strategies (VLS) in EFL context have been searching since the last decade.

Language learning strategy was well defined by Oxford as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (p. 8). Oxford categorized learning strategies including: Cognitive, Meta-cognitive, affective and social.

VLSs enable individuals to take more control of their own learning and more responsibility, especially for their studies (Nation, 2001; Scharle & Szabo, 2000). Thus, strategies foster "learner autonomy, independency, and self-direction" (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989, p.291). Equipped with a range of different VLSs, learners can decide up on how exactly they would like to deal with unknown words. Nation (2001) believes that students with different language levels can learn a large amount of vocabulary by using VLSs, and these strategies have been so useful for them.

Fan (2003) identified some differences for the use of LLSs between male and female learners. More research is needed in order to accurately describe the sex differences in VLS use. According to a study by Fan (2003) male and female students normally use the same strategies. Some studies have shown that female learners often use a wider range of LLSs than male learners.

Different learners use different strategies for learning English vocabularies. More research is needed in order to accurately describe the sex differences in VLS use. The aim of current research is to investigate the most and least frequent strategies that Iranian EFL learners use for recognition and retention of English vocabularies and the relationship between applying these strategies and gender. The present study is designed to provide baseline data for future research on the VLS of EFL learners and to provide insights for the EFL classroom.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research on Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning. Vocabulary knowledge is essential when using a foreign language, since one is unable to communicate without words. It has been suggested that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their vocabulary knowledge (Hulstjin, 1993, cited in Morin & Goebel, 2001).

Schmitt (1997) claimed that the lack of attention on vocabulary learning strategies is due to the lack of a comprehensive list or taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. He compiled a list of vocabulary learning strategies based on the following sources. First, vocabulary reference books and textbooks were examined to provide the majority of the initial strategies. Second, Japanese intermediate level students were asked to write a report on how they studied English vocabulary words. Third, several teachers were asked to review the list and add any strategies they were aware of from their own experience. He moved on to organize a new list of vocabulary learning strategies based on Rebecca Oxford's (1990) classification system of learning strategies and Cook and Mayer's (1983) Discovery/consolidation strategies.

Cook and Mayer (1983) suggested basic distinction between vocabulary activities. It is between vocabulary activities which are useful for (a) the initial discovery of a word's meaning and (b) remembering that word once it has been introduced. When learners encounter a word for the first time, they can use Determination Strategies, such as their knowledge of the language, contextual clues or reference materials, to

figure out the new meaning. They can also use Social Strategies, such as obtaining initial information about a new word by asking someone else. These strategies are labeled Discovery strategies. Once learners have been introduced to a new word, it is worthwhile to remember it using Consolidation Strategies, which can come from Social, Memory, Cognitive, or Metacognitive Strategy groups.

For Nation (1990), an important way to learn vocabulary is to use learners' independent strategies. In Nation's recent publication, vocabulary strategy training is suggested to be part of a vocabulary development program. According to Schmitt and Schmitt (1995), the best vocabulary teaching plan may be to introduce a variety of VLSs to students so that they can decide for themselves on the ones they prefer. Ahmed (1989), in a study involving 300 Sudanese learners of English, found that the good learners not only used more vocabulary learning strategies but also relied on different strategies more than the lower level learners.

Rasekh and Ranjbery (2003) investigated the effects of explicit metacognitive strategy training on the vocabulary learning through a ten-week treatment. Their study revealed the significant positive effect of explicit metacognitive strategy instruction on the vocabulary learning. Schmitt (1997) examined the relationship between strategy use and its perceived usefulness.

Vocabulary knowledge is essential in learning a foreign language. Language learners know the importance of words in a language, but they may or may not be aware of the fact that VLSs can help them to learn vocabulary successfully. With the emergence of the concept of LLS, scholars have attempted to link these strategies with language learning skills believing that each strategy enhances learning of vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. Scholars such as O'Malley (1985) and O'Malley et al. (1990) confirm that most LLS are used for vocabulary learning tasks.

Other researchers (e.g., Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Politzer, 1983; Reid, 1987; Wharton, 2000) focused on the relationship between strategy use and cultural background. Their findings indicate that learners from different cultural backgrounds may vary in their strategy preferences. For example, Politzer's (1983) finding that Asians prefer memorization strategies while Hispanics prefer social strategies is a case in point.

2.2. Vocabulary Learning Strategy Taxonomies

The literature on language learning has proposed several vocabulary learning strategy taxonomies (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997). Nation (2001, p. 218) in his taxonomy distinguishes the aspects of vocabulary knowledge, the sources of vocabulary knowledge and learning processes. Another noteworthy classification scheme has been offered by Stoffer (1995), who developed a Vocabulary Learning Strategy Inventory (VLSI) comprising fewer items compared to Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy. Stoffer (1995) demonstrated that the 53 items on the VOLS I clustered into nine categories by factor analysis as follows:

1. Strategies involving authentic language use
2. Strategies used for self - motivation
3. Strategies used to organize words
4. Strategies used to create mental linkages
5. Memory strategies
6. Strategies involving creative activities
7. Strategies involving physical action
8. Strategies used to overcome anxiety
9. Auditory strategies

The other researcher who investigated many strategies altogether is Schmitt (1997), who proposed his own taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. His scheme is somewhat different from Stoffer's. He distinguished the strategies which learners use to determine the meaning of new words when they first encounter them from the ones they use to

consolidate meanings when they encounter the words again. The former includes determination and social strategies, and the latter includes social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. The social strategies are included in the two categories because they can be used for both purposes. This categorization is based, in part, on the Oxford's (1990) classification scheme.

Therefore Kudo (1999) developed a VLS classification which was fundamentally based on Schmitt's classification of VLS. Kudo (1999) combined memory and cognitive strategies into psycholinguistic strategy, metacognitive and social strategies into metacognitive strategy as a result of exploratory factor analyses. For the research purpose, the present study adopted Kudo's classification of VLS because it is one of the most widely used one of VLS in research studies. Furthermore, it is claimed that Kudo's classification can be standardized for assessment goals, can be utilized to gather responses from language learners easily, is based on the theory of learning strategies as well as on theories of memory, is technologically simple, can be applied to language learners of different educational backgrounds and target languages, is rich and sensitive to the other relevant learning strategies, and allows comparisons with other research studies (Çelik & Toptaş, 2010).

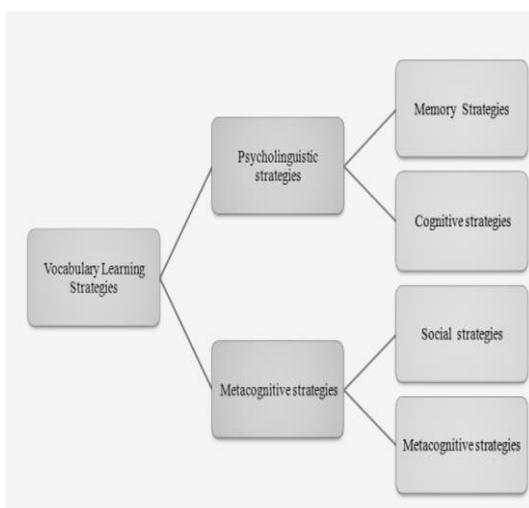


Figure1. Kudo's Taxonomy of VLSs

2.3. Research on VLSs and Gender

Hardly any research has examined sex or gender as a predictor of variation in the knowledge and use of LLS. Nevertheless, Fan (2003) points out that some differences in the use of LLS between male and female learners have been identified. However, research has also provided evidence that LLS may be associated with other individual factors such as types of memory, learning styles, motivation, or even culture.

Many factors exert influence on the strategies that the language learners select and use. For instance, gender was one factor that has been explored by a number of researchers. In language learning strategy studies involving gender, efforts have been made to investigate the strategies used by males and females and 'the sex difference findings to date show that in typical language learning situations females use significantly more learning strategies than males and use them more often' (Oxford 1989, p. 239) and according to a study by Fan (2003) male and female students normally use the same strategies and are more alike than different. Gu and Johnson (1996) investigated the vocabulary learning strategies used by advanced learners and found out that use of some strategies were tightly linked to both vocabulary size and general proficiency and that some strategies served as the predictors of success. In a study comparing the gender in terms of vocabulary learning strategy use, Gu (2003a) found that females were more willing to use learning strategies than males. In a similar study, Catalán (2003) found out that the females used more strategies than the males did.

Furthermore, Jimenez (2003) has identified that males and females differ significantly with regard to the number of VLS they use. Besides, female learners use more formal rule strategies, input elicitation strategies, rehearsal strategies and planning strategies whereas male learners use more image vocabulary strategies.

According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989) and Ehrman's (1990) research, females reported greater overall strategy use than males in many studies, although sometimes males surpassed females in the use of a particular strategy.

Researchers have also addressed the impact of age, gender, culture, aptitude, motivation, or learning styles. For example, research reports females as relatively more frequent users of strategies (Ehrman, & Oxford, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1993). Politzer (1983) and Ehrman and Oxford (1989), for instance, report that females demonstrate higher frequency use of social learning strategies. Oxford & Nyikos (1989) also report females' higher use frequency of formal rule-based (e.g., generating and revising rules, analyzing words) and conversational input (e.g., asking for pronunciation correction) strategies. However, Wharton's (2000) findings on bilingual Singaporeans reporting that males used more strategies frequently than females suggest otherwise. According to Wharton, previous language learning experience (e.g., bilingual education) might be more influential than gender on the use of certain strategy types.

Gender and academic field of study are often seen amongst the major factors that influence language learning. However, empirical studies on these two factors have produced inconsistent results. Yongqi (2002) conducted a research on gender, academic field of study, and VLS of Chinese EFL Learners. The study revealed that females reported significantly more use of almost all VLS that were found to be correlated with success in EFL learning. Male and female learners are challenging to apply various vocabulary learning strategies for learning vocabulary. Although males and females are more similar in VLS use, some differences can be identified, so the need for the present study is evident.

The current study was mainly trying to understand the aspects of one area of language learning that is VLS in order to possibly identify implications for teaching.

The researcher designed to provide baseline data for future research on the VLS of EFL speakers and to provide insights for the EFL classroom. The present study aimed to survey male and female EFL learners' VLS use.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

A total number of 80 out of 110 intermediate EFL learners (40 male and 40 female) were chosen according to their performance on OPT test. The participants were at intermediate level within their general foreign language proficiency based on Oxford Placement test direction.

The study was carried out with a total of 80 homogenous EFL learners, who were at the intermediate level of proficiency and studied English at Shokouh Language Institute, in Iran. The participants in the present study had some basic knowledge of English and could read and write in English.

3.2 Instruments and Materials

Two questionnaires have been used in this study: an OPT and a Likert-scale VLS questionnaire. At first 110 EFL learners took the OPT and according to the result of the OPT 80 out of 110 learners were at intermediate level. The participants (40 male and 40 female EFL learners) were administered vocabulary learning strategy inventory.

The present study applies a Likert scale questionnaire as a research instrument. The questionnaire adapted from Kudo (1999) and Schmitt's (1988) vocabulary learning strategies. Kudo developed and validated this questionnaire after conducting a pilot study with Japanese senior high school students. Further, the internal reliabilities (Cronbach- α) for the VLS Likert scale questionnaire was (.91). The questionnaire was composed of two categories of VLSs each of which was assessed by a number of individual items. The total number of individual items assessing the two VLSs (psycholinguistic VLSs and metacognitive VLSs) was 44. It enabled the researcher to get insights into the students' use of VLSs. The researcher directly distributed a total of

80 questionnaires and all of them were returned properly.

The questionnaire of the present study contained the questions for the strategies the participants may have used. The strategies were divided into two general categories: psycholinguistic VLSs and metacognitive strategies. The definitions of two strategies were adapted from Schmitt (1997) and Kudo (1999). In this questionnaire, the participants were asked to note the frequency of the strategies they had used to learn vocabulary over the last two weeks. Six scales' degrees of frequency were considered. All the items presented in English, and the researcher gave necessary explanations for the items expected to be hard to understand.

Data Analysis Procedures

After collecting the questionnaires, the data were summarized and the procedures of descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, etc.) followed by inferential statistics namely Mann Whitney U tests have been run. The nonparametric Mann Whitney U tests used to find a significant difference between males and females for their use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Fifteen EFL learners who were representative of the main sample regarding their general foreign language proficiency

participated in the pilot test. The reliability and validity were interpreted according to the standards suggested by Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott (1994). The determined values of Cronbach's Alpha for the OPT and strategy inventory were (.793) and (.744), respectively which were both acceptable based on the determined criteria.

4. Results and Discussion

The present study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequent vocabulary learning strategies used by male learners?
2. What are the most frequent vocabulary learning strategies used by female learners?
3. Is there any significant difference between Iranian female and male intermediate EFL learners in terms of their vocabulary strategy use?

Hypothesis:

Ho.1: There is no significant difference between Iranian female and male intermediate EFL learners in terms of their vocabulary strategy use.

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations were used to summarize the male learners' responses to the strategy inventory questionnaire. The results are presented in tables 3.1:

Table 3.1: Item Statistics for Vocabulary Learning Strategies (Males)

	Mean	SD	N
1.Paraphrase the word's meaning by yourself	3.35	1.49	40
2.Listen to tape of word lists	2.92	1.38	40
3.Guess from textual context in reading (guess the meaning from the text)	4.12	1.06	40
4.Use an English-language TV program	4.02	1.60	40
5.Associate the word with its coordinates (cat and dog, both animals)	2.87	1.50	40
6.Ask your teacher for a paraphrase (to explain in a simple way)	4.00	1.51	40
7.Learn words written on commercial items	4.40	1.35	40
8.Ask your teacher for synonym	4.27	1.32	40
9.Put English labels on physical objects	3.25	1.97	40
10.Use an English language video	3.70	1.68	40

	Mean	SD	N
11.Use English-language songs	3.67	1.62	40
12.Ask your teacher to check your flash cards or word lists for accuracy	2.50	1.70	40
13.Learn by group work in class	3.02	1.79	40
14.Read an English-language newspaper	2.50	1.58	40
15.Use English-language internet and mobiles	4.17	1.63	40
16.Connect the word to its synonyms and antonym	3.62	.92	40
17.Use spaced word practice (use the word in different time intervals)	3.22	1.29	40
18.Test with other people	3.25	1.66	40
19.Ask your teacher a sentence or an example including the new word	3.92	1.16	40
20.Do written repetition	3.55	1.55	40
21.Learn by pair work in class	3.12	1.53	40
22.Use new word in sentences	3.82	1.08	40
23.Study and practice meaning in a group outside of class	3.57	1.86	40
24.Connect word to already known words	3.62	1.56	40
25.Ask your classmates for Persian translation	4.20	1.57	40
26.Learn the words of an idiom together	3.57	1.53	40
27.Use the vocabulary section in your textbook	3.00	1.45	40
28.Take notes or highlight in class	3.12	1.65	40
29.Use thesaurus (a type of dictionary in which words with similar	3.32	1.71	40
30.Memorize the meaning of affix and roots	3.17	1.53	40
31.Use mind or semantic maps (relating the word or the meaning to	3.37	1.51	40
32.Use picture dictionary	2.75	1.72	40
33.Ask other people for Persian translation	3.27	1.41	40
34.Take notes or highlight out of class	3.50	1.50	40
35.Group the related words	3.02	1.09	40
36.Keep a vocabulary notebook	4.47	1.46	40
37.Image or draw word's meaning	3.22	1.81	40
38.connect word to a personal experience	3.75	1.27	40
39.Listen to an English-language radio program	2.47	1.73	40
40.Use 'scales' for gradable (separable) adjectives (e.g. big, bigger,	3.50	1.78	40
41.Ask your teacher for Persian translation	4.22	1.59	40
42.Use loanwords (the words that taken from one donor language and	4.02	1.34	40
43.Use a bilingual dictionary (English-Persian or Persian-English)	4.60	1.58	40
44.Do verbal repetition (repeat the word and its meaning many times)	4.50	1.37	40

When it comes to the ratings of the strategy inventory by male participants, items 43, 44, 36, 7, 8, 42, 25, 15, 3, 4, 41, and 6 had the highest mean ranks ($X \geq 4$). The evidence obtained from the questionnaire show that Using a bilingual dictionary (English-Persian or Persian-English) was the most frequently-used strategy employed by male EFL Learners ($X= 4.60$). Afterwards, the participants showed their inclination to do verbal repetition (repeat the word and its meaning many times) ($X= 4.50$). The next highly approached vocabulary strategy was "Keeping a vocabulary notebook" ($X= 4.47$) closely followed by "Learning words written on commercial items" ($X= 4.40$). What's more, "Asking their teacher for synonym" ($X= 4.27$), "Asking their teacher for Persian translation" ($X= 4.22$), "Asking their classmates for Persian translation" ($X= 4.20$), and "Using English-language internet and mobiles" ($X= 4.17$) were among other regularly employed strategies.

On the other hand, male participants showed their lowest ratings for items 2, 5, 32, 12, and 39 respectively. The respondents were less enthusiastic to "listen to tape of word lists" ($X= 2.92$). Besides, they were

less motivated to "Associate the word with its coordinates (cat and dog, both animals)" ($X=2.87$). "Using picture dictionary" ($X=2.75$) and "Asking their teacher to check their flash cards or word lists for accuracy" ($X= 2.50$) were among the least frequently used strategies by the male participants. Finally, "Listening to an English-language radio program" was the least regular vocabulary learning strategy used by male EFL learners ($X= 2.47$).

Regarding the deviation of the responses, the highest amount of divergence was found for item (9) that evaluated their viewpoints respecting "Putting English labels on physical objects" ($SD=1.97$). All the same, item (16) "respondents' enthusiasm to connect the word to its synonyms and antonym" had the highest amount of uniformity among the responses ($SD = .92$).

To answer the second research question, descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations were used to summarize the females EFL learners' responses to the vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire. The following table presents females' ratings of the vocabulary learning strategy use.

Table 3.2: Item Statistics for Vocabulary Learning Strategies (Females)

	Mean	SD	N
1.Paraphrase the word's meaning by yourself	4.02	1.12	40
2.Listen to tape of word lists	3.22	1.83	40
3.Guess from textual context in reading (guess the meaning from the text)	4.12	1.01	40
4.Use an English-language TV program	3.82	1.58	40
5.Associate the word with its coordinates (cat and dog, both animals)	3.17	1.64	40
6.Ask your teacher for a paraphrase (to explain in a simple way)	4.22	1.40	40
7.Learn words written on commercial items	3.95	1.39	40
8.Ask your teacher for synonym	4.62	1.16	40
9.Put English labels on physical objects	2.12	1.66	40
10.Use an English language video	3.77	1.57	40
11.Use English-language songs	3.92	1.87	40
12.Ask your teacher to check your word lists for accuracy	2.87	1.57	40
13.Learn by group work in class	3.50	1.50	40

14. Read an English-language newspaper	2.20	1.39	40
15. Use English-language internet and mobiles	4.67	1.77	40
16. Connect the word to its synonyms and antonym	4.05	1.35	40
17. Use spaced word practice (use the word in different time intervals e.g. you use the word this week and you use and review it two weeks later)	3.67	1.28	40
18. Test with other people	3.85	1.59	40
19. Ask your teacher a sentence or an example including the new word	3.60	1.23	40
20. Do written repetition	3.12	1.55	40
21. Learn by pair work in class	3.77	1.64	40
22. Use new word in sentences	4.02	1.14	40
23. Study and practice meaning in a group outside of class	3.40	1.56	40
24. Connect word to already known words	3.72	1.48	40
25. Ask your classmates for Persian translation	3.37	1.54	40
26. Learn the words of an idiom together	4.22	1.32	40
27. Use the vocabulary section in your textbook	3.47	1.46	40
28. Take notes or highlight in class	4.47	1.75	40
29. Use thesaurus (a type of dictionary in which words with similar meanings are arranged in groups)	4.25	1.67	40
30. Memorize the meaning of affix and roots	3.37	1.44	40
31. Use mind or semantic maps (relating the word or the meaning to other words in your mind)	3.60	1.70	40
32. Use picture dictionary	2.82	1.66	40
33. Ask other people for Persian translation	2.95	1.33	40
34. Take notes or highlight out of class	4.22	1.27	40
35. Group the related words	2.82	1.23	40
36. Keep a vocabulary notebook	4.25	1.69	40
37. Image or draw word's meaning	3.80	1.55	40
38. Connect word to a personal experience	4.05	1.44	40
39. Listen to an English-language radio program	2.15	1.52	40
40. Use 'scales' for gradable (separable) adjectives	4.07	1.54	40
41. Ask your teacher for Persian translation	3.80	1.34	40
42. Use loanwords (the words that taken from one donor language and use in the recipient language without translation)	4.77	1.31	40
43. Use a bilingual dictionary (English-Persian or Persian-English)	4.47	1.53	40
44. Do verbal repetition (repeat the word and its meaning many times)	4.52	1.26	40

The highest mean rank was reported for items 1, 3, 6, 8, 15, 16, 22, 26, 28, 29, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41, 43, and 44 ($X \geq 4$). Female respondents reflected their highest use of "loanwords (the words that taken from one donor language and use in the recipient language without translation)" ($X = 4.77$). In the second place, they were more satisfied with using "English -language internet and mobiles" ($X = 4.67$) closely followed by "asking their teacher for synonym" ($X = 4.62$). "Doing verbal repetition (repeat the word and its meaning many times)" ($X = 4.52$) was among the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy. Moreover, the female participants expressed their enthusiasm to use "a bilingual dictionary (English-Persian or Persian-English)" and "Take notes or highlight in class" ($X = 4.47$).

In comparison, items 33, 12, 32, 35, 14, 39, and 9 had the lowest mean ranks respectively. Respondents' ratings of the items disclosed that they were less eager to "Ask other people for Persian translation" ($X = 2.95$). Furthermore, they revealed their negative viewpoints towards "Asking their

teacher to check their flash cards or word lists for accuracy" ($X = 2.87$). Nevertheless, the participants were less likely to "Use picture dictionary" or "Group the related words" ($X = 2.82$). In conclusion, they expressed their least desire to "Listen to an English-language radio program" ($X = 2.15$) and "Put English labels on physical objects" ($X = 2.12$).

The highest degree of conformity among the responses was established for item (3). The respondents were roughly consistent in answering to the item that estimated their perceptions towards "Guessing from textual context in reading (guess the meaning from the text)" ($SD = 1.01$). On the other hand, the highest degree of dispersion was found among the responses for item (11) that assessed the respondents' standpoint towards "Using English-language songs" ($SD = 1.87$).

To answer the third research question, the descriptive table was used to display the means and standard deviation for the strategy inventory questionnaire for female and male groups. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 3.3: Descriptive Statistics for the Strategy Inventory of both Males and Females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
total	Male	40	3.5369	.66306	.10484
	Female	40	3.7040	.60105	.09503

Regarding vocabulary learning strategy use of males and females, the mean rank for the female group (mean female = 3.70) was higher than that of the male group (mean male = 3.53). Therefore female group reported higher levels of vocabulary learning strategy use than the male group. Both groups provided the answers to the items that evaluated their vocabulary learning strategy use with relatively identical degree of variance. However, female group (SD female = .60) seemed to be more consistent in their responses to the strategies than the male group (SD male = .66). To find out whether

these differences between the two groups were statistically significant, the non-parametric Mann Whitney U test was run to the results of the strategy inventory. The nonparametric test for the two independent samples including male and female EFL learners were run to specify whether the values of vocabulary strategy use differed between the two groups.

Mann-Whitney U test examined the null hypothesis. It does not assume normality and thus was appropriate to test the ordinal variables that were collected from the vocabulary strategy inventory.

Table 3.4: Ranks of females and males for strategy inventory

Ranks	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
	male	40	37.66	1506.50
total	female	40	43.34	1733.50
	Total	80		

The rank table was divided into two groups, one group for each test variable. The first test variable measured females' use of vocabulary learning strategies and the second one showed males' level of vocabulary learning strategy use. First, each case was ranked without regarding group membership. Cases tied on a particular value of vocabulary strategy use received the average rank for that value. After ranking the cases, the ranks were summed within groups. For female group, the average ranks were over 5.68 points apart.

Table 3.5: Test Statistics a for Mann Whitney U test

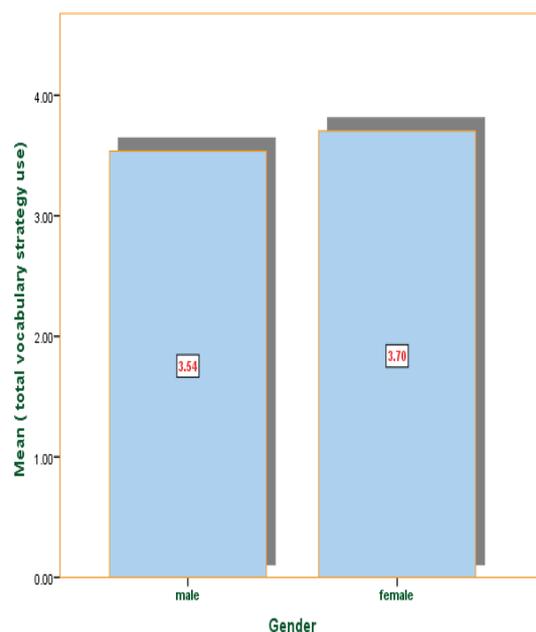
Mann-Whitney U	686.500
Z	-1.092
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.275
a. Grouping Variable: Gender	

The negative Z statistics ($Z = -1.092$) showed that the rank sums were lower than their expected values. However, the insignificantly lower rank sums of the male group suggested no significant difference between Iranian female and male intermediate EFL learners within their vocabulary learning strategy use ($\text{Sig} = .275 \geq .05$).

Mann Whitney U test results supported the null hypothesis and suggested no significant difference between female and male EFL learners ($P \geq 0.05$). The following figure illustrates males and females' use of vocabulary learning strategies.

The quantitative findings have shown that the psycholinguistic VLS was the category that gained more support in this study in the view points of the both groups

of the learners (table 3.5). Also the result of the study shows no significant difference between Iranian female and male intermediate EFL learners within their vocabulary learning strategy use ($\text{Sig} = .275 \geq .05$).

**Figure 3.1.** the Comparison between Males and Females With Respect To Their General Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use**Table 4.1.** Descriptive Statistics

VLSs	Range	Min	Max	Mea	SD
Psycholinguistic	4.11	3.11	7.22	5.29	1
Metacognitive	2.67	2	4.67	3.55	.62

N= 80

Discussion and Conclusion

About 23 out of 26 psycholinguistic strategies have been used frequently by the female learners and 21 out of 26 by male learners ($\chi > 3$). This finding was consistent with other finding of many other scholars

(e.g. Gu & Johnson, 1996; Sener, 2009; Wu & Wang, 1998; Zarafshan, 2002) Wu and Wang (1998) found out that students are using psycholinguistic strategies (memory and cognitive) and metacognitive strategies very often.

According to the result of the present study about two third of metacognitive strategies (13 out of 18) have been used frequently by Iranian EFL learners (male and female) and according to table 4.1 (mean of metacognitive strategies was 3.55 and the mean for psycholinguistics strategies was 5.29) it can be concluded that they used psycholinguistic strategies more than metacognitive strategies.

Furthermore, the finding of this study is not in line with Jimenez (2003) and Yongqi (2002) study that has identified that males and females differ significantly regarding VLS use, with female learners being reportedly more frequent users of VLS. In addition, female learners use VLSs more often to promote their language learning in comparison to male learners.

In addition Sarani and Kafipour (2008) stated psycholinguistic strategy is the most frequently used strategy for the purpose of retaining new words while current training setting is communicative approach. The finding of this study regarding the use of VLSs is similar to Gu and Johnson's (1996) finding. It was put forward that Chinese learners are applying variety of strategies considerably, yet Iranian EFL learners, especially female learners, at this study did the same and in this study female group reported higher levels of VLSs use than the male group.

Total mean for the psycholinguistic strategy use, metacognitive strategies as well as the overall frequency mean was slightly higher for the female respondents. But no significant difference was seen between Iranian female and male intermediate EFL learners within their vocabulary learning strategy use ($Sig = .275 \geq .05$).

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