THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES TO ARABIC VOCABULARY SIZE

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Few studies on vocabulary learning startegies (VLS) indicate that they are various factors influencing the selection and use of sub language learning strategies (LLS). Therefore, this study aims to; a) explore the relationship between vocabulary learning startegies (VLS) and the Arabic vocabulary size and b) investigate the contribution of VLS to the mastery of vocabulary size. The variables involved in this study are determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. The data of the study was collected using; 1) Arabic Vocabulary Learning Strategies questionnaires and Arabic vocabulary size test. The questionnaire was developed based on Bannett's (2006) Vocabulary Learning Strategies questionnaire which was also an adaptation of Schmitt's (1997, 2000) Vocabulary Learning Strategies questionnaire. As for Arabic vocabulary size test, it was built based on the common procedure used in such test. The subjects were 742 pre-university school students of religious schools (SMKA and SABK) in Malaysia. *Stepwise Multiple Regression* was used to test hypothesis and to answer the research questions.The findings of the study show that three independent variables had significant correlation with the mastery level of Arabic vocabulary size among religious secondary school students. This study shows that there were two strategies used by consolidation strategy group that were found to contribute to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size which were memory and metacognitive strategy, while only one strategy was found used by discovery strategy group which was determination strategy.

Keywords: Arabic language; learning strategy; vocabulary size

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) was originally known as one of sub language learning strategies (LLS) which eventually became more prominent than LLS especially in the vocabulary learning process (Ahmed 1989; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999; Schmitt, 1997). VLS research orientation is to look at the effectiveness of individual strategy in learning vocabulary especially when making self-selection, monitoring and evaluation. Previous studies have found that vocabulary element in second language can serve as a predictor of the students' mastery and performance level in a foreign or second language learning (Zareva *et al.,* 2005).

The vocabulary aspect in second language learning in classroom is often implicit and supplementary (Fan, 2003; Catalan, 2003, al-Shuwairekh, 2001). More unfortunate, vocabulary learning is largely studied ad hoc without proper planning of PdP activities (Catalan, 2003). Studies on notable weaknesses in the aspects of

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Arabic vocabulary (vocabulary size and knowledge) (Rahim, 2009; Harun, 2014) among students in Malaysia as well as the complexity aspect of Arabic vocabulary (al-Batal, 2006; Ryding, 2006), accordingly Arabic vocabulary aspect in Malaysia should be emphasized so that the teaching and learning activities are more organized and occur explicitly (Mat Taib, 2005; Che Radiah & Norhayuza, 2011).

VLS is an explicit learning method used by students when studying vocabulary. There are various classifications of VLS proposed by researchers such Cohen (1990), Nation (2001), Schmitt (1997) and Brown dan Payne (1994). Schmitt's classification is among the widely used method among researchers. This classification system is an important contribution in terms of providing the general framework of VLS classification . It has a comprehensive feature in most aspects of vocabulary learning. This classification system is based on the concept of the discovery, consolidation and categorization (Oxford, 1990) in LLS.

Generally, Schmitt classifies VLS into two main groups, namely (1) discovery strategy and (2) consolidation strategy. The discovery strategy involves early-stage learning on the meaning of new discovered word, while the consolidation strategy involves learning and remembering the meaning of the already-known word. The two major strategy groups are seen similar to the Nation's (1990) strategies of 'vocabulary improvement' and 'vocabulary consolidation'. Improving vocabulary is a student learning new words then to start their learning, while consolidating vocabulary is building and reinforcing existing knowledge. Schmitt's VLS classification model also has a second layer under two key strategies, namely determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and metacognitive strategy. Determination and social strategies are placed under discovery strategy group while social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies are located under consolidation strategy. Based on this, this study used Schmitt's VLS classification model as the basis of the study (refer Figure 1). It has been developed based on the learning strategy classification by Oxford (2003). The use of this VLS classification is because of several factors such as efficiency, motivation and culture (Schmitt 2000). This is because culture and environment can influence their choice of appropriate learning strategies (Schmitt, 2000).
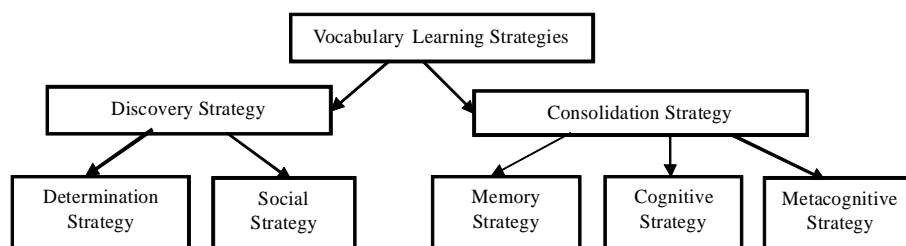

Figure 1:   Schmitt's VLS Classification Model

The size of vocabulary is the aspect of quantity and refers to how many words a person knows. The vocabulary size refers to the number of words known by students at a certain level of language competence (Nation, 2001). A student who has a large number of vocabulary means he has the largest share of any language in terms of meaning (McCarthy, 1988). The vocabulary size is also a measure of one's language excellence. By mastering large quantities of vocabulary, students are more likely to acquire something new in language learning. In addition, the vocabulary is related to the ability to master reading, writing and general speaking skills and also influencing academic achievement (Saville-Troike, 1984; Laufer, 1997).

In this regard, Nation divides vocabulary based on frequency and communicative dimensions that distinguish between high frequency, academic, technical and low frequency vocabulary. For high frequency vocabulary that a student needs to know, the vocabulary size required is approximately 3,000-5,000 words. According to Laufer (1998), high school students need a size between 3,500-4,000 words. Meanwhile, in another study, he said that students need 3,000 for minimum and 5,000 for maximum numbers to facilitate reading skills. Based on some of these insights, the size of the words required in mastering English is approximately 3000 to 5000 words.

Likewise with the size of Arabic vocabulary, in Arabic learning, some experts suggest that lower-level students should master vocabulary within the range of 750 to 1000 words, while mid-level students should master 1000 to 1500 words and high-level students should master 1500 to 2000 words (Tu'aymah, 1986). Mat Taib (2006) divides the vocabulary requirement into three stages, namely (1) 1000 to 1500 words for beginners, (2) 1500 to 2500 words for intermediate students and (3) 2500 to 3500 words for advanced students. Al-Cancel (2006) estimates that the amount of vocabulary required to achieve high efficiency require 3000 to 3500 words. The number of such vocabulary is sufficient as students need to use dictionary and morphology knowledge in studying Arabic vocabulary (Tu'aymah, 1986; al-Batal, 2006).

In the context of Arabic language education in Malaysia, the mastery of vocabulary size is based on the objectives set in the syllabus. This vocabulary size is available in the word list provided by Malaysia Ministry of Education (KPM) in the Arabic language textbook through Curriculum Division, Islamic Education Division (BPI) for each level of education (refer Table 1). Starting from the jQAF (*Jawi, Quran, Arabic & Fardhu Ain*) program, the objectives of the Arabic language should target students need to master at least 600 words Arabic vocabulary of at least 600 words (Arabic syllabus jQAF). Arabic vocabulary at this stage revealed in stages based on thematic or situations in which students need to master the vocabulary as much as 120 words per year.

For lower secondary students, students should master at least 3,000 Arabic words from the list of vocabulary provided in the textbook according to the objective of Arabic Language for Communication (BAK) (Ministry of Education, 2002e). As for Advance Arabic Language (BAT) subjects, students must master Arabic vocabulary of not less than 2000 words from vocabulary list provided by textbooks (BAT syllabus, Ministry of Education (2002t). However, according to Arabic Language in KBSM Syllabus, they were encouraged to master the Arabic vocabulary of not less than 1500 words and appropriately using them within contexts (KBSM Arabic syllabus, 2006, BPI KPM). As stated in BAK and BAT's objectives, students should at least be exposed to 3500-5000 words in the textbooks throughout their years of study starting from low secondary level.

TABLE 1: VOCABULARY SIZE ACCORDING TO THE SYLLABUS OF
MALAYSIA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Education Level	Vocabulary Size
Arabic Language for Communication (BAK)	3000
Advance Arabic Language (BAT)	2000
Arabic Language in KBSM Syllabus	1500
jQAF Arabic Language in JQAF program	600

Hence, the main purpose of this study is to identify the influence of VLS use to the mastery level of Arabic vocabulary size among SMKA and SABK religious secondary school students. The objectives of this study are: 1) to identify the significant relationship between the use of VLS and the level of Arabic language proficiency according to category of students, 2) to identify the significant contribution of the variables: strategies of determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive to the mastery level of Arabic vocabulary. Based on the objectives of the study, the research questions are as follows:

(a) Is there a significant association between the use of VLS and the level of Arabic vocabulary proficiency by category among students?

(b) What is the significant contribution of VLS (determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy and metacognitive strategy) to the mastery level of Arabic vocabulary?

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is a survey which uses a set of questionnaires of the Arabic Vocabulary Learning Strategies. The questionnaire was developed and modified based on Bannet's (2006) questionnaire on vocabulary learning strategies that was adapted from Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire (1997, 2000). This questionnaire consists of 54 questions that comprises of five key strategies, namely determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive.

For the purpose of measuring student's vocabulary, this study uses the Test of Arabic Vocabulary (TAV) (Harun *et al.,* 2014). The Test of Arabic Vocabulary (TAV) in this study is an efficient test which is not based on certain syllabus. A total of 40 words representing 4000 words will be tested in this test. This test is based on a split contract (discrete) which is measuring basic vocabulary knowledge or using free constructs. This test uses a simple test structure by taking into account the basic knowledge of vocabulary and not taking into account grammatical knowledge and reading skills. Typical test procedure is used by selecting words based on the frequency word list.

Overall, *alpha Cronbach* value obtained for each LLS survey construct was between 0.74 to 0.84 index ranges where the overall reliability index of LLS item was 0.94. For the test instrument, the reliability index was measured by test and retest ($r = .84$ ($p < .001$), *alfa Cronbach* (.89) dan *Cohen kappa* (.95). Determination of normality is a major requirement in carrying out inferential statistical technique. Hence, the analysis pertaining to the hypothesis testing of the study was initiated by explaining in advance the normality determination. Before the correlation test and multiple regressions can be executed, a few prerequisite assumptions were examined. Prerequisites to be met were sufficient sample size, absence of isolated data, multicollinearity and singularity problems, normal distribution, and linear while having a homogeneous variant or homokedasticity). Once the prerequisites were met, the Regression test involving five predictor variables (determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy and metacognitive strategy) and the Arabic vocabulary size as a criterion variable was conducted.

This study involves pre-university students at 15 SMKA and SABK throughout Peninsular Malaysia. All these schools are divided into four zones, north, south, east and west. A total of 742 Form Six students of Religious High School (SMKA) and Government-Assisted Religious School (SABK) were chosen using stratified sampling technique based on zone and gender breakdown.

FINDINGS

Table 2 describes the correlation coefficient matrix between the VLS categories (determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive) and the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size. It tests the null hypothesis and the relationship that exists between dependent variable and independent variable. The result of inter-correlation analysis showed a high correlation coefficient value of 0.33 correlation with p <.05 value. The significance of all the above correlations at p <.05 enables the null hypothesis to be successfully denied. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship of five independent variables to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size is successfully rejected.

All in all, three strategies have high correlation value, memory strategy (r = .385), determination strategy (r = .350) and metacognitive strategy (r = .302).

While the remaining two strategies have moderate correlation coefficient, social strategy ($r = .272$) and cognitive ($r = .255$).

TABLE 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE USE OF VLS AND ARABIC
VOCABULARY SIZE

VLS Main Strategies	r	r²	P
Determination	.350	.123	.000
Social	.272	.074	.000
Memory	.385	.148	.000
Cognitive	.255	.065	.000
Metacognitive	.302	.091	.000
Overall	.383	.147	.000

Sig. at the level of .05

For second research question, stepwise step regression test was used to answer the research question and test the null hypothesis which shows that there was no significant contribution of the five independent variables (determination strategy, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy and metacognitive strategy) to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary.

Variance analysis of regression (Table 3) explains whether the developed model produces a good prediction of its significance to the predictor created. The results of the analysis as illustrated in Table 2 show the value of $F = 49.021$ and the significant value = 0.000. Given that the probability value obtained (.000) is less than specified alpha value, the zero hypothesis which states that there is no significant contribution of the five independent variables to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size is successfully rejected.

TABLE 3: ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Model		Power of two/square total	D.K	Mean of two/square total	F	Sig.
3	Regression	2073.579	3	691.193	49.021	.000
	Residual	10081.373	715	14.100		
	Total	12154.951	718			

Sig. at the level of 0.05
* Predictor: (Constant), strategy memory, determination, metacognitive
** Dependent variable: Arabic vocabulary size

The discussion is based on Hair *et al.* (2006) which focuses on the use of stepwise solutions and subsequently the selection of independent variables intended to make predictions and explain the phenomenon. The results of the stepwise step regression analysis as shown in Table 4 have shown that there are three independent variables that contribute significantly ($p < 0.05$) to the total variance in the use of VLS.

These variables were memory strategy, strategy of strategy and metacognitive strategy. All these independent variables contributed 17.1 % to the variance in vocabulary size control. Thus, the null hypothesis has been successfully rejected.

TABLE 4: STEP-BY-STEP COMPLETION (STEPWISE)

Predictor	B	Standard Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	R²	Contribution
Memory	1.891	0.381	0.237	4.958	0.000	0.148	14.8%
Determination	1.106	0.331	0.153	3.340	0.001	0.166	1.8%
Metacognitive	0.610	0.307	0.085	1.989	0.047	0.171	0.5%
Constant	-3.388	0.863	-0.427	-3.923	0.000		

R	0.413
R²	0.171
R adjusted power of two/square	0.167
Constant	- 3.388
Standard error	0.863

The highest predictor of Arabic vocabulary was memory strategy (ß = 0.237, t = 4.958, and p = 0.00) which contributed 14.8%. This means that when the score of this strategy increased by one unit, the mastery of the Arabic vocabulary size increased by 0.237 units. It is clear that when this strategy item increased, the level of Arabic vocabulary of students also would increase.The second predictor that affected and contributed 1.8% was determination strategy of (ß = 0.153, t = 3.340, and p = 0.00). This shows that when this strategy item increased by one unit, the Arabic vocabulary size increased by 0.153 units. Hence, when the students improved this strategy item, their mastery of Arabic vocabulary size also increased. The metacognitive strategy (ß = 0.085, t = 1.989, and p = 0.047) was the third predictor that contributed 0.5% to Arabic vocabulary size. This situation shows that for each unit of item increased, there was an increase of Arabic vocabulary size by 0.085 units. This clearly shows that when an increase in the use of this strategy took place, the level of vocabulary size also increased.

Thus, the findings show that, for the study population, there are three predictor variables. The value of r² = 0.171 indicates the overall contribution of the three predictor variables on the use of VLS by 17.1 percent. A surplus of 82.9 percent of contribution can be explained with other variables that were not counted in this model. The findings also show that there were several other factors that affect or influence the use of VLS that were not addressed in this study. This study also rejects the opinion of other researchers who suggest other than the three VLS strategies to be the predictors in the use of VLS among pre-university students in SMKA and SABK.

The results of the analysis to the hypothesis testing, the regression equation for this study is as follows:

$$Y = -3.388 + 0.148X^1 + 0.166X^2 + 0.171X^3 + 0.863$$

Y = vocabulary size
X^1 = memory strategy
X^2 = determination strategy
X^3 = metacognitive strategy
Constant = -3.388
Error = 0.863

Through multiple regression analysis (stepwise), the three VLS strategies have correlation and contribute to the use of VLS among pre-university students of SMKA and SABK. In this case, the three strategies of memory, determination and metacognitive can explain the 17.1 percent of the variance that exists in the mastery of Arabic language vocabulary among students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings show that there was a significant relationship between the use of VLS and the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size as a whole. The five major strategies of VLS also had significant relationships with the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size. In other words, it can provide information on the positive direction of the relationship and explain the strength of the relationship between the use of VLS and the mastery level of Arabic vocabulary size among Arabic students in SMKA and SABK schools. The findings are found to be consistent with the findings of Sener (2009), Seyed Ali & Bahar (2012) dan Dieter (2013) where the main strategy of VLS has a close relationship with vocabulary size mastery.

Multiple regression analysis shows three main strategies of VLS namely determination, memory, and metacognitive contribute significantly to the Arabic vocabulary size. The three major VLS strategies contributed 17.1 per cent to the mastery of Arabic language vocabulary. This contribution suggests that VLS factor is one of the major contributing factors in the study of Arabic vocabulary along with other factors. Literature review shows that there are many factors that can influence B2 learning as well as learning strategies, especially in the early stages of B2 learning (Gass & Selinker, 2008). These factors include learning environments; confusion of other foreign languages, gender, motivation, anxiety, beliefs about B2 learning, learning assignments, and students' cultural background. All these factors are relatively stable and can determine the extent to which one's vocabulary learning approach (Gu, 2003).

Memory strategy was the major predictor that contributed the most (14.8 %) to the mastery of the vocabulary size. This finding is in line with Derin Atay & Cengiz (2007), Azadeh (2009), Soner Sozler (2012) in which they found that the group of students who were exposed to the memory strategy has better vocabulary score. The findings of Azadeh and Ghazali (2011) also point out that some of the

strategy items in memory strategy were found to contribute to the mastery of vocabulary size. Students who were exposed to this strategy were able to discuss with friends, receive help and response from teachers and always try other memory items. Not just that, it is also interesting to note that memory strategy was the biggest contributor overcoming other strategies to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size. This finding equates Fitzpatrick, Al-Qarni, and Meara, (2008); Folse, (2004), Milton, (2009), Read, (2000), and Dieter, (2013) in which showing that students with low vocabulary sizes tend to use memory strategy.

Determination strategy was the second largest contributor (1.8%) to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary. The finding is similar to many other studies (Kafipour, 2010; Celik & Toptas, 2010; Azadeh & Ghazali, 2011) which show that items in the determination strategy contribute to mastering Arabic vocabulary. This strategy is considered as a starting point to understand new words without using others' service. They were found to be wise and often used a number of simple, fast and direct resources to get the meaning of words such as using a dual-language dictionary and some basic signals for them to guess the meaning of the word in the sentence or dialogue context. This strategy is used probably because of the poor basic linguistic knowledge of Arabic and lack of deep vocabulary knowledge. This is supported by a study done by Wan Mohd Rahim Wan Yusoff (2011) which found that the mastery of grammatical knowledge among university students is weak.

Metacognitive strategy on the other hand, was listed as the third variable that contributed to 0.5 % to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size. This finding is similar to Ahmad Azman Mokhtar *et al.* (2011), Azadeh & Ghazali, (2011), Seyed Ali & Bahar (2012), and Farzad Solahshour *et al.* (2013) which found that metacognitive strategy has relation to the size of the vocabulary and level of language mastery. This also reinforces Oxford's (1990) view that metacognitive strategy is an essential ingredient for successful language learning. Less exposure to this strategy may be the cause of it being the lowest contributor to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size in this study. However, since the Arabic language students in this study had studied Arabic language for a long time, the metacognitive strategy was likely to be used over other strategies (Dieter 2013). Findings from Engku Haliza, Isarji, Ainon Jariah & Zaleha (2013) show that metacognitive strategy had no significant association with vocabulary size. This is because the respondents of the study were said to not use this strategy for the purpose of vocabulary learning because of no ongoing exposure.

Overall, this study shows that there were two strategies used by consolidation strategy group that were found to contribute to the mastery of Arabic vocabulary size which were memory and metacognitive strategy, while only one strategy was found used by discovery strategy group which was determination strategy. The strategies used by the consolidation strategy group were able to increase the

students' mastery of vocabulary size if developed strategically in the learning of Arabic vocabulary, especially among students with learning experience.

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