

## The Relationship Among Extraversion Tendency, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, and Reading Comprehension of EFL Undergraduates in Kerman Province

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Received 4 July 2011; accepted 22 July 2011

### Abstract

This article aims mainly to explore the relationship among the degree of extraversion tendency, vocabulary learning strategies, and reading comprehension of EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province. For this study, there are five different categories of vocabulary learning strategies as determination, memory, social, cognitive, and metacognitive. In order to investigate the current variables, 164 EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province were chosen based on one-step cluster sampling. The data were collected by using Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire (VLSQ) adopted from Bennett (2006), Eysenck personality inventory, revised version (EPQ-R), and TOEFL reading comprehension test. Then, they were analyzed by Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings showed that: a) overall strategy use and four categories (out of 5) of vocabulary learning strategies were not significantly correlated with reading comprehension, b) there was a significant and positive correlation between extroversion tendency and four categories of (out of 5) vocabulary learning strategies as well as overall strategy use, and c) there was no significant relationship between reading comprehension and degree of extroversion tendency.

**Key words:** Vocabulary Learning Strategy; Reading Comprehension; Extroversion Tendency; Language Learning Strategy

Mohammad Hosseini Naveh, Reza Kafipour, Rahmatollah Soltani (2011). The Relationship Among Extraversion Tendency, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, and Reading Comprehension of EFL Undergraduates in Kerman Province. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 3(2), 104-110. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/j.sll.1923156320110302.375>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.sll.1923156320110302.375>

### INTRODUCTION

Language learning strategies are special activities taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (Oxford, 1990). They have attracted much attention in the studies that were conducted by Cohen (1998), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990). The learner-centered approach was increasingly used in the educational system simultaneously. Thus, language learning strategies have helped learners to take responsibility in their learning process and learn independently. This has also been shown in the study that was done by Littlewood (1999). Furthermore, making a learner-centered classroom is much easier by the help of language learning strategies.

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are a part of language learning strategies that have received much attention since the late seventies. However, a small number of studies have been conducted in the past to investigate the usage of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) by Iranian EFL learners. Exploration of these strategies has helped learners use processes to improve their skills in a second or foreign language. According to Oxford (1997), these strategies can be affected by variables like motivation, attitude, gender, learning styles, etc. Furthermore, utilization of vocabulary learning strategies has been found to affect students' performance

in language learning (Sarani & Kafipour, 2008).

In addition, Language learning strategies are connected to the learner's basic language learning styles and other personality-related variables in the learning and cannot run only by themselves. Thus, as Schmeck (1988) believes, language learning strategies should be observed in the context of general personality factors like: introversion / extroversion, reflectiveness / impulsiveness, field independence / dependence, self-confidence, self-concept, self-efficacy, creativity, anxiety, and motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic). Moreover, he states that a language learning strategy without considering personality-related factors cannot last for a long time.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the relationship among extraversion, vocabulary learning strategies, and reading comprehension of EFL undergraduates in Kerman Province.

Thus, the following research objectives can be mentioned:

1. To find the relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and reading comprehension of EFL undergraduate learners in Kerman Province.
2. To find the relationship between the degree of extroversion tendency and vocabulary learning strategies used by EFL undergraduate learners in Kerman Province.
3. To find relationship between the degree of extroversion tendency and reading comprehension of EFL undergraduate learners in Kerman Province.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to the above research objectives, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. Is there any relationship between vocabulary learning strategies and reading comprehension of EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province?
2. Is there any relationship between the degree of extroversion tendency and vocabulary learning strategies used by EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province?
3. Is there any relationship between the degree of extroversion tendency and reading comprehension of EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province?

## REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Language learning strategies are those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language (Cohen, 1998). Generally, language learning strategies are beneficial because they make students autonomous, that is, students can be responsible for their own learning

(Nation, 2001, p.222). Utilization of learning strategies is very important in vocabulary learning and depends on learners' attempts to a large extent. Thus, researchers have identified a large number of vocabulary learning strategies used by the learners. Vocabulary learning strategies are a subdivision of language learning strategies which have attracted much attention since the late seventies. A vocabulary strategy is a special instructional tool and way of going about directly or explicitly as well as the independent word learning skills required to learn words independently. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary learning strategies make learners enable to take more responsibility for their own learning. He believes that a large amount of vocabulary can be acquired by using vocabulary learning strategies.

Some of the following studies have investigated how learners use vocabulary learning strategies. In the study that was done by Moir (1996), utilization of vocabulary learning strategies was explored by a group of 10 English learners. The study showed that the learners who were more proficient than the others were much more responsible for their learning. Furthermore, it was concluded that the less proficient learners had little control of language learning strategies and were highly affected in their methods by weekly tests.

Another study was conducted by Lawson and Hogben (1996) by using a think-aloud procedure. They explored vocabulary learning strategies that 15 Australian learners applied in learning 12 new words in Italian. In this study, learners preferred to use simple repetition strategies rather than complicated elaboration strategies. Furthermore, learners who recalled most of the learned words had more utilization of learning strategies than learners who had poorer performance.

In a follow-up study done by Gu (2002), use of vocabulary learning strategies on Chinese undergraduate students was explored. In this study, gender was found as an influential variable in specifying utilization of vocabulary learning strategies and EFL outcomes. Furthermore, Female respondents performed much better than male respondents in general proficiency and vocabulary size.

Wu (2005) used Schmitt's (1997) vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire to investigate utilization of VLS on 203 Taiwanese EFL high school and undergraduate students. In this study, using bilingual dictionaries, guessing from textual context, and asking classmates for the meaning of words were chosen as the most frequently discovery strategies by the learners. Furthermore, studying the sound of a word and repeating a word's form were chosen as the most frequently used consolidating strategies by the students. It was also found that the traditional methods of rote learning like memorizing words and grammatical forms of the words were used by Taiwanese learners yet.

Li (2005) explored learning beliefs of 100 Chinese

EFL undergraduates in a province of China using a questionnaire. In this article, rote learning was considered as a vocabulary learning strategy. After analyzing 28 items of the questionnaires, it was found that the learners believed that rote learning was composed of association, perseverance, memory, exam practice, and repetition strategies. Furthermore, the following factors shaped their perceptions of rote learning: a) the English learning environment, b) the demands of examinations, c) Chinese background, and d) personal habits in learning. The findings also revealed that the students had a strong Chinese cultural belief and preferred to use practicing, memorizing, reviewing, and repetition.

Finally, the most recent study found by researcher on vocabulary learning strategies was done by Wu (2008). He explored vocabulary learning strategies used by 10 vocational Chinese ESL learners in a vocational institute located in Hong Kong. Each of these learners was interviewed individually, and their responses were recorded with a tape recorder and transcribed by the researcher. Learners applied the following strategies to identify the meaning of the words: mental rehearsal (e.g. saying the word in the mind before speaking the word), imagery (use of pictures to remember new words), auditory representation (e.g. dividing the sound segments of the word to learn pronunciation), selective attention (e.g. paying attention to keywords in spoken English), checking the dictionary to find out the meaning of words and co-operation (e.g. working with peers).

Because of lack of research done on the relationship between extroversion tendency and vocabulary learning strategies, the following studies investigate relationships between personality and language learning strategies. In the studies that were done by Ehrman and Oxford (1989; 1990) and Oxford and Ehrman (1995), introverts applied more independent and self-management strategies than extraverts, and extraverts used more social, affective, and visual strategies than introverts. Furthermore, introverts preferred to look for meaning and context before acting. In other words, introverts preferred to use more communicating meaning strategies in comparison with extraverts.

Ehrman and Oxford (1995) did another study investigating the relationship between personality type and language learning strategies with a larger sample. This study also showed that extroverts are different from introverts because of using more social strategies. Furthermore, Ehrman and Oxford mentioned that "users of social strategies tend to be open about their thoughts and feelings and... they are realistic and down-to-earth in their learning" (p.375).

In a recent study done by Wakamoto (2000), the relationship between introversion-extraversion and utilization of language learning strategies was explored using MBTI and SILL instruments. In this study, there was a positive and significant relationship between

extraversion and social-affective and functional practice strategies. Furthermore, introverts and extraverts were different in using social-affective and functional practice strategies.

Few studies have been done on vocabulary learning strategies and its relation to reading comprehension and little attention has been given to them. Curtis (1987), in his study, showed that vocabulary learning strategies directly affected vocabulary size of the students while they mostly had an indirect effect on reading comprehension. In the study that was done by Cusen (2005), vocabulary learning strategies had closer relationship with vocabulary size than other variables like reading comprehension.

Kiany (1997) investigated the relationship between extraversion and English proficiency of 237 Iranian postgraduate students studying in English-speaking countries by using Persian version of EPQ; and TOEFL, IELTS, MCHE, and cloze tests. The results showed a negative and a significant relationship between extraversion and TOEFL subcomponent of reading comprehension, that is, more extroverted learners tended to have lower scores on the reading comprehension. Furthermore, this study showed that introverts performed better than extraverts at least in receptive proficiency tests and general academic achievement.

Busch (1982) explored the relationship between introversion-extraversion and English language proficiency of 105 adult school and 80 junior college learners in Japan. A Japanese version of EPI and a nationally standardized English test, consisting grammar / vocabulary, reading, aural comprehension, and dictation, were used to collect the data. In general, no significant relationship was found between extraversion and language measures. Only, pronunciation, a subcomponent of the oral test, was significantly and negatively correlated with extraversion.

There are different vocabulary strategy classification systems; however, the classification presented by Schmitt (2000) is the basis for the current study. According to this classification, strategies are classified as *determination*, *social*, *memory*, *cognitive*, and *metacognitive*. Determination strategies help learners to determine the meaning by using dictionaries, guessing the meaning from the context and identifying the parts of speech and constituent elements. In other words, determination strategies are individual learning strategies that help learners to identify the meaning of new words without the other's help (Schmitt, 2000).

*Social strategies* can be used to determine the word definitions by asking teachers, classmates and native speakers. In other words, social strategies can encourage learners to interact with each other and learn from each other (Schmitt, 2000). They can also be used to stabilize information by speaking to native speakers or even language teachers outside the class.

*Memory strategies* Memory strategies are a large

number of strategies that learners apply to recall the vocabulary. In other words, Memory strategies help learners to acquire the new words via mental processing by connecting their background knowledge to the new words (Schmitt, 2000). As an example, when the learner encounters the word “dog”, he groups the word “dog” under the category of a four-legged animal since the learner is aware of the image of these four-legged animals from its background knowledge. Memory strategies are composed of three groups: a) using images to create a strong connection with the word and its meaning. These images can be shaped in the mind or drawn in notebooks, b) using strategies to link words together to help retrieval of vocabulary. For example, using words in the sentences make retrieval easier, and c) using vocabulary knowledge aspects to stabilize the meaning of the words. Specific examples include giving attention to the word’s phonological or orthographical form, memorizing affixes and roots, matching some words to their corresponding physical action, and learning the word class.

*Cognitive strategies* deal with mechanical aspects of learning vocabulary and are not related to mental processing (Schmitt, 2000). Repetition is one of the most commonly used cognitive strategies. Other examples are taking notes and highlighting new words, making lists of new words, using flashcards to record new words, putting English labels on physical objects, keeping a vocabulary notebooks, and writing the words many times.

*Metacognitive Strategies* mirror learners’ capability to find opportunities to learn and then record and review those experiences. In other words, metacognitive strategies include monitoring, decision-making, and assessment of one’s advance. They can also aid learners to specify suitable vocabulary learning strategies for learning new words (Schmitt, 2000). Specific examples include using English language media, studying new words many times, paying attention to English words when someone is speaking English, studying new words many times, and skipping or passing new words.

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## METHODS

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### Participants

Since in Kerman Province, only Kerman Bahonar University and Rafsanjan Valiasr University offer English as a field of study, these two state universities were considered as the clusters of the current study. Then, among these two clusters, Rafsanjan Valiasr University was chosen randomly. Finally, based on single-stage cluster sampling, the whole population of Rafsanjan Valiasr University, 164 EFL undergraduate students, was used as the sample of the study.

### Instruments

In the current study which is a survey, two questionnaires

and one test were used to collect the data. The first questionnaire which was used in this study is Schmitt’s vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire (VLSQ) adopted from Bennett (2006). It is a 41 items likert-scale questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The second questionnaire used in this study is Eysenck personality inventory, revised version (EPQ-R) which is a 19 items yes/no questionnaire. Finally, TOEFL reading comprehension test which is extracted from the Barron’s TOEFL test and consists of 50 questions was used as another instrument in the current study.

### Procedure

Data collection was done in one ninety minute session at Rafsanjan Valiasr University in February 2010. First, TOEFL reading comprehension test was administered to the participants. After a short break, they were asked to answer vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire (VLSQ) and Eysenck personality questionnaire, revised version (EPQ-R). The students were given 60 minutes to answer TOEFL reading comprehension test but no specific time was assigned to the questionnaires. They were asked to return them as soon as they complete it. The researcher himself administered the questionnaires and the test. He explained to the respondents the purpose and the procedures of the questionnaires and the test. The participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and would not affect their marks. The researcher also made the students aware of that their participation would help all Iranian learners to learn English more efficiently. In short, all required information was given to the participants before administering the instruments, information like how to answer the questionnaires and the test.

Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17. To answer research questions 1, 2, and 3, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to identify the strength and the direction of the relationship between any two continuous variables (e.g. use of VLS and extraversion).

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## RESULTS

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### Correlation Results

To answer questions number one, two, and three and find any relationship among vocabulary learning strategies, reading comprehension and extroversion tendency, correlation coefficients amongst 6 independent variables (determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies and overall strategy use) and two dependent variables (reading comprehension and extroversion tendency) were obtained through Pearson correlation which were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Correlation Among 6 Independent Variables (Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Overall strategy use) and Two Dependent Variables (reading comprehension and extroversion)**

Dependent variable	Deter.	Soc.	Mem.	Cog.	Meta.	Over.	Extroversion
Reading Comprehension	-.005	.239**	-.030	0.022	0.099	-0.40	0.015
Extroversion	.023	.216*	.304**	.187*	.230**	.276**	1

P<0.05\*    p<0.01\*\*

**Note:** Deter= Determination; Soc= Social; Mem= Memory; Cog= Cognitive; Meta= Metacognitive; Over= Overall Strategy Use

As Table 1 showed, determination strategy was the only strategy that had no correlation with both reading comprehension (-.005) and extroversion tendency (.023) while the other strategies (social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies and overall strategy use) were positively or negatively correlated with one or both dependent variables (reading comprehension and extroversion tendency).

Social strategy was the only strategy that had correlation with both reading comprehension (0.239) and extroversion tendency (0.216). It was positively correlated with extroversion tendency and reading comprehension, that is, more extroverted learners used more social strategies and less extroverted learners preferred less use of social strategies. Furthermore, the learners who used more social strategies had higher reading comprehension scores while the learners who used less social strategies had lower reading comprehension scores.

Memory (0.304), cognitive (0.187), and metacognitive (0.230) strategies and overall strategy use (0.276) were only correlated with extroversion tendency. However, memory, metacognitive, and overall strategy use had a stronger correlation with extroversion tendency in comparison with cognitive strategy.

Next, the relationship between two independent variables (reading comprehension and extroversion tendency) was examined, there was no correlation between reading comprehension and extroversion tendency ( $r=0.015$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The first and second research questions sought relationships between vocabulary learning strategies; and reading comprehension and extroversion tendency of EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province. Since these questions are interrelated, they are discussed with each other. The relationship between variables was shown by Pearson correlation coefficient. Reading comprehension had only a significant correlation with one category of (out of 5) vocabulary learning strategies (see Table 1). Furthermore, the findings did not confirm the existence of positive relationship between overall strategy use as an independent variable and reading comprehension as a dependent variable of the study.

In the current study, vocabulary learning strategies

had slight effect on reading comprehension of the learners. It is similar to the results of Curtis (1987) and Cusen (2005). Curtis (1987), in his study, showed that vocabulary learning strategies highly affected vocabulary size of the students while they slightly had an effect on reading comprehension. In the study that was done by Cusen (2005), vocabulary learning strategies had closer relationship with vocabulary size than other variables like reading comprehension.

The findings of the current study revealed a significant correlation between extroversion tendency and four categories of (out of 5) vocabulary learning strategies as well as overall strategy use. The findings in the literature have shown that introverts are naturally good at long-term memory while extroverts are not. Thus, more extroverted learners may tend to use more VLS in comparison with less extroverted learners in order to compensate for their poor long-term memory.

A few studies have been conducted on vocabulary learning strategies and their relation to extroversion tendency. Furthermore, since Schmitt's VLS classification is mostly based on Oxford's classification of language learning strategies, social, metacognitive, and memory strategies are common in VLS and LLS and have the same nature. Thus, the results of this part will be focused on language learning strategies and their relations to personality.

In the current study, extroverts preferred to use memory strategies more than the other strategies (see Table 1). This is unlike the results of Ehrman and Oxford (1990) and Oxford and Ehrman (1995). In their study, extraverts preferred to use social strategies more than the other strategies. Furthermore, in the current study, memory and metacognitive strategies were significantly and positively correlated with extroversion tendency while in the study done by Wakamoto (2000), metacognitive strategies were not correlated with extroversion tendency, and memory strategies were not positively correlated with extroversion tendency.

The third research question asked relationship between reading comprehension and extroversion tendency of EFL undergraduate students in Kerman Province. Correlation coefficient of 0.015 showed that there was no significant relationship between reading comprehension and extroversion tendency of the students (see Table 1).

Moreover, the results of the current study were

different from the results of Kiany (1997) and Busch (1982). Kiany (1997) investigated the relationship between extraversion and English proficiency of 237 Iranian postgraduate students studying in English-speaking countries by using Persian version of EPQ; and TOEFL, IELTS, MCHE, and cloze tests. The results showed a negative and a significant relationship between extraversion and TOEFL subcomponent of reading comprehension, that is, more extroverted learners tended to have lower scores on the reading comprehension.

Busch (1982) explored the relationship between introversion-extraversion and English language proficiency of 105 adult school and 80 junior college learners in Japan. A Japanese version of EPI and a nationally standardized English test, consisting grammar / vocabulary, reading, aural comprehension, and dictation, were used to collect the data. In order to assess the learners' spoken English, some of them were interviewed. Then, these interviews were rated according to their pronunciation, comprehension, fluency, and grammar. In general, no significant relationships were found between extraversion and language measures. Only, pronunciation, a subcomponent of the oral test, was significantly and negatively correlated with extraversion. Moreover, extraversion was almost correlated significantly and negatively with the components of grammar /vocabulary and reading comprehension.

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## CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of the current study have led to the following conclusions:

1. Results related to the research question one showed that only one (social strategy) out of five categories of vocabulary learning strategies had significant correlation toward learner's reading comprehension. Furthermore, the findings of the current research did not confirm the existence of a significant relationship between overall strategy use as an independent variable and reading comprehension as a dependent variable of the study.

2. The results of research question two showed a positive and significant correlation between extroversion tendency and four out of five categories of vocabulary learning strategies as well as total strategy use. These four categories were memory, cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies.

3. The results of research question three showed no significant relationship between reading comprehension and the degree of extroversion tendency of the EFL learners.

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