

# Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Reading Habits and Vocabulary Size Test

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Diplomski studij engleskog i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

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**Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Reading Habits and Vocabulary Size  
Test**

Diplomski rad

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses two important parts of language learning, the vocabulary acquisition and the reading skill, where the focus is on vocabulary learning strategies. One part also discusses the vocabulary size tests, the purpose and use of measuring that specific knowledge, what types of tests help observe vocabulary development, their purpose in language teaching and learning and the use of tests in contemporary foreign language teaching. It also discusses general and more specific features of the reading skill and reading habits. The first part of the paper introduces relevant aspects of vocabulary, how it is acquired and measured, and vocabulary learning strategies, as well as how they are taught and acquired. The second part discusses why reading skill is important in foreign language learning, how it is taught and to which extent reading habits influence vocabulary acquisition, as well as finding the best reading technique to accomplish the vocabulary learning goal. The paper also includes a survey of relevant research in the aforementioned fields of language learning. The empirical research provides an insight into the learning strategies that students of English in Croatia exploit in order to acquire vocabulary, as well as students' reading habits that improve the reading skill. Also, it explores the way in which they are connected with vocabulary learning. An academic word list vocabulary size test is used to examine students' vocabulary breadth in order to compare it to the vocabulary learning strategies and reading habits they make use of.

**Keywords:** vocabulary learning strategies, reading habits, vocabulary size test,

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## **1.) Introduction**

The focus of this paper is the importance of the strategies used to accomplish the goal of learning vocabulary, as one of the essential parts of foreign language knowledge. The paper points out the significance of the reading skill as the main source of vocabulary and its impact on the learning of vocabulary. It also discusses the vocabulary size test, which gives the teacher either a basic look into the knowledge of the learners when it comes to vocabulary or a more profound look into the comprehension of words they acquired.

The paper attempts to consider the relationship between the reading habits, vocabulary learning strategies, and vocabulary knowledge. The paper includes explanations on how the learners learn more or less successfully, how vocabulary is taught and learned, the methods and techniques used to accomplish the goals set. It tries to clarify the most helpful strategies used by learners. At the beginning of the paper, in the first chapter, alongside the explanation of vocabulary and its teaching in general, the variety of vocabulary learning strategies are discussed in terms of which strategies are more suitable for advanced learners and which for younger learners. The reading skill, as one factor influencing the acquisition of vocabulary, is also given attention. The paper goes on to discuss how and why reading is taught and to which extent the habit of reading is considered a useful and positive strategy in achieving the foreign language learning goals. The main aim is to identify the relationship between the reading habits and vocabulary acquisition. The first chapter also reviews various tests used to measure vocabulary knowledge. In the second part of the paper, an empirical research was carried out to examine the relationship between various vocabulary learning strategies used by university students of English, their vocabulary knowledge and reading habits.

## 1.) Vocabulary learning strategies

### 2.1. What is vocabulary?

To be able to talk about vocabulary learning strategies, the first thing that should be clarified is the concept of vocabulary. The vocabulary of a language consists of words that are used for either oral or written, passive or active communication and which is one of the basics of language learning process among other important components of a language. Nation and Waring (1997) state that vocabulary is only one of the components of language that enables direct and indirect language use for learners. Every teacher is somehow interested in the learners' vocabulary size, whether it is because they are interested in providing better tasks for learning vocabulary or to encourage the learners to use a variety of strategies that help the process to become more qualitative and suitable for their own way of learning.

According to Schmitt and McCarthy (in Nation and Waring, 1997), the average learner has to be able to manipulate a corpus of approximately 3000 words, more or less, of the high frequency words of the target foreign language. Nation (1990) argues that, after the words are learned, the teacher has to focus on the low frequency words and help the learners to develop appropriate strategies to comprehend these words. Since these words cover a small amount of vocabulary, Nation and Waring (1997) suggests class time should not be spent on actually teaching these words, but rather to spend that time on different strategies.

Vocabulary is essential to language and of utmost importance to language learners. Vermeer (2001) points out that over the last decade, vocabulary has been recognized as an essential element of language proficiency, both in first and second language acquisition. After years of promoting morphological and syntactic skills, knowledge of words is now considered the most significant factor in foreign language learning. Words are the "carriers of meaning": without knowledge of words, understanding a language and communication in general is impossible. Knowledge of words involves more than connecting concept and label (in psychology) or meaning and form (in linguistics), and ranges from productive to receptive (Vermeer 2001).

In order to define what it means to know a word, second language vocabulary researchers have proposed a variety of corresponding frameworks. Shen (2008) refers to a few researchers whose frameworks describe aspects of vocabulary knowledge. Richards' (1976, as cited in Shen, 2008) framework identified seven aspects of word knowledge (e.g. syntactic behavior,

associations, semantic value, different meanings, underlying form and derivations), whereas Nation (1990) distinguished between eight types of word knowledge (e.g. form, grammatical pattern, meaning, function, relation with other words), which are specific, both for receptive and productive knowledge. Chapelle (1998, as cited in Shen, 2008), on one hand, claimed that a characteristic definition of vocabulary should contain four dimensions:

- vocabulary size,
- knowledge of word characteristics,
- lexicon organization,
- processes of lexical access;

Henriksen (1999, as cited in Shen, 2008), on the other, introduced three separate but related vocabulary dimensions:

- a “partial-precise knowledge” dimension,
- a “depth of knowledge” dimension,
- a “receptive-productive” dimension.

Qian’s (2002) latest framework, modeled on earlier representation of vocabulary knowledge, proposed that vocabulary knowledge consists of four fundamentally connected dimensions:

- vocabulary size,
- depth of vocabulary knowledge,
- lexical organization,
- automaticity of receptive–productive knowledge.

In all the frameworks reviewed, all researchers agree that vocabulary knowledge should at least be composed of two dimensions, which are vocabulary breadth, or size, and depth, or quality. Vocabulary breadth refers to the number of words (of which) a learner has at least some kind of the knowledge of, whereas depth of vocabulary knowledge is defined as a learner’s level of knowledge of various meanings of a given word (Shen, 2008).

## 2.2 Why and how is vocabulary taught and learned?

Vocabulary, being one of the biggest issues in the language learning process, is learned in many ways. To manage the learning of huge amounts of vocabulary, we either learn it directly or indirectly. The indirect or incidental learning is quite possibly the most common way. According to Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) an example of this is learning new or deepening the knowledge of already known words through extensive listening and reading. Even Sternberg (1987) agrees that learning from context is so important that some studies suggest that first language learners learn most of their vocabulary in that way. In opposition to that statement, Nation and Liu Na (1985) have shown that it is impossible to comprehend and make use of any context or unsimplified text unless we already have the necessary amount of the approximately 3000 words.

Spoken language has become more important in language teaching with the emphasis on language for communication, whilst written language will always remain fundamental source of input for language learning in most formal contexts. The reason for that is the global availability of the electronic modes of communication. The differences of course are significant with respect to the kinds of vocabulary items that become important to teach. Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) suggested that spoken language offers a way from which vocabulary should be viewed as a communicative resource, rather than just a list of words that have to be learned. So, language learning involves learning sequences of words as well as sequences within a word (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). All of the above is a guideline for teachers when it comes to vocabulary learning. However, the problem of selecting what vocabulary to teach remains. McCarthy (1990) implies that without knowing how the syllabuses and materials have been designed, what criteria have been followed regarding vocabulary content and what the main goal is, it becomes difficult for the teachers to organize classes and explain the learners why they are being taught that specific vocabulary. That is why certain criteria must be followed when selecting vocabulary.

According to McCarthy (1990), the first has to be the word frequency. The more frequent the word, the better it is to present it at the early stage of the learning process. The word frequency list must, however, be approached with caution and careful analysis, because of the questions of the size of the corpus used to get the frequency count, whether the corpus included written language, spoken or both, whether it covered a wide range of text types, topics, registers,



situations, etc. (McCarthy, 1990). These questions must be taken into account at all cost in order to plan which list to incorporate into the vocabulary teaching.

The range of the words, as well as frequency, must be considered to create the order of importance that might be present in any text (McCarthy, 1990). It might be useful to the learners to point out different course books and dictionaries that have incorporated every word, if they wish to study on their own.

- The third important factor when it comes to vocabulary teaching is learnability. The fact that some words are easier to learn, especially the short and simple ones, comes from the following statements (McCarthy, 1990): Words may present spelling difficulties, phonological difficulties and syntactic properties
- Some target words may be "false friends" and learners are often unable to relate to the word meaning

Of course predicting what ~~the~~ learners need, will always remain the most difficult issue to solve. Maybe the best way in dealing with the problem might be the answer to a specific question such as "Which words do learners need to know in order to talk to people, explain certain things, to be able to respond?" Since every learner is an individual with his or her own sense of need, the challenge for the teacher is to encourage each learner to pursue his or her interests in the way that is most productive for the whole vocabulary learning process and provide guidelines and help. Once the appropriate vocabulary has been chosen, there are steps in presenting it. The most common ways in teaching vocabulary, according to McCarthy (1990), is to present the topic, meaning, form and contextual relations. The use of topic will ensure the learners are not only presented with the words, but the context as well, just like the contextual relations. The meaning will focus on different interpretations of a word. The form gives explanation of structures and the varieties of forming more words from a single word (McCarthy, 1990).

### **2.3 Measuring vocabulary knowledge**

With the rising interest in vocabulary acquisition by second language learners, on the part of both researchers and language teaching experts, there is a need to have appropriate tools to measure learners' knowledge of words. Milton (2009) repeatedly claims that second language readers should know a vast amount of words for the purpose of achieving basic text comprehension in

explicit and implicit learning. This interdependence has a potential pedagogical effect from teaching reading and vocabulary perspective (Milton, 2009).

Measuring vocabulary usually means testing how big a learner's vocabulary size is and how well he or she knows a word. Vocabulary tests results and theories might not always influence vocabulary teaching right away but they remain essential to develop further our understanding of language learning processes. With the knowledge that many languages contain more than a million words, we can easily say that non-native or even native speakers will never learn all the words that make up the richness of their language (Pignot-Shahov, 2012). There are two main methods to measure vocabulary size: "One is based on a sampling from a dictionary and the other is based on a corpus or a frequency list derived from a corpus" (Nation, 2001:583). For the first method, a sample of words is taken out from a dictionary and learners are tested on these words. Corpus-based revision, on the other hand, is drawn on language application and is useful to classify and test high frequency words. This type of test has been extensively used for non-native speakers whose proficiency is limited. (Pignot-Shahov, 2012).

The Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) focuses on testing the first four frequency levels using a form-recognition matching format with each cluster containing three stems and six clusters (Pignot-Shahov, 2012). The Vocabulary Size Test (VST) adopts a meaning-recognition format that intends to test the learner's general vocabulary size. One of the issues is the notion of "knowing a word" which is not easy to explain, even though manifestation of knowledge is not required for the test (Pignot-Shahov, 2012). The Computer Adaptive Test of Size and Strength (CATSS), developed by Laufer and Goldstein (2004), is a computerized vocabulary test that intends to test both breadth and depth of vocabulary. It is based on the supposition that there are four hierarchic degrees of knowledge based on two dichotomous differences: "supplying the form for a given meaning versus supplying the meaning for a given form and being able to recall versus only being able to recognize (whether form or meaning)" (Laufer and Goldstein, 2004: 405). These four degrees of word knowledge reflect active recollection, passive recollection, active recognition and passive recognition. Precious insights have been gained from recognition/receptive tests. First of all, it is possible to estimate learners' vocabulary size. Secondly, it is possible to foresee the quantity of vocabulary learned across a course of lessons and also to contrast the number of words learned at the same level but in different countries. For instance, when comparing the vocabulary growth of foreign language learners in the UK to other

countries, the UK came under criticism because second language vocabulary growth for UK learners is slower than in other countries (Milton 2009). The combination of receptive/recognition tests also allows researchers to draw parallels between different types of word knowledge for receptive vocabulary. An early finding of these combined tests is that learners investigated appear to favor phonological vocabulary knowledge at the outset of learning (Milton, 2009). Another weakness of these methods is that “vocabulary breadth, the knowledge of word form and how many of these word forms are known is a relatively unified dimension of knowledge” (Pignot-Shahov, 2012:42). Tests like CATSS confirm that the passive vocabulary is larger than active vocabulary and that there is a difficulty hierarchy between the two.

#### **2.4. What are Vocabulary Learning Strategies?**

The simplest definition of vocabulary learning strategies would be the following:

“Vocabulary learning strategies can be defined as actions, behaviors, steps or techniques that learners use to discover or process information about lexical items and that enhance comprehension, storing or retention of this information.” (Pavičić Takač 2002:149). Schmitt states that the importance of vocabulary as well as of learning strategies has become the subject of a growing number of research studies in the last 25 years, vocabulary learning strategies, however, are still somehow neglected (Schmitt, 1997).

O’Malley and Chamot (1990) divided the language learning strategies in three major groups:

- 1.) metacognitive
- 2.) cognitive
- 3.) social/affective

In the process of compiling language learning strategies lists and their categorization, many studies, according to Schmitt (1997), started to indirectly deal with the more specific field of language, the vocabulary and strategies applicable to the learning or acquisition of words. To be able to cope with new vocabulary, learners apply different strategies to maximize the learning of new words. Politzer and McGroarty (1985) warn that although some strategies are effective for the learning process, they should not be considered inherently good, but rather dependant on the context in which they are used. They also mention that the variables on which the strategies will

depend include proficiency level of the learner, text, language modality, background knowledge, context of learning, target language and most importantly the learners' characteristics.

#### **2.4.1. Types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

It seems that the most frequent strategies are those mechanical ones or the most complex ones. Schmitt mentions the field of cognitive psychology that indicates activities that require deeper involvement, promote a more effective learning process than those with less manipulation of information. Some strategies such as forming association or the Keyword method have shown a considerable enhancement of retaining target words than the less complex strategies. Of course those "less complex strategies" may be effective as well, that is why a balance needs to be established between them (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). Developing word lists can also be an effective way of learning new words in a short time (Nation 1982, as cited in Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997). Rote repetition, as O'Malley and Chamot (1990) suggest, can be effective if ~~the~~ learners get used to using it. The overall conclusion of the studies and surveys is that the "less complex strategies" are more suitable for beginners or for young learners because they include less material and information than the more demanding strategies that are exploited by the intermediate or advanced learners (Cohen and Aphek, 1981). Some classification systems were proposed, in order to clarify the categories of the strategies. Stoffer's (as cited in Schmitt 1997) analysis of the 53 items on her vocabulary strategy survey showed clusters of nine groups:

- strategies that involve authentic language use
- strategies involving creative activities
- strategies used for self-motivation
- strategies used to create mental linkages
- memory strategies
- strategies involving physical action
- strategies used to overcome anxiety and strategies used to organize words.

Research on vocabulary learning strategies originates from the belief that general language learning strategies can and are used as strategies for vocabulary acquisition. Research goes in two directions. The first mentioned is the research of the language learning strategies in general and the second the research on the efficiency of each strategy used when it comes to vocabulary learning (Pavičić Takač, 2008). It is impossible to make a specific classification of vocabulary

learning strategies, because they are indeed just learning strategies used for vocabulary learning purpose. Even when learners do apply certain strategies, they use the so-called "mechanical strategies" (e.g. memorization or repetition). Depending on the knowledge and skill level of the learner strategies are used more or less successfully. Although research has shown that the more "complex strategies" result in better retention of vocabulary, it is not likely to expect from beginners to use them. Cohen and Aphek's study (1980) showed that different categories of association (e.g. meaning, sound, context, mental image, personal experience, visualization of the word, word stress, physical reaction, personal name or symbols) help the learners in vocabulary learning. The study also showed that some participants, who were using weak memorization strategies and underdeveloped strategies of inductive and deductive inferencing, were less successful in retrieving the target vocabulary.

Mnemonic devices or memory strategies, ones that include cognitive processes, can be classified into verbal (reduction, elaborated coding, semantic elaboration, rhyme and rhythm), visual (imagery, the Loci Method, method of spatial page organization) and mixed mnemonics (the Peg Method, the Keyword Method, association mnemonics, rituals, process mnemonics) (Zarevski, 1994). One of the most popular mnemonic devices, the Keyword method, involves two steps: learners establish an association between the L2 word with an L1 word that sounds similar (the so-called keyword), and then create an interactive representation that associates the keyword and the L2 word (Atkinson, 1975, as cited in Pavičić Takač, 2008). Studies indicate that this method is rarely used, unless given more attention and perhaps functions better when used with another method. Just like any other existing strategy, even mnemonic ones cannot be used by every learner, even though they enhance learning and serve better for retrieving vocabulary. Their use supposedly depends on numerous factors such as (Pavičić Takač, 2008):

- the time the learner invests in acquiring the mnemonic
- the learner's ability for creating images
- proficiency level
- learning style
- metamemory
- cultural elements
- situation demanding the retrieval of a given word

In opposition to Zarevski, Thompson (1987, as cited in Pavičić Takač, 2008) proposed the physical reaction method, the method of verbal elaboration (grouping of words, connecting words into word chain, and connected words into a meaningful story), as well as other memory-enhancing techniques (self-testing, revision in time intervals, practicing in natural situations). The majority of learners will probably use the easiest strategy when learning vocabulary. The rote learning strategy, which, by rule, entails a list of second language words and their first (native) language translation (Lawson and Hogben, 1996, as cited in Pavičić Takač, 2008), seems to be a "natural" strategy, particularly for beginners who rely on lexical associations in vocabulary learning (Griffin and Harley, 1996). This particular strategy, however, does not encourage long term retention of target vocabulary, and both researchers and teachers agree that learning words in context is far more effective.

#### **2.4.2 Use of vocabulary learning strategies**

The end goal of every vocabulary learning strategy is to help learners to continue to learn new words and increase their vocabulary size. Despite the large list of possible vocabulary learning strategies, only a few were researched in depth. Strategies such as guessing from context (Huckin, Haynes, and Cody, 1993) and certain mnemonics (Pressley, Levin and Miller, 1982, as cited in Nation and Waring, 1997) were given more attention. These studies found, that learners do use strategies to learn new vocabulary more than strategies for language learning in general. The learners found that it is more helpful to apply certain methods or techniques to make the process of learning vocabulary easier. Although the majority of learners still use either the strategy of guessing from context or simply try to memorize the word and its meaning to remember the new word, as Cohen and Apeh (1981) imply, more and more learners become aware of the importance of vocabulary and the strategies that can be used to their advantage in learning new words.

According to Moir and Nation (2002) every learner should first set their vocabulary learning goals and afterwards, accordingly, use different strategies to enhance the acquisition. They suggest the following:

- learners should learn the useful vocabulary, such as vocabulary for academic purposes, for social uses or for reading purposes (TV, newspapers, etc.).

- they should maintain the learning for further use after the classes end and to make use of the vocabulary both receptively and productively.

If these goals are set, the learners are encouraged to use the "appropriate choice" strategy, that is, to learn the most useful words regarding the field or the "appropriate focus" strategy that is, deciding what to learn about the specific word. If the learners want to maintain the knowledge of the vocabulary, Moir and Nation (2002) refer to Schmitt's memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies for deeper processing of words, that is choose the strategy that best helps retain the word. For productive use of language, the best strategy is to find a way how to use the language.

Chin (1999) compared the strategy of guessing from context, the strategy of word formation analysis and the combination of the two strategies used while reading. The effectiveness of each strategy, however, depended on the task used in testing. In general, multiple choice tasks produced better results than gap-filling tasks. Word formation analysis entails certain familiarity with suffixes, prefixes and their meanings, whereas gap-filling tasks involve a deeper semantic-syntactic awareness of the word. Learners who inferred from the context or used the combined context/word formation strategy were more successful at such tasks. Although the strategy of word formation analysis, especially if it includes attending to etymology that is to cognates (Bellomo, 1999, as cited in Pavičić Takač, 2008) can be very useful, its contribution seems irrelevant if the learner has already successfully inferred the word's meaning from the context (Pavičić Takač, 2008)

### 2.4.3. Why and how are VLS taught?

Because of the need to establish a more efficient class when teaching vocabulary, teachers put a lot of effort in helping learners to become more competent to organize their studies of vocabulary or to make it simpler. Language learning strategies encourage greater overall self-direction for learners. Self-directed learners are independent learners who are capable of assuming responsibility for their own learning and gradually gaining confidence, involvement and proficiency, such is the case with vocabulary learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). But they are mostly inclined to use basic vocabulary learning strategies (Schmitt, 1997). This in turn makes strategy instruction an essential part of any foreign or second language program.

Ghazal (<http://novitasroyal.org/Ghazal.pdf>) suggests the following steps in teaching vocabulary learning strategies. First, teachers need to find out what strategies and in particular what combination of strategies should be taught. Second, the learning strategies known and preferred by learners should be identified and taken into account. This can be done through various questionnaires. Third, some learners may need to be convinced that strategy training is to their own advantage (Ellis, 1994). Fourth, after deciding what strategies to give attention to, teachers should decide how much time to spend on training the learners in strategy use, and they should work out a syllabus for each strategy that covers the required knowledge and provides enough independent practice (Nation, 2001). Fifth, when considering which vocabulary learning strategies to recommend to students, teachers should not take strategies as naturally good. They should bear in mind that effectiveness depends on the context in which strategies are used (Schmitt, 1997). Again, the effectiveness with which learning strategies can be both taught and used depends on the already mentioned variables such as “proficiency level, task, language modality, background knowledge, context of learning, target language and learner” characteristics” (Chamot & Rubin, 1994). Finally, teachers should bear in mind that learners need to understand the goal of each strategy and the conditions under which it works best.

Learners also need enough practice to feel confident and proficient in using strategies. Therefore, teachers should provide plenty of time for strategy training (Nation, 2001). After these issues are settled, teachers can adopt an appropriate framework for training learners in using vocabulary learning strategies. Unfortunately, today’s teachers cannot find enough time to spend on teaching various strategies, but rather leave it to the learners to explore them and find the most



suitable ones for their learning abilities. In most cases this will probably take too much time for the learners and distract them from other important studies. There are several patterns of strategic teaching available for the teachers in order to determine which strategies best suit each learner:

- 1.) The teacher demonstrates the use of the strategy.
- 2.) Steps involved in the strategy are separately practiced.
- 3.) Learners in pairs use the strategy, supporting each other.
- 4.) Learners report on their strategy use.
- 5.) Learners report on the difficulties and success in strategy use outside the classroom.
- 6.) Teachers systematically test the use of strategy and provide feedback.
- 7.) If needed, learners consult the teacher on their strategy use.

A teaching plan like this is necessary to be designed for every single vocabulary learning strategy, especially if it is a complex one whose use requires specific knowledge and skills (Pavičić Takač, 2008).

### **3. Reading habits**

#### **3.1. Teaching reading skill in foreign language**

Since forever the reason of learning to read in a language has been to be able to understand the literature written in that language. Learners learn to read a language by studying different parts of it (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure) and not by actually reading it. Lower level learners read only sentences and paragraphs produced by textbook writers and instructors. The reading of authentic materials is limited to the works of great authors and reserved for upper level students who have developed the language skills needed to read them (Byrnes, 1998). The communicative approach to language teaching has given instructors a different perspective of the role of reading in the language classroom and the types of texts that can be used in teaching. When the goal of lessons is communicative competence, everyday materials such as train schedules, newspaper articles, and travel and tourism, even Web sites become appropriate classroom materials, because reading them is one way communicative competence is developed. Instruction in reading and reading practice thus become essential parts of language teaching at every level (Byrnes, 1998).

Reading is an activity with a purpose. A person may read in order to gain information or confirm existing knowledge, or in order to evaluate a writer's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for enjoyment, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading guide the reader's selection of texts. Reading research shows good readers (Byrnes, 1998):

- read extensively
- integrate information in the text with existing knowledge
- have a flexible reading style, depending on what they are reading
- are motivated
- rely on different skills interacting: perceptual processing, phonemic processing, recall
- read for a purpose; reading serves a function

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what that meaning is. Reader knowledge, skills, and strategies include (Byrnes, 1998):

- linguistic competence: the ability to recognize the elements of the writing system; knowledge of vocabulary; knowledge of how words are structured into sentences
- discourse competence: knowledge of discourse markers and how they connect parts of the text to one another
- sociolinguistic competence: knowledge about different types of texts and their usual structure and content
- strategic competence: the ability to use top-down strategies, as well as knowledge of the language (a bottom-up strategy)

Teachers want to create learners who, even if they do not have complete control of the grammar or have a developed vocabulary, can manage in communicational situations. In the case of reading, this means creating learners who can use reading strategies to take full advantage of their understanding of text, identify relevant and non-relevant information. To accomplish this goal, teachers' center of attention is the process of reading rather than the result of reading. This process involves six stages (Byrnes, 1998):

- developing learners awareness of the reading process in general and present them with a variety of strategies by asking students to think and talk about how they read in their native language.
- learners are allowed to make use of the selection of reading strategies by using authentic reading texts and tasks, in or outside the classroom. The choice of texts is left to the learners, because the purpose is to read to learn, they however must be aware of what they are doing while reading.
- helping learners by pointing out different strategies that help with the specific task given or the type of text presented.
- self-evaluation of comprehension and self-report of their use of strategies is promoted.

- the use of the target language to convey instructions and course-related information in written form
- point out how a particular strategy can be used in a different type of reading task or with another skill.

By raising students' awareness of reading as a skill that requires active engagement, and by explicitly teaching reading strategies, instructors help their students develop both the ability and the confidence to handle communication situations they may encounter beyond the classroom. In this way they give their students the foundation for communicative competence in the new language. Every class that involves reading is divided into three stages of particular activities: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities, each, of course, with a different aim (Byrnes, 1998):

Before reading: Plan for the reading task.

- set a purpose or decide in advance what to read for
- decide if more linguistic or background knowledge is needed
- determine whether to enter the text from the top down (attend to the overall meaning) or from the bottom up (focus on the words and phrases)

During and after reading: Monitor comprehension

- verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses
- decide what is and is not important to understand
- reread to check comprehension
- ask for help

After reading: Evaluate comprehension and strategy use

- evaluate comprehension in a particular task or area
- evaluate overall progress in reading and in particular types of reading tasks
- decide if the strategies used were appropriate for the purpose and for the task
- modify strategies if necessary

### 3.2. Influence of reading habits on language learning

It was thought that it is better to be fluent in a foreign language, to be able to speak, but the problem for the learners was, there was nothing to talk about. The learners were never given a chance to read in the target language, therefore they could not think or speak, without mentally translating. Reading is not only considered a mere way of entertainment, but in a foreign language class it is the most valuable source of information, a way of expanding knowledge and consolidation of the existing knowledge (Rivers, 1998). In a foreign language class, rarely do the learners read for pleasure because of the opinion that reading represents an activity that is related to a great amount of various texts. Leung (2002) suggests that extensive reading especially improves language learning, since it advances other language abilities as well. In addition to the development of reading proficiency, extensive reading improves listening proficiency, writing ability, reading speed and even spelling. Learner's of any foreign language who never experienced extensive reading may find it difficult to find the time, along with other intensive studies, discipline or commitment at the beginning. Leung (2002), however, says that the solution to this problem is the impact of extensive reading during the reading process itself. A great role in the process has the teacher, who should encourage his or her learner<sup>2</sup>s. If learners are given the opportunity to read more for pleasure than for requirement, perhaps extensive reading may become a habit and they will become more eager to develop necessary reading skills and vocabulary they need in order to enjoy what they are reading.

According to Rivers (1998) reading is referred to as a passive activity or a receptive skill with obviously little engagement in actual language production. But if the actual process and abilities required are examined, readers are more active than suspected. The abilities previously mentioned include comprehension of the text, semantic and syntactic understanding of words and sentences, as well as their phonological side. With the advance of science and technology, people are able to learn through many modes other than reading. Yet, reading continues to be a major tool of learning and enjoyment. Those who read more, generally do quite well in most areas of academic life. In foreign language teaching and learning, reading involves understanding and comprehending meaning or message conveyed through the written text. An efficient reader will understand what is irrelevant for him and what is relevant in the text that he should get at.

Drawing on the first language (native language) reading theories of Goodman (1976) and Smith (1975), Krashen (1989) proposed the hypothesis that vocabulary is best acquired by guessing from context through the act of reading itself. His theories have intuitive appeal and appear to have had a more profound impact on second language teaching practice than any other current theory of second language acquisition (Raptis, 1997). The pre-reading exercises are also used at times to teach the important skill of guessing the meaning of words from context (Wegman and Knezevic, 1990, as cited in Raptis, 1997). In another text, Roseberry and Weinstock (1992: ix, as cited in Raptis, 1997) write: "this text is designed to help students acquire the skills that academic study requires. Among these is understanding vocabulary in context". Another author claims "the fact remains that the best way of extending vocabulary is through reading itself" (Wallace, 1986:135, as cited in Raptis 1997) and another text reflects current theories about language learning, namely that reading is the most effective way to become a better writer (Rentz, 1992, as cited in Raptis, 1997).

It has been shown that many current second language reading theorists support the hypothesis that vocabulary is best learned incidentally by guessing from context. This view of learning has a theoretical foundation in Krashen's Monitor Model of second language acquisition (1981). A key aspect of this model is the Input Hypothesis, which proposes that successful acquisition depends on a learner's contact to comprehensible input (language input that is specially adjusted to a stage just beyond the learner's current level of ability). In terms of reading, what is necessary for successful reading and vocabulary acquisition is contact to meaningful reading materials. It is felt that direct instruction of conscious strategies may be pointless, and perhaps damaging, to the natural growth of the reader (Raptis, 1997).

### **3.3. Relationship between reading and vocabulary**

Research evidence shows that extensive reading and achievement in English are closely related. Learners, who read independently, become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not (Krashen 1989).

The connection between vocabulary and reading is well structured and rather "active" than "passive". Researchers such as Anderson and Freebody (1981, as cited in Shen, 2008) have suggested several models to describe the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. They presented three hypotheses - "instrumentalist", "aptitude" and "knowledge":

- Instrumentalist view - vocabulary knowledge is the main requirement and contributory factor in comprehension. Good vocabulary knowledge enables good comprehension.
- Aptitude view - vocabulary knowledge is one of many results of having a "good brain". Good reading comprehension is also one of these results.
- Knowledge view - vocabulary is a pointer of good world knowledge. This world knowledge supports reading comprehension because the reader must bring as much information to the text as the reader expects to get from it.

Mezynski (1983, as cited in Shen, 2008) suggested a fourth "access" hypothesis.

- Access view - vocabulary is described as having a causal relationship with comprehension provided that the vocabulary can be easily accessed, and access can be improved through practice.

The importance of vocabulary in language acquisition goes uncontested. Haynes and Baker (1993, as cited in Rashidi and Piran, 2011) came to the conclusion that the most significant hindrance for second language readers is not lack of reading strategies but insufficient vocabulary in English. What these studies point out is that the threshold for reading comprehension is, to a large extent, lexical. Lexical problems will, therefore, hinder successful comprehension. It is obvious that vocabulary is crucial for successful communication in any language. However, the key role vocabulary plays in language learning has not always been reflected in the researches and studies and the amount of attention given to it by language teachers and researcher. Interest in the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension has also a long history in the research of ESL/EFL reading. Observing the performance of ESL/EFL readers, dealing with unknown vocabulary, researchers have noted the important role of vocabulary as an interpreter of reading ability taken as a whole (Nation, 1990; 2001). According to Grabe (1991, as cited in Rashidi and Piran, 2011), the incorporation of intensive reading supports vocabulary learning and improvement and that the foreign language learners can benefit from intensive reading in order to develop their vocabulary knowledge. Newman and Green (2004, as cited in Rashidi and Piran 2011) claimed that learners who were exposed to extensive reading with deliberate attention to vocabulary, performed better on vocabulary tests and as a result, their knowledge of vocabulary was reinforced (Rashidi and Piran, 2011).

#### **4.) Research of the relationship between VLS, reading habits and vocabulary size**

#### **4.1.) Introduction**

To master a language and use it to communicate, a certain number of words is required. This is why learners choose different strategies to successfully improve their vocabulary. Nation (2001) claims, a strategy must involve:

- choice, i.e. there should be several strategies to choose from
- be complex, i.e. there should be several steps to learn
- require knowledge and benefit from training
- increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use

Nation (2001) also states that small amounts of vocabulary can become big amounts if the learners read large quantities of comprehensible books (Nation, 2001). Set of actions people do while reading, routines of behavior that are repeated regularly and tend to occur subconsciously while reading are often referred to as reading habits. In order to enlarge the vocabulary, reading might be the most valuable method to do so. Depending on the level of the learners, vocabulary size test results show the quantity of words learned during a period of time. It shows not only the number of words mastered, but the competence of using them correctly as well. With the different choices of the form of the vocabulary size test, different aspects of vocabulary can be tested (morphology, semantics, spelling, etc.). Although the history of research into vocabulary learning strategies is relatively short, the interest has brought along a range of studies conducted on individual and general vocabulary learning strategies.

#### **4.2.) Aim**

According to the previous studies and research, conducted with primary school, high school and university students, reading is believed to be the most efficient strategy when it comes to vocabulary acquisition. Both vocabulary acquisition and reading involve certain strategies and habits that help the vocabulary learning process which then is reflected on the vocabulary size of individual learners. In order to further explore this claim, the present research pursues the following questions:

- 1.) What is the relationship between VLS used and the VST results?
- 2.) What is the relationship between the RH and the VST results?



3.) Is there any difference between "good" and "poor" RH and the VST results?

#### **4.3.) Sample**

The study was conducted last year (2012), at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, Croatia. The participants in this research were 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th year students of English (1st year –15 students, 2nd year – 28 students, 4th year – 23 students, 5th year – 13 students). There were 7 female and 5 male participants from the 1st year, 15 female and 13 male participants from the 2nd year, 16 female and 7 male participants from the 4th year and 11 female and 2 male participants from the 5th year. The total number of participants who completed the questionnaire is 79 (N=79). The age of the participants ranges from 18 to 29 years. Participants had learnt English between 9 and 17 years.

#### **4.4.) Instruments**

The instrument used to elicit data for this research, was a battery of instruments consisting of three parts (Appendix). The first part contained 49 items about vocabulary learning strategies (modified version, items based on the questionnaire by Pavičić Takač, 2008). The second part of the questionnaire contained 20 items regarding reading habits (some statements taken from the questionnaire developed by Scales and Zikri (1986) and some added by the author of the paper). The third instrument was Nation's (2001) University Word List Level test (VST). The part about VLS and RH contained statements (strategies and habits) which the students are already familiar with or already use, followed by a 5 – point Likert-type scale. For each statement students could choose one of the following responses 1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, 5 – always. The VST was graded in two different ways: rigorous and lenient. For the VST rigorous all mistakes were taken into account (spelling, morphology and semantics) and for the VST lenient only semantic and morphological mistakes were taken into account. At the end of the first two parts, space was left, so that the students could enter other possible vocabulary learning strategies they use or reading habits they have or use, which, however were not mentioned in the questionnaire. Part 3 of the questionnaire consists of 35 sentences that measure the vocabulary size of the English language of the students. The first letters of the word missing were already given.

#### **4.5.) Procedure**

The students were asked to complete a three part questionnaire, during breaks between classes, by the author of this paper. They were asked to answer honestly, since it was not a test. The students read the instructions for each part in order to complete the questionnaire successfully. There were no right or wrong answers to these statements. The students had 90 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Learners were instructed to leave the field empty if they did not know the required word in the Vocabulary Size Test. The results of the research were obtained and analyzed by means of the SPSS program. In addition to descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and the independent t-test were used. On the basis of the results, participants were also divided into "good" and "poor" readers. The correlation (Pearson correlation) analysis was used to identify the relationship between the VST results, both rigorous and lenient, and the VLS and RH used by the students of English. The independent t-test was used to see if there was any difference between the "good" and "poor" RH and the VST results.

#### 4.6.) Results

The research conducted with the students of English showed that some of the students occasionally do use some VLS and that the students only periodically read. If the students do use VLSs, the most frequently used are (Table 1.): *If I cannot remember a word in conversations, I use another one with a similar meaning* (mean = 4.3671, St. D. = 0.80347 ), *I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words* (mean = 4.3165, St. D. = 1.05666), *I remember a new word if I encounter it many times* (mean = 4.3165, St. D. = 0.74325 ), *I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context* (mean= 4.2658, St. D. = 0.72870), *I look up words in computer dictionaries* (mean = 4.2532, St. D. = 0.85438 ), *I remember a new word if I remember the context in which I heard it* (mean= 4.1392, St. D. = 0.69308). The less frequently used strategies would be the following: *I keep a separate vocabulary notebook* (mean = 1.5063, St. D. = 0.98545), *I make word cards* (mean = 1.5443, St. D. = 0.91704), *I practice with friends in order to remember new words* (mean = 1.9747, St. D. = 1.09749).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for Vocabulary Learning Strategies (N = 79)**

VLS	Min	Max	Mean	St. D
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**If I cannot remember a word in conversations,**

<b>I use another one with a similar meaning.</b>	2.00	5.00	4.3671	.80347
<b>I remember a word if I encounter it many times.</b>	2.00	5.00	4.3165	.74325
<b>I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words.</b>	1.00	5.00	4.3165	1.05666
<b>I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context.</b>	3.00	5.00	4.2658	.72870
<b>I look up words in computer dictionaries.</b>	1.00	5.00	4.2532	.85438
<b>I remember a word if I remember the context in which I heard it.</b>	2.00	5.00	4.1392	.69308
<b>I like to be corrected if I misuse a word.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.9873	1.08005
<b>I remember a word, if I associate it with pictures, drawings or illustrations.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.9494	1.01146
<b>I remember a word if I like it.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.9367	1.12480
<b>I pick up words while, reading books and magazines in the foreign language.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.9241	.99707
<b>If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.9114	1.02769
<b>I associate new words with the ones I already know.</b>	2.00	5.00	3.7848	.79535
<b>I imagine a context, in which a word could be used in order to remember it.</b>	2.00	5.00	3.7468	.82382
<b>I remember words that are in some way similar.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.7215	.90493
<b>If I do not understand a word, I look it up in a monolingual dictionary.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.6709	1.04662
<b>I remember a word if I connect it with my personal experience.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.6709	1.02183

<b>I remember a word if I see it written down.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5949	.79290
<b>I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5949	1.13814
<b>I say a word out loud repeatedly, in order to remember it.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5823	1.21537
<b>I connect an image with a word's meaning in order to remember it.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5823	1.05742
<b>I use familiar words in various ways, in new situations in order to remember them.</b>	2.00	5.00	3.5443	.82892
<b>I remember 'complicated' words, because they stand out.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5316	.93144
<b>If I encounter an unknown word, I ignore it if I understand what the text is about.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5063	1.10794
<b>When I test myself I try to give the word's definition in the foreign language.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.4937	1.19693
<b>I use new words in a sentence, in order to remember them.</b>	2.00	5.00	3.4304	.76265
<b>If I do not understand a word, I ask for help.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.4304	1.16227
<b>I connect words to physical objects to remember them.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.3544	1.02580
<b>I review words only before a test.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.3291	.97035
<b>I test myself to check if I remember the words.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.3038	1.21269
<b>If I do not understand a word, I look it up in a bilingual dictionary.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.2278	1.08544
<b>I use colors and highlighters, to mark new words in a text.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.2278	1.55208
<b>I make a mental picture of a word's written form,</b>				

<b>in order to remember it.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.1772	1.19571
<b>I try to use the new words,</b>				
<b>I learn immediately in conversations or writing.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.1392	.94373
<b>If I do not know a word,</b>				
<b>I look it up in the textbook glossary.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.0506	1.08485
<b>If I cannot remember a word in conversations,</b>				
<b>I ask for help.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.0506	1.03650
<b>I ask the teacher to explain the meaning of the word.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.9747	1.02500
<b>I review words regularly outside the classroom.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.9494	.99870
<b>I look for similarities in sound and meaning,</b>				
<b>between words in my mother tongue and foreign words</b>				
<b>in order to guess the meaning.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.8481	1.13328
<b>I connect new words with words in another foreign language</b>				
<b>to remember them.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.8354	1.14836
<b>I group words together in order to remember them.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.7595	1.30301
<b>If I cannot remember a word in conversations,</b>				
<b>I use a word in my mother tongue.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.7215	1.20827
<b>I make word lists and write their translations,</b>				
<b>in my mother tongue.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.6709	1.19531
<b>If I hear a new word in class,</b>				
<b>I immediately write it down.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.6582	1.14227
<b>I read and leaf through a dictionary,</b>				
<b>to learn some new words.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.3544	1.25103
<b>I write down words,</b>				
<b>while I read books and magazines for pleasure.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.1646	1.07930

<b>I practice with friends in order to remember words.</b>	1.00	5.00	1.9747	1.09749
<b>I make word cards.</b>	1.00	5.00	1.5443	.91704
<b>I keep separate vocabulary notebook.</b>	1.00	5.00	1.5063	.98545

When it comes to students' reading habits, the results showed that the following habits are most often present when students read (Table 2.): *I like to read at home* (mean = 4.4051, St. D. = 0.89899), *If I read in a reasonable time I remember most of the content* (mean = 4.2025, St. D. = 0.75752), *My vocabulary improves when I read* (mean = 4.0380, St. D. = 0.82342), *I read books that are in English* (mean = 4.0253, St. D. = 0.98677). The results also show which habits are not as frequent: *I like to read at the library* (mean=1.9873, St. D. = 1.06811), *I find it difficult and exhausting to read* (mean = 2.0000, St. D. = 0.97402), *I read non-fiction such as diaries, essays, biographies, etc.* (mean = 2.6962, St. D. = 1.20208), *I only read required literature* (mean = 2.7975, St. D. = 1.10221), *I read the books I like more than once* (mean = 2.9494, St. D. = 1.46671 ). The results below indicate only the minimum usage of RH, where the most popular ones specify that learners are most comfortable while reading at home and, if they read what they like, not only the content will be remembered, but their vocabulary will improve.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Reading Habits (N = 79)**

<b>RH</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. D.</b>
<b>I like to read at home.</b>	1.00	5.00	4.4051	.89899
<b>If I read in a reasonable time,</b>				
<b>I remember most of the content of the book.</b>	2.00	5.00	4.2025	.75752
<b>My vocabulary improves as I read.</b>	2.00	5.00	4.0380	.82342
<b>I read books that are in English.</b>	1.00	5.00	4.0253	.98677
<b>I like reading literature.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.8734	1.14765

<b>I read books from my favorite authors.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.8608	1.09467
<b>I read fiction such as novels, short stories, poetry, etc.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.8481	1.13328
<b>To understand what I read,</b>				
<b>I use what I already know about the topic.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.5823	.98199
<b>I use the library to obtain reading materials.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.4684	1.15287
<b>I talk with my friends about the books I read.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.4684	1.25918
<b>I read for fun whenever I have time.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.4304	1.24739
<b>I read newspapers/magazines/etc.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.2911	1.31219
<b>I read books that are in Croatian.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.2658	1.27811
<b>I'm too busy to read books I like.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.0633	1.18041
<b>If I read literature quickly,</b>				
<b>I tend to forget what it's about.</b>	1.00	5.00	3.0506	1.11974
<b>I read the books I like more than once.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.9494	1.46671
<b>I only read required literature.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.7975	1.10221
<b>I read non-fiction such as diaries, essays,</b>				
<b>biographies, etc.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.6962	1.20208
<b>I find it difficult and exhausting to read.</b>	1.00	5.00	2.0000	.97402
<b>I like to read at the library.</b>	1.00	5.00	1.9873	1.06811

The maximum for VLS is 245 (49x5) and for RH the maximum is 100 (20x5). In this sample, the maximum for VLS is 200.10 (St. D. = 16.47760) and for RH just 81.25 (St. D. = 7.57545) (Table 3.). The results indicate that the participants occasionally do read and at least

some of them do use vocabulary learning strategies. For the tests the average score for VTS len is 20.4177 and for VST rig 20.3797, which indicates only a small difference between the ways the tests were corrected. Of course the more lenient the tests were corrected, the better were the scores.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics for Total VLS and RH (N=79)**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>St. D.</b>
<b>Total VLS</b>	160.7902	112.02	200.10	16.47760
<b>Total RH</b>	64.2013	40.05	81.25	7.57545
<b>Vocabulary Test Size lenient</b>	20.4177	6.00	34.00	6.47205
<b>Vocabulary Test rigorous</b>	20.3797	5.00	113.00	12.42135

When it comes to vocabulary learning, the present research shows that "good" readers do better in both VST rig (mean = 21.69, St. D. = 15.50658) and VST len (mean = 20.37, St. D. = 6.06718) as the results below illustrate (Table 4.). It is also shown, that "good" readers use to some extent more VLS than the "poor" readers (mean = 166.70, St. D. = 15.04596), whereas the "poor" readers use fewer strategies (mean = 153.72, St. D. = 15.46130).

**Table 4. Comparison of "good readers" vs. "poor readers" on VST and use of VLS (N = 79)**

	<b>VST rig</b>	<b>VST len</b>	<b>VLS</b>



	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.D.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.D.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.D.</b>
<b>good readers</b> <b>(≥65RH)</b>	43 (54%)	21.69	15.50658	20.37	6.06718	166.70	15.04596
<b>poor readers</b> <b>(&lt;65RH)</b>	36 (46%)	18.80	7.11465	20.47	7.01218	153.72	15.46130

The present research sets out to answer the following research questions: What is the relationship between VLS used and the VST results? What is the relationship between the RH and the VST results? The results demonstrate the following (Table 5.):

- 1.) There is no statistically significant correlation between vocabulary size test and use of VLS (sig. =  $p < 0.01 = 0.042$ ).
- 2.) There is no statistically significant correlation between vocabulary size test and RH (sig. =  $p < 0.01 = -0.151$ ).
- 3.) There is a strong statistically significant correlation between VLS and RH (sig. =  $p < 0.01 = 0.516^{**}$ ).

The Pearson's correlation test (Table 5.) showed that there is no significant correlation between the VSTs and the use of VLS and RH (compared to the results shown in Table 4.), which would suggest that there is only a small difference between "good" and "poor" readers. Total VLS ( $r = 0.042$ ,  $p = 0.711$ ) There is only a strong relationship between the Total VLS and Total RH ( $r = 0.516^{**}$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

**Table 5. Pearson's Correlation (N = 79)**

	<b>Total VLS</b>	<b>Total RH</b>
<b>Vocabulary Test rigorous</b>		
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	.042	.091
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.711	.427
<b>Vocabulary Test lenient</b>		
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.151	-.003
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.184	.977
<b>Total VLS</b>		
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>		.516**
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Independent t-test was conducted to check if there is a significant difference between "good" and "poor" readers in their use of VLS. The results show that the "good" readers use significantly more strategies than the "poor" readers ( $p = 0.000$ ). The test also showed that there is no significant difference between "good" and "poor" readers in their vocabulary size ( $p > 0.05 =$  VST rig ( $p = 0.306$ ), VST len ( $p = 0.946$ )) (Table 6.).

**Table 6. Independent t-test**

	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
<b>Vocabulary Size Test rigorous</b>	1.031	77	.306
<b>Vocabulary Size Test lenient</b>	-.068	77	.946
<b>Total VLS</b>	3.772	77	.000

Taking into consideration the low number of participants in this research the results cannot be interpreted as generally accurate.

#### 4.7.) Discussion

The focus of this paper was on "good" and "poor" readers, and the relationship between the use of vocabulary learning strategies and reading habits and vocabulary size. All tests conducted showed that "good" readers achieve better results on VSTs, both lenient and rigorous, and use significantly more VLS than "poor" readers. Moreover, "good" readers have better developed RH. However, the results indicate that there is only a small difference, which is statistically insignificant, in their vocabulary size. The research also showed that there is no significant correlation between the VSTs and the use of VLS and RH. Perhaps the main reason for the absence of the correlation is the fact that learners only occasionally read and during the process only some of them use VLSs.

While studying general learning strategies, researchers tried to somehow establish the differences between successful and unsuccessful learners. According to Ahmed (1989, as cited in Pavičić Takač, 2008), learners can be grouped on the basis of their strategy use. Successful learners are aware of the learning process and what it involves, learning words in context is more important than rote repetition or any other strategy, and are aware of the distinction between new and previously learnt second language vocabulary. Successful learners, in addition to other sources, use other learners as an information source of vocabulary. When using strategies in the learning process of vocabulary, weak learners apply them inadequately (Porte, 1988). Unsuccessful learners generally do not use strategies as often as successful learners, learning new words becomes difficult or impossible, not to mention connect them with the already known, and they usually avoid active practice, where they have to openly present their knowledge (Ahmed, 1989).

Research has shown that good readers actually do understand what they read, although they read the text fast (Share and Stanovich, 1995; Adams, Treiman and Pressley, 1998). The reading process of "good" readers' differs significantly from that of "poor" readers. Good readers process the text in detail, although they do so very quickly and almost unconsciously. When identification of words is fast and accurate as well, a reader has plenty mental energy to think about the meaning of the text. Knowledge of how to map sound and symbol is essential in developing the ability to recognize words (Foorman, Francis, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, and Fletcher, 1997). The ability to sound out words is, in fact, the foundation for rapid recognition of words "by sight."

Language knowledge and language proficiency is the main difference between "good" and "poor" readers. At the beginning of their learning process, poor readers are not less gifted or less motivated, they are just less skilled with language. Because of that, they benefit more from teaching that expands awareness of certain parts and their relationships of the target language.

Summing up studies on reading, this is what good readers actually do (Byrnes, 1998):

- read extensively
- integrate information in the text with existing knowledge
- have a flexible reading style, depending on what they are reading
- are motivated
- rely on different skills interacting: perceptual processing, phonemic processing, recall
- read for a purpose; reading serves a function.

## 5.) Conclusion

Regarding the demand for a better education, researchers and teachers tried to develop a more efficient plan for learning. In order to achieve a higher proficiency level and become more skillful in a foreign language, learners need to exploit different learning strategies. The aim of this study was to determine different relationships between English students' vocabulary size, preference in vocabulary learning strategies use and reading habits. Since the vocabulary tests are a perfect way to test the learners' knowledge, an adequate grading system should be developed according to the level. More rigorous grading system gives more accurate data regarding the knowledge of the vocabulary. If a rigorous grading system is applied, without the knowledge of the learners, no matter which level they are at, perhaps it will be easier for them to solve the test without extra pressure. As for vocabulary learning strategies, the results show that students do not use a great variety of vocabulary learning strategies. This could be attributed to several reasons. First, the students may have already discovered a small set of strategies that they find suitable and that they actively use. Second, the factors affecting the choice of strategies may vary from learner to learner. Students' reading habits can show the way they are most comfortable to develop a system that allows them to engage in the learning process. Since they show how and what the learners read, it is easier to develop a plan for reading skill development. Learners' improvement depends not only on teaching, it also depends on the way they create their learning environment. The variety of strategies introduced to the learners does not only make the learning process easier, it makes it more efficient as well. Although the research showed that the majority of students use almost the same VLS or have similar RH, both of these are individual learner characteristics and cannot be taken as generally efficient.

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## Appendix

### 1.) Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Reading Habits and Vocabulary Size Test

#### Questionnaire

Gender (circle): m f

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Language year: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** As part of a research project on language learning, I would like you to complete this questionnaire. The aim is to find out which vocabulary learning strategies you use, to find out your reading habits and the size of your vocabulary of the **English** language. The questionnaire consists of 3 parts each describing one part of the whole research. Please answer honestly, since this is not a test. Read the instructions for each part in order to complete the questionnaire successfully. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. You have 90 minutes to complete the questionnaire. For each statement you can choose one of the following responses:

**Circle the responses. 1-never 2-rarely 3 – sometimes 4 – often 5 - always**

#### PART 1

**Instructions:** Part 1 of the questionnaire consists of 49 statements concerning vocabulary learning strategies you use to learn new vocabulary for the **English** language. The part for Vocabulary Learning Strategies is not complete; please write down other approaches you might use, if there are any. For each statement you can choose one of the following responses: **Circle the responses. 1-never 2-rarely 3 – sometimes 4 – often 5 - always**

#### Vocabulary Learning Strategies

1	I use new words in a sentence in order to remember them.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I make word lists and write their translations in my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I review words regularly outside the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I test myself to check if I remember the words.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I remember a word if I remember the context in which I heard it.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I use familiar words in various ways in new situations in order to remember them.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I ask the teacher to explain the meaning of the word.	1	2	3	4	5

8	If I cannot remember a word in conversations, I use another one with a similar meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
9	If I do not understand a word, I look it up in a bilingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
10	If I do not understand a word, I look it up in a monolingual dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I remember words that are in some way similar.	1	2	3	4	5
12	If I hear a new word in class, I immediately write it down.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I like to be corrected if I misuse a word.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I write down words while I read books and magazines for pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I make word cards.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I look for similarities in sound and meaning between words in my mother tongue and foreign words (cognates) in order to guess the meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I review words only before a test.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I remember a word if I see it written down	1	2	3	4	5
19	I say a word out loud repeatedly in order to remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I connect an image with a word's meaning in order to remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
21	If I do not know a word, I look it up in the textbook glossary	1	2	3	4	5
22	I associate new words with the ones I already know.	1	2	3	4	5
23	If I do not understand a word, I ask for help.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words.	1	2	3	4	5
25	I remember 'complicated' words because they stand out.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I make a mental picture of a word's written form in order to remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
27	If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
28	I imagine a context in which a word could be used in order to remember it	1	2	3	4	5
29	I use colors and highlighters to mark new words in a text.	1	2	3	4	5
30	I group words together in order to remember them.	1	2	3	4	5
31	I remember a word if I encounter it many times.	1	2	3	4	5
32	I try to use the new words I learn immediately in conversations or writing.	1	2	3	4	5
33	I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
34	I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context.	1	2	3	4	5
35	I remember a word if I associate it with pictures, drawings or illustrations.	1	2	3	4	5
36	I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words.	1	2	3	4	5
37	I pick up words while reading books and magazines in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
38	When I test myself I try to give the word's definition in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
39	If I cannot remember a word in conversations, I use a word in my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5
40	I connect new words with words in another foreign language to	1	2	3	4	5

	remember them.					
41	If I cannot remember a word in conversations, I ask for help.	1	2	3	4	5
42	I remember a word if I connect it with my personal experience.	1	2	3	4	5
43	I connect words to physical objects to remember them.	1	2	3	4	5
44	I ask somebody to test me on words (e.g. parent, sibling, friend).	1	2	3	4	5
45	I remember a word if I like it.	1	2	3	4	5
46	If I encounter an unknown word, I ignore it if I understand what the text is about.	1	2	3	4	5
47	I look up words in computer dictionaries.	1	2	3	4	5
48	I practice with friends in order to remember words.	1	2	3	4	5
49	I keep a separate vocabulary notebook.	1	2	3	4	5

**Other Approaches:**

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**PART 2**

**Instructions:** Part 2 of the questionnaire consists of 20 statements. Please circle the responses that best fit your reading habit for reading in **English**. The part for Reading Habits is not complete, please write down other habits you might have, if there are any. For each statement you can choose one of the following responses: **Circle the responses. 1-never 2-rarely 3 – sometimes 4 – often 5 - always**

**Reading Habits**

1	I like reading literature.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I only read required literature.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I read books that are in English.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I find it difficult and exhausting to read.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I'm too busy to read books I like.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I read newspapers/magazines/etc.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I read non-fiction such as diaries, essays, biographies, etc.	1	2	3	4	5

8	I read fiction such as novels, short stories, poetry, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
9	If I read literature quickly I tend to forget what it's about.	1	2	3	4	5
10	If I read in a reasonable time I remember most of the content of the book.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I use the library to obtain reading materials.	1	2	3	4	5
12	To understand what I read, I use what I already know about the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I read books from my favorite authors.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I like to read at home.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I like to read at the library.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I read for fun whenever I have time.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I read the books I like more than once	1	2	3	4	5
18	I talk with my friends about the books I read	1	2	3	4	5
19	My vocabulary improves as I read	1	2	3	4	5
20	I read books that are in Croatian.	1	2	3	4	5

**Other habits:**

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**PART 3**

**Instructions:** Part 3 of the questionnaire consists of 35 sentences that will measure your vocabulary size of the **English** language. The first letters of the word missing are already given. If you don't know the word please leave the field empty.

**Vocabulary Size Test**

1. There has been a recent tr\_\_\_\_\_ among prosperous families towards a smaller number of children.
2. The ar\_\_\_\_\_ of his office is 25 square meters.
3. Phil\_\_\_\_\_ examines the meaning of life.
4. According to the communist doc\_\_\_\_\_, workers should rule the world.
5. Spending many years together deepened their inti\_\_\_\_\_.

6. He usually read the sport sec\_\_\_\_\_ of the newspaper first.
7. Because of the doctors' strike the cli\_\_\_\_\_ is closed today.
8. There are several misprints on each page of this te\_\_\_\_\_.
9. The suspect had both opportunity and mot\_\_\_\_\_ to commit the murder.
10. They insp\_\_\_\_\_ all products before sending them out to stores.
11. A considerable amount of evidence was accum\_\_\_\_\_ during the investigation.
12. The victim's shirt was satu\_\_\_\_\_ with blood.
13. He is irresponsible. You cannot re\_\_\_\_\_ on him for help.
14. It's impossible to eva\_\_\_\_\_ these results without knowing about the research methods that were used.
15. He finally att\_\_\_\_\_ a position of power in the company.
16. The story tells us about a crime and subs\_\_\_\_\_ punishment.
17. In a hom\_\_\_\_\_ class all students are of a similar proficiency.
18. The urge to survive is inh\_\_\_\_\_ in all creatures.
19. The baby is wet. Her dia\_\_\_\_\_ needs changing.
20. The prisoner was released on par\_\_\_\_\_.
21. Second year University students in the U.S. are called soph\_\_\_\_\_.
22. Her favorite flowers were or\_\_\_\_\_.
23. The insect causes damage to plants by its toxic sec\_\_\_\_\_.
24. The evac\_\_\_\_\_ of the building saved many lives.
25. For many people, wealth is a prospect of unimaginable felic\_\_\_\_\_.
26. She found herself in a pred\_\_\_\_\_ without any hope for a solution.
27. The deac\_\_\_\_\_ helped with the care of the poor of the parish.
28. The hurricane whi\_\_\_\_\_ along the coast.
28. Some coal was still smol\_\_\_\_\_ among the ashes.
29. The dead bodies were muti\_\_\_\_\_ beyond recognition.
30. She was sitting on a balcony and bas\_\_\_\_\_ in the sun.
31. For years waves of invaders pill\_\_\_\_\_ towns along the coast.
32. The rescue attempt could not proceed quickly. It was imp\_\_\_\_\_ by bad weather.
33. I wouldn't hire him. He is unmotivated and indo\_\_\_\_\_.
34. Computers have made typewriters old-fashioned and obs\_\_\_\_\_.

35. Watch out for his wil\_\_\_\_\_ tricks.



## **Sažetak**

Strategije učenja vokabulara i čitateljske navike, imaju vrlo važnu ulogu u procesu usvajanja vokabulara. Ovaj rad bavi se odnosima i vezama između strategija učenja vokabulara i čitateljskih navika te veličinom znanja vokabulara. Rezultati su istraživanja pokazali da se većina studenata ponekad služi strategijama pri učenju vokabulara, a čitanje kao strategija pokazala se kao jednom od najučinkovitijih. Dakle, ako se čitanje aktivno potiče kao strategija, napredak u usvajanju riječi stranoga jezika bit će uspješniji. Također je ispitana i veličina vokabulara studenata engleskoga jezika, a rezultati su pokazali da nema povezanosti između znanja vokabulara, strategija učenja vokabulara i čitateljskih navika u ovome uzorku.