COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDONESIAN AND PAKISTANI UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti strategi pembelajaran kosakata yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa S1 Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia dan Pakistan dengan fokus pada perbedaan yang dipengaruhi oleh konteks pendidikan dan budaya. Dengan menggunakan metode kuantitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuisioner tertutup dari 114 mahasiswa di tujuh universitas. Kuisioner yang diadaptasi dari Goundar (2019) dan kerangka kerja Gu dan Johnson (1996), mengkategorikan strategi pembelajaran kosakata menjadi strategi meta kognitif, kognitif, memori, dan aktivasi. Analisis data menggunakan SPSS mencakup statistik deskriptif, uji normalitas, uji Mann-Whitney U, dan analisis Kruskal-Wallis. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan perbedaan yang signifikan dalam preferensi strategi pembelajaran kosakata, dengan strategi kognitif menjadi yang paling dominan di kedua kelompok. Namun, mahasiswa Pakistan menunjukkan penggunaan meta kognitif yang lebih tinggi daripada Indonesia. Temuan ini menyoroti dampak sistem pendidikan pada pemilihan strategi pembelajaran kosakata. Studi ini menyarankan untuk menggabungkan strategi meta kognitif dan aktivasi ke dalam kurikulum pembelajaran bahasa untuk meningkatkan perolehan kosakata siswa. dan dipisahkan dengan tanda koma.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Pembelajaran Kosakata, Indonesia, Pakistan, komparatif.

Abstract

This study examines vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by undergraduate English students in Indonesia and Pakistan focusing on differences influenced by educational and cultural contexts. Using a descriptive quantitative method, data was collected through a closed-ended questionnaire from 114 students across seven universities. The questionnaire, adapted from Goundar (2019) and based on Gu and Johnson's (1996) framework, categorized VLS into meta cognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation strategies. Data analysis using SPSS included descriptive statistics, normality tests, t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests, and Kruskal-Wallis analysis. The results revealed significant differences in VLS preferences, with cognitive strategies being the most dominant in both groups. However, Pakistani students demonstrated higher meta cognitive strategy use than their Indonesian counterparts. These findings highlight the impact of educational systems on VLS selection. The study suggests incorporating meta cognitive and activation strategies into language learning curricula to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition.

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Indonesia, Pakistan, comparative.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) play a crucial role in language acquisition, helping students effectively retain and use vocabulary. For university students in English departments,

vocabulary mastery is fundamental to academic success and communication skills. However, vocabulary learning is often challenging, as students employ different strategies influenced by cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts. Vocabulary mastery plays an important role in language learning because the higher the vocabulary, the better one's speaking skills. (Dalimunthe & Haryadi, 2023). Understanding how students navigate these strategies in different educational environments is essential for improving language instruction and fostering more effective learning practices.

English holds different statuses in Pakistan and Indonesia, significantly influencing students' approaches to vocabulary learning. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), primarily within formal classroom settings, with minimal exposure outside academic contexts. The Indonesian education system typically emphasizes structured learning, relying heavily on rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction (Laila, Adityarini, & Maryadi, 2023). In contrast, Pakistan considers English a second language (ESL), granting it a more prominent role in education, government, and professional sectors. Pakistani students are generally exposed to English more frequently and are encouraged to adopt self-regulated learning strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their vocabulary acquisition (Sultana & Imran, 2024). These distinctions in instructional methodologies and language exposure directly impact the vocabulary learning strategies used by students, making a comparative study crucial for understanding their effectiveness in different learning settings.

This study aims at analyzing and compare the vocabulary learning strategies employed by undergraduate English students in Indonesia and Pakistan. By identifying the most commonly used strategies in each country, the research seeks to determine the key factors shaping students' learning behaviors. Additionally, it aims at evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies and provide insights for educators to enhance vocabulary instruction. The study also investigates how environmental and linguistic differences influence students' choices and usage of VLS, contributing to a broader understanding of vocabulary acquisition in diverse educational contexts. The objectives of this research include is determining significant differences in the implementation of VLS between these two groups.

While numerous studies have explored vocabulary learning strategies, comparative research on Indonesian and Pakistani students remains limited. Most existing studies focus on individual countries, overlooking cross-cultural differences in vocabulary learning approaches. Previous research has highlighted the dominance of cognitive strategies in reinforcing vocabulary acquisition through repetition and practice, as found in Malaysian EFL learners (Yaacob et al., 2019). Similarly, meta cognitive strategies have been emphasized as a key approach for vocabulary retention (Goundar, 2019; Al-Khresheh & Al-Ruwaili, 2020). It is contrast from Kocaman finding's (2018) where

activation strategies is being the most effective way to improving vocabulary retention. Despite these insights, direct comparisons of VLS usage across different linguistic and educational contexts remain scarce

This study addresses this gap by providing a comparative analysis of VLS usage among Indonesian and Pakistani students. The findings will offer valuable insights for language educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers to develop more adaptive and effective teaching methodologies tailored to the needs of students in different learning environments.

2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive quantitative method to examine vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by undergraduate English students in Indonesia and Pakistan. The research focuses on identifying the types and frequency of VLS used by students in both contexts and comparing their learning patterns. Data was collected through a closed-ended questionnaire distributed online via WhatsApp groups to students from two Indonesian universities (Sebelas Maret University and Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta) and five Pakistani universities (Air University, Quaid-e-Azam University, National University of Modern Languages, Allama lqbal Open University, and Bahria University). These universities were selected to represent different English learning contexts-English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia and English as a Second Language (ESL) in Pakistan. The participants included 114 undergraduate English students (57 from Indonesia and 57 from Pakistan), selected through purposive sampling based on their enrollment in English departments, completion of at least one English course, and willingness to participate.

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adapted from Goundar (2019) based on the VLS framework developed by Gu and Johnson (1996). The original questionnaire contained 47 statements categorized into nine different strategy groups, but or this study, the statements were reorganized into four main categories: meta cognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation strategies. These categories encompass a range of strategies, such as selective attention, dictionary use, note-taking, word repetition, and contextual application of vocabulary. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). To ensure clarity, instructions were provided in both English and the participants' local language. Data collection was conducted online, with students given 30-45 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The collected data was analyzed quantitatively using SPSS to examine differences in vocabulary learning strategies between Indonesian and Pakistani students. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to calculate the mean, standard to deviation, and percentage distribution of responses in each strategy category. A normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk or

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the appropriate statistical tests for comparison. If the data was normally distributed, an independent t-test was applied to compare the mean scores of Indonesian and Pakistani students; if not, the Mann-Whitney U test was used as a non-parametric alternative. Additionally, Kruskal-Walis analysis was performed to examine the dominant strategy among both groups. Effect size calculations were also conducted to measure the magnitude of differences between the two groups. The results were presented in tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation and support answering the research questions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study, starting with the normality test to determine the appropriate statistical analysis for comparing vocabulary learning strategies between Indonesian and Pakistani Undergraduate students. The normality test results serve as the basis for selecting either parametric or non-parametric tests for further inferential analysis.

3.1 Normality Test

Normality test is conducted to determine whether the data is normally distributed or not. The normality test is conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test with the test criteria used at a significance level of 5%, if the p-value > 0.05 then the data is normally distributed. The results of the normality test are presented as follows.

Country		Shapiro-Wilk			Notes
		Statistic	df	Sig.	
Meta Cognitive Strategies	Indonesian	0,968	57	0,142	Normal
	Pakistani	0,973	57	0,227	Normal
Cognitive Strategies	Indonesian	0,957	57	0,040	Abnormal
	Pakistani	0,968	57	0,140	Normal
Memory Strategies	Indonesian	0,970	57	0,168	Normal
	Pakistani	0,906	57	0,000	Abnormal
Activation Strategies	Indonesian	0,943	57	0,010	Abnormal
	Pakistani	0,930	57	0,003	Abnormal

Table 1. The Result of Normality Test

The results of the normality test show that in the meta cognitive strategies, the data of Pakistani and Indonesian student respondents are normally distributed. The p-values exceed the significance threshold of 0.05. An independent t-test will be used for inferential analysis in this category. However, for cognitive strategies, the data from Indonesian students do not meet the normality assumption, while the data from Pakistani students do. In the memory strategies, the data from Indonesian students are normally distributed, whereas the data from Pakistani students are not. Additionally, for activation strategies, both Indonesian and Pakistani students' data are not normally distributed. In the cognitive strategies, memory strategies, and activation strategies, there are data that are not normally distributed, so the inferential test

will be carried out with the Mann-Whitney U test.

3.2 Inferential Statistics

The inferential statistical test conducted in this study was to determine whether there were significant differences between Indonesian and Pakistani in each VLS. The hypotheses proposed are as follows.

- Ho: There is no significant difference
- H1: There is a significant difference

At a significance level of 5%, the test criteria are obtained if the p-value < 0,05 then Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. The results of the t-test on each category are presented as follows.

3.2.1 Meta Cognitive Strategies

The results of the independent t-test on the meta cognitive strategies can be seen as follows.

Category	Country	Mean	SD	P-Value	Notes
Meta Cognitive Strategies	Indonesian	43,79	4,869	0,002	Ho rejected
	Pakistani	46,75	5,051		

Table 2. The results of the meta cognitive strategies t-test

The t-test results show a p-value < 0,05 so that Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. This shows a significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the meta cognitive strategies. The magnitude of the difference can be determined by conducting an effect size test with the Cohen's d formula as follows.

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{Mean_{Pakistani} - Mean_{Indonesian}}{SD_{Indonesian}}$$

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{46{,}75 - 43{,}79}{4{,}869}$$

$$Effect\ Size = 0{,}6089$$

Based on the calculations obtained using the effect size, it is 0,6089 and is included in the large category. This shows a large and significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the meta cognitive strategies.

3.2.2 Cognitive Strategies

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the cognitive strategies can be seen as follows.

Category	Country	Mean	SD	P-Value	Notes
Cognitive Strategies	Indonesian	68,60	7,995	0,013	Ho Rejected
	Pakistani	73,26	10,661		

Table 3. The results of the cognitive strategies t-test

The t-test results show a p-value < 0,05 so that Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. This shows a significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the cognitive strategies. The magnitude of the difference can be determined by conducting an effect size test with the Cohen's d formula as follows.

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{Mean_{Pakistani} - Mean_{Indonesian}}{SD_{Indonesian}}$$

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{73{,}26 - 68{,}60}{7{,}995}$$

$$Effect\ Size = 0{,}5837$$

Based on the calculations obtained using the effect size, it is 0,5837 and is included in the large category. This shows a large and significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the cognitive strategies.

3.2.3 Memory Strategies

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the memory strategies can be seen as follows.

Category	Country	Mean	SD	P-Value	Notes
Memory Strategies	Indonesian	30,26	3,935	0,011	Ho Rejected
	Pakistani	32,16	5,993		

Table 4. The results of the memory strategies t-test

The t-test results show a p-value < 0,05 so that Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. This shows a significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the memory strategies. The magnitude of the difference can be determined by conducting an effect size test with the Cohen's d formula as follows.

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{Mean_{Pakistani} - Mean_{Indonesian}}{SD_{Indonesian}}$$

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{32{,}16 - 30{,}26}{3{,}935}$$

$$Effect\ Size = 0{,}4815$$

Based on the calculations obtained using the effect size, it is 0,4815 and is included in the large category. This shows a large and significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the memory strategies.

3.2.4 Activation Strategies

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the memory strategies can be seen as follows.

Category	Country	Mean	SD	P-Value	Notes
Activation Strategies	Indonesian	27,14	3,512	0,005	Ho Rejected
	Pakistani	29,05	4,987		

Table 5. Results of the activation strategies t-test

The t-test results show a p-value < 0,05 so that Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. This shows a significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the memory strategies. The magnitude of the difference can be determined by conducting an effect size test with the Cohen's d formula as follows.

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{Mean_{Pakistani} - Mean_{Indonesian}}{SD_{Indonesian}}$$

$$Effect\ Size = \frac{29{,}05 - 27{,}14}{3{,}512}$$

$$Effect\ Size = 0{,}5444$$

Based on the calculations obtained using the effect size, it is 0,5444 and is included in the large category. This shows a large and significant difference between Indonesian and Pakistani in the activation strategies.

3.3 Comparative Test

This comparative test was conducted to determine the most frequently used strategies of each student based on the country. The test analysis was conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis test. The test results are presented as follows.

Category		N	Mean Rank	P-Value
	Meta Cognitive Strategies	57	142,11	
	Cognitive Strategies	57	199,82	
Indonesian	Memory Strategies	57	72,50	0,000
	Activation Strategies	57	43,58	
	Total	228		

Table 6. The Result of Kruskal-Wallis Test Indonesian

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test on Indonesian showed a p-value < 0,05 which indicated a difference in each VLS dimension. Furthermore, based on the mean rank, it shows the average ranking of each category. The average ranking of cognitive strategies is higher than other dimensions. This shows that the most superior strategy in Indonesian is the cognitive strategies.

Category		N	Mean Rank	P-Value
	Meta Cognitive Strategies	57	142,30	
	Cognitive Strategies	57	199,78	
Pakistani	Memory Strategies	57	68,41	0,000
	Activation Strategies	57	47,51	
	Total	228		

Table 7. The Results of Kruskal-Wallis Test Pakistani

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test on Pakistani showed a p-value < 0,05 which indicated a difference in each VLS dimension. Furthermore, based on the mean rank, it shows the average ranking of each category. The average ranking of cognitive strategies is higher than other dimensions. This shows that the most superior strategy in Pakistani is the cognitive strategies.

Based on the independent t-test and Mann-Whitney U-test, all categories have p-values < 0.05, indicating that the nul hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. This confirms that Indonesian and Pakistani students employ significantly different vocabulary learning strategies. Furthermore, the effect size calculation shows values falling into the large category across all strategies, highlighting the strong distinction between the two groups Kruskal-Wallis analysis further revealed that cognitive strategies were the most dominant among both Indonesian and Pakistani

students, as evidenced by the highest mean rank. This suggests that students from both countries rely on cognitive strategies such as repetition and contextual usage in their vocabulary learning processes However, despite this commonality, variations in other strategy categories emphasize how cultural and educational factors shape different learning approaches.

A notable finding was the significantly higher use of meta cognitive strategies among both Pakistani and Indonesian students, as indicated by the mean ranks. This result suggests that meta cognitive strategies play a crucial role in vocabulary learning for both groups. However, while the mean ranks are similar, further analysis is needed to understand potential contextual differences in how these strategies are applied.

One possible explanation for this strong reliance on meta cognitive strategies is the increasing emphasis on independent learning in higher education settings across both countries. Pakistani students, traditionally associated with self-regulated learning approaches that emphasize planning, monitoring, and evaluation, may exhibit a structued approach to vocabulary acquisition. Meanwhile, Indonesian students, despite being accustomed to more teacher-centered instruction, may also recognize the effectiveness of meta cognitive strategies and adopt them accordingly. In contrast, memory and activation strategies showed much lower mean ranks.

Although English holds different statuses in both countries, EFL in Indonesia and SLA in Paistan. Both contexts share a common characteristic: limited exposure to English in everyday life. Unlike countries where English is widely spoken in social and professional settings, students in both countries primarily engage with English mostly in academic environments. This lack of immersive exposure may explain why the findings of this study reveal similar patterns in VLS use, particularly the strong reliance on cognitive and meta cognitive strategies while activation strategies remain less favored.

The results of this study align with Yaacob et al. (2019), who found that cognitive strategies were the most commonly employed by EFL learners in Malaysia, highlighting their role in reinforcing vocabulary acquisition through repetition and practice. Similarly, Goundar (2019) emphasized the dominance of meta cognitive strategies among university students in Fiji, supporting the notion that learners actively regulate their learning processes to enhance vocabulary retention. The findings also resonate with Al-Khresheh & Al-Ruwaili (2020), who reported that meta cognitive strategies, particularly planning and self-monitoring, play a crucial role in vocabulary learning across different educational settings.

This study differs from Kocaman et al. (2018), who emphasized the importance of activation strategies in improving vocabulary retention and practical language use on Turkish students. Activation

strategy higher used in countries where English is more widely spoen, as greater exposure to English provides learners with more opportunities to practice vocabulary in real-life contexts. Overall, this study supports previous research on the importance of meta cognitive and cognitive strategies, it also highlights differences in the use of memory and activation strategies, which can be influenced by cultural, pedagogical, and environmental factors.

Despite these significant insights, this study has several limitations. The relatively small sample size (57 Indonesian and 57 Pakistani students) may not fully represent the broader student population. Additionally, the reliance on quantitative methods means that deeper insights into students' strategy choices were not explored. Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative interviews and classroom observations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' VLS preferences. Expanding the sample size and investigating external factors such as motivation, proficiency level, and educational background would further enhance the generalizability and applicability of these findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the patterns of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) employed by Indonesian and Pakistani undergraduate students. While cognitive strategies emerged as the most dominant in both groups, meta cognitive strategies were also widely used, with no significant difference between the two. These findings indicate that both groups actively engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their vocabulary learning processes. However, memory and activation strategies were the least preferred. The lower preference for activation strategies can be influenced by limited exposure to English-speaking environments, as students in countries with a higher number of English speakers tend to engage more in real-life language application. These findings underscore the role of contextual factors, including educational systems, language environments, and cultural influences, in shaping students’ VLS preferences.

The results of this study hold practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. By understanding the variations in VLS use, educators can develop targeted instructional approaches that incorporate a balance of cognitive, meta cognitive, memory, and activation strategies. Additionally, integrating more interactive and self-regulated learning techniques into curricula could enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency. Future studies should explore Iongitudinal and intervention-based research to assess how instructional modifications influence students' VLS over time, ensuring more effective and adaptive learning strategies in diverse linguistic environments.

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