



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 8, Issue, 02, pp.27051-27060, February, 2016

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES USED BY HIGH AND LOW ACHIEVERS (A CASE STUDY ON UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS IN ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITIES)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 07th November, 2015
Received in revised form
20th December, 2015
Accepted 09th January, 2016
Published online 27th February, 2016

Key words:

High and low achievers,
Language-learning strategies,
Vocabulary-learning strategies.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this investigation was to discover the vocabulary learning strategies used by high and low achiever Ethiopian English major undergraduate university students. Jimma, Ambo, Debre Birhan and Miza Tepi universities were randomly selected using a lottery method. Questionnaire and interview were used to collect relevant data of the study. One hundred thirty-four (134) students, who were enrolled in the aforementioned universities in 2013/14, filled out the questionnaire, and six purposely selected students from each university provided data through an in-depth interview. The data gathered through questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The data obtained from open-ended and interview questions were analyzed through content analysis strategies. The findings of the study revealed that the high achievers used vocabulary-learning strategies (determination, memory, cognitive, and meta-cognitive strategies) more often than the low achievers but without any statistically significant differences in some of the strategies. In contrast, the low achievers used the social strategies more often than the high achievers although both high and low achievers poorly used the social strategies. Finally, it was recommended that instructors should train students to use multifaceted vocabulary-learning strategies to enhance their academic achievement and language use.

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Citation: Haileslasie Beyene Hagos and Demis Gebretsadik Deneke, 2016. "A comparative analysis of vocabulary learning strategies used by high and low achievers (a case study on undergraduate English major students in Ethiopian Universities)", *International Journal of Current Research*, 8, (02), 27051-27060.

INTRODUCTION

English is a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary levels of Ethiopia. Besides, it is studied as an autonomous subject at Ethiopian higher education levels. Therefore, it plays an indispensable role in Ethiopian governmental and non-governmental sectors. To this end, at university level, students are obliged to do various academic skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in which knowing vocabulary words and identifying appropriate learning strategies positively affects students' success. Therefore, in order to enhance students' English language use and vocabulary power, English major students learn various elective and common courses in Ethiopian universities in which knowing vocabulary learning strategies assist better achievement. However, the students face various difficulties in enhancing their vocabulary repertoire as well as their English language competence.

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Consequently, some university students in Ethiopia do not use the right vocabulary words for the right contexts; they do not speak English fluently. In addition, they fail to contextualize the meanings of words using several clues. Likewise, they do not seem aware of various vocabulary learning strategies. Triggered by the above challenges, some of the students even at graduating class level often do not seem to use relevant vocabulary words to express their idea both in academic and non-academic contexts. This problem might have come from students' lack of using various language-learning strategies in general and vocabulary learning strategies in particular. Moreover, the inability of foreign language learner to learn vocabulary is a particular challenge. According to [Asgari \(2011\)](#) to solve students' insufficient of use vocabulary learning strategies, students should be educated about vocabulary learning strategies. Similarly, [Asgari \(2011\)](#) suggests that learning second language helps the students to acquire the right motivation towards language learning. Equally important, they should suit themselves with the learning environment and appropriate learning strategies use.

Undeniably, these learner traits can enhance language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular. In order to nurture effective learning strategy use, there has to be a conscious and active processing of information among the language users (Gu, 2005, Jurkovich, 2006). Jurkovich (2006) confirms that successful learners intentionally select, consciously monitor and evaluate their learning strategies while less successful learners employ similar strategies, yet are not aware of them and do not have learning aim.

The necessity of vocabulary learning strategies use in academic and non-academic contexts is ever increasing due to its multifaceted function. Moreover, meaningful communication is almost impossible without the use of lexical items. In this regard, Allen (1983, as cited in Yohhaness, 2008, p. 74) claims, "lexical problems frequently interfere with communication; and communication breaks down when people do not use the right words." Therefore, vocabulary learning is the soul of teaching and learning that deserves special attention and the investment of an immense effort in making the students learning meaningful and interactive (Yohhaness, 2008).

However, Ethiopian university students do not effectively use English language and vocabulary learning strategies; they do not use vocabulary-learning strategies in the same way among the high and low achiever students. Moreover, an immense investment and attention is not given to the way students learn vocabulary. This situation in Ethiopian universities encouraged the researchers to investigate the comparative analysis of students' vocabulary learning strategies among higher and lower achieving students.

Statement of the Problem

Ethiopian students' English language learning can be affected by many debilitating factors. One of the most difficult problems of Ethiopian university students is lack of vocabulary using and storing habits. The students' vocabulary deficiency might have come from the school system in which the students taught. This in return can influence students' school success. Therefore, due to students' limited vocabulary knowledge, some students even at a higher education level in our context have trouble expressing their ideas in the target language. Likewise, the researchers' experience in teaching English, attending students' research presentation and some interview of the students at the level of graduating year, they face difficult to explain their thoughts using the target language. In this case, the students suffer from lack of vocabulary power and language learning strategies use.

Learning a second language requires the use of the major skills: speaking, writing, listening and reading, which ensure effective communication. Moreover, knowing and possessing essential vocabulary highly contributes to the meaning of any language and to the smooth acquisition of foreign language (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). However, vocabulary learning and using it in an appropriate context is a big problem for most university students in our country. Although vocabulary learning is currently receiving attention in second language education and research, there is still much to learn about how successful language learners learn vocabulary.

In our universities, vocabulary is not taught independently as a subject; there is no explicit teaching of vocabulary learning strategies. Moreover, the major emphasis given to English teaching and learning is mainly geared towards the four major language skills and grammar components. This scenario in our context is also consistent with Fan (2003) and Catalan (2003) whom they claim vocabulary learning and teaching in many foreign language classrooms is largely incidental.

Thus, there is no doubt that vocabulary learning and teaching is less organized and scantily addressed form of foreign language learning at a higher education levels compared to the major language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar. Therefore, vocabulary has never provoked the same level of interest like the major skills and components of English language. However, vocabulary can be learned through reading context; it cannot be effective if the students are not directly trained to guess the meaning of words contextually. This scenario has brought students inadequacy of vocabulary knowledge; therefore, it affects the performance of students in their exams. Furthermore, lexical knowledge inadequacy may hinder students' overall language use. This situation calls for enhancing university students' vocabulary knowledge and its learning strategies.

Foreign language studies conducted by Ahmed (1989) and Nation (2001) about vocabulary-learning strategies used by learners spontaneously show that underachieving learners used a smaller range of strategies than the good learners use and tended to avoid active practice. Moreover, Gu and Johnson (1996) also conducted a study on non-English majors students at a university in China with relation to students' learning strategies, vocabulary size, and language proficiency.

With the exception of the aforementioned international researches conducted on various aspects of vocabulary learning strategies other than university context and different focus from this study, there seems to be a scarcity of investigations conducted locally. However, the researchers accessed one local research thesis conducted by Getnet (2008) at the college level on vocabulary learning strategies employed by college students in Gondar College of Teacher Education. Thus, there is no research conducted on Ethiopian universities English major undergraduate students' vocabulary-learning strategies focused on higher and lower achieving students. Therefore, this study is original because it addressed Ethiopia English major students, who experienced learning English courses better than lower grade students did.

Research Questions

- What are the vocabulary learning strategies of high and low achieving students?
- What are the most and the least vocabulary learning strategies used by Ethiopian universities students?
- Is there a significant difference between vocabulary learning strategies used by high and low achieving students?
- Is there a relationship between students' vocabulary learning strategies and academic achievement?

Table 1. Students' Determination Strategies Use

Items	Achievement Group	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it		Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%			Lower	Upper
		1. I analyze parts of speech (e.g. noun, verb, adjective).	L	8	12.5	12	18.8	14	21.9	16	25.0				
	H	2	2.9	3	4.3	29	41.4	23	32.9	13	18.6	3.6			
2. I analyze affixes and roots to guess the meanings of words	L	9	14.1	8	12.5	24	37.5	12	18.8	11	17.2	3.1	.067	-.747	.026
	H	3	4.3	6	8.6	26	37.1	24	34.3	11	15.7	3.5			
3. I guess the meanings of words from textual context	L	4	6.3	5	7.8	17	26.6	17	26.6	21	32.8	3.7	.099	-.710	.062
	H	3	4.3	3	4.3	11	15.7	24	34.3	29	41.4	4			
4. I look up a word in English- English dictionary	L	8	12.5	6	9.4	26	40.6	9	14.1	15	23.4	3.3	.111	-.715	.074
	H	2	2.9	6	8.6	27	38.6	19	27.1	16	22.9	3.6			
5. I look up a word in English- mother tongue dictionary	L	23	35.9	9	14.1	17	26.6	5	7.8	10	15.6	2.5	.151	-.806	.126
	H	12	17.1	14	20.0	25	35.7	9	12.9	10	14.3	2.9			
6. I list vocabulary words and review it	L	9	14.1	13	20.3	26	40.6	14	21.9	2	3.1	2.8	.218	-.602	.138
	H	8	11.4	9	12.9	35	50.0	9	12.9	9	12.9	3			

*Significance level at ≤ 0.5

Table 2. Students' Social Strategies Use

Items	Achievement	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it		Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%			Lower	Upper
		1. I ask the teacher to translate the meaning of words I do not understand	L	11	17.2	15	23.4	19	29.7	11	17.2				
	H	19	27.1	25	35.7	17	24.3	6	8.6	3	4.3	2.3			
2. I ask the teacher for synonyms or similar meanings of new Word	L	14	21.9	10	15.6	20	31.3	6	9.4	14	21.9	2.9	.009*	.145	1.016
	H	18	25.7	23	32.9	18	25.7	8	11.4	3	4.3	2.4			
3. I ask the teacher to make a sentence by using the new words	L	18	28.1	14	21.9	17	26.6	11	17.2	4	6.3	2.5	.041*	.016	.758
	H	21	30.0	20	28.6	28	40.0	1	1.4	0	0	2.1			
4. I ask classmates for meaning	L	7	10.9	15	23.4	28	43.8	7	10.9	7	10.9	2.9	.667	-.459	.294
	H	7	10.0	15	21.4	29	41.4	12	17.1	7	10.0	3			
5. I discover the meaning through group work activity	L	11	17.2	13	20.3	20	31.3	13	20.3	7	10.9	2.9	.986	-.392	.400
	H	7	10.0	18	25.7	28	40.0	11	15.7	6	8.6	2.9			
6. I ask the teacher to check my word lists for accuracy	L	7	10.9	16	25.0	22	34.4	11	17.2	8	12.5	3	.023*	.062	.844
	H	16	22.9	18	25.7	24	34.3	9	12.9	3	4.3	2.5			
7. I interact with English fluent speakers	L	8	12.5	16	25.0	24	37.5	5	7.8	11	17.2	2.9	.174	-.131	.718
	H	16	22.9	17	24.3	20	28.6	11	15.7	6	8.6	2.6			

*Significance level at ≤ 0.5

Table 3. Students' Response on Memory Strategies

Items	Achievement	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it		Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%			Lower	Upper
		1. I study the word with pictures.	L	18	28.1	16	25.0	12	18.8	10	15.6			8	12.5
	H	14	20.0	17	24.3	24	34.3	11	15.7	4	5.7	2.6			
2. I connect the word to my experience.	L	5	7.8	12	18.8	22	34.4	9	14.1	16	25.0	3.3		-.606	.200
	H	5	7.1	6	8.6	20	28.6	27	38.6	12	17.1	3.5	.320		
3. I make a list of vocabulary in alphabetical for reviewing.	L	12	18.8	15	23.4	25	39.1	6	9.4	6	9.4	2.7		-.248	.563
	H	15	21.4	25	35.7	14	20.0	11	15.7	5	7.1	2.5	.444		
4. I make a list of vocabulary arranged by topic or group for reviewing (e.g. animal, parts of body, flower).	L	11	17.2	15	23.4	19	29.7	14	21.9	5	7.8	2.8		-.166	.645
	H	14	20.0	22	31.4	21	30.0	7	10.0	6	8.6	2.6	.245		
5. I try to use the new word at once after learning.	L	6	9.4	11	17.2	19	29.7	17	26.6	11	17.2	3.2		-.556	.227
	H	4	5.7	8	11.4	25	35.7	21	30.0	12	17.1	3.4	.408		
6. I associate the word with other words I have learned.	L	4	6.3	10	15.6	23	35.9	17	26.6	10	15.6	3.3		-.885	-
	H	4	5.7	4	5.7	16	22.9	24	34.3	22	31.4	3.8	.010*		.121
7. I review the word I have learned by spelling it aloud.	L	11	17.2	10	15.6	24	37.5	8	12.5	11	17.2	3		-.479	.359
	H	6	8.6	18	25.7	23	32.9	14	20.0	9	12.9	3	.778		
8. I remember a word from its strange form, pronunciation or difficult spelling.	L	9	14.1	6	9.4	29	45.3	13	20.3	7	10.9	3		-.548	.184
	H	2	2.9	13	18.6	31	44.3	15	21.4	9	12.9	3.2	.328		
9. I say the new word aloud when studying in order to easily remember.	L	14	21.9	11	17.2	20	31.3	15	23.4	4	6.3	2.8		-.748	.076
	H	9	12.9	10	14.3	26	37.1	16	22.9	9	12.9	3.1	.109		
10. I learn the words by paraphrasing the words meaning.	L	6	9.4	11	17.2	17	26.6	21	32.8	9	14.1	3.2		-.635	.135
	H	3	4.3	7	10.0	27	38.6	18	25.7	15	21.4	3.5	.202		
11. I learn the words of an idiom together.	L	10	15.6	13	20.3	23	35.9	10	15.6	8	12.5	2.9		-.414	.367
	H	7	10.0	15	21.4	31	44.3	11	15.7	6	8.6	2.9	.905		
12. I use physical action when learning a word (Ex. You will dance to remember the meaning of the word? Dance?).	L	21	32.8	13	20.3	9	14.1	11	17.2	10	15.6	2.6		-.147	.797
	H	25	35.7	17	24.3	14	20.0	10	14.3	4	5.7	2.3	.176		

*Significance level at ≤ 0.5

Main Objective

The main objective of this investigation was to discover the vocabulary learning strategies employed by undergraduate English major students in Ethiopian universities with reference to high and low academic achievers.

Review of Literature

Language Learning Strategies

There are different types of second language learning strategies; they all contribute to the students learning success. Consequently, students may have differences in their school achievement due to their difference in language learning strategies use in general and vocabulary learning strategies use in particular.

In connection with this, researches revealed the need for intentional changes from teachers and teaching methods to learners and learning techniques during the past decades (Chamot, 2005; Lee, 2003 as cited in Zare, 2012). In this case, language learning strategies, being one of these techniques have been given a particular attention since the late 1970s (Zare, 2010; Brawn, 2007; Hong, Nam and Leave, 2007; as cited in Zare, 2012).

Although there could be more definitions given to language learning strategies, the definition given by Oxford (1990, p. 8) can be suffices: "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations". In short, it is what the learner wants to do to enhance his/her academic achievement.

Table 4. Results from Cognitive Learning Strategies

Items	Achievement	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it		Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%			Lower	Upper
		1. I learn the word through verbal repetition	L	15	23.4	15	23.4	11	17.2	11	17.2			12	18.8
	H	9	12.9	8	11.4	29	41.4	14	20.0	10	14.3	3.1	.242		
2. I learn the word through written repetition	L	10	15.6	11	17.2	19	29.7	12	18.8	12	18.8	3.1		-.748	.133
	H	5	7.1	12	17.1	23	32.9	11	15.7	19	27.1	3.4	.170		
3. I take notes in class	L	7	10.9	3	4.7	7	10.9	15	23.4	32	50.0	4		-0.811	-0.23
	H	0	0	4	5.7	7	10.0	17	24.3	42	60.0	4.4	.038*		
4. I use the vocabulary section in the textbook	L	2	3.1	9	14.1	13	20.3	18	28.1	22	34.4	3.8		-.382	-.023
	H	4	5.7	7	10.0	16	22.9	19	27.1	24	34.3	3.7	.912		
5. I listen to a tape of word lists	L	15	23.4	11	17.2	20	31.3	10	15.6	8	12.5	2.8		-.132	.691
	H	16	22.9	18	25.7	24	34.3	10	14.3	2	2.9	2.5	.181		
6. I keep a vocabulary notebook wherever I go	L	12	18.8	11	17.2	20	31.3	8	12.5	13	20.3	3		-.204	.688
	H	13	18.6	17	24.3	23	32.9	9	12.9	8	11.4	2.7	.286		

*Significance level at ≤ 0.5

Table 5. Results of Meta- Cognitive Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Items	Achievement	Never use it		Seldom use it		Sometimes use it		Often use it		Always use it		Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%			Lower	Upper
		1. I use English media (song, movie, newspaper, leaflets, The Internet, magazines, etc.	L	7	10.9	6	9.4	24	37.5	15	23.4			12	18.8
	H	5	7.1	11	15.7	17	24.3	15	21.4	0	0	3.5	.256	.672	
2. I test myself with word tests.	L	5	7.8	5	7.8	28	43.8	11	17.2	15	23.4	3.4		-	.620
	H	7	10.0	11	15.7	24	34.3	18	25.7	10	14.3	3.2	.277	.179	
3. I translate the meaning of the word from my mother tongue into English.	L	6	9.4	8	12.5	21	32.8	9	14.1	20	31.3	3.5		-	.281
	H	4	5.7	6	8.6	21	30.0	23	32.9	16	22.9	3.6	.527	.546	
4. I translate the meaning of the word from English into my mother tongue.	L	5	7.8	5	7.8	20	31.3	13	20.3	21	32.8	3.6		-	.176
	H	6	8.6	3	4.3	12	17.1	22	31.4	27	38.6	3.9	.250	.668	
5. I continue to study the word over time.	L	4	6.3	12	18.8	18	28.1	17	26.6	13	20.3	3.4		-	.444
	H	1	1.4	11	15.7	35	50.0	13	18.6	10	14.3	3.3	.694	.296	
6. I practice by doing vocabulary exercises (e.g. filling words in the spaces).	L	5	7.8	6	9.4	28	43.8	12	18.8	13	20.3	3.3		-	.655
	H	7	10.0	11	15.7	29	41.4	16	22.9	7	10.0	3.1	.161	.110	
7. I play vocabulary games.	L	17	26.6	13	20.3	20	31.3	9	14.1	5	7.8	2.6		-	.386
	H	13	18.6	21	30.0	24	34.3	6	8.6	6	8.6	2.6	.911	.432	
8. I try to speak or describe things in English.	L	6	9.4	5	7.8	14	21.9	18	28.1	21	32.8	3.7		-	.033
	H	0	0	4	5.7	13	18.6	31	44.3	22	31.4	4	.073	.718	

*Significance level at ≤ 0.5

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Researchers in the field of second language acquisition have come across with applicable definitions of vocabulary learning strategies. To state a few, Rubin (1981 as cited in Komol and Sripetpun, 2011) vocabulary learning strategy is the process in which information is obtained, stored, retrieved and used. Other scholars also come up with tremendous classifications and taxonomies of language learning strategies in general and vocabulary learning strategies in particular.

First, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classified vocabulary-learning strategies as meta-cognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies. However, Oxford (1990) unlike the above authors has come with two broad categories such as direct and indirect strategies. The classification of direct strategy includes memory, cognitive, and compensation whereas the indirect strategy includes meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies. This classification of vocabulary taxonomies laid a base line for Schmitt's (1997) classifications of vocabulary learning strategies. Therefore, Schmitt (1997), later on, has come up with five comprehensive categories of second language (L2) vocabulary learning strategies: determination, social, memory, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Furthermore, GU and Johnson (1996) formulated two types of vocabulary learning strategies such as meta-cognitive regulation and cognitive strategies.

This classification further includes six sub-categories like guessing, using a dictionary, note taking, rehearsal, encoding and activating. This research revealed that contextual guessing, the skill of using dictionary, note taking, and activation of newly learned words positively correlated with the two test scores, but visual repetition of new words was the strongest negative predictor of both vocabulary size and general proficiency. This result is consistent with the findings of Jafari and Ajideh (2012). The above reviews made show that a good knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies use and the ability to apply them in their suitable situations considerably simplify the learning of new vocabularies. Thus, learner strategy research has focused on studying how learners use strategies and what differences are there between the strategies used by successful and unsuccessful learners (O'Malley and Chamot 1990). Equally important, several researchers argued that if we knew more about what successful learners did, we might be able to teach these strategies to poorer learners and thereby increase their chances of success (Wenden, 1991).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed an exploratory study that utilized two types of data gathering strategies: qualitative and quantitative. Thus, data were collected through close and open-ended questionnaire as well as semi structured interview.

Population of the study

The data for this study were collected from English language major third year undergraduate students in four Ethiopian Universities. This particular level was chosen because the respondents have taken several English major courses.

Therefore, they were considered as focal respondents', for they were information rich respondents about vocabulary learning strategies compared to students at lower grades. Therefore, one hundred thirty four (134) English major final year students who were enrolled in four (4) Ethiopia universities in 2014 GC were the population of this study. Consequently, Ambo, Debre-Birhan, Jimma and Mizan Tepi were the sample universities taken randomly through lottery for the main data collection. Therefore, all students (134) who were enrolled in the aforementioned universities were surveyed.

On the other hand, six students from each of the above universities were purposively selected to supply in-depth information through face-to face interview. Thus, three students from high achieving and three students from the low achieving were selected from each university (24 in aggregate). The cumulative CGPA of the students and willingness of students was considered in selection of the students for interview. The CGPA was used to take equal number of high and low achieving students for the sake of getting representative data.

Data Gathering Instruments and procedures

A Questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to collect data for the research. A questionnaire consisting of open and close-ended items was used as a main data collection instrument to get large and detail data from the respondents respectively. The close-ended questionnaire items were adapted from previous vocabulary learning inventories developed mainly by Schmitt (1997). The students were asked to rate their responses in a five scale likert questionnaire. The Close ended and open-ended data were used to complement among each other. Moreover, each response is represented through the following options: 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often and always'.

The second data-gathering instrument was semi-structured interview. Semi structured questions related to the way the respondents learn vocabularies were set, and the respondents from the high and low achieving students were asked. However, during the face-to-face interview, some leading questions were asked for maximum clarification. A note of the interview was taken in the mean time of the interview. This instrument was chosen to get in-depth data and to triangulate with the data obtained through questionnaires. The data collection was carried out after the following arrangements were made. To ensure the legality of the researchers to collect data and to get cooperation from the selected universities, a permission letter was obtained from Jimma University, college of Social Sciences Humanities; then the consent of the other target universities was obtained too. After the consolidated name list and GPA of the students was secured, analysis of students' CGPA result was made (high and low achieving students identified). Then, students were briefed on the objectives of study and the overall ethics of the study. Finally, the administration of the questionnaire was carried out at the same time so that there could not be contamination of response among the respondents. The interview was also conducted after the following arrangements were made. First, the CGPA was obtained and the achievement level of students was identified.

Following this, the willingness of the students to participate in face-to-face interview was checked. Therefore, respondents who showed interest to provide data through semi-structured interview were taken. After convenient time was negotiated, data were secured from high and low achieving students.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed. Thus, the data obtained through close-ended questionnaire, which was represented in the five scale likert, was analyzed through descriptive (count, percentage and mean) and inferential (independent sample t-test and chi-square) statistics. Therefore, SPSS version 16.0 was used to compute the above statistics. Moreover, the data obtained through the open-ended questions was analyzed through Content analysis. Similar response were sorted out and grouped according to their meaning. Consequently, the qualitative summary of the responses was made in the form of paragraphs and essays. Likewise, the data obtained from interview were analyzed qualitatively. After the responses of the students were grouped into similar meaning categories, the likelihood of the same responses among different respondents was used to generalize for the existence of students learning strategy use. Accordingly, the results were summarized in the form of essays and paragraphs qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion of this study included: discussion of data obtained from students' close and open-ended questionnaire as well as discussions of data obtained from students semi structured interview.

Results Obtained From Students Close Ended Questionnaire

The students' close-ended questions, which include determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy and the Meta-cognitive strategy, are thoroughly discussed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Determination Strategy

Determination vocabulary learning strategy helps students to acquire vocabulary repertoire and to enhance their language learning. However, this vocabulary learning strategy does not seem to be effectively used by Ethiopian universities students. In this case, the findings of this study disclosed that although the high achievers consistently used the determination strategies more often than the low achievers, there is no statistically significant difference between high and low achievers in using the determination strategy.

Thus, the p-value computed for all of the items is greater than p-value (0.05). Hence, the 95% confidence interval of the mean differences do not suggests strong evidence to support the high achievers significantly use these learning strategies (Table 1).

Social learning Strategy Use

Social strategy use is believed to bring students' vocabulary enrichment and ease students' language learning. However, the result of this study revealed that Ethiopian university students poorly use the social strategies. In this case, the result revealed that low achievers are statistically better than the high achievers in using social strategies (asking for translation, synonyms, making sentences using the new words, checking the word lists for accuracy) although they are applying them poorly. Consequently, the P-Value calculated for items 1, 0.006; item 2, 0.009; item 3, 0.041; and item 6, 0.023 is less than the level of significance (0.05). However, there is no statistically significant difference between high and low achievers in using the remaining social strategies (asking classmate for meaning, discovering the meaning through group work activity and interacting with English fluent speakers). The p-value computed for item 4, 0.667; item 5, 0.986; and item 7, 0.174) is greater than the level of significance (0.05) Table 2.

Memory Strategy Use

Using memory strategies can play a paramount function in students' vocabulary and language learning. In this case, the result of this study exhibited that although there are no statistical differences between high and low achievers in using the memory related vocabulary learning strategies, the high achievers are mathematically better in using some of the learning strategies.

Thus, neither of them use the memory related vocabulary learning strategies efficiently. However, the P-Value computed for item number 6 (0.01) is much less than the level significance (0.05). Consequently, the result showed strong evidence that supports the high achievers associate the new vocabulary words with the other words they have learnt significantly often than the low achievers. Nonetheless, there is no statistically significant difference in the remaining items (Table 3).

Cognitive Learning Strategies

The body of literature declares that students' use of cognitive learning strategy contributes to effective acquisition of vocabulary and achievement of language proficiency. In its absence, the students' academic achievement and vocabulary development were found ineffective.

The result obtained from this learning strategy disclosed that the students' cognitive learning strategies use insignificantly vary from item to item among high and low achievers. Nonetheless, the P-Value computed for item 3 (0.038) which is less than the level of significance (0.05) showed a statistically significant difference among high and low achievers. Consequently, the 95% confidence interval of the mean difference suggests that the high achievers take notes in class better than the low achievers. However, there is no statistically significant difference between the high and the low achievers in using cognitive strategies in vocabulary learning although the high achievers used those strategies mathematically better than the low achievers (Table 4).

Meta-Cognitive Learning Strategies

Meta-cognitive learning strategies, being higher order learning strategies, are very helpful vocabulary and language-learning strategies; they can help students to plan and organize their learning. With no doubt their effective use can help students in many ways. Therefore, the result of this study disclosed that the high achievers used meta-cognitive strategies such as using English media, translating the meaning of words from mother tongue to English, translating the meaning of words from English to mother tongue as well as trying to speak or describe things in English. On the other hand, the low achievers used meta-cognitive learning strategies such as testing oneself with word test, continuing to study the words over time and practicing by doing vocabulary exercise slightly better than the high achievers did. Nonetheless, there is no statistically significant difference in either side (Table 5).

Results of the Chi-Square Tests

The chi-square test shows test of association between students' status and frequency of use in the vocabulary learning strategies. The chi-square test of association compute revealed a significant correlation between students' status and frequency of analyzing parts of speech (p-value 0.004). Thus, high achievers used this strategy significantly often than the low achievers. Moreover, there is a significant test of association in students asking the teacher for synonyms and making a sentence by using the new words (p-value 0.012 and 0.003 respectively). The low achievers significantly often do these learning strategies. In the same token, there is correlation between students' status and connecting the words they learned to their experience, (p-value 0.022). Furthermore, there is a significant correlation between students' status and learning the words through written repetition (p-value 0.017). Otherwise, there is no test of association between students' vocabulary learning strategies and their achievement level in the remaining items.

Generally, the subjects of the study used vocabulary-learning strategies in all the five categories. However, high achievers used more strategies higher than the low achievers in the four categories: determination, memory, cognitive, and meta-cognitive. On the other hand, the low achievers found better at using the social strategies. The overall mean (2.69) of the social strategy was the least used vocabulary-learning strategy by the subjects of the study. However, this result is not consistent with Getnet (2008) which indicates, the more the successful learner frequently or always uses social strategies to discover the meaning of new word. The overall mean (3.37) of the meta-cognitive strategy found the most used vocabulary learning strategy by all the subjects of the study. Therefore, both study subjects used the five category of learning strategies in the following least-most order: social (2.69), memory (2.99), cognitive (3.12), determination (3.26) and meta-cognitive (3.37). The grand mean of the five categories of the learning strategies is 3.086.

Results Obtained from the Open-ended Questionnaire

High achievers used learning strategies such as identifying the parts of speech of the new words, using medias broad casted in

English, through word formation and other authentic learning resources more frequently than the low achievers. In contrast, small number of the low achievers used this learning strategy. The low achievers, however, preferred asking friends or the teacher and use antonyms or synonyms as good ways of vocabulary learning. On the other hand, high achievers preferred authentic learning materials and contextual vocabulary learning strategies. The result of this study showed that high achievers preferred higher order learning strategies. This finding was found consistent with Ahmed's (1989) finding, which revealed that the low achievers do not learn words in a context, and they are less aware of what they could learn about the new words.

Students' Interview Result

The students' interview result exhibited that low achievers' vocabulary learning depends on referring dictionaries, asking clever students and lecturers and guessing the meaning of words. However, the low achievers were found to be weak in planning and testing their vocabulary learning. Nonetheless, high achievers claimed they learn vocabulary through reading texts, using context clues, looking at synonymous and antonymous clues, using context of word class, and using resources such as references and internet. Moreover, the participants of the study claimed they have weakness in their vocabulary learning strategies use.

Furthermore, the participants of the study elaborated on how their vocabulary learning weaknesses affect their overall academic achievement. In this regard, all of the low achievers confirmed that their vocabulary weakness could affect their academic achievement. Besides, the students were observed having vocabulary problems while the interview was going on; they did not use sufficient and relevant vocabulary words to express their idea. Generally, the result obtained from the structured interview was triangulated, and it was found consistent with the open-ended questionnaire.

Conclusion

All the subjects of the study sometimes (grand mean 3.086) used vocabulary-learning strategies in all the five categories. High achievers used four of the five categories: determination, memory, cognitive, and Meta-cognitive better than the low achievers. However, low achievers used the social strategies better than the high achievers. Nonetheless, both of them poorly applied the social vocabulary learning strategy. Consequently, the social and meta-cognitive learning strategies were found to be the least and the most used learning strategies. Therefore, the finding of the study did not show adequate use students vocabulary learning strategies.

This in return, affected the students' academic achievement. The findings of the study disclosed high correlation test of association between students' status and frequency of analyzing parts of speech. Thus, as the achievement of students increase, there happens more likelihood of the students to analyze parts of speech. Moreover, although the high achievers showed a good attempt at using the determination strategies, there is no significant difference between the high achievers

and low achievers. Likewise, the respondents were not found using the determination strategy effectively. This failure of the students to use the determination strategy obviously affected the students' academic achievement and language use. The low achievers used most of the social learning strategies; nonetheless, there is no strong reason to conclude they used them at their level best; the average mean obtained for these items was below the average mean (3.00). Thus, the subjects of the study poorly applied the social strategies compared to the other categories of learning strategies. Undeniably, this situation can affect the students' academic achievement and language use.

The results of the study disclosed that although the high achievers used most of the memory and cognitive related learning strategies mathematically better than the low achievers, there is no statistical significance evidence that supports the high achievers use these strategies in most of the items asked. There was only high test of correlation between students' status and connecting the words they learned to their experience, learning the words through written repetition and taking notes in class. However, the high achievers were not significantly better than the low achievers. Consequently, this scenario can adversely affect students' vocabulary development and academic achievement.

Furthermore, the high achievers used most of the meta-cognitive strategies such as using English media, translating the meaning of words from their mother tongue to English as well as trying to speak or describe things in English mathematically higher than the low achievers. The low achievers used meta-cognitive learning strategies such as testing oneself with word test, continuing to study the words over time and practicing by doing vocabulary exercise better than the high achievers do. Nonetheless, there was no statistically significant difference in either side. Despite this scenario, the triangulated result of the open ended and semi structured interview showed that the high achievers were found to be using higher order learning strategies such as planning, testing themselves and using multiple resources more often than the low achievers. Students' vocabulary learning strategy use weaknesses affected the overall academic achievement and overall language use of the subjects of the study. More importantly, this problem adversely affected the low achievers using the English language. Thus, the low achievers could not use sufficient and relevant vocabulary words to express their idea.

Recommendations

Students' academic achievement and language use failure obviously resulted from the ineffective use of learners' vocabulary learning strategies, lack of orientation and commitment towards learning those vocabulary-learning strategies. Thus, English language instructors and other concerned bodies should orient and train Ethiopian university students to enhance and use vocabulary-learning strategies such as determination, social, memory, cognitive and meta-cognitive. Moreover, instructors should monitor and research the way high and low achievers learn vocabulary, so it could be possible to transcend effective learning strategies among successful and less successful learners of foreign language.

Students Vocabulary learning strategies were not focused in Ethiopian university undergraduate English major courses curriculum. This scenario brought students' vocabulary learning strategy use weaknesses. To its greater extent, the low achievers can be very victim of this scenario, but the high achievers also are not being without difficult in learning vocabulary. Therefore, language curriculum professionals and instructors should work hard to make vocabulary a point of focus in Ethiopian university undergraduate English major courses curriculum as the major skills and grammar related courses already given due attention. Moreover, researchers should conduct a comprehensive research on the ways students learn vocabulary at grass root level. Finally, Ethiopian university students should maximize higher order learning strategies use such using English medias, using several authentic learning resources and monitoring vocabulary learning strategies. In this regard, instructors should play decisive role in encouraging university students to plan and test their vocabulary stock to enhance their independent learning.

Acknowledgements

Our acknowledgement to individuals and organizations who contributed to this research is priceless. First, we would like to credit the contribution made by English major Ethiopian university students for providing us valuable data for this study. Our gratitude is endless. Second, our appreciation goes to College of Social Science and Humanities for offering us their time, resources and information for the accomplishment of this study. Finally, our heartfelt gratitude is also to all people who helped us in any of our moves for this research purpose.

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