

Problems and Difficulties in Learning English Vocabulary among EFL Students

Hanan IBR. S. Habebi *

Department of English Language, Faculty of Education/ Gaser Ben Gashir, Tripoli
University, Libya

*Email: Hananhabibi2018@gmail.com

المشكلات والصعوبات في تعلم مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية بين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

حنان ابراهيم سالم حبيبي *

قسم اللغة الانجليزية، كلية التربية/ قصر بن غشير، جامعة طرابلس ، ليبيا.

Received: 17-04-2026	Accepted: 20-06-2026	Published: 03-07-2026
		
Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).		

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the problems and difficulties faced by EFL students in learning English vocabulary at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method and used a quantitative approach. A questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 80 students in order to collect data about the main vocabulary-learning difficulties they encounter. The questionnaire consisted of demographic information and nine items covering three main axes: linguistic difficulties, cognitive and memory-related difficulties, and contextual use and vocabulary learning strategies.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS through frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Cronbach's Alpha, Independent Samples T-test, and One-Way ANOVA. The results showed that students face several vocabulary-learning difficulties, especially in understanding word meanings in different contexts, pronouncing new vocabulary correctly, memorizing and recalling words, and using vocabulary accurately in sentences. The findings also revealed that students do not have enough opportunities to practice new vocabulary and need more effective strategies to help them learn, remember, and use English vocabulary correctly. The study recommends giving more attention to vocabulary instruction, providing more practice opportunities, and training students in effective vocabulary learning strategies.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning, EFL students, vocabulary difficulties, learning strategies, SPSS.

المخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المشكلات والصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في تعلم المفردات الإنجليزية بكلية التربية، قصر بن غشير اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، واستخدمت الأسلوب الكمي في جمع البيانات وتحليلها. وتم توزيع استبيان على عينة مكونة من 80 طالباً وطالبة بهدف التعرف على أبرز الصعوبات التي تواجههم في تعلم المفردات الإنجليزية. وقد تكون الاستبيان من قسم خاص بالبيانات الديموغرافية، إضافة إلى تسع عبارات موزعة على ثلاثة محاور رئيسية، وهي: الصعوبات اللغوية، والصعوبات المعرفية والمرتبطة بالذاكرة، وصعوبات الاستخدام السياقي واستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج SPSS من خلال التكرارات، والنسب المئوية، والمتوسطات الحسابية، والانحرافات المعيارية، ومعامل الثبات كرونباخ ألفا، واختبار T-test، وتحليل التباين الأحادي One-Way ANOVA. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يواجهون عدة صعوبات في تعلم المفردات الإنجليزية، خاصة في فهم معاني الكلمات في سياقات مختلفة، ونطق المفردات الجديدة بشكل صحيح، وحفظ الكلمات واسترجاعها، واستخدام المفردات بدقة في الجمل. كما أوضحت النتائج أن الطلبة لا يمتلكون فرصاً كافية لممارسة المفردات الجديدة، وأنهم بحاجة إلى استراتيجيات أكثر فاعلية تساعدهم على تعلم المفردات وتذكرها واستخدامها بصورة صحيحة. وتوصي الدراسة بضرورة الاهتمام بتدريس المفردات، وتوفير فرص أكبر للممارسة، وتدريب الطلبة على استخدام استراتيجيات فعالة في تعلم المفردات الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعلم المفردات، طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، صعوبات تعلم المفردات، استراتيجيات التعلم، برنامج .

Introduction

Vocabulary occupies a central position in the process of learning English as a foreign language because it functions as the lexical foundation upon which communicative competence is built. Unlike some other linguistic components that may be learned through relatively limited patterns or rules, vocabulary is open-ended, cumulative, and context-dependent. For this reason, EFL learners are required not only to memorize individual words but also to understand their meanings, forms, pronunciation, grammatical behavior, collocations, connotations, and appropriate use in different communicative contexts. Alqahtani (2015) emphasizes that vocabulary is an essential component of foreign language learning and that limited vocabulary knowledge can seriously obstruct successful communication. Similarly, Schmitt's work on vocabulary teaching highlights that vocabulary knowledge is not a marginal aspect of language learning, but a core element in the development of language proficiency.

The significance of vocabulary becomes more evident when considering the difficulties experienced by EFL learners in actual learning contexts. Many learners may possess basic grammatical knowledge, yet they remain unable to express ideas accurately or understand language input effectively because of insufficient lexical knowledge. Meara (1980) argued that vocabulary acquisition had long been neglected in applied linguistics, despite the fact that learners themselves frequently identify vocabulary as one of the greatest sources of difficulty in second and foreign language learning. This observation remains relevant in contemporary EFL contexts, where vocabulary learning continues to represent a persistent challenge for students at different educational levels.

Learning English vocabulary is particularly demanding because knowing a word involves far more than recognizing its dictionary meaning. A learner may know the general translation of a word but still be unable to pronounce it correctly, spell it accurately, use it in an appropriate context, recognize its grammatical form, or distinguish it from similar lexical items. Read

(2000) explains that learners often experience “lexical gaps,” meaning that they encounter words they cannot understand or concepts they cannot express adequately in the target language. This shows that vocabulary knowledge includes both receptive and productive dimensions: learners need to recognize words when they hear or read them, but they also need to use them effectively in speaking and writing.

Previous empirical studies have identified several recurring problems in EFL students' vocabulary learning. Rohmatillah (2014), for instance, found that students faced difficulties in pronunciation, spelling, inflectional forms, word meaning, contextual use, and idiomatic expressions. These difficulties were attributed to several factors, including the difference between written and spoken forms in English, the large number of words learners are expected to acquire, limited sources of lexical information, the complexity of word knowledge, and the influence of learners' native language. In a similar way, Hasan (2024) reported that EFL students struggle with pronouncing and spelling English words correctly, developing sufficient vocabulary, applying words appropriately, and grasping meanings accurately.

Statement of the Problem

Although vocabulary is widely recognized as a fundamental component of English language proficiency, many EFL students continue to experience serious and persistent difficulties in learning, retaining, and using English vocabulary effectively. These difficulties are not limited to knowing the dictionary meaning of words; rather, they extend to pronunciation, spelling, grammatical forms, word meaning, contextual use, collocations, connotations, and idiomatic expressions. Rohmatillah (2014) found that students faced various vocabulary learning difficulties, including pronouncing words, writing and spelling them, understanding inflectional forms, choosing appropriate meanings, using words in context, and interpreting idiomatic expressions. These findings indicate that vocabulary learning is a complex process that requires more than memorization or simple word translation.

The problem becomes more significant in EFL contexts, where learners often have limited exposure to authentic English outside the classroom. As a result, coursebooks, teachers, and classroom instruction become the main sources of vocabulary input. However, these sources may not always provide sufficient contextual, cultural, and pragmatic information necessary for developing deep lexical knowledge. Bao (2023) argues that EFL learners' vocabulary difficulties are influenced by coursebook limitations, the linguistic distance between the learners' mother tongue and English, and the role of teachers, especially in contexts where learners lack real target-language environments.

Previous studies have also shown that EFL students' vocabulary problems are associated with psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical factors. Students may have difficulty understanding the meanings of English words, using them appropriately, memorizing them, or pronouncing them correctly. Some learners also suffer from low motivation, limited learning facilities, and fear of making mistakes when using new vocabulary. Fitri, Uyun, and Kulsum (2024) reported that students' problems included lack of motivation, difficulty understanding word meaning, problems with grammar and pronunciation, laziness in memorizing vocabulary, and insufficient learning facilities. Similarly, Lutfiyah, Nuraeningsih, and Rusiana (2022) found that pronunciation and spelling represented one of the highest levels of difficulty among EFL students, especially because English spelling often differs from pronunciation.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the linguistic difficulties faced by EFL students in learning English vocabulary, particularly in pronunciation, spelling, and understanding word meanings in context?
2. What are the cognitive and memory-related difficulties faced by EFL students in memorizing, recalling, and connecting new English vocabulary with previously learned words?
3. What difficulties do EFL students face in using English vocabulary correctly in sentences, and to what extent do they need more opportunities and effective strategies for vocabulary practice and learning?

Significance of the Study

1. **This study is significant because it highlights the central role of vocabulary in EFL learning.**

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency, as learners cannot communicate effectively or develop their language skills without sufficient lexical knowledge. Therefore, investigating vocabulary learning difficulties helps explain one of the major barriers that affect students' overall English performance.

2. **The study helps identify the major difficulties faced by EFL students in learning English vocabulary.**

These difficulties include pronunciation, spelling, word meaning, appropriate use, connotation, collocation, and idiomatic expressions. Identifying these problems is important because vocabulary learning involves more than memorizing isolated word meanings.

3. **The study is useful for English language teachers.**

By understanding students' vocabulary-related problems, teachers can design more effective teaching practices, provide suitable classroom activities, and focus on the areas where learners need more support, such as pronunciation practice, contextual use, and vocabulary retention.

4. **The study benefits EFL students by raising their awareness of effective vocabulary learning strategies.**

Students may become more aware of how to overcome vocabulary difficulties through strategies such as using dictionaries, reviewing words, practicing with peers, using vocabulary notebooks, guessing meaning from context, and applying new words in meaningful situations.

5. **The study may assist curriculum designers and material developers.**

Since EFL learners often depend heavily on textbooks and classroom input, the findings may help improve vocabulary materials by including richer contexts, word forms, pronunciation, collocations, cultural meanings, and practical vocabulary-use activities.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to investigate the problems and difficulties encountered by EFL students in learning English vocabulary. It seeks to provide a clear academic understanding of the major lexical challenges that prevent learners from developing adequate vocabulary knowledge and using English words accurately and appropriately. Since vocabulary learning involves more than memorizing word meanings, this study focuses on the different dimensions of vocabulary knowledge, including pronunciation, spelling, word meaning, grammatical forms, contextual use, collocations, connotations, and idiomatic expressions. Previous studies

have shown that EFL learners often struggle with these areas, particularly when the written form of a word differs from its spoken form or when learners are required to use words appropriately in context.

The study also aims to identify the main factors that contribute to students' vocabulary learning difficulties. These factors may include linguistic differences between English and the learners' mother tongue, limited exposure to authentic English, lack of sufficient vocabulary input, dependence on textbooks, insufficient practice, and inadequate awareness of vocabulary learning strategies. In EFL contexts, learners often rely heavily on classroom instruction and coursebooks as their primary sources of English input, which may limit their ability to understand vocabulary in real communicative, social, and cultural contexts.

Another objective of this study is to examine how vocabulary difficulties affect students' overall English language performance. Insufficient vocabulary knowledge may create barriers to communication, reduce learners' confidence, and negatively influence their ability to understand and produce English in both spoken and written forms. Therefore, the study attempts to explain the relationship between vocabulary problems and students' academic and communicative performance in English.

Furthermore, the study aims to explore the role of vocabulary learning strategies in helping EFL students overcome vocabulary-related problems. It considers strategies such as dictionary use, repetition, vocabulary notebooks, guessing meaning from context, peer practice, reviewing, listening to English materials, watching English videos, and using words in meaningful contexts. Such strategies may help learners become more independent, active, and effective in developing their vocabulary knowledge.

Previous Studies

1. Afzal's Study (2019)

Afzal conducted a study in 2019 in Saudi Arabia entitled "**A Study on Vocabulary-Learning Problems Encountered by BA English Majors at the University Level of Education.**" This study is considered highly relevant because it directly investigated the vocabulary-learning problems faced by undergraduate English majors at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University.

The study was conducted in response to the observation that limited vocabulary knowledge negatively affects students' academic performance in language skills, linguistics, literature, and translation courses. The main problem addressed by the study was that non-native English majors encounter several difficulties in learning vocabulary, including understanding the meanings of new words, pronouncing them, spelling them, memorizing them, and using them correctly.

The study aimed to identify the major vocabulary-learning problems encountered by BA English majors and to suggest possible strategies to reduce these difficulties. Afzal adopted a quantitative research design and used an online questionnaire to collect data from 100 undergraduate students from different academic levels in a four-year BA English program. The findings revealed that students faced various vocabulary-learning problems, particularly in understanding word meanings, pronunciation, spelling, memorization, and appropriate use. This study is useful for the present research because it deals directly with vocabulary-learning problems among EFL university students.

2. Rohmatillah's Study (2014)

Rohmatillah conducted a study in 2014 entitled **“A Study on Students’ Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary.”** This study examined the types of difficulties faced by students in learning English vocabulary and the factors that caused these difficulties.

The study was based on the assumption that vocabulary is a central component of language learning and that insufficient vocabulary knowledge may hinder students’ ability to communicate effectively in spoken and written English. The researcher also noted that English differs from Indonesian in pronunciation, spelling, form, meaning, and use, which may create additional challenges for learners.

The study aimed to identify both the kinds and causes of students’ vocabulary-learning difficulties. It employed a qualitative case-study design and used interviews and questionnaires to collect data from first-semester students in the English Education Department. The findings showed that students faced difficulties in pronouncing words, spelling and writing words, understanding inflectional forms, choosing appropriate meanings, using words in context, and understanding idiomatic expressions. The study is important for the present research because it provides a clear classification of vocabulary-learning difficulties and their causes.

3. Hasan’s Study (2024)

Hasan conducted a recent study in 2024 entitled **“A Study on Student’s Challenges and Problems in Learning English Vocabulary.”** The study focused on vocabulary-learning challenges among students at King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia.

The study was motivated by the fact that vocabulary proficiency is one of the most common problems preventing students from improving their English language competence. It addressed several challenges related to vocabulary learning, including pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary development, word use, and meaning comprehension.

The study aimed to identify the major challenges students face when acquiring English vocabulary and the approaches they use to overcome these difficulties. A questionnaire was administered to male and female students enrolled in English 101 and English 102 during the second semester of 2024. The findings revealed that students encountered difficulties in pronouncing and spelling English words correctly, building vocabulary, applying vocabulary appropriately, and understanding meanings. This study is valuable for the present research because it is recent and directly related to EFL students’ vocabulary-learning problems.

4. Lutfiyah, Nuraeningsih, and Rusiana’s Study (2022)

Lutfiyah, Nuraeningsih, and Rusiana conducted a study in 2022 entitled **“The Obstacles in Learning Vocabulary of EFL Students.”** The study investigated the obstacles faced by EFL students in learning vocabulary and the strategies they used to overcome these obstacles.

The study was conducted because vocabulary mastery is one of the most common problems preventing students from improving their English skills and abilities. The researchers focused on second-semester students at Universitas Muria Kudus and examined their difficulties in learning vocabulary, especially in relation to pronunciation, spelling, meaning, word use, and connotation.

The study used a survey design, and a questionnaire was administered to 30 students. The findings showed that students faced several obstacles, including difficulty distinguishing between spelling and pronunciation, difficulty developing vocabulary skills, difficulty using vocabulary correctly, and difficulty understanding connotation. To overcome these problems, students used strategies such as dictionary use, memorization, peer practice, listening to English music, watching English videos, discussion with friends, and additional individual classes. This study is useful for the present research because it connects vocabulary-learning difficulties with practical learner strategies.

5. Fitri, Uyun, and Kulsum's Study (2024)

Fitri, Uyun, and Kulsum conducted a study in 2024 entitled **"Students' Problems in Learning English Vocabulary: A Descriptive Study at Tenth Grade of SMAN 1 Rancaekek."** The study focused on vocabulary-learning problems among tenth-grade students.

The study was based on the observation that students' limited ability to master vocabulary is a major problem in learning English. The researchers noticed that some students mixed Indonesian and English when answering questions and that others became confused or anxious when asked to write English words they knew.

The study aimed to identify the problems faced by tenth-grade students in learning English vocabulary. It used a qualitative descriptive method, and data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observation. The participants were 37 students, and six students were interviewed based on their English scores. The findings revealed several problems, including lack of interest in learning English, low motivation, difficulty understanding grammar and pronunciation, laziness in memorizing vocabulary, and inadequate learning facilities. This study supports the present research because it shows that vocabulary difficulties are influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by motivational and educational factors.

6. Bao's Study (2023)

Bao conducted a study in 2023 entitled **"Special Vocabulary Learning Difficulties for EFL Students with Chinese Backgrounds."** The study examined the special vocabulary-learning difficulties experienced by EFL learners with Chinese linguistic backgrounds.

The study was conducted in the context of EFL learning, where learners often lack access to authentic English environments and socio-cultural contexts. The problem addressed by the study was that vocabulary input for EFL learners is often limited to textbooks and classroom instruction, which may reduce learners' ability to understand vocabulary in real communicative contexts.

The study discussed three major factors influencing vocabulary-learning difficulties: coursebooks, language distance between the mother tongue and English, and teachers. It found that coursebooks are often the main source of vocabulary input for EFL learners, but they may not provide sufficient information about word parts, semantic relations, contextual meaning, and constraints on use. This study is relevant to the present research because it highlights the role of instructional materials, mother-tongue influence, and classroom context in vocabulary-learning difficulties.

7. Alshammari's Study (2020)

Alshammari conducted a study in 2020 entitled **"EFL Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Saudi Arabia University Students."** The study investigated the vocabulary-learning strategies used by Saudi university students and their relationship with vocabulary achievement.

The study was conducted in response to the observation that Saudi university students struggle to achieve the desired level of English proficiency, especially in vocabulary. The researcher argued that poor vocabulary development creates academic challenges for learners and requires attention from teachers, curriculum designers, and other educational stakeholders.

The study involved 85 male and female university students. It examined their vocabulary levels and compared the responses of high achievers and low achievers regarding vocabulary-learning strategies. The findings showed that high achievers valued a wider range of strategies, while low achievers focused more on metacognitive and memory strategies. This study is important

for the present research because it shows that students' use of vocabulary-learning strategies may affect their vocabulary development and achievement.

8. Altalhab's Study (2019)

Altalhab conducted a study in 2019 entitled **"The Vocabulary Knowledge of Saudi EFL Tertiary Students."** The study examined the vocabulary knowledge of Saudi tertiary students and its relationship to their ability to communicate in English.

The study was based on the assumption that vocabulary is essential for developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The problem addressed was that students may possess enough vocabulary for basic communication, yet still struggle with authentic texts, advanced writing, and more demanding listening materials.

The study used a vocabulary test developed by Nation and Beglar and applied it to 120 Saudi tertiary students. The findings revealed that the students' average vocabulary size was about 3000 words, but many participants scored low in mid- and low-frequency vocabulary levels. The study concluded that although students may communicate at a basic level, they may face difficulty reading authentic texts, producing high-quality writing, and understanding English media. This study is useful for the present research because it demonstrates the impact of limited vocabulary size on students' academic and communicative performance.

9. Goundar's Study (2019)

Goundar conducted a study in 2019 entitled **"Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) Employed by Learners of English as a Foreign Language."** The study explored vocabulary-learning strategies used by adult EFL learners.

The study was conducted because acquiring vocabulary is one of the major challenges involved in learning a new language. The researcher emphasized that encouraging learners to become independent is an important way to address vocabulary-learning problems.

The study aimed to identify the vocabulary-learning strategies used by EFL learners, examine the benefits and drawbacks of different strategies, and determine the most and least frequently used strategies. A quantitative method was used, and data were collected from 53 EFL learners through a questionnaire. The findings revealed that learners used various strategies to acquire vocabulary and that appropriate strategy use could help them overcome difficulties in vocabulary learning. This study is useful for the present research because it provides practical insight into how vocabulary-learning strategies can reduce vocabulary-related challenges.

10. Davoudi and Chavosh's Study (2016)

Davoudi and Chavosh conducted a study in 2016 entitled **"Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use by Iranian EFL Learners across Proficiency Levels."** The study investigated vocabulary-learning strategies used by Iranian EFL learners at intermediate and advanced proficiency levels.

The study was based on the view that vocabulary is a central element of language learning and that having a large vocabulary is an important indicator of communicative competence. It also emphasized that vocabulary learning and teaching are challenging processes and that learning strategies can help students develop their lexical knowledge.

The study involved 105 learners from English language institutes in Yazd, Iran. The participants were classified into intermediate and advanced groups based on TOEFL scores, and they completed a vocabulary-learning strategy inventory. The results showed that both groups used mental linkages, memory strategies, and auditory strategies most frequently, while self-motivation strategies, authentic-language strategies, and creative activity strategies were the least frequently used. The study also found differences between intermediate and advanced

learners in their strategy use. This study is relevant because it shows that proficiency level influences vocabulary-learning strategy use.

11. Al Zahrani and Chaudhary's Study (2022)

Al Zahrani and Chaudhary conducted a study in 2022 entitled **“Vocabulary Learning Strategies in ESP Context: Knowledge and Implication.”** The study examined vocabulary-learning strategies among EFL university students studying English for Specific Purposes.

The study was conducted because vocabulary is essential for effective communication, especially in ESP contexts where students need to understand and use specialized vocabulary. The problem addressed by the study was the need for effective strategies that can help students acquire and use vocabulary in academic and professional contexts.

The study aimed to explore students' knowledge and preferences regarding vocabulary-learning strategies and to investigate the impact of these strategies on learners' performance. A triangulated approach was used, including a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and pre- and post-tests. The findings showed that the use of vocabulary-learning strategies had a substantial impact on learners' performance. This study is useful for the present research because it shows that vocabulary-learning strategies can improve students' vocabulary development and reduce learning difficulties.

12. Al-Ahmadi's Study (2024)

Al-Ahmadi conducted a study in 2024 entitled **“An Exploratory Study of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Saudi Female First-year EFL University Students.”** The study explored vocabulary-learning strategies used by Saudi female first-year university students.

The study was based on the idea that language-learning strategies play an important role in improving language performance, promoting learner autonomy, and supporting effective language learning. It also emphasized that vocabulary is central to language proficiency and that insufficient vocabulary knowledge is one of the major obstacles that hinder learners' language performance.

The study involved 55 Saudi female freshmen studying English as a foreign language in a university foundation program. Two research instruments were used: a closed/open-ended questionnaire based on Schmitt's taxonomy of vocabulary-learning strategies and a vocabulary diary learning log. The findings showed that the participants used different vocabulary-learning strategies at different rates, with memory strategies being the most frequently used, followed by determination, cognitive, social, and metacognitive strategies. This study is useful for the present research because it highlights the importance of learners' strategic behavior in vocabulary development.

13. Ueno and Takeuchi's Study (2023)

Ueno and Takeuchi conducted a study in 2023 entitled **“Which Vocabulary Learning Strategies are Important and Useful for Japanese University Students? A Text-Mining Approach.”** The study examined the vocabulary-learning strategies perceived as important and useful by Japanese university students learning English as a foreign language.

The study was based on the idea that vocabulary learning is a demanding process that requires considerable time and effort. The researchers argued that vocabulary learning involves not only form and meaning but also sound, association, and metacognitive control. Therefore, strategic learning is important for making vocabulary learning more efficient.

The study involved 40 Japanese university students, divided into higher- and lower-proficiency groups. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire and analyzed using KH Coder software and co-occurrence networks. The findings showed that students perceived cognitive strategies related to word form, sound, association learning, and metacognitive

strategies as important and useful. Higher-proficiency learners showed stronger awareness of metacognitive strategies than lower-proficiency learners. This study is relevant because it shows that vocabulary-learning strategies and learners' proficiency are closely related.

14. Ostovar-Namaghi and Rajaei's Study (2013)

Ostovar-Namaghi and Rajaei conducted a study in 2013 entitled **"Effect of Strategy Training on Vocabulary in EFL Contexts."** The study investigated the effect of vocabulary strategy training on vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL learners.

The study was conducted because many EFL students find it difficult to memorize long lists of vocabulary items and because some teachers do not explicitly teach vocabulary-learning strategies. The researchers argued that students' lack of awareness of vocabulary strategies contributes to their vocabulary-learning difficulties.

The study used an experimental design with 60 Iranian male high-school EFL learners aged between 14 and 16. The participants were divided into experimental and control groups. Both groups took a pre-test, but only the experimental group received vocabulary strategy training for two months. After the treatment, both groups took a post-test. The results showed a significant difference in favor of the experimental group, indicating that vocabulary strategy training was effective. This study is useful for the present research because it confirms that training learners in vocabulary strategies can help reduce vocabulary-learning difficulties.

15. Aljurbua's Study (2020)

Aljurbua conducted a study in 2020 entitled **"Memory Strategies for Vocabulary Learning Employed by Saudi Undergraduate EFL Learners."** The study was a master's thesis in Applied Linguistics at Universiti Putra Malaysia and was later made available through Arab World English Journal.

The study was conducted because Saudi undergraduate EFL learners face difficulty choosing appropriate strategies for vocabulary learning and memorization. The problem was also related to learners' inability to remember words when they need them in writing or speaking.

The study aimed to examine the memory strategies used by Saudi undergraduate EFL learners in vocabulary learning. It adopted a quantitative approach using descriptive statistical analysis and involved 110 Saudi undergraduate learners. The study used Oxford's classification of memory strategies. The findings revealed that creating mental linkages was the most frequently used strategy, followed by reviewing well and applying images and sounds, while employing actions was the least used strategy. This study is useful for the present research because it emphasizes the role of memory strategies, mental linkage, and review in helping learners retain and recall vocabulary.

Theoretical Background

The Concept and Nature of Vocabulary in EFL Learning

Vocabulary in EFL learning refers to the body of words and lexical items that learners need in order to understand and produce English effectively. It is not limited to isolated word meanings or simple word lists; rather, it includes the forms, meanings, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical behavior, and contextual use of words. In this sense, vocabulary represents a basic component of language proficiency because it provides much of the foundation for how learners speak, listen, read, and write in English. Therefore, learning vocabulary is an essential requirement for developing communicative competence in EFL contexts (Rohmatillah, 2014, pp. 70–71).

The nature of vocabulary is complex because knowing a word involves more than knowing its dictionary definition. A learner may recognize the meaning of a word but still fail to pronounce

it correctly, spell it accurately, use it in the appropriate grammatical pattern, or apply it in a suitable communicative situation. Vocabulary knowledge also involves awareness of collocations, word associations, register, frequency, and semantic features. This shows that vocabulary learning is a multidimensional process that requires learners to develop both linguistic knowledge and practical ability to use words appropriately in context (Rohmatillah, 2014, p. 71).

In EFL contexts, vocabulary has a particularly important role because English is usually learned in classrooms rather than through daily social interaction. Learners often depend on textbooks, teachers, and classroom activities as their main sources of vocabulary input. This makes vocabulary learning more challenging because students may not receive enough real-life exposure to how words are used naturally in social, cultural, and communicative situations. As a result, vocabulary learning in EFL settings requires more systematic teaching, repeated practice, and meaningful contextualization (Bao, 2023, pp. 108–109).

Vocabulary is also central to meaning-making in communication. Words are the basic units through which learners express ideas, understand messages, and construct spoken or written texts. However, vocabulary does not function separately from context; words gain their precise meanings through the situations, texts, and discourse in which they occur. For this reason, effective vocabulary learning should not focus only on memorizing isolated words, but should also help learners understand how words operate within sentences, texts, conversations, and real communicative tasks (Read, 2000, pp. 1–4).

Another important feature of vocabulary is that it develops gradually over time. Learners do not fully acquire a word after a single exposure; instead, they need repeated encounters with the word in different contexts before they can understand and use it confidently. Vocabulary learning includes several stages such as recognizing the word form, understanding its meaning, remembering it, and extending its use across different contexts. This gradual nature explains why many EFL students may understand some words receptively but still struggle to use them productively in speaking and writing (Rohmatillah, 2014, pp. 72–73).

Accordingly, vocabulary in EFL learning should be understood as a dynamic and cumulative area of language knowledge. It includes not only the number of words a learner knows, but also the depth of understanding attached to those words. A strong vocabulary base enables learners to communicate more effectively, understand English input more accurately, and participate more confidently in academic and everyday language use. Thus, the concept and nature of vocabulary reveal why vocabulary learning is both essential and difficult for EFL students (Hasan, 2024, p. 208).

The Importance of Vocabulary Knowledge for EFL Students

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the most fundamental elements in learning English as a foreign language because it provides the lexical basis through which learners understand and produce language. EFL students cannot develop effective communication if they lack sufficient vocabulary, even when they possess some knowledge of grammar or pronunciation. In this sense, vocabulary is not a secondary component of language learning; rather, it is a central element that supports learners' ability to express ideas, understand messages, and participate in meaningful communication (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 22).

The importance of vocabulary knowledge is also evident in its direct relationship with the four language skills. Learners need vocabulary to understand spoken English, comprehend written texts, express themselves orally, and produce written language. Without adequate vocabulary, students may know grammatical structures but still fail to use them for real communication because they do not have the words needed to convey meaning. Therefore, vocabulary

knowledge enables language use, while continued language use also contributes to expanding vocabulary knowledge (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 22).

For EFL students, vocabulary is especially important because English is usually learned in an environment where exposure to the language is limited. Unlike learners in English-speaking contexts, EFL students often depend mainly on classroom instruction, textbooks, and teachers as sources of language input. This makes vocabulary knowledge a decisive factor in their academic progress and communicative ability. If students have a limited vocabulary size, they may be able to communicate at a basic level, but they are likely to face difficulties when reading authentic texts, writing academic compositions, and understanding English media (Altalhab, 2019, p. 55).

Vocabulary knowledge also affects learners' confidence and fluency. Students with poor vocabulary often hesitate while speaking or writing because they cannot quickly retrieve the words they need. This lexical gap may interrupt communication, reduce fluency, and prevent learners from expressing their thoughts accurately. As a result, vocabulary becomes essential not only for comprehension but also for the successful production of spoken and written language (Altalhab, 2019, p. 55).

Moreover, vocabulary knowledge contributes to academic achievement because many classroom tasks require students to understand instructions, read texts, answer questions, discuss ideas, and write responses in English. When students lack vocabulary, their performance in both receptive and productive skills may be negatively affected. Thus, vocabulary learning is closely connected to students' overall English achievement, and improving vocabulary mastery can support better performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Lutfiyah et al., 2022, p. 115).

Accordingly, vocabulary knowledge is important for EFL students because it represents the foundation of language proficiency, communication, comprehension, academic learning, and language production. It allows learners to move beyond mechanical knowledge of grammar toward actual use of English in meaningful contexts. For this reason, vocabulary should receive systematic attention in EFL teaching and learning, especially through activities that help students understand, remember, and use words appropriately in different contexts (Aljurbua, 2020, pp. 48–49).

Dimensions of Vocabulary Knowledge: Receptive and Productive Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is not a single, simple form of knowledge; rather, it consists of different dimensions that reflect how deeply and effectively learners know and use words. In EFL learning, students may recognize a word when they encounter it in listening or reading, but this does not necessarily mean that they can use the same word accurately in speaking or writing. For this reason, scholars commonly distinguish between receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary as two essential dimensions of lexical knowledge. This distinction is important because it shows that vocabulary learning involves both understanding words and using them appropriately in communication (Alqahtani, 2015, pp. 24–25).

Receptive vocabulary refers to the words that learners can recognize and understand when they appear in context, especially in reading or listening. These are words that students may know passively because they can identify their meanings when they see or hear them, yet they may not be able to produce them independently in speech or writing. In EFL contexts, many learners develop receptive vocabulary before productive vocabulary because comprehension usually precedes active use. However, relying only on receptive vocabulary may limit learners' ability to communicate actively and confidently in English (Hasan, 2024, p. 209).

Productive vocabulary, on the other hand, refers to the words that learners can understand, pronounce correctly, and use effectively in speaking and writing. This type of vocabulary requires a higher level of lexical control because learners must not only know the meaning of the word but also retrieve it, pronounce or spell it correctly, and place it in an appropriate grammatical and communicative context. Therefore, productive vocabulary is considered an active process, as it enables learners to express their thoughts, construct sentences, and participate in real communication (Aljurbua, 2020, pp. 32–33).

The distinction between receptive and productive vocabulary is closely related to the broader distinction between passive and active vocabulary. Passive vocabulary consists of lexical items that learners can recognize and understand, whereas active vocabulary includes the words learners can use in oral or written expression. This difference is pedagogically significant because many EFL students may appear to know a word during reading or listening activities but fail to use it accurately when required to speak or write. Thus, vocabulary instruction should not stop at recognition; it should also guide learners toward active and meaningful word use (Afzal, 2019, p. 83).

Another important dimension of vocabulary knowledge is the distinction between vocabulary breadth and vocabulary depth. Breadth refers to the size of a learner's vocabulary, or the number of words known at least at a basic level. Depth, however, refers to the quality of knowing a word, including its meanings, associations, collocations, grammatical behavior, register, and appropriate use. A student may have a large vocabulary size but still lack deep knowledge of how words function in different contexts. Therefore, effective vocabulary learning requires both expanding the number of known words and deepening learners' understanding of how those words are used (Altalhab, 2019, pp. 56–57).

In relation to assessment, vocabulary knowledge should not be evaluated only through isolated word meanings or multiple-choice recognition tasks. Although such tests may measure part of learners' receptive vocabulary, they often fail to show whether learners can use vocabulary effectively in real communicative situations. Read argues that language ability involves not only knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and sound systems, but also the ability to draw on this knowledge for communicative purposes under normal conditions. This means that productive vocabulary use should be considered an essential part of evaluating learners' lexical competence (Read, 2000, pp. 4–5).

Major Problems and Difficulties in Learning English Vocabulary

EFL students encounter a wide range of difficulties when learning English vocabulary because vocabulary knowledge is not limited to memorizing word meanings. Learners are required to know how words are pronounced, spelled, formed, used grammatically, and applied appropriately in different contexts. One of the most common problems is pronunciation, as many students find it difficult to pronounce English words correctly, especially when the spoken form differs from the written form. This problem may lead to hesitation in oral communication and reduce learners' confidence when using newly learned words in speaking activities (Rohmatillah, 2014, p. 69).

Another major difficulty is spelling. English spelling often creates confusion for EFL learners because there is not always a direct relationship between letters and sounds. Students may recognize a word when they hear it, but they may fail to write it correctly. Similarly, they may know the written form of a word but pronounce it inaccurately. This gap between pronunciation and spelling makes vocabulary learning more demanding and may affect learners' ability to use vocabulary accurately in both spoken and written communication (Lutfiyah et al., 2022, p. 114).

Understanding word meaning is also one of the central problems in vocabulary learning. Many English words have multiple meanings depending on context, and this may confuse EFL learners who often depend on direct translation or dictionary definitions. A student may know one meaning of a word but fail to understand its meaning in a different sentence or communicative situation. Therefore, vocabulary difficulty is not only related to learning new words, but also to selecting the appropriate meaning according to context (Afzal, 2019, p. 83). EFL students also face difficulties in using vocabulary appropriately. Knowing the meaning of a word does not necessarily mean being able to use it correctly in speaking or writing. Learners may use a word in an unsuitable grammatical form, combine it with inappropriate words, or place it in a context where it sounds unnatural. This shows that vocabulary learning involves knowledge of grammar, collocation, register, and contextual appropriateness, not merely memorization of isolated word meanings (Hasan, 2024, pp. 207–210).

Memorization and retention represent another important problem. Many EFL learners may memorize vocabulary temporarily for classroom tasks or examinations, but they quickly forget the words because they do not review them regularly or use them in meaningful contexts. Some students also depend heavily on rote memorization without applying effective vocabulary learning strategies. As a result, vocabulary remains passive and difficult to recall when learners need it in speaking or writing (Fitri et al., 2024, p. 45).

In addition, learners may struggle with grammatical forms and word formation. English words may change their forms through inflection, derivation, prefixes, suffixes, and changes in word class. For example, learners may know a base word but fail to recognize or use its noun, verb, adjective, or adverb forms correctly. Such difficulties show that vocabulary knowledge includes morphological awareness and the ability to understand how words are formed and modified in English (Rohmatillah, 2014, p. 69).

Idiomatic expressions and connotations are also problematic for EFL students. Some words and expressions cannot be understood through literal meaning alone, which makes them difficult for learners who rely mainly on translation. Idioms, figurative meanings, and connotative meanings require cultural and contextual understanding. When learners lack exposure to authentic English use, they may find it difficult to understand these expressions or use them naturally (Rohmatillah, 2014, p. 69; Lutfiyah et al., 2022, p. 114).

Factors Contributing to Vocabulary Learning Difficulties and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning difficulties among EFL students are influenced by several interrelated factors, including linguistic, pedagogical, cognitive, and environmental conditions. In many EFL contexts, students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, which means that their vocabulary input often depends mainly on textbooks, teachers, and classroom activities. This limited exposure reduces learners' opportunities to encounter words in authentic communicative, social, and cultural contexts. As a result, students may learn the surface meaning of words without developing a deeper understanding of how these words are used naturally in real-life communication (Bao, 2023, pp. 108–111).

One major factor contributing to vocabulary learning difficulties is the linguistic distance between learners' mother tongue and English. When the first language differs greatly from English in terms of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, pronunciation, and written form, learners may face interference while trying to understand or produce English words. This interference may appear in pronunciation errors, inappropriate word choice, literal translation, or difficulty recognizing grammatical and morphological features of words. Therefore, vocabulary learning

becomes more difficult when students attempt to apply structures or meanings from their first language to English (Bao, 2023, pp. 109–111).

Coursebooks may also contribute to vocabulary learning difficulties. In EFL settings, textbooks are often the main source of vocabulary input; however, they may not always present vocabulary in a sufficiently comprehensive way. Although some textbooks provide pronunciation, written forms, and basic meanings, they may lack adequate explanation of word parts, related meanings, collocations, concepts, references, and constraints on use. This can lead students to develop partial vocabulary knowledge, where they may know the basic meaning of a word but remain unable to use it accurately and appropriately in context (Bao, 2023, pp. 108–110).

Another factor is students' limited awareness of effective vocabulary learning strategies. Many learners depend mainly on memorization or repetition, but these strategies alone may not be sufficient for long-term retention and productive use. Research suggests that learners need to be aware of a wider range of strategies, including guessing meaning from context, using dictionaries, note-taking, rehearsal, encoding, activation, and metacognitive regulation. When students lack this strategic awareness, they may learn vocabulary in an unsystematic way and may forget words quickly or fail to use them when needed (Aljurbua, 2020, pp. 40–43).

Vocabulary learning strategies are therefore essential tools that help EFL students manage the difficulty of learning new words. These strategies can be understood as conscious actions or procedures that learners use to discover, understand, remember, and use vocabulary. Schmitt's classification, for example, divides vocabulary learning strategies into discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. Discovery strategies help learners find the meaning of unfamiliar words, while consolidation strategies help them remember and use words after they have been encountered. This classification shows that vocabulary learning requires both initial understanding and continued practice (Davoudi & Chavosh, 2016, pp. 70–71).

Memory strategies are particularly important because many vocabulary problems are related to retention and recall. Learners often forget words when they do not connect them with previous knowledge or use them in meaningful contexts. Memory strategies help learners encode new words through association, imagery, sound, semantic grouping, word structure, and contextual links. Such strategies support long-term retention because they create stronger mental connections between new vocabulary and existing knowledge. Therefore, memory-based learning can help students move beyond mechanical memorization toward deeper and more meaningful vocabulary learning (Aljurbua, 2020, pp. 41–42).

Cognitive and metacognitive strategies also play a significant role in overcoming vocabulary learning difficulties. Cognitive strategies include practical techniques such as using dictionaries, guessing from context, taking notes, repetition, and analyzing word structure. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, evaluating, and selecting suitable strategies for learning new words. Learners who use metacognitive strategies can organize their vocabulary learning more effectively because they become aware of what to learn, how to learn it, and how to evaluate their progress (Davoudi & Chavosh, 2016, pp. 70–71).

In addition, vocabulary learning strategies can be grouped into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Such classifications are useful because they show that vocabulary learning is not only a mental process but also a social and emotional process. Students may benefit from practicing with peers, asking teachers or classmates for help, using English media, reducing anxiety, and developing motivation to continue learning vocabulary (Al Zahrani & Chaudhary, 2022, pp. 384–385).

Strategy training is also an important pedagogical response to vocabulary learning difficulties. When teachers explicitly train students to use vocabulary strategies, learners become more aware of how to learn words effectively and how to take responsibility for their own vocabulary development. Strategy training may include teaching students how to analyze word formation, use synonyms and antonyms, define words, guess meanings from context, review vocabulary systematically, and apply new words in different contexts. Such training can reduce vocabulary learning difficulties and make students more autonomous learners (Ostovar-Namaghi & Rajaei, 2013, pp. 4–5).

Practical Framework of the Study

Type of Analysis

The present study adopts a quantitative statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The use of SPSS is appropriate for this study because the data will be collected through a questionnaire distributed to students, and the responses will need to be coded, organized, and statistically analyzed. The analysis will mainly depend on descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, in order to identify the most common problems and difficulties faced by EFL students in learning English vocabulary.

In addition, reliability analysis will be conducted through Cronbach's Alpha to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. This step is important to ensure that the research instrument is reliable and suitable for measuring the intended dimensions of vocabulary learning difficulties. If needed, further statistical tests may be applied, such as the Independent Samples T-test or One-Way ANOVA, to examine whether there are significant differences in students' responses according to demographic variables such as gender, academic year, or level of English proficiency.

Thus, SPSS will be used not only to describe students' responses but also to provide a more accurate statistical understanding of the major factors that contribute to vocabulary learning difficulties among students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghassir.

Methodology of the Study

This study follows the descriptive analytical method, as it is suitable for investigating educational and linguistic problems based on students' responses and perceptions. The descriptive method allows the researcher to describe the phenomenon under investigation, namely the problems and difficulties encountered by EFL students in learning English vocabulary. At the same time, the analytical aspect helps interpret the collected data and identify the most significant vocabulary-related challenges faced by the participants.

The study is quantitative in nature because it relies on numerical data obtained from a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed to measure students' perceptions of vocabulary learning difficulties, including problems related to pronunciation, spelling, word meaning, memorization, contextual use, collocations, idiomatic expressions, and the lack of effective vocabulary learning strategies. The questionnaire items will be organized according to a Likert scale in order to measure the degree of students' agreement with each statement.

The use of a questionnaire is appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to collect data from a relatively large number of students within a limited period of time. It also

allows the researcher to identify general patterns in students' responses and to analyze the data statistically using SPSS. Therefore, this methodology is considered suitable for achieving the objectives of the study and answering its research questions.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study consists of students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir. This population was selected because students in the Faculty of Education are expected to study English either as a subject or as part of their academic preparation, which makes them suitable participants for investigating vocabulary learning difficulties in an EFL context.

The sample of the study will consist of **80 students** from the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir. The questionnaire will be distributed to these students in order to collect their views about the problems they face when learning English vocabulary. The sample size is considered appropriate for a descriptive quantitative study, as it provides enough responses to identify common difficulties and analyze students' perceptions statistically.

The participants will be selected from students available at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir. The study will focus on their experiences and perceptions regarding English vocabulary learning, especially the difficulties they encounter in pronunciation, spelling, understanding meanings, remembering new words, and using vocabulary correctly in context. The collected data will then be coded and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Demographic Data of the Participants

Table A: Distribution of Participants According to Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–20 years	26	32.5%
21–23 years	38	47.5%
24 years and above	16	20.0%
Total	80	100%

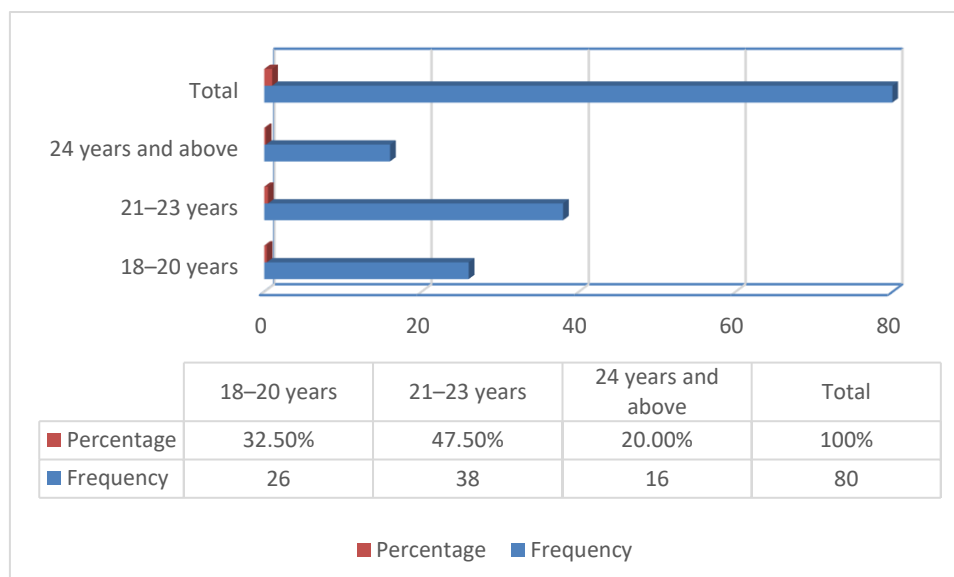


Figure A: Distribution of Participants According to Age

Description:

Table B indicates that most participants were between **21 and 23 years old**, representing **47.5%** of the sample. Students aged **18–20 years** represented **32.5%**, while students aged **24 years and above** represented **20.0%**. This shows that the majority of the respondents were young university students.

Table B: Distribution of Participants According to Academic Year

Academic Year	Frequency	Percentage
First year	20	25.0%
Second year	22	27.5%
Third year	21	26.3%
Fourth year	17	21.3%
Total	80	100%

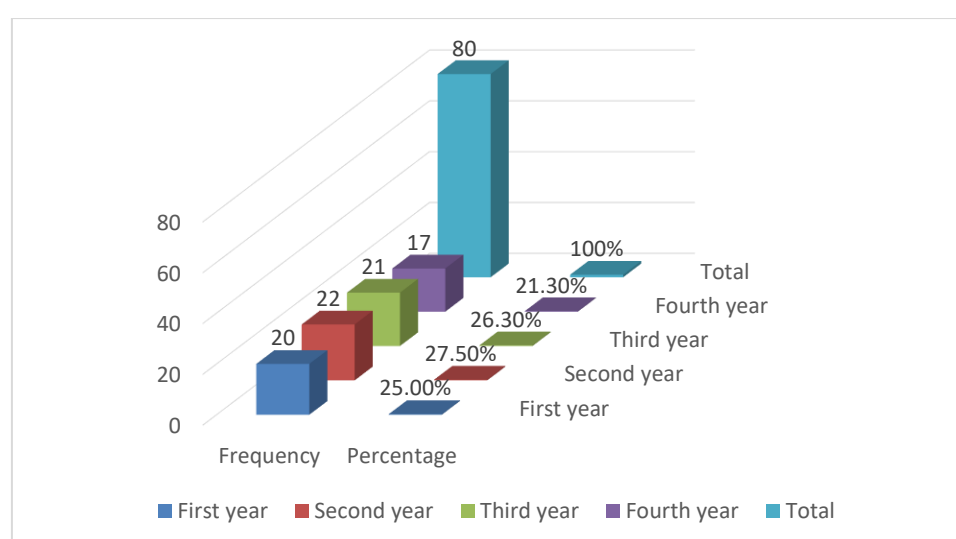
**Figure B:** Distribution of Participants According to Academic Year**Description:**

Table C shows that the participants were distributed across the four academic years. The highest percentage was among second-year students, representing **27.5%**, followed by third-year students with **26.3%**, first-year students with **25.0%**, and fourth-year students with **21.3%**. This distribution gives the study a reasonable representation of students from different academic levels.

Table C: Distribution of Participants According to English Proficiency Level

English Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	30	37.5%
Intermediate	40	50.0%
High	10	12.5%
Total	80	100%

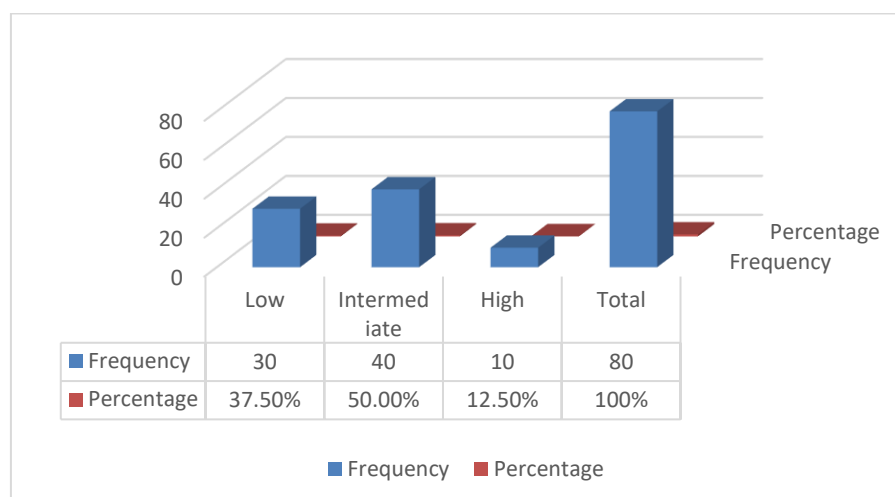


Figure C: Distribution of Participants According to English Proficiency Level

Description:

Table D shows that half of the participants, representing **50.0%**, reported that their English proficiency level was intermediate. Meanwhile, **37.5%** reported a low level, and only **12.5%** reported a high level. This indicates that most students had either low or intermediate English proficiency, which may explain why they faced difficulties in learning English vocabulary.

Questionnaire Axes

Axis 1: Linguistic Difficulties in Learning English Vocabulary

Table 1: Students' Responses to the Difficulty of Pronouncing New English Vocabulary

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it difficult to pronounce new English vocabulary correctly.	56	14	10	2.58	0.71

The results in Table 1 show that **56 students**, representing **70.0%** of the total sample, agreed that they find it difficult to pronounce new English vocabulary correctly. Meanwhile, **14 students** representing **17.5%** were neutral, while only **10 students**, representing **12.5%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.58**, with a standard deviation of **0.71**. Since the mean is closer to the "Agree" level, this indicates that pronunciation represents a clear difficulty for most students in learning English vocabulary. The standard deviation also shows that there is a moderate variation in students' responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the existence of pronunciation difficulty among students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir.

Table 2: Students' Responses to the Difficulty of Spelling English Words Accurately

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it difficult to spell English words accurately.	52	16	12	2.50	0.75

The results in Table 2 show that **52 students**, representing **65.0%** of the total sample, agreed that they find it difficult to spell English words accurately. Meanwhile, **16 students**,

representing **20.0%**, were neutral, while **12 students**, representing **15.0%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.50**, with a standard deviation of **0.75**. Since the mean is closer to the “Agree” level, this indicates that spelling represents a noticeable difficulty for many students in learning English vocabulary. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students’ responses, but the general tendency of the sample indicates that spelling difficulty is one of the vocabulary-related problems among students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir.

Table 3: Students’ Responses to the Difficulty of Understanding Different Meanings of English Words in Contexts

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it difficult to understand the different meanings of English words in different contexts.	58	13	9	2.61	0.68

The results in Table 3 show that **58 students**, representing **72.5%** of the total sample, agreed that they find it difficult to understand the different meanings of English words in different contexts. Meanwhile, **13 students**, representing **16.3%**, were neutral, while only **9 students**, representing **11.3%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.61**, with a standard deviation of **0.68**. Since the mean is close to the “Agree” level, this indicates that understanding the contextual meanings of English vocabulary represents a clear difficulty for most students. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students’ responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the idea that many students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir face problems in understanding how English words change meaning according to context.

Axis 2: Cognitive and Memory-Related Difficulties

Table 4: Students’ Responses to the Difficulty of Memorizing New English Vocabulary for a Long Time

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it difficult to memorize new English vocabulary for a long time.	54	15	11	2.54	0.73

The results in Table 4 show that **54 students**, representing **67.5%** of the total sample, agreed that they find it difficult to memorize new English vocabulary for a long time. Meanwhile, **15 students**, representing **18.8%**, were neutral, while **11 students**, representing **13.8%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.54**, with a standard deviation of **0.73**. Since the mean is closer to the “Agree” level, this indicates that memorizing new English vocabulary for a long time represents a clear difficulty for many students. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students’ responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the view that vocabulary retention is one of the major difficulties faced by students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir.

Table 5: Students' Responses to Forgetting English Words When Needed in Speaking or Writing

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I often forget English words when I need to use them in speaking or writing.	55	14	11	2.55	0.73

The results in Table 5 show that **55 students**, representing **68.8%** of the total sample, agreed that they often forget English words when they need to use them in speaking or writing. Meanwhile, **14 students**, representing **17.5%**, were neutral, while **11 students**, representing **13.8%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.55**, with a standard deviation of **0.73**. Since the mean is closer to the "Agree" level, this indicates that forgetting English vocabulary when needed represents a clear difficulty for many students. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students' responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the view that recalling vocabulary during speaking or writing is one of the major problems faced by students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir.

Table 6: Students' Responses to the Difficulty of Connecting New English Words with Previously Learned Words

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it difficult to connect new English words with words I have already learned.	49	18	13	2.45	0.76

The results in Table 6 show that **49 students**, representing **61.3%** of the total sample, agreed that they find it difficult to connect new English words with words they have already learned. Meanwhile, **18 students**, representing **22.5%**, were neutral, while **13 students**, representing **16.3%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.45**, with a standard deviation of **0.76**. Since the mean is closer to the "Agree" level, this indicates that connecting new vocabulary with previously learned words represents a noticeable difficulty for many students. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students' responses, but the general tendency of the sample suggests that many students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir face difficulty in building meaningful connections between new and existing vocabulary knowledge.

Axis 3: Contextual Use and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Table 7: Students' Responses to the Difficulty of Using New English Vocabulary Correctly in Sentences

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it difficult to use new English vocabulary correctly in sentences.	53	17	10	2.54	0.71

The results in Table 7 show that **53 students**, representing **66.3%** of the total sample, agreed that they find it difficult to use new English vocabulary correctly in sentences. Meanwhile, **17**

students, representing **21.3%**, were neutral, while **10 students**, representing **12.5%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.54**, with a standard deviation of **0.71**. Since the mean is closer to the “Agree” level, this indicates that using new English vocabulary correctly in sentences represents a clear difficulty for many students. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students’ responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the view that many students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir face problems in applying newly learned vocabulary accurately within sentence contexts.

Table 8: Students’ Responses to the Lack of Opportunities to Practice New English Vocabulary

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I do not have enough opportunities to practice new English vocabulary inside or outside the classroom.	57	13	10	2.59	0.70

The results in Table 8 show that **57 students**, representing **71.3%** of the total sample, agreed that they do not have enough opportunities to practice new English vocabulary inside or outside the classroom. Meanwhile, **13 students**, representing **16.3%**, were neutral, while **10 students**, representing **12.5%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.59**, with a standard deviation of **0.70**. Since the mean is closer to the “Agree” level, this indicates that the lack of opportunities to practice English vocabulary represents a clear difficulty for most students. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students’ responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the view that limited vocabulary practice inside and outside the classroom is one of the major problems faced by students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir.

Table 9: Students’ Responses to the Need for Effective Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I need more effective strategies to help me learn, remember, and use English vocabulary correctly.	60	12	8	2.65	0.66

The results in Table 9 show that **60 students**, representing **75.0%** of the total sample, agreed that they need more effective strategies to help them learn, remember, and use English vocabulary correctly. Meanwhile, **12 students**, representing **15.0%**, were neutral, while only **8 students**, representing **10.0%**, disagreed with the statement.

The mean score was **2.65**, with a standard deviation of **0.66**. Since the mean is close to the “Agree” level, this indicates that most students recognize their need for effective vocabulary learning strategies. The standard deviation shows a moderate variation in students’ responses, but the general tendency of the sample supports the view that students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir need more practical strategies to improve their ability to learn, remember, and use English vocabulary correctly.

Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's Alpha

To examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used. The questionnaire consisted of **9 items** measuring vocabulary learning difficulties among EFL students. The result is presented in the following table.

Table10 : Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire

Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
9	0.82	High

The Cronbach's Alpha value was **0.82**, which indicates a high level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items. This means that the items of the questionnaire were reliable and suitable for measuring the problems and difficulties faced by EFL students in learning English vocabulary.

Since the value of Cronbach's Alpha is higher than **0.70**, the questionnaire can be considered statistically reliable. Therefore, the instrument was appropriate for collecting data from the students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir.

Table11: Reliability According to the Main Axes

Axis	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
Linguistic Difficulties	3	0.79	Good
Cognitive and Memory-Related Difficulties	3	0.76	Acceptable
Contextual Use and Vocabulary Learning Strategies	3	0.81	Good
Overall Questionnaire	9	0.82	High

The reliability results show that all axes of the questionnaire had acceptable to good reliability values. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.82** confirms that the questionnaire was internally consistent and reliable for measuring vocabulary-learning difficulties among the study sample.

Independent Samples T-test

Table 12: Group Statistics According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	28	2.52	0.34	0.06
Female	52	2.59	0.31	0.04

Table 13: Independent Samples T-test Results According to Gender

Variable	Levene's Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Vocabulary Learning Difficulties	0.519	-0.931	78	0.355	-0.07

The results of the Independent Samples T-test show that there is **no statistically significant difference** between male and female students in their vocabulary learning difficulties, since

the significance value was **0.355**, which is higher than **0.05**. This means that gender does not have a significant effect on students' responses regarding the problems and difficulties of learning English vocabulary.

One-Way ANOVA

Table14: Descriptive Statistics According to English Proficiency Level

English Proficiency Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	30	2.67	0.29
Intermediate	40	2.55	0.31
High	10	2.32	0.35
Total	80	2.56	0.32

Table 15: One-Way ANOVA Results According to English Proficiency Level

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.940	2	0.470	4.964	0.009
Within Groups	7.289	77	0.095	-	-
Total	8.229	79	-	-	-

The results of the One-Way ANOVA show that there is a **statistically significant difference** in students' vocabulary learning difficulties according to their English proficiency level, since the significance value was **0.009**, which is lower than **0.05**. This indicates that students' level of English proficiency affects the degree of difficulty they face in learning English vocabulary. The descriptive statistics show that students with a **low English proficiency level** recorded the highest mean score (**2.67**), which means that they faced the greatest vocabulary-learning difficulties. In contrast, students with a **high English proficiency level** recorded the lowest mean score (**2.32**), indicating that they faced fewer difficulties.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir face noticeable difficulties in learning English vocabulary. The results show that most students agreed with the statements related to pronunciation, spelling, contextual meaning, memorization, recall, and vocabulary use in sentences. This confirms that vocabulary learning is a complex process and cannot be limited to memorizing word meanings only.

The results also reveal that pronunciation and spelling are among the main difficulties faced by students. This may be due to the difference between the written and spoken forms of English words. Many learners may recognize a word in writing but fail to pronounce it correctly, or they may hear a word but struggle to spell it accurately. This finding agrees with previous studies which reported that pronunciation and spelling are common vocabulary-learning difficulties among EFL students (Rohmatillah, 2014).

Another important finding is that students have difficulty understanding the different meanings of words in different contexts. This suggests that many students depend on direct or single meanings of words without fully understanding how meaning changes according to context. This result supports the idea that vocabulary knowledge requires contextual understanding, not only dictionary meaning (Afzal, 2019).

The results further show that students face problems in memorizing and recalling vocabulary when they need to use it in speaking or writing. This indicates a gap between learning words

temporarily and retaining them for actual communication. Such a difficulty may result from limited practice, weak review habits, and lack of effective vocabulary learning strategies.

Conclusion

1. The study found that students at the Faculty of Education, Qasr Bin Ghashir face clear difficulties in learning English vocabulary.
2. The overall results indicate that vocabulary-learning difficulties are not limited to one area, but include pronunciation, spelling, understanding meaning, memorization, recall, and vocabulary use.
3. The highest mean score was related to students' need for more effective vocabulary learning strategies, with a mean of **2.65**.
4. Students showed a clear difficulty in understanding the different meanings of English words in different contexts, with a mean score of **2.61**.
5. The results revealed that students do not have enough opportunities to practice new English vocabulary inside or outside the classroom, with a mean score of **2.59**.
6. Pronunciation was found to be one of the main vocabulary-learning problems, as many students agreed that they find it difficult to pronounce new English words correctly.
7. The study showed that students face difficulties in memorizing new English vocabulary for a long time, with a mean score of **2.54**.
8. The findings also revealed that many students forget English words when they need to use them in speaking or writing, with a mean score of **2.55**.

Recommendations

1. English language teachers should give more attention to vocabulary instruction as a central part of EFL learning, not as a secondary activity.
2. Teachers should provide regular pronunciation practice to help students pronounce new English vocabulary correctly and confidently.
3. Students should be trained to spell English words accurately through dictation, word repetition, writing exercises, and spelling-focused activities.
4. Vocabulary should be taught in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated word lists, so that students can understand the different meanings of words in different situations.

References

- Afzal, N. (2019). A study on vocabulary-learning problems encountered by BA English majors at the university level of education. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(3), 81–98.
- Al-Ahmadi, N. M. (2024). An exploratory study of vocabulary learning strategies by Saudi female first-year EFL university students. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 12(2), 19–39.
- Aljurbua, M. F. (2020). *Memory strategies for vocabulary learning employed by Saudi undergraduate EFL learners* [Master's thesis, Universiti Putra Malaysia]. Arab World English Journal.
- Alqahtani, M. (2015). The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 3(3), 21–34.
- Alshammari, S. R. (2020). EFL vocabulary learning strategies used by Saudi Arabia university students. *Advanced Education*, 16, 28–38.

- Altalhab, S. (2019). The vocabulary knowledge of Saudi EFL tertiary students. *English Language Teaching*, 12(5), 55–65.
- Al Zahrani, S. M., & Chaudhary, A. (2022). Vocabulary learning strategies in ESP context: Knowledge and implication. *Arab World English Journal*, 13(1), 382–393.
- Bao, L. (2023). Special vocabulary learning difficulties for EFL students with Chinese backgrounds. *Pacific International Journal*, 6(2), 108–116.
- Davoudi, M., & Chavosh, M. (2016). Vocabulary learning strategy use by Iranian EFL learners across proficiency levels. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 8(1), 67–81.
- Ellis, N. C. (1995). The psychology of foreign language vocabulary acquisition: Implications for CALL. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 8(2–3), 103–128.
- Fitri, F. P. C., Uyun, A. S., & Kulsum, E. M. (2024). Students' problems in learning English vocabulary: A descriptive study at tenth grade of SMAN 1 Rancaekek. *Gunung Djati Conference Series*, 46, 45–56.
- Goundar, P. R. (2019). Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) employed by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). *English Language Teaching*, 12(5), 177–189.
- Haghi, E. B., & Pasand, P. G. (2013). Vocabulary learning strategies used by EAP learners: The case of the students of social sciences. *i-manager's Journal on English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 28–33.
- Hasan, N. R. H. (2024). A study on student's challenges and problems in learning English vocabulary. *International Journal for Scientific Research*, 3(6), 207–227.
- Laufer, B. (1997). What's in a word that makes it hard or easy? Some intralexical factors that affect the learning of words. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 140–155). Cambridge University Press.
- Lutfiyah, N., Nuraeningsih, & Rusiana. (2022). The obstacles in learning vocabulary of EFL students. *Prominent: Journal of English Studies*, 5(2), 114–125.
- Meara, P. (1980). Vocabulary acquisition: A neglected aspect of language learning. *Language Teaching and Linguistics: Abstracts*, 13(4), 221–246.
- Ostovar-Namaghi, S. A., & Rajaei, M. (2013). *Effect of strategy training on vocabulary in EFL contexts*. Online Submission.
- Read, J. (2000). *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rohmatillah. (2014). A study on students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 6(1), 69–86.
- Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ueno, S., & Takeuchi, O. (2023). Which vocabulary learning strategies are important and useful for Japanese university students? A text-mining approach. *Vocabulary Learning and Instruction*, 12(1), 18–30.
- Yolcu, M., & Mirioğlu, M. (2020). Investigating the importance level and utilization of vocabulary learning strategies among Turkish EFL learners. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 16(1), 32–45.
- Nawal Eid Ahmed, & Wedad Abdella Abalgewd. (2026). The Impact of AI-Driven Personalized Learning on Language Acquisition and Assessment Strategies for Multilingual Learners (literature review). *Libyan Journal of Educational Research and E-Learning (LJERE)*, 2(1), 390–403. <https://doi.org/10.65417/ljere.v2i1.94>
- Ahmad Abdusalam Ramadan Emaiza. (2025). Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) at the Advanced Level: A Qualitative Study of Learner Practices and perceptions. *Libyan Journal of Educational Research and E-Learning (LJERE)*, 1(1), 62–67. <https://doi.org/10.65417/ljere.v1i1.41>

- Fatma Elhadi Harb, & Farah Amer Alsaadi. (2026). Peer Feedback Influence on Libyan EFL Female University Students' Disposition to Speak English Inside and Outside Class: a Survey Study . *Libyan Journal of Educational Research and E-Learning (LJERE)*, 2(1), 405-413. <https://doi.org/10.65417/ljere.v2i1.95>
- Mostafa Ali Kulaib. (2025). Bridging the gap : Secondary School EFL Teachers' Conceptualizations of CLT and Contextual Constraints on Implementation. *Libyan Journal of Educational Research and E-Learning (LJERE)*, 1(2), 88-94. <https://doi.org/10.65417/ljere.v1i2.30>
- Abdelraouf Salem Abushena. (2025). Exploring The Effect of Social Media on Improving Libyan Students' Speaking Skills. *Libyan Journal of Educational Research and E-Learning (LJERE)*, 1(2), 188-198. <https://doi.org/10.65417/ljere.v1i2.46>
- Soad Alshibani Ahmed Altaeb. (2026). The Significance of Course Books in ELT Classrooms: A Critical Perspective from the Libyan Context. *Libyan Journal of Educational Research and E-Learning (LJERE)*, 2(1), 80-89. <https://doi.org/10.65417/ljere.v2i1.66>
- Abdelnaser Abushina. (2026). Students' Approaches to Learning in Higher Education: A Study of Deep and Surface Learning among English Majors at Elmergib University. *Journal of Libyan Academy Bani Walid*, 2(1), 224–237. <https://doi.org/10.61952/jlabw.v2i1.387>
- Emran Ali Mohammed Alareefi. (2026). The Impact of Using Technology in English Language Teaching and Learning among First-Semester Students at the Faculty of Information Technology in Al Khums. *Journal of Libyan Academy Bani Walid*, 2(3), 159–172. <https://doi.org/10.61952/jlabw.v2i3.578>
- Enas Omar Elwahab. (2026). Students' Perceptions of Online Learning versus Face-to-Face Learning: A Comparative Study in Libyan Higher Education. *Journal of Libyan Academy Bani Walid*, 2(2), 57–65. <https://doi.org/10.61952/jlabw.v2i2.477>

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of **JLABW** and/or the editor(s). **JLABW** and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.