

## A COMPARISON BETWEEN VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Vocabulary Learning Strategies ( VLSs ) are important to English learners as they help develop learners' reading , writing , listening and speaking skills. Thus, they play an important role in improving language learners' English proficiency on a whole. Since , there is a gap in English proficiency between urban and rural schools students , the study was carried out ( 1 ) to compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the urban and rural schools students , ( 2 ) to compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the high and low achievers , and ( 3 ) to examine the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the vocabulary learning strategies employed. Survey research design was used where Mayuree Siriwan's ( 2007 ) VLSs questionnaire was adopted and adapted. The questionnaires which consisted of 32-Likert-scaled items on three categories of VLSs were distributed to collect data from 94 samples from an urban and rural secondary schools. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot test which involved 30 students was conducted and the reliability Cronbach Alpha was 0.837 (  $\alpha = 0.837$  ).The findings of the study reveal that there was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed; however , the findings show that there was a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed. In addition, the results show that there was a significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed. The results of the study imply that VLSs should be emphasized by educators especially in rural areas to help language learners learn vocabulary that can give a great impact on their English proficiency.*

Keywords : proficiency ,vocabulary , vocabulary learning strategies , vocabulary learning strategies classification , correlation

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### Introduction

Vocabulary is vital in English language proficiency because language learners who have abundant vocabulary tend to develop the other skills including thinking skills ( Smith , 1998 ) . According to some scholars, such as Tarone ( 1983 ) ; Rubin ( 1987 ) ; O'Malley and Chamot ( 1990 ) ; Oxford (1990); Williams and Burden (1997), strategies are vital in improving communication ability. Limited vocabulary and failure in using appropriate vocabulary can cause confusion and misunderstanding. Learning vocabulary is not about knowing the word only but it includes knowing about the knowledge of the word. In vocabulary learning, not all students can get the meanings of new words, retain them in their memory, use them in suitable situations, or enrich their vocabulary without being taught the strategies first. Thus, to assist learners learn vocabulary effectively and eventually become independent vocabulary learners, they must be exposed to a variety of appropriate vocabulary learning strategies for dealing with new words. The employment of appropriate vocabulary learning strategies can lead to bigger size of vocabulary bank, better performance in reading, writing ,listening and speaking skills and English proficiency on a whole.

Despite being important in the development of English proficiency, very little studies have been done concerning vocabulary learning strategies employed by secondary school students in Malaysia. Therefore, this study sought ( 1 ) to compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the urban and rural schools students , ( 2 ) to compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the high and low achievers , and ( 3 ) to examine the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the vocabulary learning strategies employed.

### Background of the study

In Malaysia, there is a gap in English proficiency between urban and rural schools students. The rural schools students are less proficient compared to their counterparts in the urban schools. Thus, the Ministry of Education has started sending more English-option teachers to more than 200 schools in the rural areas especially in Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu to improve the students' English proficiency. According to the Ministry of Education, it is an initial step to narrow the gap in English proficiency between the urban and rural schools students. Since it has been proven that there is a correlation between VLSs used

and students' proficiency in English, the study was carried out to investigate the VLSs employed by urban and rural schools students. The research questions guiding the study are as follow;

- ( 1 ) Is there a significant difference between the urban and rural school students with respect to the vocabulary learning strategies employed ? ,
- ( 2 ) Is there a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the vocabulary learning strategies employed ? , and
- ( 3 ) Is there a significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the vocabulary learning strategies employed ?

The hypotheses are as follows:

- 1 )  $H_0$  = There is no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed.
- 2 )  $H_0$  = There is no significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed.
- 3 )  $H_0$  = There is no significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed.

To answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses, two secondary schools in Melaka were chosen ; one is in the urban area and another is in the rural area. A survey was conducted and a questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The data then were analysed by utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 for Windows.

The findings of the research are expected to benefit teachers and students respectively. They might change teachers' and students' perception on VLSs. The rest of the article is organised as follows: First , the definitions of VLSs , distinction between *word* and *vocabulary* , classification of VLSs , the past research on VLSs , and conceptual framework of the study are discussed. After that, the research methods and procedures used in the study are described .Then, the results are discussed and finally , implications , limitations and suggestions for future study are proposed.

### Definitions of vocabulary learning strategies ( VLSs)

A *strategy* comprises rules and guidelines on how to select the best strategies and determine their use.( Cubukcu, 2007 ). However , scholars have different ways of defining VLSs. Cameroon ( 2001 ) proposed that VLSs are actions taken by learners to assist them in understanding and remembering vocabulary. Catalan ( 2003 ) on the other hand , stated that VLSs are knowledge about the mechanisms employed to ( 1 ) discover the meaning of words , ( 2 ) store the words in long term memory , ( 3 ) retrieve the words when necessary , and ( 4 ) use the words in speaking and writing. Meanwhile , Intaraprasert ( 2004 ) defined VLSs as " any set of techniques or learning behaviours, which language learners reported using in order to figure out the meaning of a new word, to retain the knowledge of newly-learned words, and to enrich one's knowledge of vocabulary ". It can be suggested that VLSs mean actions taken by language learners to understand, remember , as well as enrich vocabulary items. It also includes learners' ability to use vocabulary items appropriately in speaking and writing.

### Distinction between *vocabulary* and *word*

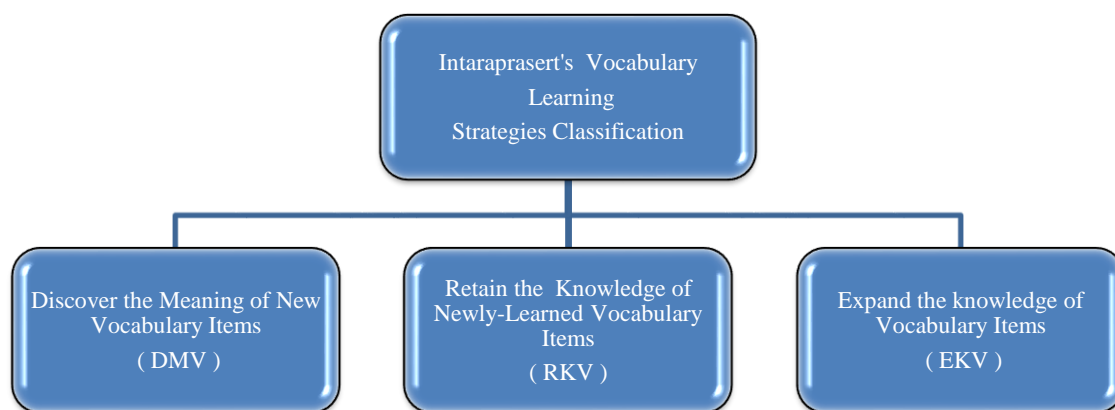
*Vocabulary* is different from *word* , where basically, *vocabulary* is knowledge about *words*. While *word* can be seen as a sound or a combination of sounds. ( Schmitt , 2000 ). According to Hornby et al. ( 1984 ) *vocabulary* is the total number of words that form a language. It also refers to a total of words a person knows or uses. Read & Richards ( 2000 ) stated that a *word* can exist on its own and have meaning, and acts as 'a part of *vocabulary*' in a language while *vocabulary* can have more than a word. Jackson & Amvela ( 2000 ) added that *vocabulary* also concerns with compound and complex words, and the language meaningful units .In the context of the study , *vocabulary* refers to knowledge of words and it can consist of more than a single word. It also refers to the total number of words known and can be used by a learner in speaking and writing.

### Classification of vocabulary learning strategies

O'Malley and Chamot ( 1990 ) discovered three broad categories of strategies that are cognitive , metacognitive , and socioaffective. While Oxford's ( 1990 ) classified VLSs into two main categories : direct strategies which comprise memory , cognitive , and compensation strategies and indirect strategies that include metacognitive , affective , and social strategies. There are many other scholars with other VLSs classifications. Some of the VLSs categories might have different names, but apparently they share some common features. It seems that the most common individual VLSs is Memory category; then followed by Metacognitive, Cognitive, Social and Determination categories. Most VLSs can be used in a wide range of vocabulary learning, and are useful at all levels. The VLSs are vital for language learners as they encourage language learners to manage their own learning and finally become self-directed learners.

As for the present study, Intaraprasert's VLSs classification was employed as it suits the purpose of the study. VLSs classification proposed by Intaraprasert ( 2004 ) consists of three main categories ; 1) strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items ( DMV ), 2) strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items ( RKV ), and 3) strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items ( EKV ). The diagram below represents Intaraprasert's ( 2004 ) VLSs classification.

Figure 1 : Intaraprasert's Vocabulary Learning Strategies Classification ( 2004 )



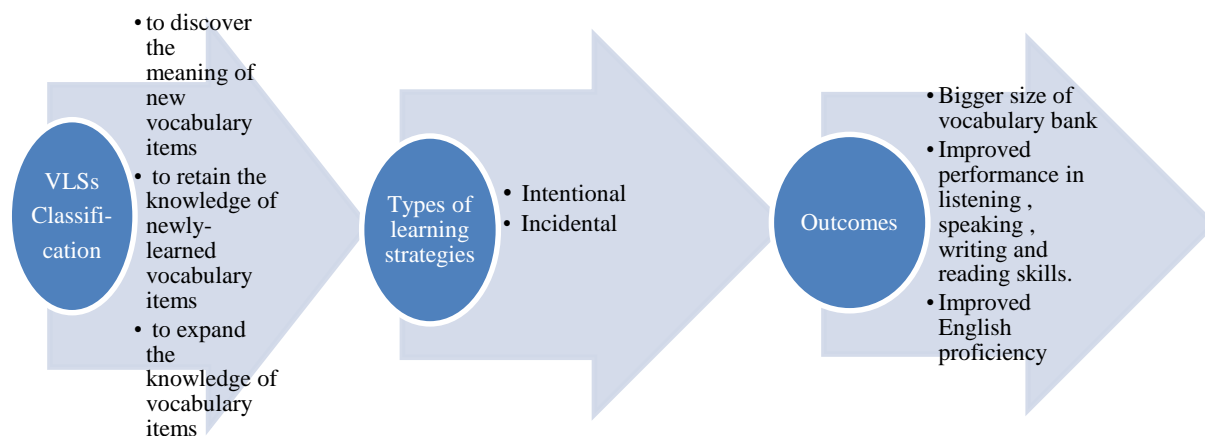
**Researches on vocabulary learning strategies ( VLSs )**

Many studies have shown a significant relationship between VLSs and learning results via a correlational approach ( Fan, 2003; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999 ). Gu and Johnson ( 1996 ) conducted a research on 850 Chinese college students and the results manifested that there was a significant relationship between VLSs, language proficiency, and vocabulary range. A significant relationship was also seen by associating strategies' similarities and differences among learners with different levels of achievement ( Gu, 1994, 2003; Moir & Nation, 2002 ). Meanwhile, the findings of Kung's and Chen's ( n.d ) were supported by Medani's ( as cited in Mc Carthy, 1990) who conducted a study on VLSs for both good and weak Arabic learners who learned English. He discovered that there was a significant difference in what good and weak learners did. Apparently, good learners used more variety of strategies compared to the weak learners. In addition, according to O'Mally & Chamot ( 1990 ) , successful language learners often employ various indirect learning strategies to comprehend and remember new information while less effective learners use lesser strategies infrequently or inappropriately. Another recent research done by Rahimi and Shams (2012), revealed that VLSs had a significant influence on the result of learners who studied in intermediate level where those who got a good result employed the techniques in the questionnaire more frequently to assist them in comprehending the words better. In short, researches have shown that there is a correlation between the employment of VLSs and English proficiency. Learners will be able to perform better in other skills if they have a great amount of vocabulary as they will encounter less problems in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

**Conceptual framework**

The following diagram describes the conceptual framework of the research.

Figure 2 : Conceptual framework of the research



An important cognitive theory concept that gives impact on VLSs is learning strategies because VLSs are part of learning strategies. Intaraprasert's (2004), Vocabulary Learning Strategies can be classified into three categories (1) strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items (DMV), (2) strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items (RKV), and (3) strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items (EKV). They can be intentional or incidental strategies depending on individuals and situations. Intentional learning is described as any action that leads to converting lexical information to memory (Hulstijn, 2001). On the other hand, incidental learning refers to the process of learning something without realizing it. A learner learns something despite the intention of learning something else (Richard & Schmidt, 2002). Students should use both types of strategies; intentional and incidental as there are no specific strategies that are suitable for all purposes. The use of appropriate VLSs may lead to bigger size of vocabulary bank, better performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and eventually improved English proficiency. This is due to the fact that the explicit teaching of VLSs can help language learners become independent and self-directed language learners (Benson, 2001).

### Methodology

By employing survey research design, the data for the study were gathered from ninety-four ( $n=94$ ) students from two different secondary schools in Melaka. 54 students were from a school that was located in the urban area and another 40 students were from a school that was located in the rural area. The schools were selected as their locations were not very far from the researcher's school. Therefore, it facilitated the process of collecting data. The students who comprised 44 males and 50 females were selected through the technique of random sampling. They were 17 years old and they studied English as one of their core subjects. Five periods were allocated for English subject every week with 40 minutes per period. The students from the two schools were divided into two groups; high and low achievers based on the grades that they got in their most recent examination or test. Those who obtained A and B grades belonged to the high achievers group whilst the remaining who got C, D, E and G grades went to the low achievers group. 50 students belonged to the high achievers group while 44 students went to the low achievers group.

The instrument used was a questionnaire which consisted of 32 Likert – scaled items on three categories of Vocabulary Learning Strategies: (1) Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items (DMV), (2) strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items (RKV), and (3) strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items (EKV). The respondents were required to circle the scale that best shows the frequency of the strategies that they use. The scales of 1 to 4 are as follows: 1 – *Never* 2 – *Sometimes* 3 – *Often* 4 – *Always*. The questionnaire was mainly adopted and adapted from the vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire produced by Mayuree Siriwan (2007). The questionnaire was employed as it suited the purpose of the study and it was suitable for students' level. Some of the items had been modified to suit the students' learning context and level of proficiency. A pilot test which involved 30 students was conducted before the actual data were collected. The reliability Cronbach's Alpha obtained was 0.837 ( $\alpha = 0.837$ ). It means that the questionnaire was reliable as the degree of reliability was more than 0.70. The questionnaire also had been sent to a TESL lecturer for validity and it was proven valid to be used in the study.

These procedures were followed when collecting data from the respondents. First and foremost, permission was obtained from the District Education Office and the principals of the schools. Then, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in both schools on two different days, as the schools' location are quite far from each other; one school is in the town and another school is in a rural area. Instructions on the questionnaire were given orally before it was administered. The written instructions were also given in the questionnaire. The respondents were instructed to answer the questionnaire in 30 minutes; so that, the teaching and learning process was not disturbed.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 for Windows was utilized to compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by urban and rural schools students. Analysis was also done to compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by high and low achievers. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis was run to examine the correlation between the grades attained by students and the VLSs employed.

### Findings

This section will answer the following Research Questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between the urban and rural school students with respect to the VLSs employed?
2. Is there a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed?
3. Is there a significant correlation between the grades attained by students and the VLSs employed?

### Comparison between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students

Independent sample T-test was used to compare the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students. Table 1 shows the result of the comparison between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students (Category 1 - Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items). Category 1 consisted of eight items on strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary. They were *Guess the meaning from a single vocabulary item*, *Guess the meaning from contexts*, *Guess the meaning by analysing the structure of words*, *Use an English-English dictionary*, *Use an English-Malay dictionary*, *Ask classmates or friends*, *Ask English subject teachers*, and *Ask other people, such as members of one's family*.

Table 1: Independent sample T-test between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students ( Category 1 )

Area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Urban	54	2.607	0.406	0.879	0.382
Rural	40	2.528	0.455		

As can be seen from Table 1, there was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed (  $t= 0.879$  ;  $p= 0.382$  ). The value of  $p > 0.05$ , therefore ,  $H_0$  failed to be rejected. There was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed. The mean value of the urban school students (  $M= 2.607$   $SD = 0.406$  ) was higher than the mean value of the rural school students (  $M=2.528$   $SD= 0.455$  ).

Table 2 shows the result of the comparison between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students ( Category 2 - Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items ). Category 2 comprised ten items on strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items. They were *Say a single vocabulary item with its meaning repeatedly*, *Say vocabulary items in sentences repeatedly*, *Listen to an English conversation of other people*, *Use vocabulary items to talk with classmates or friends*, *Use vocabulary items to talk with English subject teachers*, *Revise previous English lessons*, *List down vocabulary items with meanings in a notebook*, *Write vocabulary items with meanings on small papers and stick them on the wall of your room*, *Do English exercises during free time* , and *Use newly-learned vocabulary items in writing*.

Table 2: Independent sample T-test between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students ( Category 2 )

Area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Urban	54	2.289	0.445	1.010	0.315
Rural	40	2.198	0.418		

As can be seen from Table 2 , there was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed (  $t= 1.010$  ;  $p= 0.315$  ).The value of  $p > 0.05$  , therefore ,  $H_0$  failed to be rejected. There was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed. The mean value of the urban school students (  $M= 2.289$   $SD = 0.445$  ) was higher than the mean value of the rural school students (  $M=2.198$   $SD= 0.418$  ).

Table 3 shows the result of the comparison between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students ( Category 3 - Strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items ). Category 3 comprised 14 items on strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items. They were *Listen to English songs*, *Listen to English radio programmes*, *Talk with classmates and friends in English*, *Talk with English subject teachers in English*, *Talk with foreigners in English*, *Read English articles*, *Watch English programme channels on TV*, *Watch English-speaking films with subtitles*, *Search for English information through the Internet*, *Practise using a dictionary*, *Practise translating articles from English to Malay, or from Malay to English*, *Do extra English exercises from other sources, such as the newspapers and the Internet*, *Play English games, such as scrabble, crossword puzzles*, and *Write a journal of daily activities*.

Table 3: Independent sample T-test between the VLSs employed by the urban and rural schools students ( Category 3 )

Area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Urban	54	2.549	0.496	1.225	0.224
Rural	40	2.427	0.452		

As can be seen from Table 3, there was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed (  $t= 1.225$  ;  $p= 0.224$  ). The value of  $p > 0.05$ , therefore,  $H_0$  failed to be rejected. There was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students with respect to the VLSs employed. The mean value of the urban school students (  $M= 2.549$   $SD = 0.496$  ) was higher than the mean value of the rural school students (  $M=2.427$   $SD= 0.452$  ).

### Comparison between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers

Independent sample T-test was once again used to compare the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers. Table 4 reveals the result of the comparison between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers ( Category 1- Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items ).

Table 4: Independent sample T-test between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers ( Category 1 )

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
High achievers	50	2.678	0.411	2.604	0.011
Low achievers	44	2.455	0.418		

As can be seen from Table 4, there was a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed ( $t = 2.604$ ;  $p = 0.011$ ). The value of  $p < 0.05$ , therefore,  $H_0$  was rejected. There was a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed. The mean value of the high achievers ( $M = 2.678$   $SD = 0.411$ ) was higher than the mean value of the low achievers ( $M = 2.455$   $SD = 0.418$ ).

Table 5 shows the result of the comparison between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers (Category 2 - Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items)

Table 5: Independent sample T-test between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers (Category 2)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
High achievers	50	2.292	0.454	1.000	0.320
Low achievers	44	2.202	0.500		

As can be seen from Table 5, there was no significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed ( $t = 1.000$ ;  $p = 0.320$ ). The value of  $p > 0.05$ , therefore,  $H_0$  failed to be rejected. There was no significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed. The mean value of the high achievers ( $M = 2.292$   $SD = 0.454$ ) was higher than the mean value of the low achievers ( $M = 2.202$   $SD = 0.500$ ).

Table 6 shows the result of the comparison between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers (Category 3 - Strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items)

Table 6: Independent sample T-test between the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers (Category 3)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
High achievers	50	2.593	0.493	2.106	0.038
Low achievers	44	2.388	0.444		

As can be seen from Table 6, there was a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed ( $t = 2.106$ ;  $p = 0.038$ ). The value of  $p < 0.05$ , therefore,  $H_0$  was rejected. There was a significant difference between the high and low achievers with respect to the VLSs employed. The mean value of the high achievers ( $M = 2.593$   $SD = 0.493$ ) was higher than the mean value of the low achievers ( $M = 2.388$   $SD = 0.444$ ).

### Correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed

To identify the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed, Pearson Correlation was used. However, it only shows the level of linear relationship between the two variables (grades and VLSs). The value of  $r$  ranges from -1 to +1. The interpretation of correlation ( $r$ ) is as follows:

Table 7 : Interpretation of correlation

$r$	Interpretation
0	No correlations
0.01 – 0.20	Very low correlation
0.21 – 0.40	Low correlation
0.41 – 0.60	Quite low
0.61 – 0.80	Sufficient
0.81 - 0.99	High

Table 8 shows the result of the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed (Category 1 - Strategies to discover the meaning of new vocabulary items).

Table 8: Correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed (Category 1)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation ( $r$ )	Sig.
Grade	1.47	0.502	-0.262	0.011
VLSs	2.573	0.427		

As revealed in Table 8, the value of  $r$  ( $-0.262$ ) shows that there was a correlation between the grades attained and the VLSs employed by students. The  $r$  value ( $-0.262$ ) shows a low correlation between the two variables. However, the  $p$  value ( $0.011$ ) shows that the correlation was statistically significant as  $p < 0.05$ . Thus,  $H_0 =$  There is no significant correlation between the grades attained by students and the VLSs employed was rejected. There was a significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed.

Table 9 shows the result of the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed (Category 2 - Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items).

Table 9: Correlation between the grades attained by students and the VLSs employed ( Category 2 )

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Sig.
Grade	1.47	0.502	-0.104	0.320
VLSs	2.250	0.434		

As shown in Table 9, the value of *r* ( -0.104 ) shows that there was a correlation between the grades attained and the VLSs employed by students. The *r* value (-0.104 ) shows a very low correlation between the two variables. Meanwhile, the *p* value ( 0.320 ) shows that the correlation was statistically not significant as  $p > 0.05$ . Thus,  $H_0 =$  There is no significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed failed to be rejected.

Table 10 shows the result of the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed ( Category 3 - Strategies to expand the knowledge of vocabulary items ).

Table 10: Correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed ( Category 3 )

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Sig.
Grade	1.47	0.502	-0.214	0.038
VLSs	2.497	0.479		

As shown in Table 10, the value of *r* ( -0.214 ) shows that there was a correlation between the grades attained and the VLSs employed by students. The *r* value (-0.214 ) shows a low correlation between the two variables. However, the *p* value ( 0.038 ) shows that the correlation was statistically significant as  $p < 0.05$ . Thus,  $H_0 =$  There is no significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed was rejected. There was a significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs employed.

### Discussion and conclusion

The findings show that there was no significant difference between the urban and rural schools students in respect of the VLSs employed. However, there was a difference in regard of frequency of VLSs use between the urban and rural school students. The urban school students employed all the three categories of the VLSs more frequently compared to the rural school students. Maybe the urban school students are more exposed to the various strategies compared to the rural school students.

In terms of differences between the high and low achievers in respect of the VLSs employed , the findings of the first and third categories of the VLSs show that besides the higher frequency use of the VLSs among the high achievers , the differences between the two groups were also statistically significant. It can be suggested that the higher the frequency of the VLSs use, the more proficient the students were. This is evidence as the high achievers ( those who obtained A and B grades in examinations ) scored higher mean compared to the low achievers ( those who got C , D , E and G grades in examinations). These findings are consistent with the findings of Kung's and Chen's ( n.d ) and supported by Medani's (as cited in Mc Carthy, 1990). These findings are also in line with the findings of O'Malley & Chamot ( 1990) .However , the results of the study reveal that there was no significant difference between the second category of the VLSs employed by the high and low achievers. Besides, the two groups of students did not employ the second category of the VLSs as frequently as the first and third categories of the VLSs.

In respect of correlation between the grades attained by the students and the VLSs used , the results revealed that there was a significant correlation between the grades attained by the students and the first and third categories of the VLSs employed. Although the correlation was not strong, it was statistically significant. The findings are consistent with the findings of Fan ( 2003 ) , Gu & Johnson ( 1996 ) , Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown (1999) , Kung & Chen ( n.d ). However, the correlation between the grades attained by the students and the second category of the VLSs employed by students was not statistically significant.

The results of the study imply that educators should emphasize the teaching of VLSs among students especially those in the rural schools. Besides, emphasis should be given on the second category of the VLSs ( Strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary items ) as the data show that the students did not use the strategies as frequently as the first and third categories of the VLSs. Maybe they did not get enough exposure to the strategies. Therefore, educators should teach and train them to employ the strategies to retain the knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary; so that, they will not forget about the vocabulary items that they have learned.

Language learners with abundant vocabulary are inclined to improve other skills including thinking capabilities ( Smith , 1998 ). It shows that vocabulary is vital for language learners to excel in other skills. They will encounter less problems because they have rich vocabulary. Nation ( 1990 ) believed that the crucial way of learning vocabulary is via learners' independent strategies. Learners will be more responsible to their own learning and they will not feel as if they are being forced to learn. According to Catalan ( 2001 ) , language learners learn words via various ways ; therefore , they need to be taught various VLSs to make them successful language learners. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) claims that the best plan in teaching vocabulary might be to teach various VLSs to students to enable them to decide which strategies they prefer. Language learners will employ the strategies that they are comfortable with and different language learners might favour different strategies. However, many researchers are of the opinion that certain VLSs are more effective to be used to learn and develop new lexical items ( Sanaoui, 1995; Schmitt, 1997 ).

Oxford ( 1990 ) and Schmitt ( 2000 ) believed that each VLS might be suitable for its objectives. Foreign language learners who are taught VLSs can be much more successful as VLSs produce autonomous students who are responsible of their own learning (Oxford, 1990). Besides, the explicit teaching of VLSs can help language learners become independent and self-directed language learners ( Benson , 2001 ).

The study has two limitations which are only two schools and 94 respondents were involved in the study. Besides, only one instrument that was the questionnaire was employed in the study. For future research, maybe more schools and respondents should be involved in the study; so that , the result will show a clearer differences between urban and rural school students in respect of VLSs use. Besides, the future study should use more than one instrument to collect data from respondents. Maybe a vocabulary test can be given to respondents to examine the correlation between the score obtained in the test and frequency of VLSs employed by them. Finally, the upcoming research can consider other variables such as English proficiency level to determine whether proficiency level affects the use of VLSs or vice versa.

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