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**Investigating The Strategies Adopted by English as a Foreign  
Language Learners in Compensating Vocabulary Deficiency  
Case of Fourth-Year Pupils at Refrafi Brothers Middle School - Mziraa**

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for a  
**Master Degree in Sciences of Language**

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## DEDICATION

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

With immense pleasure, I offer this dissertation as a tribute to my wonderful and loving mother. I am profoundly grateful for her unwavering love, encouragement, support, and belief in me.

I humbly dedicate this work:

To the memory of my beloved father, who passed away when I was very young. Though I do not have memories of his direct guidance, his enduring love and legacy continue to inspire me.

To my beloved sisters, for their constant love, encouragement, and support.

To my brother, for his steadfast support.

Also, to my dear nieces and nephews.

To my dearest friends, for their unfailing support and confidence in me.

Finally, to all those who have been a part of my journey.

**Moundhir**

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“No one navigates life’s journey solo; it’s important to express gratitude to those who have accompanied and supported you along the way.” - Adapted from Shalu Bathla

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## ABSTARCT

The majority of foreign language learners often encounter various significant difficulties across the four essential language skills. These learners are constantly in need to actively develop some effective communicative strategies that can aid them to successfully overcome the numerous obstacles that they may face during their challenging journey of learning English. The present study carefully attempted to identify the most commonly used compensation strategies that fourth-year middle school learners at Refrafi Brothers Middle School employ to strategically bridge their vocabulary gaps. To properly carry out this detailed research, this dissertation followed a quantitative descriptive method in which a structured questionnaire and direct observation have been organized to collect the necessary valuable data. Both the two procedures are strongly based on Oxford's (1990) typology of compensation strategies. The findings from the thorough analysis of gathered data showed that the participating learners frequently use some helpful compensation strategies in receptive skills (reading and listening) and equally in productive skills (speaking and writing). Besides, based on the findings, this study strongly recommends some practical suggestions that may help the learners to enhance their overall speaking skill.

**Key words:** Communicative strategies, Compensation strategies, Foreign language learners, Linguistic gaps, Receptive/Productive skills.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**EFL** - English as a Foreign Language

**ESL** - English as a Second Language

**L1** - First Language (Mother Tongue)

**L2** - Second Language

**VLS** - Vocabulary Learning Strategies

**LLS** - Language Learning Strategies

**CS** - Communication Strategies

**CpS** – Compensation strategies

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**GENERAL**

**INTRODUCTION**

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Since the late 1970s, a considerable number of studies have focused on the learning strategies that the learners employ to improve their targeted learning skills, this research in the field of language learning strategies has increased our comprehension of the processes that the learners apply to advance their competency in foreign language acquisition. Reiss (1985) asserted that within the past decade, the focus on the research of foreign language had shifted from the teacher to the student, and educational studies had clarified several criteria that justify some of the differences in how learners learn. Communication strategies are “techniques of coping with difficulties in communicating in an imperfectly known language” (Stern, 1983, p. 411). In other words, communication strategies are techniques that the learners utilize to conserve communication and to deal with vocabulary shortage. Compensation strategies as a subcategory under communication strategies are considered as one of the main types that many scholars as Oxford (1990), highlighted their effectiveness for foreign language use.

Vocabulary acquisition is a major aspect of foreign language learning, playing a vital role in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. However, English as a Foreign Language learners encounter a lot of challenges that hinder their ability to communicate in an effective way due to linguistic problems mainly lexical ones. This gap in communication may lead to serious disruptions in learners’ interaction across all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To address these difficulties, learners employ compensatory strategies to overcome the lexical gaps they face. This study investigates how EFL learners use such strategies to compensate for vocabulary deficiencies during comprehension (listening/reading) and production (speaking/writing) tasks.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

The lack of English vocabulary is a major obstacle for EFL learners that hinders them from communicating in an effective way and enhance their proficiency in listening, speaking,

reading, and writing. Although vocabulary is paramount for language acquisition, learners most of the time struggle significantly in developing proficiency due to so many reasons such as the limited exposure, insufficient lexical knowledge, and a lack of the ineffective use of learning strategies. Lacking in vocabulary will make the students face problems and difficulties in the academic performance in English.

Middle school learners are at a crucial stage for the development of their language skills, yet they lack systematic training in the strategies that may help them to bridge vocabulary gaps. A lot of them depend on limited techniques that do not support long-term vocabulary retention or fluency. The lack or the absence of the explicit training in compensation strategies undoubtedly hinders learners' ability to cope with lexical challenges independently.

## **2. Research Questions**

- 1) What are the strategies that EFL learners use to compensate for the lack of English vocabulary in receptive (reading and listening) skills?
- 2) What strategies EFL learners employ to overcome the vocabulary gaps in productive (speaking and writing) skills?

## **3. Aims of the Study**

This study examines the used strategies by EFL learners to compensate for vocabulary gaps in both receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) skills by analyzing the strategies learners use in these domains, the research aims to inform more structured vocabulary instruction. The results could benefit learners' communicative competence, autonomy, and strategic flexibility when they have to deal with lexical problems in English.

## **4. Research Hypothesis**

Compensation strategies seem to be effective techniques to facilitate EFL learners' proficiency across all the four language skills. Learners would not communicate effectively if

they did not master these strategies to compensate for the lack of linguistic knowledge. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

- 1- Algerian EFL learners employ background knowledge, and situational cues to compensate for vocabulary gaps in reading and listening.
- 2- Algerian EFL learners utilize Code-Switching and Circumlocution to compensate for vocabulary gaps in speaking and writing.

## **5. Research Methodology and Design**

### **5.1 Population of the Study**

This study selects fourth-year middle school learners at Refrafi Brothers Middle School – Mziraa randomly as a population because at this level they have experienced a lot of challenges in which they were required to engage with English across the four language skills. Therefore, this selection can facilitate the gathering of the needed data to test the hypothesis of this research. Fourth-middle school students are about 30 in this research, so that it would be representative, the sample was selected randomly. The purpose of this selection is that learners at this level are aware to some extent about the problems and obstacles that face them in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Hence, we assume that the fourth-year middle school learners use some alternative plans to overcome these challenges. The latter can help to investigate learners' use of compensation strategies as useful devices to facilitate their communication in all four language skills.

### **5.2 Choice of the Method**

This study seeks to investigate fourth-year middle school learners' use of compensatory strategies to overcome their linguistic shortage. We adopted a quantitative descriptive method to collect data that would test the hypothesis. The students' questionnaire would provide a comprehensive picture of subject matter. Specifically, quantitative data about students' use of compensation strategies. Moreover, for a better understanding of the result gained from the questionnaire, the research used classroom observation as supportive data collection tool that

elicit a reliable description of compensation strategies use. To facilitate the recording of the observed strategies in the class, Oxford (1990) typology for compensation strategies is prepared in a form of checklist.

## **6. Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation contains two different sections. The first section is devoted to the two theoretical chapters that discuss key concepts related to the the two variables of the research. The second section is the field investigation.

Chapter one discusses the importance of vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. It begins by defining vocabulary from various scholarly perspectives and categorizing its types (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Then the vocabulary aspects which are receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (writing and speaking ),. The chapter also highlights the differences between EFL and ESL context, and spots the light on the EFL learners in the classroom pointing for specific EFL tasks like pronunciation, spelling, and meaning.

The second chapter discusses learning strategies and compensating for vocabulary shortage. It presents vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) and some of the taxonomies of those learning strategies (Schmitt, Gu & Johnson, Nation, Oxford). The chapter then moves on to compensation strategies by Oxford (1990) defining them and explaining their role in overcoming vocabulary deficiencies including techniques such as guessing intelligently (using linguistic and non-linguistic clues) and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing (code-switching, circumlocution ...). The chapter concludes by discussing factors influencing strategy choice, such as task type, L1 influence, and learner proficiency.

Chapter three presents the field investigation with fourth-year middle school students. It starts with the description of the research methodology, the administration of the questionnaire, and the classroom observations. The questionnaire data reveal learners' self-reported use of



compensation strategies, while observations provide real-time insights into their application.

The chapter concludes with pedagogical implications.

# **Chapter One**

## **The Importance of Vocabulary in EFL Learning**

## **Introduction**

Foreign languages learners are the ones who are aware of the significance of vocabulary because they frequently search for words to make their ideas clear when they speak or write. They also face lack of motivation while reading and listening because of the limited amount of vocabulary. Researchers in language are aware that knowing as many vocabulary words as possible is really important, especially when it is connected to reading skills (Gardner, 2013; Nation, 2013). This issues that learners face in the process of acquiring vocabulary is acknowledged by both non-native users of language and language researchers.

The biggest challenge for the learners is the large number of words that they need to learn and become part of an L2 user's vocabulary. But when it comes to vocabulary learning, the case is different in each setting. Based on the consideration that in the context of learning a foreign language the chances are limited in terms of the input, output, and interaction of the language, this is why it is crucial to employ stimulating and functional learning strategies (Tseng & Schmitt, 2008). In the foreign language learning context, it is clear that the shortage of vocabulary is an essential reason for making learners hesitant to be exposed to or to practice reading and listening. Moreover, there are a lot of other factors such as word frequency, importance, learning burden, and learners' needs in vocabulary (Grabe & Stoller, 2018).

## **1. Vocabulary in EFL**

### **1.1 Definition of Vocabulary**

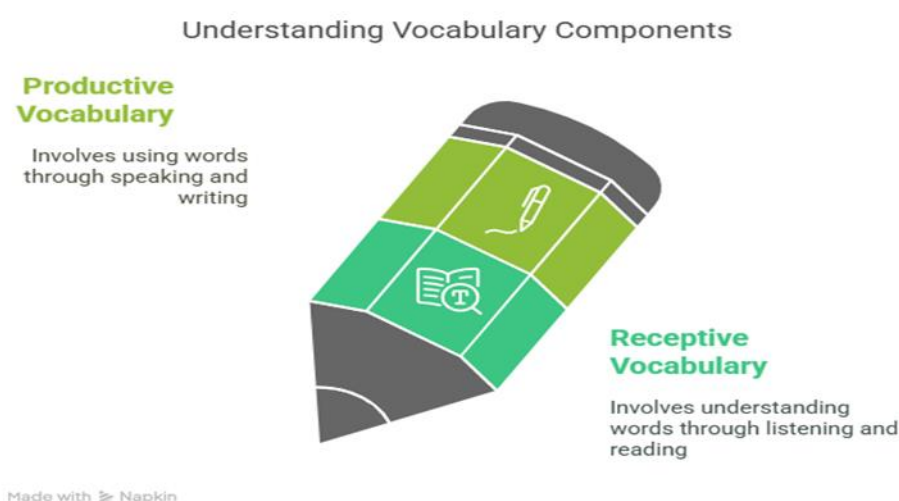
Vocabulary may be described as the words we need to know in order to communicate effectively; words in talking (expressive vocabulary) and words in understanding (receptive vocabulary) (Neuman & Dwyer 2009). There is no way one can study any Language without studying or having knowledge of the vocabulary which is referred to in Longman dictionary (1995) as “all the words that someone knows or uses in a language”. Hatch and Brown (1995) defined vocabulary as set of words known to a single language user or the words including an authentic word list for a particular language. While according to Roget (1980), vocabulary is a list of specialized expression which are indigenous to a particular field, subject, trade or subculture. Edward (1997) defined vocabulary as a major factor in all language teaching; students must continually learn words as they learn structure and as they practice sound system. Sometimes, it is challenging to identify the vocabulary elements students connect with, including definitions, pronunciation/spelling, word partnerships, implied meanings, and grammatical rules, among others (Linse, 2005). According to Laufer (1997) learning words is at the center of learning a language and using it. It is, in fact, what a language is all about. When we do not have these vocabularies, we cannot express sentences with meaning and cannot communicate with others in a given language. Hornby (2006) defines vocabulary as all the words known and used by a particular person such as all the words that we have in English. According to Oxford dictionary (2006) vocabulary is “all words that somebody knows or that are used in a particular book or subject or all the words in a language”.

Vocabulary is an indispensable skill in Second Language (L2) learning. As McCarthy (1990) stated that “without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way”. Also, Schmitt (2000) proposed a list of the different kinds of knowledge that a person must master in order to know words; the meaning of word,

the written form of the word, the spoken form of the word, the grammatical behavior of the word, the collocations of the word, the register of the word, the association of the word, and the frequency of the word. It can be said that vocabulary has two different categories: receptive vocabulary (listening and reading) and productive vocabulary (speaking and writing).

The figure below gives an image about how vocabulary deals with its two kinds:

Figure 1: Presentation of productive and receptive vocabulary



Source: Schmitt's typology.

## 1.2 Types of Vocabulary

Vocabulary has four types: 1- Listening 2- Speaking 3- Reading 4- Writing. The first two are spoken vocabulary, and the last two are written vocabulary. Listening and speaking vocabularies typically precede reading and writing vocabularies by many years for children. Each of these has a purpose and the development of vocabulary in one type supports vocabulary growth in the other.

### **1.2.1 Listening Vocabulary**

The words we hear and understand. From when they are still in the womb, fetuses can detect sounds as early as 16 weeks. Babies are listening during all their waking hours and continue to learn new words like this for all of our lives. By the time we are adults, we know and understand about 50,000 words. (Stahl, 1999). Deaf children who are never exposed to a listening vocabulary have signing models at home or school, they will be exposed to a “visual” listening vocabulary and the number of words in this situation is significantly less.

### **1.2.2 Speaking Vocabulary**

The words we say when we speak. Our speaking vocabulary is limited, the average adult knows anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 words and it is less than the size of our listening vocabulary, this gap exists because we understand more words than we actively use. To improve fluency, learners should practice using passive vocabulary in conversations., regular speaking exercises can help bridge this difference over time.

### **1.2.3 Reading Vocabulary**

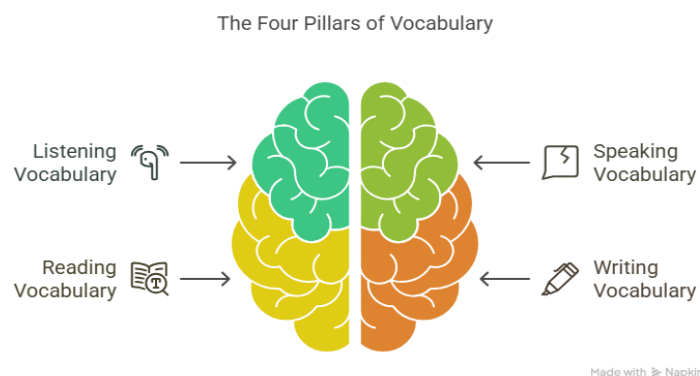
The words we comprehend in written texts form our reading vocabulary which is more than our speaking vocabulary in terms of size. This is a large word bank for readers because those who do not read on a regular basis cannot expand their vocabulary as reading is key for learning new words.

### **1.2.4 Writing Vocabulary**

Words that we can accurately employ in writing are known as writing vocabulary. Although it is more accurate than spoken words, it is smaller than our reading vocabulary. Writing necessitates active recall and proper usage, in contrast to passive word recognition. Read widely

and write frequently to build it. Writing with a large vocabulary improves communication impact and clarity.

Figure 2 Types of vocabulary



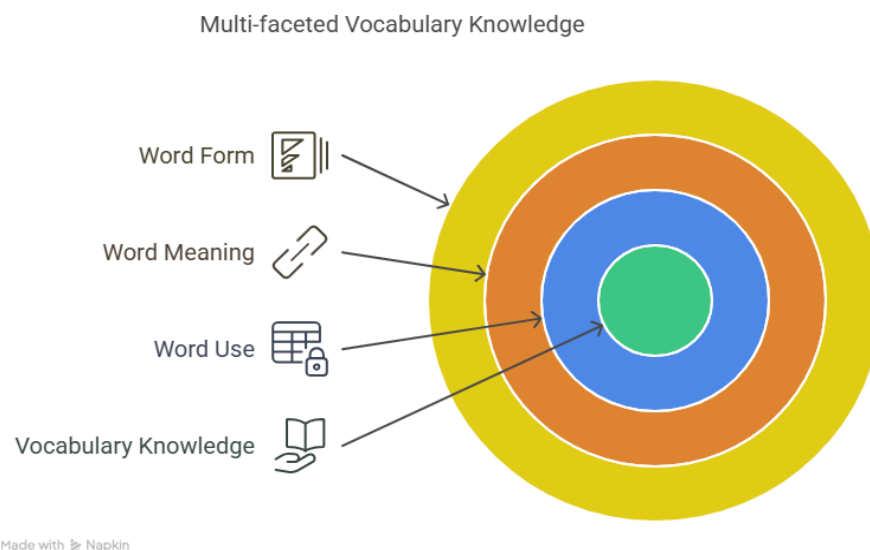
Source: Author's own work.

### 1.3 Aspects of Vocabulary

Various attempts have been made to classify types of vocabulary knowledge. Receptive knowledge and productive knowledge are a common distinction. Daller et al. (2007) and Meara (2005) proposed a third dimension of vocabulary knowledge named “vocabulary accessibility” or “lexical fluency”. Whichever perspective is adopted, researchers in the field of vocabulary concurred that vocabulary knowledge is multidimensional (Laufer et al., 2004; Milton, 2013). That is to say, there is a lot more that goes into learning a word than a mere relationship between form and meaning. The aforementioned knowledge of vocabulary still do not sufficiently reflect the complexity of vocabulary knowledge (Milton, 2009). Nation (2013) classified vocabulary knowledge in three general categories: (a) knowledge of word form; (b) knowledge of word meaning; and (c) knowledge of word use. Knowledge of word form covers spoken form, written form, and word parts. This valuable classification not only encompasses both receptive and productive knowledge but also reflects the dimensions of vocabulary knowledge. There are various views on the way characteristics of vocabulary knowledge

should be learned and taught. For instance, form, collocations, and grammatical functions are found to be acquired incidentally through extensive reading or listening with adequate input, but explicit instruction or consciousness-raising to students may facilitate their acquisition (Ellis, 1997). According to Schmitt (2008) word form and word meaning should be taught explicitly, while more contextualized aspects such as collocations should be learnt incidentally. On the other hand, Nation (2013) suggested incidental learning for form aspects, grammatical functions, collocations, and intentional learning for meaning aspects and restrictions on use. Experimental studies have demonstrated that knowledge of form can actually be more challenging than knowledge of meaning for learners to develop, and that collocations can be problematic for learners to produce and acquire (Nesselhauf, 2003; Peters, 2016). So the foreign language vocabulary mastery should be given more attention by learners, teachers and textbook publishers.

Figure 3 Aspects of vocabulary



Source: Schmitt's Multifaceted Vocabulary Knowledge



## **1.4 Vocabulary in EFL**

### **1.4.1 Definition of EFL**

Gebhard (2006) described EFL as the study of English by individuals who live in places where English is not used as a means of their first language communication. Furthermore, he indicated that under such circumstance, students have little opportunity to come across English for the purpose of communication outside the classroom. Harmer (2007) also defined EFL teaching English in a classroom where the students are learning the language in their own country or the teachers are teaching short courses taken in English. A third definition is proposed by Camenson (2007) who indicated that EFL students may live in a country where their own language is primarily spoken for communicating and who need to learn English for their education, travelling needs and business practices. He also stated that EFL students spend little time per week studying English having little exposure to English outside the classroom, and little chance to practice their newly- acquired language skills.

In EFL, certain target-language cultures may not be acquired naturally (Brown, 2001; Cotterall & Cohen, 2003). For instance, EFL is taught in Japan, Morocco and Thailand as well as in, other countries like Italy, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam where English is not the primary language spoken and the cultural context differs significantly from English-speaking countries (Gebhard, 2006). Based on the definition above we can conclude that EFL is as the study of English by non-native speakers living in a non-native environment and possibly taught by non-native teachers who might not be competent in dealing with some cultural values inherent in the target language.

### **1.4.2 The Difference between EFL and ESL**

Stern (1983) in his book “Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching” explained the difference between "foreign language" and "second language" in word functions, learning aims,

environments and the learning methods. According to him, the foreign language is the language used by individuals outside their country. Learning a foreign language for tourism, to get in touch with locals, read foreign journals and so on. But Second Language means the Language, which plays the vital role like that of mother tongue. Shu Dingfang (1994) distinguished differences from "foreign language" and "second language" in terms of language environment, language input and affective variables affecting language teaching and learning. Hence, EFL is to learn English in an environment where English is not a mother tongue, while ESL means English as a second language, which has the same or even more important status as mother tongue. Yoko Iwai (2011) stated that "The term EFL refers to people who learn English in countries where English is not the dominant language. (E.g. Japanese who study English in Japan are EFL students). and ESL refers to those who learn English in countries where English is used as a tool for communication and is formally spoken (E.g. Hispanic people who are learning English, are ESL learners.). Based on the above, EFL is primarily spoken by non-native speakers of English, ESL learners are students whose second language is English (Indian students for example).

### **1.4.3 Analysis of The Differences between EFL and ESL**

#### **1.4.3.1 From the Perspective of Teaching**

According to the definitions of EFL and ESL, people in countries like Algeria, China, South Korea, Japan are defined as the audience of EFL because English is not their first and second language. In these countries, English is not necessary for everyday communication. But for ESL, there are two types of audience. One for non-English speaking countries' people, another for former colonies of the English speaking countries, such as some countries in Africa and other countries in Asia. For these countries, their English proficiency determines whether they can survive or not.

Although EFL and ESL are both designed to learn English, there are some differences in teaching objectives and approaches. Though the teacher is the initiator of classroom activities

in ESL classroom teaching, the students are the heart of the classroom activities. for instance, in the oral English class of ESL mode in Australia, the teacher explains the new words and abbreviations to the students through two advertisements in the newspaper, students then start reading the advertisements then play the role of the landlord and the tenant based on the information in their ads. Then the teacher will get two groups of students to repeat the same conversation and identify problems and solve them (Run Jianhua, Pengyan, 2008) so as to effectively train the listening, speaking, reading and writing. Some teachers equate foreign language classes with history, politics, or psychology, viewing them merely as learning classes. Consequently, their lectures become the class's focus, leading to ineffective teaching. (Zhao Zhongde, 2001) due to the impact of teaching syllabus, teaching content, teaching method, and the living environment, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing cannot develop simultaneously.

#### **1.4.3.2 From the Perspective of Learners**

For ESL learners, the ultimate goal is to o promote the development and formation of language practice as Xie Lixin (1997) examined in his study of the nature of mother tongue, second language and foreign language learning. Because English expresses the needs for communication for ESL learners, they come into use with English more natural, in contrast when it comes to EFL learners, they seldom have it on a social occasion. Language learning is a complex process, it is not only related to cognition, psychology, emotion and interests but also influenced by the environment. What we refer to as "second language acquisition" is actually a subconscious process that is comparable to the process of learning one's mother tongue, as Krashen (1985) thought. So when we distinguish between EFL and ESL, we may find that foreign language learning takes place in the learner's native language environment, whereas second language acquisition takes place in the target language environment.

#### **1.4.4 Importance of Vocabulary in EFL Learning**

##### **1.4.4.1 The Role of Vocabulary in Language Acquisition and Communication**

The knowledge of vocabulary is deemed to be essential for learners of languages as it is believed that a vocabulary shortage in a language hinders communication. Schmitt (2000) argued that the development of vocabulary is vital for communicative competency and language acquisition. Additionally, Nation (2001) referred to the relationship between vocabulary acquisition and language use as complimentary as vocabulary learning enables language use and language use in turn fosters vocabulary learning.

Vocabulary is evident daily inside and out of the classroom. The students who achieve in the classroom have the most sufficient vocabulary. Researchers as Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Marion (2008), Nation (2011) and many others found that the learning of vocabulary is necessary for a successful use of language and that it serves for the formation of the spoken and written texts. In the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), the learning of vocabulary items is not an exception as it is a crucial component in all of the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) (Nation, 2011). The acquisition of an appropriate vocabulary is also necessary to the use of the language: The knowledge of the structures and their communicative functions already learnt will not be practicable without an extensive lexicon (Rivers & Nunan, 1991).

One of the major problems in reading is the amount of vocabulary knowledge to which readers have access, and its absence is perhaps the primary and largest obstacle to reading (Huckin, 1995). In production, when we have a concept or meaning we want to express, we need a set of words we can choose from to express that concept or meaning. “When students travel, they don’t carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries” (Krashen, as cited in Lewis, 1993). Many see learning vocabulary as one of the most, if not the most-significant aspects of learning a foreign language, and foreign language curricula should reflect this, Wilkins (1972) stated that “There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not

got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say, while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed''. Other researchers like Richards (1980) and Krashen (1989), as cited in Maximo (2000), give many reasons for giving importance to vocabulary. "First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem''.

Vocabulary has been recognized as learners' major source of problems (Meara, 1980). This observation may be an indication that the structure of an open vocabulary system is considered to be problematic by such learners. Another reason might be that, unlike what happens in syntax and phonology, in vocabulary there are no rules learners can follow to learn and to increase their knowledge. In other words, in vocabulary learning, the rules are uncertain, and it is unsure which vocabulary items should be learned in which order. Oxford (1990) further asserted that it is the most massive and uncontrollable aspect of learning of one's first or second language because of the tens of thousands of meaning. Despite such problems that language learners encounter in their vocabulary learning, they are still constantly confronted with vocabulary in their exam as "vocabulary has traditionally been one of the language components measured in language tests" (Schmitt, 1999). In addition, language learning is still understood by many as a process of learning words, so students focus on memorizing word lists. Consequently, language teachers and applied linguists now generally acknowledge vocabulary learning and are finding means to facilitate it more successfully. Great part of this research consists in the analysis of strategies that learners use for vocabulary learning (VLS), which is our focus of attention.

#### **1.4.4.2 The Role of Vocabulary in Developing Language Skills**

Size of vocabulary appears to be an important factor in reading ability. Vocabulary is one of the determining factors to understand reading texts (Nation & Coady, 1988). Many researchers and educators have highlighted the link between vocabulary knowledge and

reading. Zimmerman (1997) indicated that wide reading across a variety of texts leads to building vocabulary knowledge. Hills and Laufer (2003) indicated that post-reading tasks that focus on target vocabulary lead to better vocabulary knowledge. Hsueh-Chao and Nation (2001) emphasized the concept of the impact of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension and the effect of reading comprehension on vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, a lot of scholars and writers state that vocabulary knowledge is closely linked to reading comprehension and a few studies have also supported that kind of relationship between them. As Pringprom (2012, p.1104) stated, “Learners will have difficulty comprehending the text if their vocabulary size is far from the required threshold”. It is also important to note that there are other factors that influence reading comprehension aside from knowledge of vocabulary, including the role of L1 transfer, individual variance and the level of difficulty of texts (Thomas & Healy, 2012).

Since vocabulary is a strong ally of language skill development, Furthermore, the quality of our writing depends on that vocabulary size . Researchers’ attention on vocabulary has ventured into the field of ELT to develop language skills and a lot of researches has been done to show the importance of vocabulary in developing writing skills. According to Cameron (2001) the acquisition of vocabulary is one of the most important aspects in learning a foreign language at the fundamental level. Additionally, the L2 writers' ability to choose the word that best expresses their message will be enhanced as their vocabulary grows (McCutchen & Stull, 2015). So we can conclude that writers’ ability in creating a well-structured text depends on their vocabulary knowledge, which makes them able to deliver their intended message in an effective way. For this reason, vocabulary is a very important ingredient in improving the learners’ writing abilities.

It is widely accepted that listening is an inferential and active process during which a listener can build meaning with the help of two extensive knowledge bases: linguistic (such as phonological, lexical, syntactic knowledge) and non-linguistic knowledge (such as knowledge of context or topic) (Buck, 2001; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 2007). Both knowledge bases

contribute to creating meaning from a spoken input on the part of listeners, who apply top-down (such as background knowledge) and bottom-up processes (analyzing sounds, words, grammar). According to Bonk (2000), listeners must first identify enough words through bottom-up processing (decoding sounds and words) before they can comprehend spoken language (using top-down cues like context). This capacity to recognize and distinguish words is essential to listening comprehension (Rost 2002).

Speaking is unpredictable and always changing, which makes it harder to learn and teach. Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires quick thinking and adaptation in real conversations. Psycholinguist Pawlak (2011) claimed that speaking involves the collaboration of many different processing mechanisms to put words in spoken language to speak it fluently. In language pedagogy, the control of the relationship and role of the speaker versus the listener in speaking element is another crucial aspect that determines the quality of the speech production (Hulstijn, 2000). Therefore, students would preferably have to be engaged in the production of appropriate and structured part of language with no or limited hesitation and pauses. So, it is essential for the learners to acquire knowledge of all four aspects of speaking skill (fluency, accuracy, comprehension, interaction), and vocabulary learning plays a significant role in this whole process (Bailey, 2006; Cazden, 2001). Similarly, learners have to display a good command on the pragmatic awareness of the word, the competence of strategy, the grammatical side and the interconnecting capability among the words to form a conversation as meaningful. Learners feel problems in creating balance in this regard that further creates complexity in lexicon and cognition (Bulté, Housen, Pierrard, & Van Daele, 2008).

#### **1.4.4.3 Challenges facing EFL learners with English vocabulary**

Numerous variables can cause learners to have difficulties when acquiring vocabulary and vocabulary learning is one of the variables (Brown, 2001; Nation, 2000; Thornbury, 2004). Vocabulary includes meaning, correct usage, pronunciation, spelling, connotation. Research

suggested that words that are difficult to pronounce are also difficult to learn. If learners have native languages with highly regularized orthographic systems they may have problems with the spelling of many English words because English is irregular and unpredictable. Regarding pronunciation, certain spelling patterns may also cause miscomprehension, Mistakes in sounds can lead to mistakes in pronunciation or spelling and increase the complexity of a term, such as in words that have silent letters for example, foreign, listen, climbing.

When two words are closely related in meaning, students often get them confused. Meaning includes the relationship between form and meaning or in other words, the idea and the things it refers to, as well as the connections that individuals have when they hear or see a particular word or phrase. Words that have wide applications are in general easy to understand than those with narrow applications. Colloquial words and idioms are generally harder to be understood by learners than clear-cut words. Another difficulty is the meaning of the words because sometimes the learners get confused whether a word is used in a negative or positive way, even native speakers sometimes do not agree over the use of some words and their precise meaning. According to Thornbury (2004) the most common difficulties in vocabulary learning are as follows:

- a. Pronunciation: Studies showed that words that are hard to pronounce are harder to learn.
- b. Spelling : Mismatches between sounds and spelling may be the source of errors in reading and/or spelling, and afford a word its level of difficulty.
- c. Length: Long words are more difficult to learn than short ones.
- d. Grammar: Grammar is associated with the word, especially if this differs from that of its L1 equivalent.
- e. Meaning: If two words have the same meaning, learners will misuse them.
- f. Range, Connotation and Idiomaticity: Words that are applicable to more contexts will be typically considered as easier than those are applicable to a more limited range. Ambiguity in the sense of some words may also lead to issues. Finally, idiomatic words or expression (such



as, make up your mind, keep an eye on. ...) is harder to learn than words with clear meanings (decide, watch).

## **Conclusion**

Vocabulary is an essential component of language learning, it is crucial for to develop the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this chapter, it was discussed that vocabulary knowledge is more than just memorizing words, it is the understanding of form, meaning, and usage (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). EFL learners face a lot of challenges, such as pronunciation, spelling, and limited exposure to English, which makes vocabulary strategies really important (Thornbury, 2004; Tseng & Schmitt, 2008).

Research confirms that vocabulary size has a big impact on the four skills (Nation & Coady, 1988; Bonk, 2000). On the contrary to ESL learners who acquire language naturally, EFL learners depend on other important factors such as classroom instruction, requiring a balance of explicit teaching and incidental learning (Nation, 2013).

According to these findings, it is obvious that vocabulary instruction in EFL contexts must be systematic and rich context. Teachers are required to integrate diverse approaches that is a mix of direct instruction and reading, communicative activities, and multimedia resources. This will allow to overcome the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use.

Overall, vocabulary is crucial in communication, learners who lack vocabulary face challenges to express ideas regardless to their grammar knowledge (Wilkins, 1972). Future research should focus on vocabulary depth in low-resource EFL settings to improve both teaching methods and learner success.

**Chapter two**

**Vocabulary**

**Compensation**

**Strategies**

## **Introduction**

Vocabulary learning is essential in language acquisition as it is the corner stone for an effective communication and comprehension in a foreign language learning. Without a solid vocabulary, learners will struggle in terms of expressing their ideas clearly and understanding subtle meanings. The obstacles of vocabulary acquisition are varied, they are not only about memorization but also retention, recall, and appropriate utilization in different contexts. In addition to that, the dynamic nature of language imposes on learners to constantly adapt to new words, idioms, and expressions. To explore these complexities, learners develop and use numerous vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) that are tailored to their basic needs and their learning environments. These strategies vary from cognitive such as memorization to metacognitive like planning and self-evaluation. Compensation strategies are of an equal importance as they enable learners to bridge gaps in their vocabulary. these strategies serve as a powerful means for the learners to maintain fluency and confidence in times when they face lexical limitations.

This chapter explores and analyzes the different taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies that are proposed by leading scholars such as Schmitt, Gu and Johnson, Nation, and Oxford. It goes from the definitions, classifications, and practical applications of these strategies to their roles in improving and enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, the chapter studies compensation strategies that learners use to bridge the communication barriers that they may face in their journey of learning. Understanding these strategies and recognizing the factors that influence their selection, both teachers and learners will be able to optimize vocabulary learning and improve language proficiency. The chapter begins with a general view of vocabulary learning strategies, moving to analyzing their classifications then investigating compensation strategies and how they function. Finally, the factors that determines the choice of the strategy such as task, language proficiency, and individual differences.

## **1.Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

### **1.1 Definition of vocabulary Learning Strategies**

VLS are considered as part or subcategory of LLS (Nation, 2001). These strategies are used by language learners in order to learn new words and expressions in a foreign language. So VLS are defined through LLS (Catalán, 2003). VLS involve whatever learners do to facilitate acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of a language (Rubin, 1987; O'Malley & Chamot, 1995). Cameron (2001), on the other hand, characterized VLS as LLs' activities aimed at assisting learners in understanding and remembering vocabulary. According to Schmitt (1997), "use" is seen as a vocabulary practice, so anything that affects this practice is considered as a vocabulary learning strategy. There are many classifications of VLS, proposed by different scholars, illustrate numerous approaches for vocabulary acquisition.

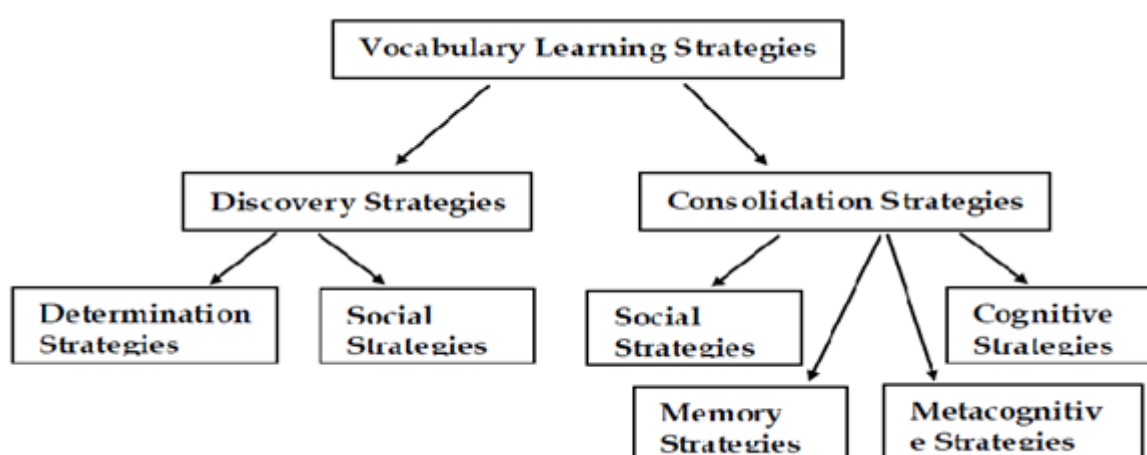
### **1.2 Taxonomies of vocabulary Learning Strategies**

#### **1.2.1 Schmitt's Taxonomy**

Schmitt (1997) organized VLS' taxonomy according to both Oxford's (1990) classification and the pedagogical distinction between Discovery and Consolidation strategies. This classification system was created in light of the study with Japanese EFL learners and recommendations from teachers. The taxonomy comprises 58 strategies, which were classified into two principal categories namely, Discovery strategies are the ones related to the discovery of a new word's meaning, which has two sub-categories: social strategies and determination strategies. In this class of strategies, when learners encounter an unfamiliar word, they determine its meaning by drawing on their linguistic knowledge, identifying an L1 cognate, inferring from context, consulting a reference, or seeking clarification from someone. Determination strategies facilitate gaining knowledge of a new word from the first four options. Social strategies are employed to get the meaning of a word by cooperating with others. Consolidation strategies, on the other hand, apply to words after they have been encountered, this group is divided into four sub-types of strategies which are social, memory, cognitive and

metacognitive strategies. Memory strategies are described as “techniques which establish a personal linkage between new materials and some extent of existing knowledge” while cognitive strategies as manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner (Schmitt, 1997). Finally, metacognitive strategies are defined as a consciousness on the learning process and making decision for the process of planning, monitoring, or evaluation in the best way of study (Schmitt, 1997). So Schmitt classified vocabulary learning strategy into two general stages, ‘discovering the meanings of new words’ and ‘consolidating new word forms and meanings’. The first is employed for the understanding of the meanings of unknown words, and to the second is given to train learners to memorize the words they encountered. The two phases embed categories as can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 04: Taxonomy of the Vocabulary Learning Strategies



Source: Schmitt's Taxonomy

### 1.2.2 Gu and Johnson's Taxonomy

Vocabulary learning strategies are classified by Gu and Johnson (1996) as metacognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies. Metacognitive strategies include selective attention and self-initiation strategies. Foreign and second language learners utilizing selective attention know the vocabularies that are essential for them for an adequate understanding of a passage. Learners who employ self-initiation strategies have several ways of keeping the meaning of vocabulary items understandable. Cognitive strategies in Gu and Johnson's

taxonomy include guessing strategies, efficient utilization of dictionaries and note-taking strategies. Learners using guessing strategies draw upon their background knowledge and use linguistic clues like grammatical structures of a sentence to guess the meaning of a word. Memory strategies are categorized into the two types: rehearsal and encoding. Listing words and repeating them are examples of rehearsal strategies. Some encoding strategies include association, imagery, visual, auditory, semantic, contextual and word structure. Activation strategies when the learners actively use new words they recently acquired. All these suggested strategies can be summarized in a table as follows:

Table 01: Taxonomy of  
the Vocabulary Learning Strategies

<b>Strategies</b>			
<b>Metacognitive</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Memory</b>	<b>Activation</b>
* Selective Attention: Identifying essential words for comprehension	* Guessing: Activating background knowledge, using linguistic items	* Rehearsal: Word lists, repetition, etc.  * Encoding: Association (imagery, visual, auditory, etc.)	* Using new words in different contexts
* Self-initiation: Using a variety of means to make the meaning of words clear	* Use of dictionaries  * Note-taking		

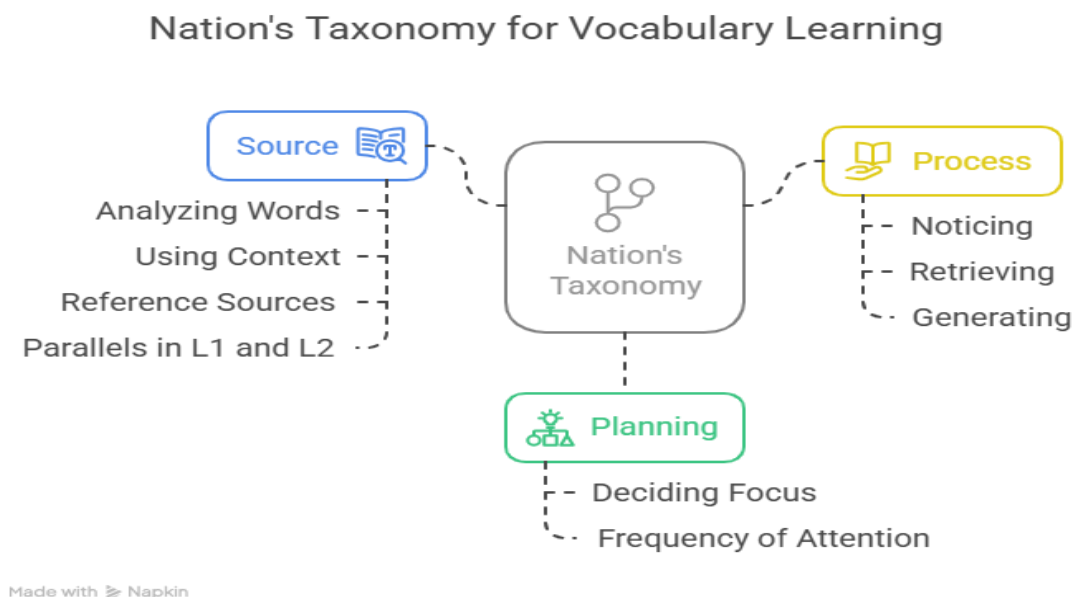
Source: Gu and Johnson's Taxonomy

### 1.2.3 Nation's Taxonomy

Nation (2001)'s taxonomy is theoretical and practical and it is not difficult for students to learn and apply. It demystifies complexity by separating the four dimensions of vocabulary; knowledge of vocabulary, sources of knowledge, learning processes, increasing and extending awareness of learners and their ability to select strategies. It involves three main areas as follows: planning, source and processes.

- 1- The planning category involves deciding on where, how, and how often to focus attention on the vocabulary item. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) confirmed that planning is a key metacognitive strategy for language acquisition.
- 2- The source category is the acquisition of information concerning the word. Word analysis, use of context, reference to reference source and parallels in L1 and L2 are the strategies used in this category. The first two skills assist students in predicting the meaning of a word they do not know. The third approach involves animated (teachers, classmates) and unanimated (dictionaries, glossaries) sources. Final strategy suggests memorizing format and L1 cognates to store the target words.
- 3- The process category encompasses the establishment of word knowledge by monitoring, retrieving, and generating strategies. Noticing is about recording strategies (writing a word in a notebook, repeating it aloud or visually). Retrieving on the other hand is viewed more important than noticing. It includes recalling items that were acquired before, than creating addresses word analysis, semantic maps, predicated context and collocations.

Figure 5: Taxonomy for Vocabulary Learning Strategies



Source: Nation's Taxonomy

#### 1.2.4 Oxford's Taxonomy

Oxford (1990) categorized these strategies as direct and indirect. The first influences learning, and the second assists and regulates learning but work without direct involvement of the learned language. Macaro (2001) confirmed that the direct strategies are subconscious strategies since they are harder for the learner to describe whereas the indirect strategies are conscious strategies making them more controlled by the learners. According to Oxford (1990) and Cohen and Weaver (2005), indirect strategies are Metacognitive: Affective, and Social, and similarly, the direct strategies are Cognitive: Memory, and Compensation.

Oxford Taxonomy is the most comprehensive LLS categorization is strategy inventory for Language Learning, which is made by Oxford, her taxonomy is comprehensive and useful. She categorized strategies into two strategy orientations, direct and indirect strategies. Direct LLS includes the identification, retention, storage, or retrieval of words, phrases, and other elements of the target language.

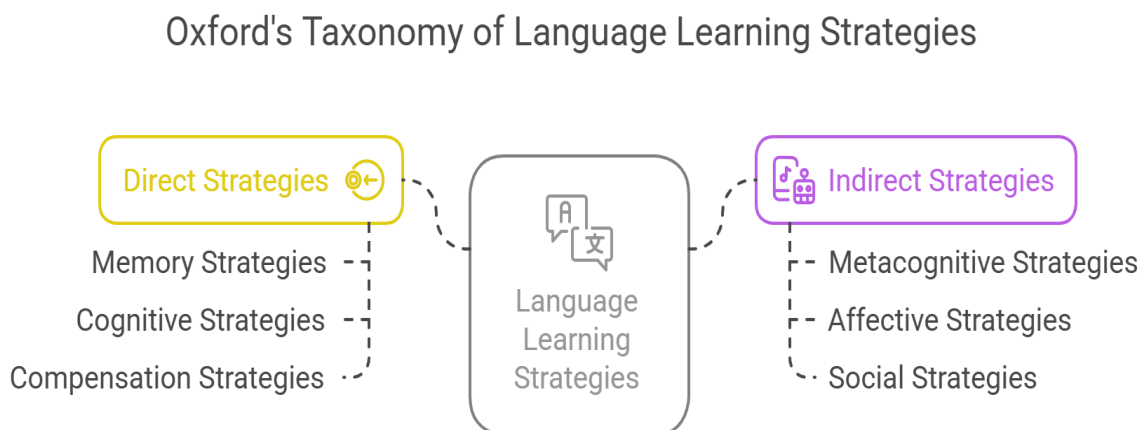


This is divided into memory, cognitive and linguistic deficiency compensation strategy.

Indirect LLS deal with needs assessment, activities planning and monitoring, and outcome evaluation. Indirect strategies are categorized into meta-cognitive and affective strategy. Memory strategies aid language learners in associating L2 items or concepts to one another. It is frequently employed for learning vocabulary grammatical items. Cognitive strategies allow students to manipulate the material in a more direct way (making inferences, comparing, contrasting, paraphrasing, drawing conclusions, scanning for details, monitoring for comprehension, etc).

Linguistic deficit-compensation strategies assist learners to compensate with the lack of knowledge. These strategies are divided into strategies that are used in receptive skills (listening and reading), and others used in productive skills (writing and speaking). Meta-cognitive strategies are used to manage the overall learning process related to the learner's preference and needs concerning learning style, planning L2 tasks, gathering and organizing materials, deciding on a study place and schedule and evaluating how successful LLS. Affective techniques consist of (a) mood and anxiety identification, (b) speaking about and rewarding one's own performance, (c) utilizing good deep breathing and positive self-talk. Social strategies assist learners in interacting with others and in comprehending the culture and language. It includes asking question to get verification, asking for clarification, of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native speaker and exploring culture and social norms. Of these four categorizations, the Oxford classification is the most comprehensive.

Figure 6: Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies



Source: Oxford's Taxonomy

### 1.3 Compensation Strategies for Vocabulary Deficiency

#### 1.3.1 General Definition of Strategy

In a general sense, strategy is a holistic and integrated approach for accomplishing long range goals in a changing environment. Strategy is a reasoned sequence of actions and decisions focused on aligning resources towards a desired outcome - be it a sub organization, military, or individual. Strategy involves establishing goals, allocating resources and planning tactics in an imperfect or dynamic environment. Chandler (1962) indicated that a strategy is the defining of long range goals and lines of action towards the execution of them. On the contrary, and as theorized by Mintzberg et al. (1998), Strategy may develop organically through iterative practices, rather than solely through deliberate pre-planning.

#### 1.3.2 Definition of Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies are used to solve linguistic problems in those moments when immediate linguistic and non-linguistic responses are required (Ljungberg, 2011). This technique is employed, in most cases, by learners in speaking. However, it can also be applied with other language skills. Oxford (1990) affirmed that “compensation occurs not just in

understanding the new language but also in producing it” (p. 48). Some subtypes of such a strategies enhance L2 production (using synonyms and antonyms or code switching). According to Poullisse (1989), compensatory strategies should be included in the investigation of communication. On the light to these definitions, compensation strategies help learners make communication longer, despite lack of accuracy. In a research about compensation strategies with Dutch learners of English, Poullisse (1989) revealed that the use of compensation strategies is accomplished by a learner who uses two types of knowledge: how students understand general ideas (conceptual knowledge) and their ability to use English in reading, listening, speaking, and writing (linguistic knowledge). Learners apply intelligent guessing strategies in the reading and listening skills (Oxford, 1990). In speaking and writing, students overcome the limitations they have to compensate for their limitations on these two skills.

### **1.3.3 Compensation Strategies in Language Learning**

The compensatory strategies are considered very useful in language learning for beginners or intermediate learners, they are also effective for more advanced learners (Oxford, 1990). Oxford (1990) defined compensatory learning strategies as “actions taken by second and foreign language learners to control and improve their own learning.”. Although these strategies are not functional equivalents of communication strategies, the distinction is not so clear, most language learning does occur in the context of being involved in a communicative interaction and communication strategies help learners to do this. So they help in obtaining practice and learn new things by testing what is appropriate. Tarone (1981) included learning strategies as a third type of strategy in her classification, noting that in actual use all compensatory strategies may also be learning strategies (Tarone, 1980). Because of this, compensation strategies are one of the six broad categories in the system of language learning strategy used by Oxford (1990).

In Relation to this discussion about the terminology and categorization provided in the previous paragraphs is the discussion whether compensation strategies are language use or

language learning strategies. There have been many researchers categorized different language learning strategies, foreign language learning strategies are usually categorized on a number of levels, including long-term strategies and current use strategies. At this point a difficulty in putting compensation strategies into either of these categories occurs. Among language use strategies a group labelled communication strategies (Cohen & Weaver, 2005) are strategies learners employ to transmit a meaningful and comprehensible message when they do not have full access to the necessary language to do so. When language learners face difficulties or lack of understanding of a message, communication is at a loss and they need tools to remain the communication. Compensation strategies can be utilized to steer the conversation away from problematic areas by expressing their meaning in some other way. Students will paraphrase words or concepts; use words coinage, as well as, facial expressions or gestures in an effort to communicate and to give more time to think. Learners may also resort to literal translation from their native language or switch completely to their mother tongue (code switching). In addition to that, communicative strategies may also involve conversational strategies such as requesting for assistance, clarification and confirmation (Cohen & Weaver, 2005).

Research on oral fluency with two groups of English students in the first grade of a Dutch secondary school can serve as an example of the relevance of guessing strategies (Bakermans, 2017). The non-trained group was more fluent than the trained group, suggesting that concern with grammar rules and accuracy can hinder fluency. (Oxford, 1990) stated that the skilled learners communicate better than the ones who knows many additional target-language words and grammar structures. López Medina (2010) examined the compensation strategies of adult learners at an intermediate English level in Spain who were experiencing problems in the four skills, she found that learners suffered from speaking and listening difficulties when they encountered a communication problem and they were very reliant on grammar books and dictionaries; they do not want to take risks or make errors since applying compensation strategies could retard their learning (López Medina, 2010).

## 1.4 Oxford's Typology of Compensation Strategies

Compensatory strategies are techniques that students employ to compensate for the gaps in language, they are defined and classified by Oxford (1990) as follows:

### 1.4.1 Guessing intelligently in Reading and Listening

#### 1.4.1.1 Using linguistic Clues

Linguistic cues are clues within the language itself that assist in understanding the meaning of a word with that the learner is unfamiliar. These clues can come in the form of words, phrases, or even sentences that surround the unfamiliar word. By being aware of these rules, learners will be able to make more informed guesses on new vocabulary and increase their general English comprehension. Simply put, linguistic clues help learners to connect the dots and make sense of what they hear. (Bryce Purnell 2023).

**. Synonyms and antonyms:** Passages often put synonyms near each other, providing subtle definitions. This closeness of the text encourages the learners to deduce through associative understanding. If a passage says a character is “loquacious,” it also might say the character is “verbose” or is “talkative,” using them as an emphasize to say that a person talks too much.

On the other hand, antonyms are employed to define by contrast, sometimes separated by conjunctions to highlight differences. "Jane was loquacious, unlike Tom, a quiet man of few words."

**. Examples and Descriptions:** Examples, descriptions, or similes may be used to clarify meanings. Simile, for instance, makes a comparison between two objects by using the words “like” or “as” to indicate resemblance. Furthermore, metaphors can compare two otherwise unrelated things directly, instead of saying that one thing is "like" or "as" the other. "The classroom was a furnace" would mean the room was hot, without using "like" or "as.". so understanding the similes used will, in turn, deepen your understanding of the subject.

**. Word Structure:** Prefixes, suffixes and roots can help the learners with knowing the meaning of words. Learning these word building blocks can help learners uncover meanings or help guess the meaning of new words, which can improve learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension.

### **Examples of prefixes**

Un- (not) : Unfriendly, unseen, unusual

Re- (again): Rebuild, reconsider

Pre- (before) Prehistoric, pre-listening

### **Examples of suffixes**

-less (without): Hopeless, careless, endless

-ful (full of): Joyful, peaceful, mindful

-ity (quality of): Activity, humility, validity.

**. Definition or Restatement:** The definition of the word is given in the sentence, usually right after the word itself. This strategy is based on the assumption that the reader or the speaker will provide, either explicitly or through rephrasing, the meaning of the unfamiliar word for the reader or listener. Example: The arbitrator, the neutral person chosen to settle the dispute, arrived at her decision.

#### **1.4.1.2 Using non-linguistic clues**

Non-linguistic clues can also be used to guess intelligently learners use this strategy by seeking and using clues that are not language based in order to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the target language:

## **. Background Knowledge**

EFL students should be aware of their prior knowledge since it largely benefits their vocabulary improvement and comprehension (Narvaez, 2005). Listener/reader utilizes a variety of resources (background knowledge and experiences) to construct meaning within a text (Spivey 1995). It is this active dialogue between the reader/listener and the text that results a ‘‘constructed meaning’’. When a listener/reader experiences a text, his/her mental representation of that text is a result of combining the content and the rhetorical organization of the immediate text with prior knowledge. In Flower’s conceptual model for discourse construction (1987), readers/listeners are acted on by external and internal forces as they read or listen to a text. The way background knowledge (what one already knows about a topic or situation) is used to make sense of language.

## **. Tone clues**

Tone clues are the implicit indicators a speaker uses to express their attitude towards a subject. They go more than the literal meaning of words towards looking at the way words are said. Ups and downs in the pitch of a voice and pauses provide direction to the emotional attitude of the speaker. Tone includes facial expressions and body language as well. So if the learners want to understand what a speaker is saying, they need to focus on not just what he is saying, but how he is talking.

## **. Situational clues**

In the domain of vocabulary learning, situational clues are defined as various internal and external aspects that create an environment that fosters how a learner comes to know a word. Situational clues refer to the hints found in a situation which a learner may use to make the meanings of new or unfamiliar words. The best way to learn vocabulary isn't memorizing it from a dictionary, as a dictionary won't be at hand anytime the learner encounters the word. Dynamic context, actions, objects, and social relationships can be observed to deduce word

meaning of new words. A learner needs to realize that words can have more than one meaning. The learner can decide which of the definitions is the appropriate one for the situation if and only if he is conscious of the situation in which the word is being used.

### **1.4.2 Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing**

#### **1.4.2.1 Switching to the mother tongue (Code Switching)**

This technique, also known as “Code switching” is applied to speaking and writing, using the mother tongue to say the word without translating it. This technique may also involve attaching endings of words in the new language to words in the native language. Atkinson (1987), Cook (2013), and Liu (2008) argued that the use of the first language does not hinder the learning of the foreign language. So L1 can help in the process of learning another language and optimize time efficiency. Almoayidi (2018) advocated for a selective use of the first language (L1) alongside second or foreign language in the classroom, rather than replacing it totally. Furthermore, using L1 may facilitate comprehension and lower apprehension in learning.

#### **1.4.2.2 Getting help**

The Getting Help strategy was described by Oxford (1990) as the process of requesting assistance from someone in a conversation through hesitation or an explicit request for the missing expression. By actively searching for help, learners can fill the lexical gaps in the learning process. The interaction offers immediate feedback as well as the necessary context for acquisition of the target words. This strategy is commonly used in the digital communication of Net Generation individuals where learners ask for help from peers and online teachers within online environments.

#### **1.4.2.3 Using mime and body movements**

Mime and body movement strategy can be defined as the use of physical action such as mime or gesture to substitute an expression of meaning in a conversation (Oxford, 1990), from



the perspective that language and language use is combination of speech and gestures (McNeill 1992). Several studies have been conducted on gestures in language acquisition over the last thirty years and it was found that gestures play a powerful role in learning a foreign language since the spoken language is only half of the picture (It provides a window only onto verbal thought and not imagistic thought), and it is not always the efficient way of communication specifically in case of asymmetry of language skill between the learner and the teacher or a native speaker, for example in learning L2, the following gap in speech is filled: Sylvester went [gesture of an object flying out laterally]” (McNeill 2005). Several researchers have proved that learners’ gestures have an effect on how their oral proficiency is rated. For example, Gullberg (1998) found that learners’ oral proficiency was rated significantly higher in a video-condition, where the raters saw the learners’ gestures, than in an audio only condition, where raters could only hear the learners’ speech. In addition, the ratings of oral proficiency interviews in a face to face and an ‘audio only’ condition were compared by Nambiar and Goon (1993) who reported that the oral proficiency of learners was rated higher in face to face condition. In both of these studies, hearing not only the speech of the learners’ but also seeing their mouth movements and gestures benefitted the raters.

#### **1.4.2.4 Adjusting or approximating the message**

Approximation is one of the fundamental compensatory strategies that learners utilize to cope with lexical gaps. It makes use of an alternative linguistic resource to express intended meaning when the exact words fail. It is not random substitution but a cognitive process that when users scan their store of linguistic knowledge to then substitute them with other words, they are doing so as a part of immediate, real-time communication. At its most basic level, what is happening with approximation is that the learner is retrieving semantically related, or conceptually similar, words and phrases, and in so doing managing to keep the conversation going. Such strategies are, as Ellis (1994) has observed, indicative of the learner’s active construction of meaning, not passive reproduction of memorized forms. Learners of EFL

frequently attempt with different approximation strategies. Semantic approximation is a situation where a learner substitutes a synonym for the target word. It may involve substituting “car” with “vehicle,” or “apple” with “fruit.”. Such strategies, as Bialystok (1990) proposed, are at the heart of strategic competence development in language acquisition.

#### **1.4.2.5 Using circumlocution**

Circumlocution is a communicative strategy, which we can easily define as using a description of some object or concept or place or action instead when the learner does not know the exact word. One example of this would be from a situation where a learner responded with “It is a long, yellow fruit. Monkeys like it” even if the word ‘banana’ is unknown. Learning to use circumlocution is a necessity. Circumlocution was defined by Hedge (2000) as “Knowing how to use different kinds of strategies to express something when language resources are lacking”. As circumlocution allows language learners to communicate semantic content that is beyond their current linguistic knowledge, its value as a tool for functional communication is undeniable. The main way circumlocution foster acquisition is through the negotiation of meaning that takes place (Ellis, 1994).

#### **1.4.2.6 Avoiding communication partially or totally**

Avoiding communication partially or totally is explained as avoiding communication when difficulties in communication are anticipated or encountered (Oxford, 1990). This technique is known as the total avoidance of communication in some situations or avoiding some topics for which the learner does not have enough vocabularies, ideas, or grammatical structures in the new language. This strategy is against the aim of speaking as much and as often as possible. Starting a conversation with topics that do not cause strong feelings can make the learner feel safer, this can then help them be more willing to talk about other things later in the conversation.

#### **1.4.2.7 Coining words**

Word coinage is one of a variety of creative processes used by language learners when they are unable to access the correct lexical item. It has been viewed as a creation of a new word by

applying the existing knowledge of the target language that learners have (Tan et al. 2012, Rushita 2012). Word coinage was defined in various ways; Word coinage can be described as creation of new words with the learners' item knowledge of L2 (Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Tarone, 1977). Tarone (1977) also defined word coinage as a paraphrasing strategy that learners use when they need to express a concept but they lack the words for that concept. There are two types of word coinage: grammatical and semantical (Dornyei & Kormos, 1998), grammatical word coinage involves creating a new, non-existent second language (L2) word by applying a supposed L2 rule. For example, using the English word "unhappy," a student who was incorrectly using a prefix they had already learned may write "disunhappy" thinking it means "very unhappy." while semantic word coinage deals with the creation of a non-existing L2 word by compounding words. For example, if a learner doesn't know the word "lawnmower," they might put together the words "grass" and "cutter" to convey the same idea.

#### **1.4.2.8 Selecting the topic**

EFL students with a limited vocabulary sometimes use topic selection as a compensatory strategy to keep speech going. They try their best to lead the talk in the direction of a subject about which they have previous knowledge. Oxford (1990) called this technique as compensation strategy because the learner may overcome the vocabulary gap without really disrupting communication. An overdependence on this source may retard lexical growth, even if it support fluency. Studies showed that beginners employ this strategy more than advanced learners as they lack words to use especially in speaking more than writing. Choosing easy topics helps anxious beginners speak, but teachers should build confidence to encourage wider vocabulary use.

### **1.5 Factors Influencing the Choice of Compensatory Strategies**

Numerous researchers attempt to classify and conceptualize compensatory strategies, but another crucial issue that was not highly considered by researchers is the factors, only few investigate factors that influence the learners' choice of the strategy. Mollay (2011) identifies

the main ones that are task, first language influence, learners' attitude and proficiency. The Impact of Compensation Strategies on Learners' Speaking Skill .

### **1.5.1 Task**

Mollay (2011) claims that the task devoted to the learner reveals the nature of the selected compensation strategy. As Mollay reviews, there are many researchers as the Nijmegen group used a series of tasks to investigate the strategies learners tend to employ in each different task. Task is the most prevailing determinant of selecting compensating strategy, according to Pouliss (1989). In fact , Mollay (2011) highlighted the significance of goals over tasks as a key factor, people set goals that they would like to achieve rather than trying to solve tasks.

### **1.5.2 First language Influence**

The influence of the first language is another important factor that determines the choice of compensation strategies. According to Mollay (2011), there is insufficient work on the relationship between native language and the strategy choice. Mollay (2011) claims that the context where the learner is using the language undoubtedly influences the choice of the compensatory. In her study, she reviews that language production in German EFL lessons were observed, more different strategies were found than in EFL lesson in an English- Speaking environment.

### **1.5.3 The Influence of Learners' Attitudes**

Learners differ in terms of personality. The difference lay in their degree of attitudes and motivation towards the learning goals precisely their communicative goals. Corder (1983) assumes that learner's personality may influence whether he adopts achievement or reduction behavior. That is, learners' attitudes can be an important factor that could influence the choice of compensatory strategy. If they have positive attitudes towards their goals they would choose to compensate their lacks, using the above reviewed compensation strategies. However, if they have negative attitudes they will resort to reduction or avoidance strategies.

### **1.5.4 Foreign Language Proficiency:**

Some of language analysis's interest is devoted to expound on the association between proficiency and the type of communication strategies selected. Mollay (2011) illustrates that learners with varying levels of proficiency do not use CS less or more often but simply have a preference for different CS types, or that, advanced learners employ their strategies better than novice learners. That summarizes that students' proficiency level decides the choice of the compensatory strategies. Parikibaht (1984) adds that the usage frequency of the strategies vary. It means that, beginners will employ more strategies than proficient learners. Chen (1990) claims that circumlocution and approximation is the most used strategy by advanced and proficient students. Findings of various studies have indicated that there exists a correlation between the use frequency of Compensatory Strategies and level of proficiency. The count of compensation strategies utilized decreased when the level of proficiency increased (Oweis, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Vocabulary learning and compensation strategies play an important role in language acquisition as they offer the learners the opportunity to expand their lexical knowledge and overcome communication obstacles. The taxonomies presented in this chapter by Schmitt, Gu and Johnson, Nation, and Oxford are for understanding how learners discover, consolidate, and use vocabulary in an effective way. On the other hand, compensation strategies equip the learners with the necessary means to keep the communication going despite lexical gaps.

The learners' choice of compensation strategies is influenced by so many factors such as task, L1 influence, learner attitudes, and proficiency levels. Understanding these factors can help the teachers to tailor and adjust the needs of the learners and empowers the effective use of strategies. Finally, giving the learners a number of ways to approach a task will develop their self-learning and self-expression within a variety of linguistic situations.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Field Work**

## Field Work

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## **Introduction**

This chapter presents the practical part of the research. The purpose of this study was to gather information from the students' questionnaires and observations in order to assess the methods by which students make up for their limited vocabulary in English. Since the study only looks at quantitative descriptive data, the best methods to help investigate the given hypothesis appear to be administering a questionnaire and making an observation in class. The purpose of the observation selection is to enhance comprehension of the proposed problem. This chapter is composed of two sections. Section one relates to students' questionnaire. It is devoted to the description, analysis of students' questionnaire along with the discussion of results illustrated from the sample's responses. Section two provides the description and analysis of observation along with the discussion of results and findings.

### **3.1 Students' Questionnaire**

#### **3.1.1 Sampling Choice**

The study's population consists of 92 fourth-year students from Refrafi Brothers Middle School in Mziraa. Learners split into three groups, thirty-three students from the target population made up the sample for this study. This example was chosen by random selection since the participants had similar heterogeneous mix of characteristics in terms of level of English. As a result, results from this sample could be generalized to the entire population. Moreover, at this level, students have experienced many tasks where they were required to read, write, listen, and speak. We can assume that the students are aware about the problems that hinder them to master the four language skills so that they will be able to solve it.

#### **3.1.2 Description of the Questionnaire**

In order to identify the elements that this study is based on. The questionnaire was designed to examine the learners' strategies that they use to compensate for the lack of English vocabulary. The students' questionnaire is composed of three sections. Section one



was structured to get general information about the learners (age, level). To ensure that all the learners share the same characteristics. Section two was dedicated to the compensatory strategies that the learners use for the lack of vocabulary in reading and listening. The last section was structured to check the strategies learners may employ in time of difficulty in writing and speaking. The type of strategies that learners were asked about represents Oxford's (1990) typology of compensation strategies.

### 3.1.3 Administration of Students' Questionnaire

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the questionnaire was distributed to each of the three groups. About 10 to 12 students in each group were selected randomly. Some students misunderstood certain questions and sought for clarification. A clearer explanation for the unclear questions is therefore necessary. At the same hour that they were distributed, the 33 administered surveys were returned.

### 3.1.4 The Analysis of Results and Findings

#### Section One: General Information

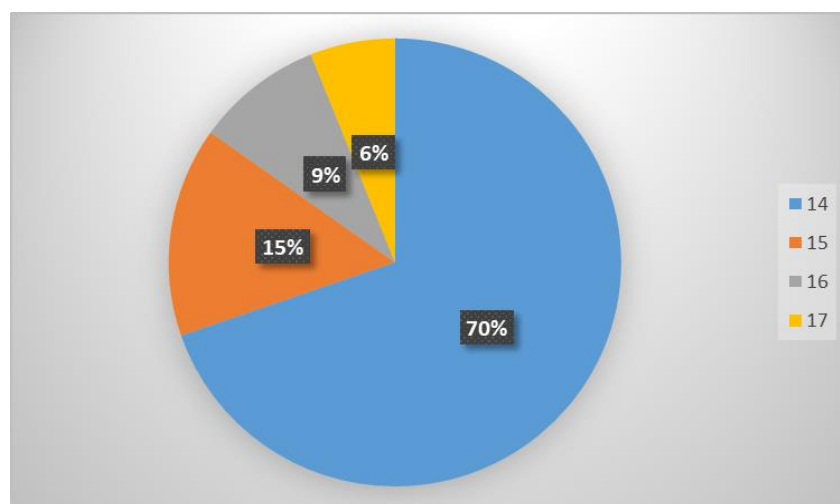
##### 1. Age distribution

**Table 3.1**

*Students' Age*

Age	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
14	23	70%
15	5	15%
16	3	9%
17	2	6%
Total	33	100%

Graph 3.1 Students' age



The age distribution summarized in the table below shows that there is a clear dominance of younger participants with 70% being 14 years old. The percentage decreases with only 15% at age 15, 9% at age 16, and 6% at age 17.

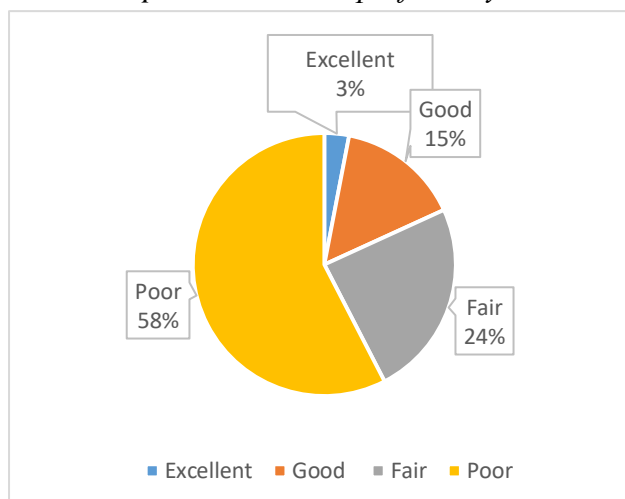
## 2. How do you rate your overall proficiency level in English?

Table 3.2

*Students' Appreciation of Their Proficiency Level in English*

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Excellent	1	3%
Good	5	15%
Fair	8	24%
Poor	19	58%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.2 Student's proficiency level*



Regarding the student proficiency level in English, more than half of students (58%) claimed that their level of proficiency is poor. Also (24%) of the total said that it is fair. While (15%) said that their level of proficiency is good. Finally, (3%) claimed that it is excellent. This implies that learners still have a lot of work to achieve proficiency.

## **Section Two: Vocabulary Compensation Strategies in Reading and Listening**

### **3. When I read or listen to a text or a segment and encounter an unfamiliar word, I**

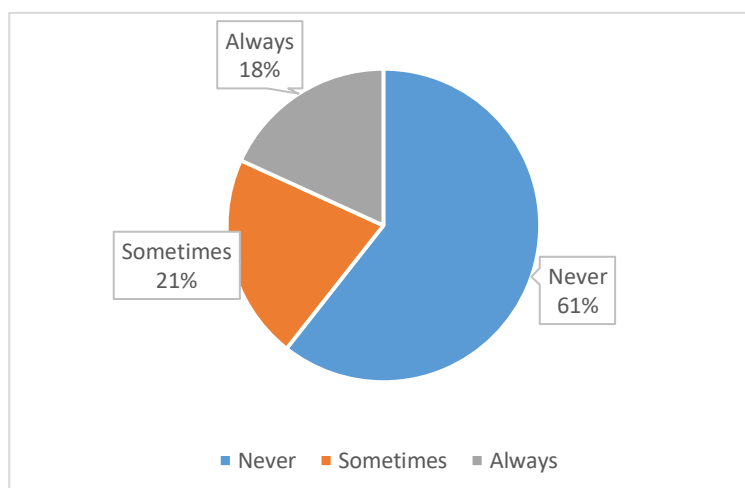
#### **3.1 Attempt to find a synonym or an antonym of the word within the text or segment**

**Table 3.3**

*Students' Use of Synonyms and Antonyms Strateg*

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	20	61%
Sometimes	7	21%
Always	6	18%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.3 Using synonyms and antonyms*



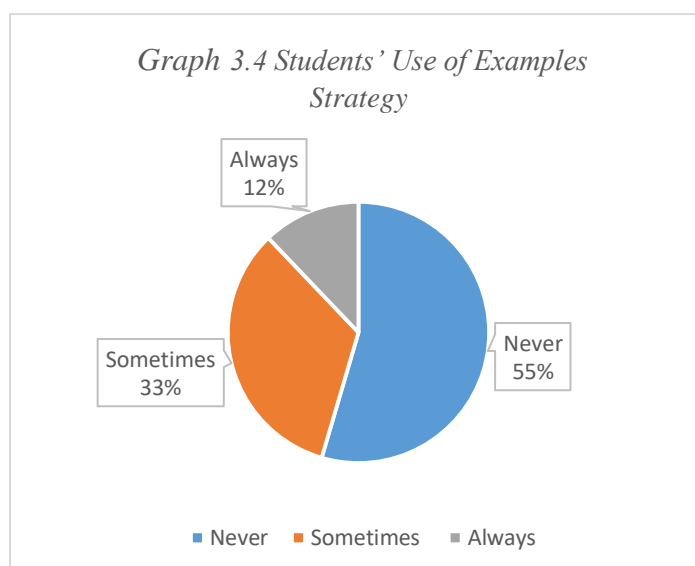
The data reveals that the majority of learners (61%) have never used synonyms and antonyms as a compensatory strategy for vocabulary gaps in English. A smaller percentage reported usage in occasions (21%), while fewer claimed to always employ this technique (18%). This shows that the learners rarely rely on synonyms and antonyms to overcome vocabulary gaps, with only a small portion using them regularly.

### 3.2 Attempt to find examples for the word within the text or segment

**Table 3.4**

*Students' Use of Examples Strategy*

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	18	55%
Sometimes	11	33%
Always	4	12%
Total	33	100%



The results indicate that more than half of the students (55%) who were asked said they never utilize examples as a method while learning new English terms. (33%) of the participants reported using this method infrequently or occasionally. Interestingly, just 12% of the students said they always utilize examples when they are having trouble with terminology. So most of the questioned students do not use examples as a compensation strategy, while only a small fraction consistently relies on it.

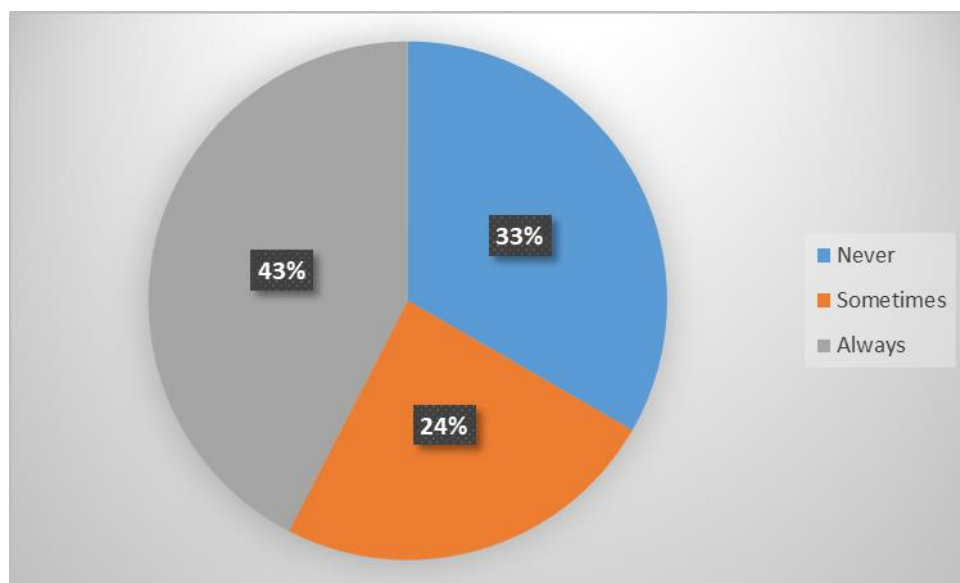
3.3 I try to guess the meaning of the word by looking at its parts or components

**Table 3.5**

Students' use of word structure strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	11	33%
Sometimes	8	24%
Always	14	43%
Total	33	100%

Graph 3.5 Students' use of word structure strategy



The results from the table shows that 33% never used the word structure as a strategy to help them understand new English vocabulary. 24% answered that they use this strategy occasionally. While 43% of the students said that they always rely on this strategy to face vocabulary gaps. So most of the students rely on word structure to understand new vocabulary, while only about a third never use this strategy.

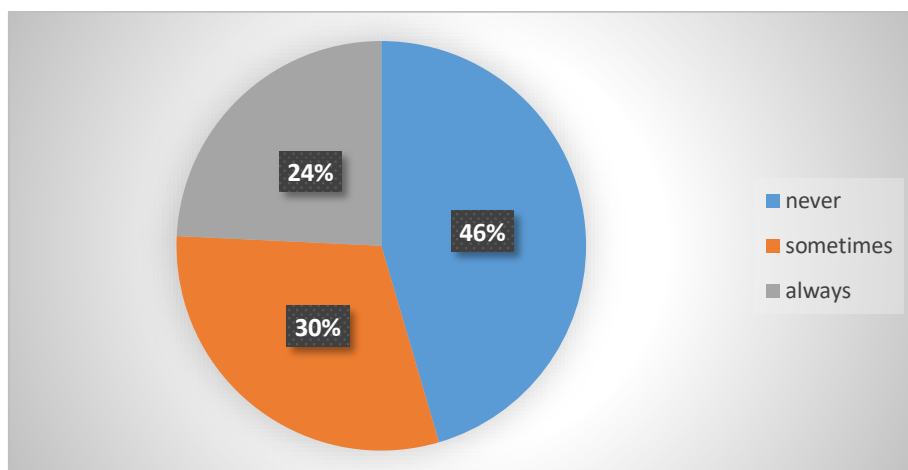
3.4 I try to look for a definition that may appear after the word and explains it

**Table 3.6**

Students' use of definition or restatement strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	15	46%
Sometimes	10	30%
Always	8	24%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.6 Students' use of definition strategy*



The table above indicates that 46% of the asked learners never utilize the definition and restatement strategy. 30% of them answered that they sometimes use this strategy. While 24% said that depend on it on a regular basis. It is clear that a significant portion of learners never use definition and restatement as a vocabulary strategy, while less than a quarter regularly depend on it.

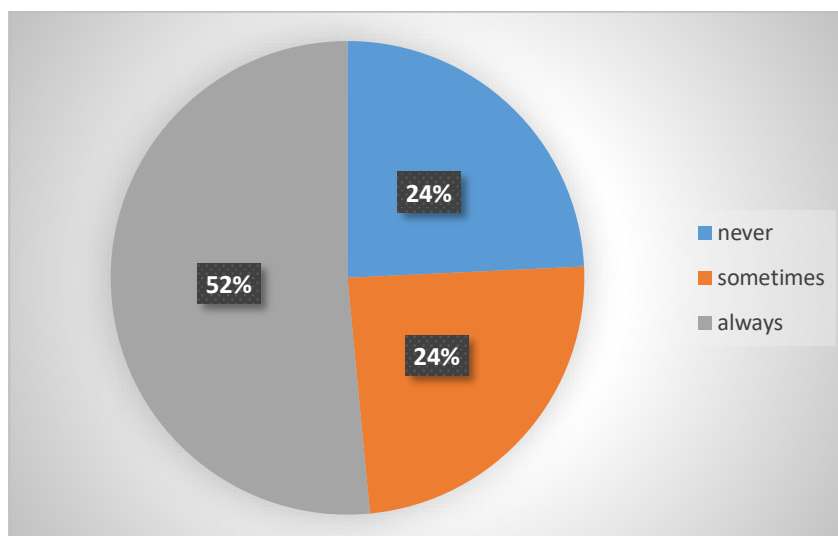
3.5 I rely on my prior knowledge about the topic to guess the meaning of the word

**Table 3.7**

Students use of background knowledge strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	8	24%
Sometimes	8	24%
Always	17	52%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.7 Students' use of background knowledge strategy*



The data reveals that a small percentage of learners (24%) never utilize the background knowledge strategy to compensate for the lack of English vocabulary. Another small percentage of (24%) replied that they use this strategy every now and then. While more than a half of the questioned learners claimed to always employ this technique with a percentage of (52%). This means that most learners frequently use background knowledge to overcome vocabulary gaps, while only a minority never or rarely employ this strategy.

3.6 I try to understand the speaker's feelings from his tone of voice to guess the meaning

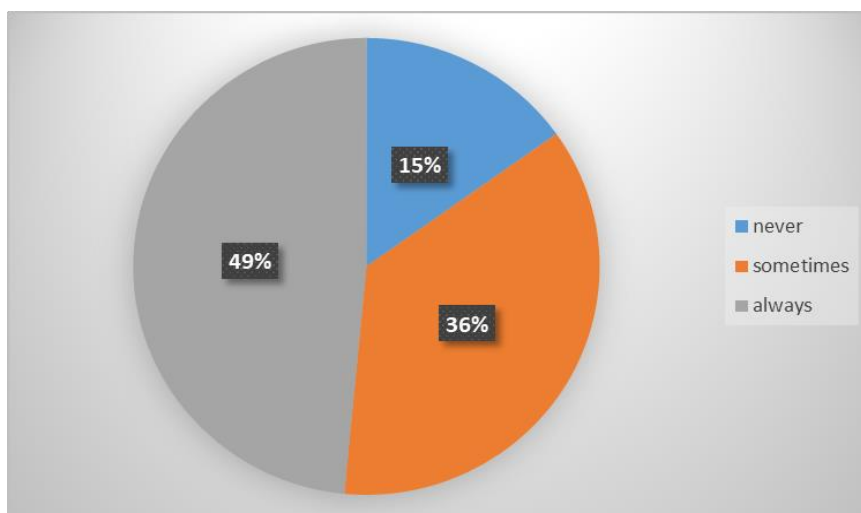
**Table 3.8**

Students' use of tone of voice strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	5	15%
Sometimes	12	36%
Always	16	49%
Total	33	100%



Graph 3.8 Students' use of tone of voice strategy



The data reveals that (15%) of learners have never used tone clues as a compensatory strategy for vocabulary gaps in English. A percentage of (36%) reported usage in occasions, while (49%) claimed to always employ this technique. As we can notice, most learners frequently rely on tone clues to compensate for vocabulary gaps, while a smaller portion uses them occasionally or not at all.

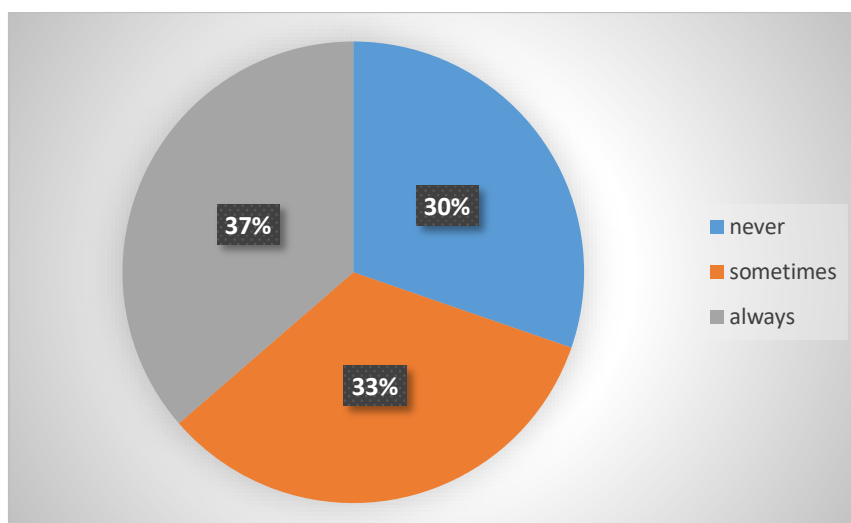
3.7 I try to guess the meaning of the word based on the situation around me

**Table 3.9**

Students' use of situational clues

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	10	30%
Sometimes	11	33%
Always	12	37%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.9 Students' use of situational clues strategy*



The results from the table indicate that 30% never used the situational clues as a strategy to help them understand new English vocabulary . 33% answered that they use this strategy occasionally . While 37% of the students said that they always rely on this strategy to face vocabulary gaps. So the majority of students frequently depend on situational clues to overcome vocabulary challenges, while a smaller portion uses them sporadically or not at all.

### **Section Three: Vocabulary compensation strategies in speaking and writing**

#### **4. When I speak or write and I don't find the appropriate word, I**

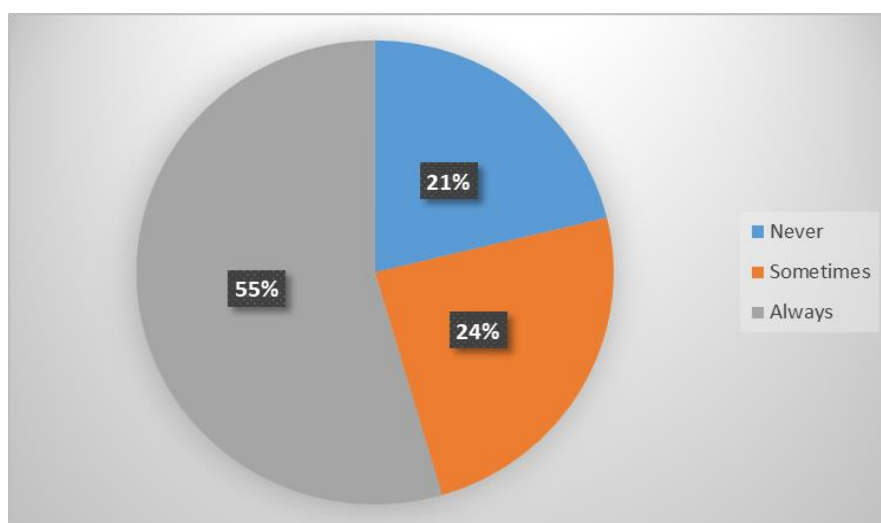
##### **4.1 I switch to Arabic when I don't find the word in English**

**Table 3.10**

Students' use of code switching strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	7	21%
Sometimes	8	24%
Always	18	55%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.10 Students' use of code switching strategy*



Regarding the ‘switching to the mother tongue’ strategy 21% of students responded that they never rely on this technique to fill in vocabulary shortage. A percentage of 24% said that they occasionally use this strategy, while 55% claimed that they switch to Arabic when they are at a loss for words while speaking or writing. Most students resort to their mother tongue for vocabulary gaps, while only some of them avoid this strategy.

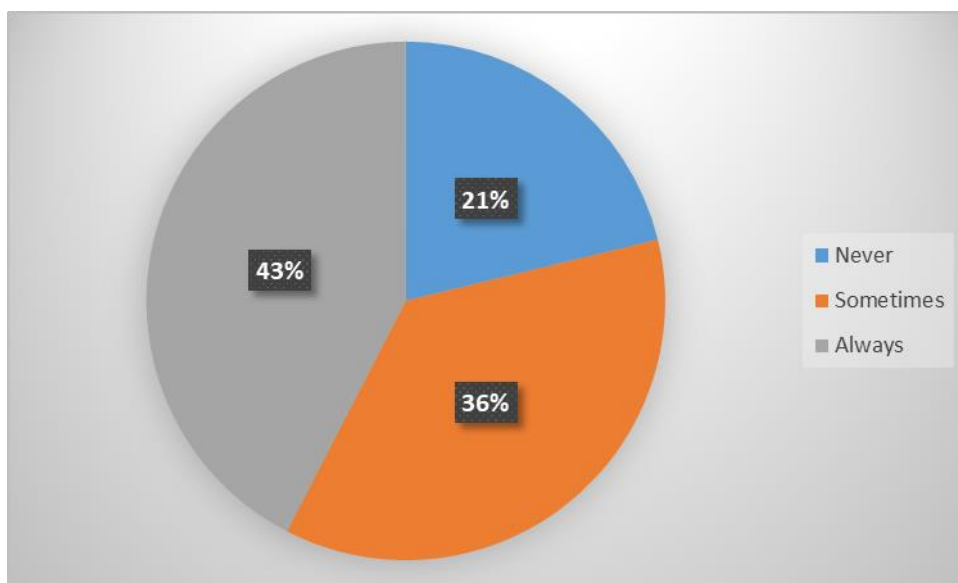
#### 4.2 I ask for help from my teacher or one of my classmates

**Table 3.11**

Students' use of getting help strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	7	21%
Sometimes	12	36%
Always	14	43%
Total	33	100%

Graph 3.11 Students use of getting help strategy



Concerning the “getting help” strategy 21% of students answered that they never rely on this technique when facing gaps in vocabulary. A percentage of 36% said that they sometimes use this strategy, while another percentage of 43% claimed that they ask for help when they lack the word in speaking or writing. The results show that a significant portion of students seek for help for vocabulary gaps especially from their teachers while a minority avoid that.

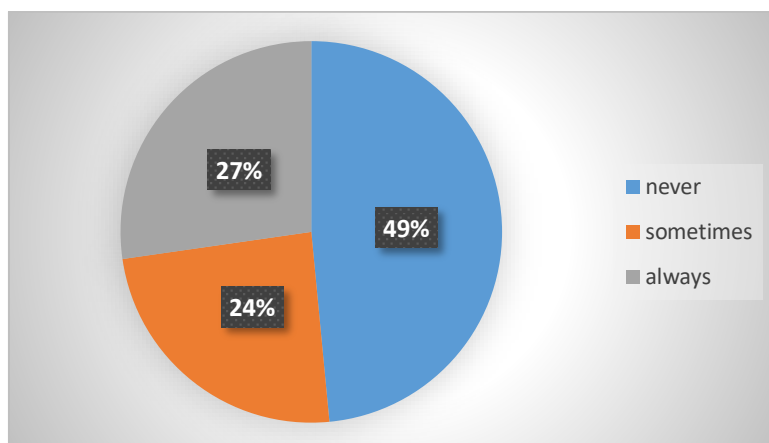
#### 4.3 I use gestures with my body and hands to explain what I mean

**Table 3.12**

Students’ use of mime and body movements strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	16	49%
Sometimes	8	24%
Always	9	27%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.12 Student's use of mime and body movements strategy*



The results from the table shows that 49% of the respondents never utilize mime and body movements strategy to convey the message when they lack English vocabulary, 24% replied that they use this strategy occasionally, while 27% said that they always use it. So the majority of learners rarely or never use mime and body movements to compensate for vocabulary gaps, with only about a quarter employing this strategy regularly.

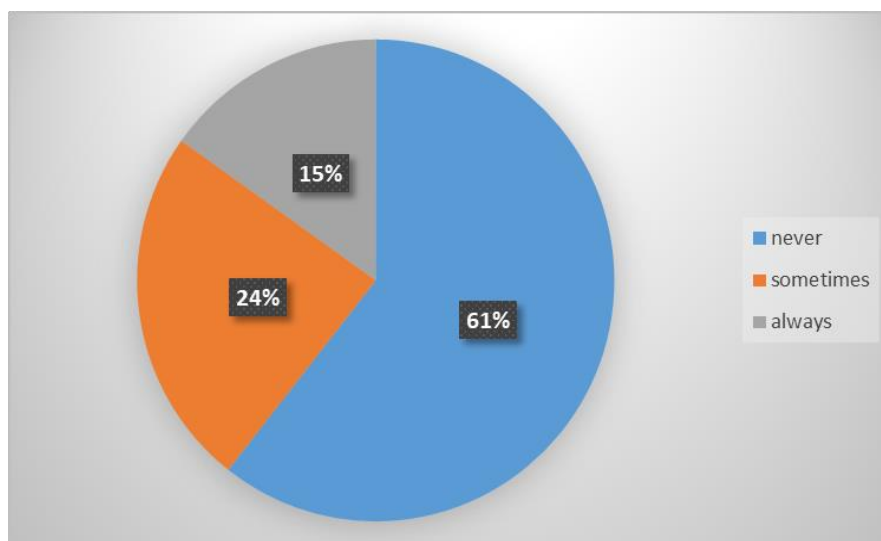
#### 4.4 I try to describe approximately the meaning of the word I intend

**Table 3.13**

Students' use of adjusting the message strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	20	61%
Sometimes	8	24%
Always	5	15%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.13 Students' use of adjusting the message strategy*



As the results show, more than a half of the questioned students (61%) said that they never adjust their message when they don't have the exact word to say or write. (24%) claimed that they use this strategy occasionally, while small percentage of (15%) answered that they use it regularly. Obviously the results indicate that most students rarely or never modify their message to work around vocabulary gaps, with only a small fraction doing so regularly.

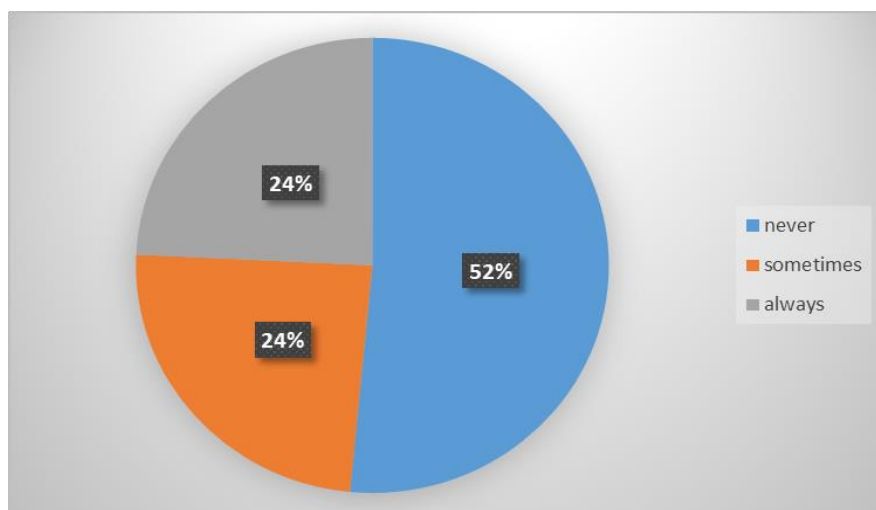
#### 4.5 I try to explain the word with alternative words I know

**Table 3.14**

Students' use of circumlocution

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	17	52%
Sometimes	8	24%
Always	8	24%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.14 Students' use of circumlocution strategy*



The results indicate that more than half of the students (52%) said they never utilize this method to deliver their message. (24%) of the participants reported using this method infrequently, another (24%) said that they always use circumlocution when facing a vocabulary gap. Most students avoid using circumlocution for vocabulary gaps, with only a quarter employing it consistently and another quarter using it occasionally.

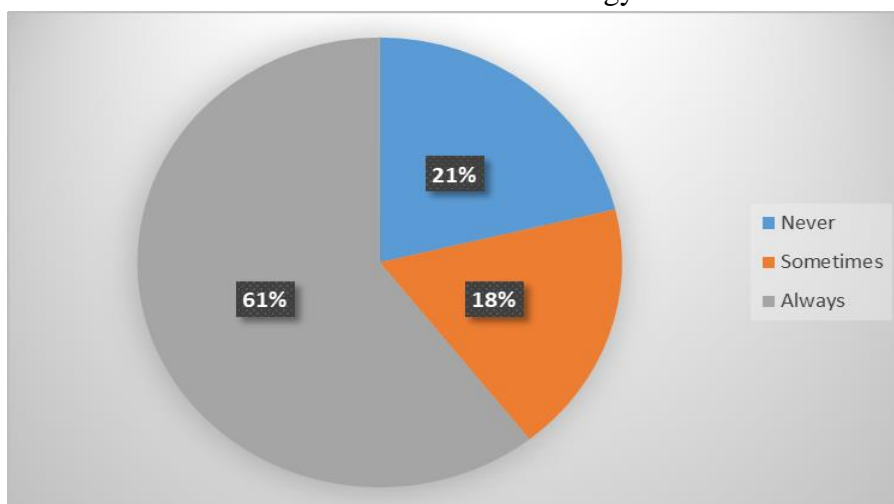
#### 4.6 I try to avoid speaking or writing about things I don't know in English

**Table 3.15**

Students' use of avoiding communication strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	7	21%
Sometimes	6	18%
Always	20	61%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.15 Students' use of avoiding the communication strategy*



The data reveals that a percentage of (21%) of the learners never used this strategy to compensate for vocabulary gaps in English. A smaller percentage reported usage in occasions (18%), while (61%) claimed to always employ this technique. This shows that The majority of learners employ this vocabulary compensation strategy.

#### 4.7 I try to coin a new English word of my own

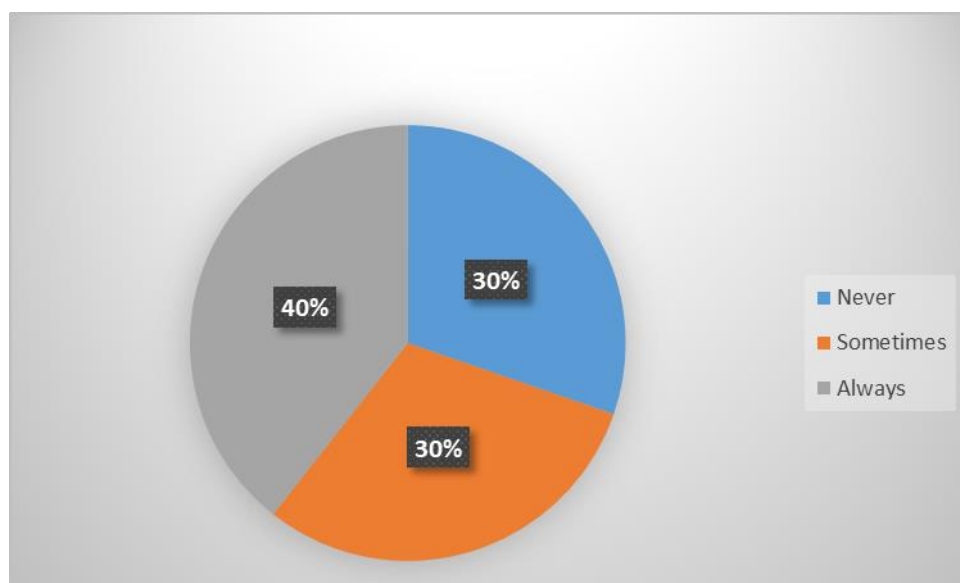
**Table 3.16**

Students' use of word coinage strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	10	30%
Sometimes	10	30%
Always	13	40%
Total	33	100%



*Graph 3.16 Students' use of word coinage strategy*



A percentage of (30%) answered that they never rely on word coinage strategy when they want to convey a message, and another (30%) claimed that they use it from time to time, and (40%) said that they depend on this technique. From the given results we can suggest that most of the learners depend on word coinage when they face a vocabulary shortage.

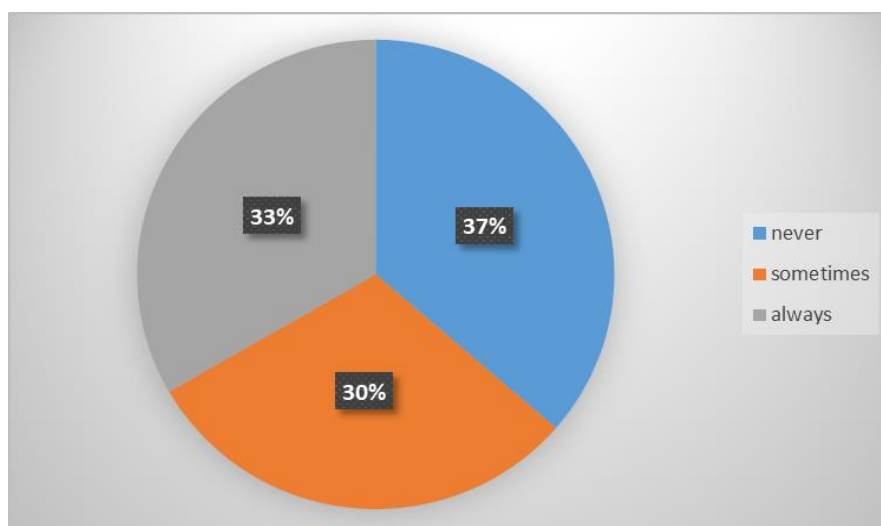
4.8 I try to choose topics for which I know enough English words

**Table 3.17**

Student's use of selecting the topic strategy

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Never	12	37%
Sometimes	10	30%
Always	11	33%
Total	33	100%

*Graph 3.17 Students' use of selecting the topic strategy*



The results from the table indicate that 37% never used selecting the topic as a strategy to help them understand new English vocabulary. 30% answered that they use this strategy occasionally. While 33% of the students said that they always rely on this strategy to face vocabulary gaps. A significant portion of learners avoids topic selection as a vocabulary strategy, while the remaining students are nearly evenly split between occasional and consistent use of this approach.

### **3.1.5 Summary of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire**

The results from the students' questionnaire show that the vast majority of the learners consider their English proficiency as low, most of them rate it as "poor" or "fair", this undoubtedly indicates lack of confidence in their language skills. Students with an age of 14 years old dominate the sample, this suggests that the problems and challenges that they are facing in mastering the English language are most relevant to early English school learners.

When facing vocabulary gaps in reading and listening, learners tend to depend on context-based strategies such as background knowledge, tone of voice, and situational clues instead of relying on linguistic techniques like analyzing or synonyms. Many learners try to stay away from text-based strategies, possibly because of their limitation in the analytical skills. In

speaking and writing, learners tend to rely on code switching (switching to Arabic) or asking for help which indicates that they prefer depending on external support rather than solving the problem independently. Non-verbal strategies such as gestures and body movements are used moderately, a big portion of the questioned learners avoid adjusting their message or using alternative words to deliver their message. Many learners avoid communication altogether when they face unfamiliar topics.

Overall, the findings from the students' questionnaire suggest that students heavily rely on context and prior knowledge rather than linguistic strategies, this may hinder the learners from expanding their vocabulary independently. A big portion prefer avoiding the topic totally or external assistance over experimenting with language which shows low self-confidence or lack in training on these strategies. These findings support the need for intentional training in vocabulary-building techniques, such as word analysis and circumlocution, as well as confidence-boosting exercises that promote taking chances when speaking. By paying close attention to these gaps, students may be able to move past their need on translation or avoidance, resulting in improved performance and increased independence with English.

## **3.2 The Observation**

### **3.2.1 Sample Choice**

The entire population of the fourth-year middle school students could not be observed due to the constraints of time; we chose to do the observation for a sample of 30 learners. This sample would serve the purpose of our observation which is the application of Oxford (1990) compensation strategies with the four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, writing. This will allow for the identification of the most used compensation strategies that the learners use when they face vocabulary gaps and provide insights of how these young learners deal with communicative challenges.

### 3.2.2 Description of the Observation

Classroom observation provides valuable tasks and opportunities to collect data for reflection on the area of focus (Wajnryb, 1992; Wallace, 1991). This investigation also incorporated an observational study as a supportive tool, since the study is of a descriptive nature, we opted for the use of this tool. The data that will be gathered from the classroom observation will allow us to check the learners' answers in the questionnaire about the compensation strategies that are commonly used among them when they encounter an unfamiliar English vocabulary across the four language skills; reading, listening, speaking, writing, framed by the classification of Oxford (1990) for the compensation strategies. The study will spot the light specifically on how learners use "guessing intelligently in reading and listening" (using linguistic and non-linguistic clues) and "overcoming limitations in speaking and writing" (using circumlocution, approximation ...) to maintain communication and comprehension despite the deficiency of vocabulary. The classroom observation will serve to capture the real-time strategies they employ during regular English language lessons, the analysis of the data will focus on the types of the compensation strategies in relation to each language skill.

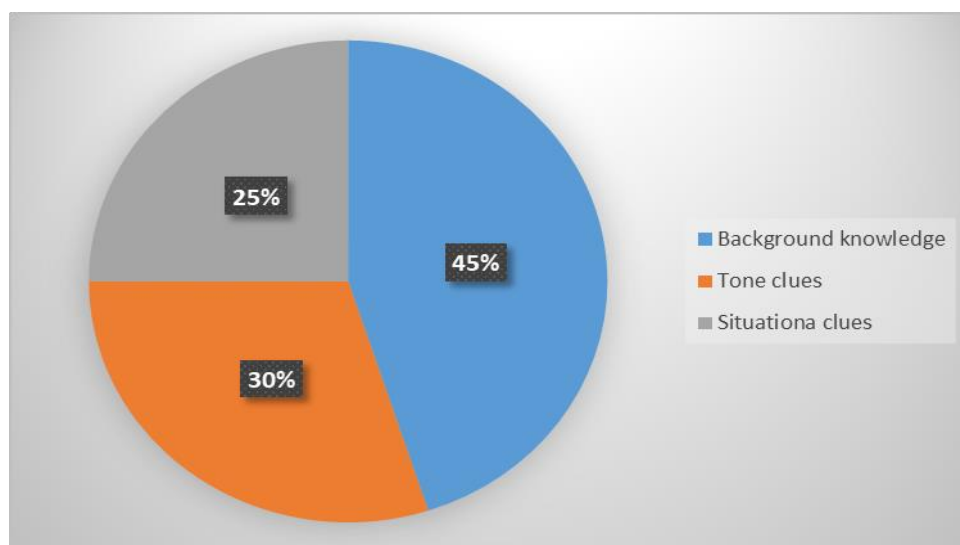
Class observation took place one week after the administration of the questionnaire, students of fourth-year middle school were observed during class. After asking for permission from the teacher who was in charge, we observed the learners for two sessions of 60 minutes, one session for listening and reading and the other session for writing and speaking. Since the study deals with the compensation strategies across the four skills, Oxford's (1990) typology of compensation strategies, we prepared a checklist to facilitate the gathering of data (See Appendix B). Students' performance for the tasks in the two sessions served as a help to identify the different types of compensation strategies they rely on when facing vocabulary gaps.

### **3.2.3 Analysis of the Results and Findings**

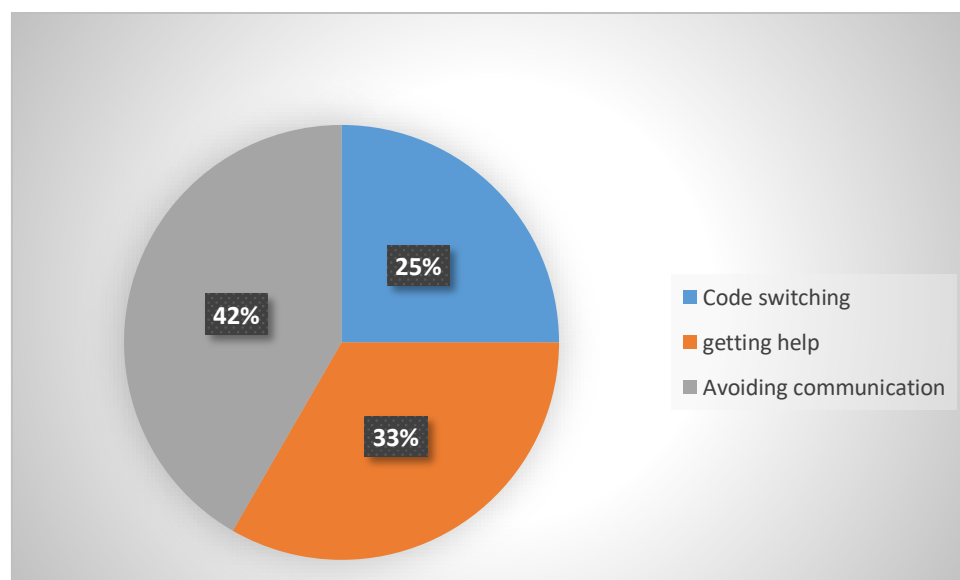
The classroom observations showed that there is a distinction in how learners utilized compensation strategies with the four language skills - listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In receptive skills, students showed a strong performance in listening which was more than in reading. In listening tasks, learners employed contextual clues and background knowledge in an effective way to understand vocabulary that is unfamiliar to them, this was clear in their ability to answer accurately the comprehension questions. However, in reading activities, greater dependence on teacher explanations was evident, which suggests less confidence in their ability to analyze texts. For productive skills, a significant gap emerged between speaking and writing performance. In writing tasks, students could carefully build sentences and have more time to revise their work which led to producing sentences that are more accurate and coherent. On the other hand, during speaking activities, it was noticed that learners relied on pre-written notes which confirmed a limitation in spontaneous communication abilities, learners frequently tend to avoidance strategies, code-switching to their L1, or producing grammatically simplified utterances when they were required to speak without preparation.

The difference that we noticed was in the approach of the students in terms of accuracy versus fluency; writing tasks showed that learners focus on grammatical precision. Whereas, speaking activities revealed that they prioritize fluency over accuracy. Students' main priority was to complete their turns quickly rather than self-correcting errors and this was the reason why they failed most of the time to properly address interlocutors' questions (they focus on speed rather than meaningful interaction). The classroom observations proved that learners have developed some effective compensation strategies when it comes to receptive tasks. However, they lack spontaneous production strategies especially in speaking. They rely on prepared notes for oral communication which indicates that there is an area needing pedagogical attention for them to develop the communicative competence across all four language skills.

Graph 3.18 Students' Use of Compensation Strategies  
in Receptive Tasks



Graph 3.19 Students' Use of Compensation Strategies  
in Productive Tasks



### 3.2.4 Summary of Results from the Observation

The analysis of the observation proved that the shortage in linguistic knowledge is the highly noticed problem learners really encounter. Closer inspection revealed that the learners did not use diverse compensation strategies to overcome the lack of their vocabulary shortage and only

stick to background knowledge, tone clues, situational clues in receptive tasks, when it comes to productive tasks they employed code switching or switching to the mother tongue, getting help, and avoiding the communication partially or totally. The learners did not use all the compensation strategies under Oxford (1990) typology and this is because of their unawareness of them, they used the compensation strategies unconsciously because the Algerian educational system in the middle school do not explicitly teach or raise awareness of these specific language learning strategies. The curriculum may implicitly encourage some compensatory behaviors, such as using context clues; however, there is no explicit instruction in respect of the wider range of strategies identified by Oxford's (1990) typology, probably leading to a narrower and potentially less effective set of strategies understood and used. This lack of explicit teaching means they may not be consciously selecting and applying the most appropriate strategies for given language learning activities, which in turn can have negative impacts on their overall strategic competence and autonomy in learning a language. Another reason for the limited use of the compensation strategies by learners can be the teachers' unfamiliarity with these strategies, because teachers themselves did not receive any training on explicit strategies teaching and this fell in line with the observation that the learners using the compensatory strategies unconsciously.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study proves to a certain extent that compensatory strategies have a big role in assisting learners overcome vocabulary shortage during the process of learning English. The analysis of the questionnaire showed that learners rely on these strategies on a regular basis such as context-based guessing, switching to the mother tongue, and seeking for help which helps the learners bridging gaps in their linguistic knowledge. However, the classroom observation provided a deeper analysis of the topic as it showed that even if the students utilize some of these strategies, the application of these strategies is still unconscious. For example,

when the learners answered that they use word structure or word coinage in the questionnaire, the observation showed that these strategies were not utilized in the class,

Moreover, the data proved that fourth-year middle school learners encounter a lot of challenges and problems in receptive and productive language tasks, especially in speaking in spontaneous way. Despite the fact that they try to employ the compensation strategies to keep the communication going, the lack of systematic application limits the effectiveness of these strategies. The contributor to this inconsistency is ineffective observed teaching and lack of understanding of the strategies. The observation also showed that students experience a great difficulty when speaking spontaneously, becoming heavily reliant on pre-written text or reverting to Arabic which restrained their fluency and confidence. These results emphasize the importance of pedagogical intervention adapted to the learner that does not only teach a broader variety of compensation strategies, but that also makes children apply them actively and adequately. In this way, learners may become more autonomous in handling lexis gaps and improving their general communicative competence in English.



**GENERAL**

**CONCLUSION**

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

This study has investigated the compensation strategies that EFL learners utilize to overcome the vocabulary gaps that they may face during the process of learning English with the four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, writing. It was revealed in the literature review that the compensation strategies are an effective way for learners to bridge the gaps that they encounter in learning languages. Data has been collected through a questionnaire administered to the learners and classroom observations to a more reliable and comprehensive picture of the subject, the questionnaire has been designed to identify the strategies that the learners use to compensate for the lack of English vocabulary. Because this problem is the type of problem that can be observed, observation can reinforce student's viewpoints as well.

The results of this study indicated that the learners employed some of the compensation strategies to overcome their vocabulary deficiency but not all the types under Oxford (1990) typology were used, they utilized only some strategies such as background knowledge, tone clues, situational clues in listening and reading, code switching, getting help, avoiding the communication in speaking and writing. It is worth mentioning that these strategies were used by the learners unconsciously which was so obvious in the classroom observation. This unconscious use of strategies indicates that learners develop them naturally through their language learning experiences rather than through systematic instruction. Furthermore, The results indicate an interesting discrepancy between the strategies that the learners report that they use in the questionnaire and those observed in the classroom.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of this study suggest helpful insights for EFL learning and teaching in middle schools, a lot of pedagogical recommendations can be suggested for learners and teachers.

The results show that learners depend on a limited number of strategies that they use unconsciously such as context-based approaches (background knowledge, situational clues) for receptive skills and avoidance strategies (code-switching, avoiding the communication) for

productive tasks. This limited use is a direct consequence for the Algerian education system's lack of focus on teaching these strategies as it does not provide any specific kind of training neither for the learners nor the teachers in vocabulary learning strategies as part of the formal EFL curriculum. A systematic training for the learners will make them aware when and how to use those strategies effectively.

Teachers also should not be slaves to the curriculum; they can devote some Tutorial sessions (TD) or sessions at the beginning of the year when doing the diagnostic assessment to train the learners on how to employ these strategies as they will need them throughout the whole year in their journey of learning English. For instance, training learners how to paraphrase unknown words (circumlocution) or use gestures effectively could build learners' confidence in spontaneous communication.

Despite their young age to be aware of the importance of learning English, Fourth-year middle school learners should put some extra effort to learn English outside the school and rely not only on what is given to them by their teachers who are considered as a 'guide' in the CBA (Competency Based Approach) which means that the learners bear the largest share of the burden in the learning process.

## **2. Research Perspective and Limitation**

This research investigated the compensation strategies that fourth-year middle school learners use to overcome the vocabulary gaps that they may encounter across the four language skills, further researches could explore the application of these strategies at other levels' in the high school or the university due to the significant differences in terms of vocabulary demands and communicative contexts.

Finally, a number of potential limitations need to be considered. First, due to time constraints, we could not observe the entire population of the fourth-year middle school learners which is 92 and only a sample of 30 learners were observed. Consequently, the results from the observation represent a partial picture of the compensation strategies that are used by fourth-

year learners. Moreover, the research also revealed a discrepancy between some strategies that the learners reported that they use in the questionnaire and those that were observed in the classroom observation which limits the reliability of self-reported data. Furthermore, the reliance on pre-written notes during speaking tasks in the observation may have limited the insights into learners' use of spontaneous compensation strategies in that skill

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## Appendix A

### Students' Questionnaire

#### Exploring EFL Learners' Strategies to Compensate for The Lack of English Vocabulary

#### The Case Study of Fourth-Year Middle School Students at Refrafi Brother Middle

#### School - Mziraa

Dear Students,

We are preparing a research on the using of compensation strategies to overcome the lack of English vocabulary. You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire. Your answers are very important to the validity of the result. Please, tick (✓) the appropriate box to indicate your choice.

#### Section one: General Information

1. Age ...years.
2. How do you rate your overall proficiency level in English?

Excellent	
Good	
Fair	
Poor	

#### Section Two: Vocabulary Compensation Strategies in Reading and Listening

##### 1. When I read or listen to a text or a segment and encounter an unfamiliar word, I

- 3.1 Attempt to find a synonym or an antonym of the word within the text or segment

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

### 3.2 Attempt to find examples for the word within the text or segment

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

### 3.3 I try to guess the meaning of the word by looking at its parts or components

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

### 3.4 I try to look for a definition that may appear after the word and explains it

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

### 3.5 I rely on my prior knowledge about the topic to guess the meaning of the word

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	



3.6 I try to understand the speaker's feelings from his tone of voice to guess the meaning

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

3.7 I try to guess the meaning of the word based on the situation around me

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

### **Section Three: Vocabulary compensation strategies in speaking and writing**

#### **4. When I speak or write and I don't find the appropriate word , I**

4.1 I switch to Arabic when I don't find the word in English

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.2 I ask for help from my teacher or one of my classmates

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.3 I use gestures with my body and hands to explain what I mean

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.4 I try to describe approximately the meaning of the word I intend

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.5 I try to explain the word with alternative words I know

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.6 I try to avoid speaking or writing about things I don't know in English

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.7 I try to coin a new English word of my own

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

4.8 I try to choose topics for which I know enough English words

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

**Appendix B**  
**The Checklist used in the Observation**  
**Checklist one**

**Session Number: .....**

Types of compensation strategies in listening and reading	Observed		Number of students	Examples / Comments
	Yes	No		
Synonyms and antonyms				
Examples and description				
Word structure				
Definition and restatement				
Background knowledge				
Tone clues				
Situational clues				

**Further Notes :**

.....

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.....

.....

## Checklist two

Session Number: .....

Types of compensation strategies in speaking and writing	Observed		Number of students	Examples / Comments
	Yes	No		
Switching to the mother tongue				
Getting help				
Mime and body movements				
Adjusting and approximating the message				
Circumlocution				
Avoiding communication partially or totally				
Coining words				
Selecting the topic				

**Further Notes :**

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## الملخص

يواجه غالبية متعلمي اللغات الأجنبية غالبًا صعوبات كبيرة ومتنوعة عبر المهارات اللغوية الأساسية الأربع: الاستماع، والتحدث، والقراءة، والكتابة. يحتاج هؤلاء المتعلمون باستمرار إلى تطوير بعض الاستراتيجيات التواصلية الفعالة التي يمكن أن تساعد في التغلب بنجاح على العقبات العديدة التي قد يواجهونها خلال رحلتهم الصعبة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. كما يقول الفيلسوف لودفيج فيتجنشتاين: "حدود لغتي تعني حدود عالمي"، مما يؤكد أهمية إتقان اللغة لفتح آفاق جديدة. حاولت الدراسة الحالية بعناية تحديد استراتيجيات التعويض الأكثر شيوعًا التي يستخدمها متعلمو السنة الرابعة في التعليم المتوسط بمدرسة الإخوة رفا في لسد الفجوات في مفرداتهم بشكل استراتيجي. لإجراء هذا البحث المفصل بشكل صحيح، اتبعت هذه الأطروحة منهجًا وصفيًا كميًا حيث تم تنظيم استبيان منظم وملاحظة مباشرة لجمع البيانات القيمة الضرورية. تعتمد كلتا الإجراءتين بقوة على تصنيف أكسفورد (1990) لاستراتيجيات التعويض. أظهرت النتائج المستخلصة من التحليل الشامل للبيانات المجمعة أن المتعلمين المشاركين يستخدمون بشكل متكرر بعض استراتيجيات التعويض المفيدة في المهارات الاستقبالية (القراءة والاستماع) وبالمثل في المهارات الإنتاجية (التحدث والكتابة). هذا يؤكد أن المتعلمين، حتى في المراحل المبكرة، يبذلون جهودًا للتغلب على التحديات اللغوية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، بناءً على النتائج، توصي هذه الدراسة بقوة ببعض الاقتراحات العملية التي قد تساعد المتعلمين على تعزيز مهاراتهم الشاملة في التحدث، مثل زيادة التعرض للغة الإنجليزية الأصيلة والتفاعل مع الناطقين بها، واستخدام الوسائل البصرية، وتبني التفكير الإيجابي تجاه الأخطاء كجزء طبيعي من عملية التعلم.