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## مجلة جامعة حلب في المناطق المحررة

مجلة علمية محكمة فصلية، تصدر باللغة العربية، تختص بنشر البحوث العلمية والدراسات الأكاديمية في مختلف التخصصات، تتوفر فيها شروط البحث العلمي في الإحاطة والاستقصاء ومنهج البحث العلمي وخطواته، وذلك على صعيدي العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية والعلوم الأساسية والتطبيقية.

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- أن تكون المجلة مرجعاً علمياً للباحثين في مختلف العلوم.

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- ١٠- يبلغ الباحث بقبول النشر أو الاعتذار عنه، ولا يعاد البحث إلى صاحبه إذا لم يقبل، ولا تقدم أسباب رفضه إلى الباحث.
- ١١- يحصل الباحث على وثيقة نشر تؤكد قبول بحثه للنشر بعد موافقة المحكمين عليه.
- ١٢- تعبّر الأبحاث المنشورة في المجلة عن آراء أصحابها، لا عن رأي المجلة، ولا تكون هيئة تحرير المجلة مسؤولة عنها.

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أثر استعمال البطاقات في التعلم المتعمد للمفردات في طلاب اللغة الإنكليزية  
المستجدين في شمال غرب سورية

إعداد

أ. جمعة الأحمد      د. عبد الحميد معيكل

### ملخص البحث:

هدفت الدراسة الحالية، المطبقة على عينة من طلاب المرحلة الجامعية السورية، إلى دراسة استخدام البطاقات في حفظ المفردات. استخدمت الدراسة أداتين لجمع البيانات: الاختبارات (القبلية والبعدية) والاستبانة. شارك في البحث 64 طالباً، من السنة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة إدلب في الفصل الدراسي الأول من العام الدراسي 2022-2023. وتم تقسيمهم إلى مجموعتين متساويتين: العينة التجريبية والعينة الضابطة. وأظهر تحليل البيانات تفوق المجموعة التجريبية على المجموعة الضابطة في حفظ الكلمات والاحتفاظ بها لفترة طويلة واستخدامها بشكل مناسب. كما أظهر أن ضغط الوقت وحفظ العناصر وحفظ البطاقات وتنظيمها كانت من أهم الصعوبات التي واجهت المشاركين. ومع ذلك، كانت التقنية مثمرة، حيث ساعدت المشاركين على حفظ الكلمات. إضافة إلى ذلك، كانت أهمية التكرار من النتائج الرئيسية. أما من ناحية التطبيقات، فإن استخدام البطاقات فعال ومفيد للبالغين على المستوى الجامعي، فهو يساعد على تخزين المعلومات في الذاكرة طويلة المدى واسترجاعها لاحقاً عند الضرورة، ويساعد الأفراد الذين يواجهون تحديات في إدارة الوقت. وأخيراً، تقترح الدراسة أن يقوم باحثون آخرون بدراسة تأثير استخدام البطاقات في تعلم أنواع مختلفة من المعلومات واستخدام البطاقات من قبل مستويات مختلفة من الطلاب في سنوات جامعية مختلفة.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** بطاقات الذاكرة، التكرار، المراجعة.



## The Impact of Using Cards in Deliberate Vocabulary Learning on the First-year English Majors in Northwest Syria

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### Abstract:

The present study, applied to a sample of undergraduate Syrian students, aimed to investigate the use of cards for memorising vocabulary. Two data collection instruments were employed: pre- and post-tests, and a questionnaire. Sixty-four first-year English majors from the Department of English at Idlib University, enrolled in the first semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, participated in the study. They were divided equally into an experimental group and a control group. Data analysis showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in memorising words, retaining them over time, and using them appropriately. The study also identified several challenges faced by participants, including time pressure, memorising items, and organising and maintaining the cards. However, the technique proved effective, helping participants to memorise vocabulary successfully. Furthermore, the results highlighted the importance of repetition as a key factor. Regarding practical implications, using cards is effective and beneficial for university-level adults, as it aids in storing information in long-term memory and facilitates later retrieval. Additionally, it supports individuals who struggle with time management. Finally, the study recommends that future research examine the impact of using cards on learning different types of information and explore their use among students at various academic levels and years.

**Keywords:** memory cards, repetition, reviews.



## CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning is a main subskill in learning because all other skills use vocabulary and unless learners have a large repertoire of vocabulary, they cannot communicate with others (Nation, 2014). There is a complementary relationship between the knowledge of language and vocabulary learning. However, two main strands in learning vocabulary are deliberate and incidental. Incidental learning is very useful but it may not be enough as learners may not be able to understand received information so they need to rely on deliberate learning to be more successful (Jordan, 1997).

Learning vocabulary receives a great deal of importance due to its major role in communication and studying (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006). Moreover, one of the main causes of the students' achievement at school is their appropriate repertoire of vocabulary (Becker, 1977). Unless students focus on vocabulary and store enough words, they are not expected to be successful in their studies. In addition, learning vocabulary helps students in the comprehension of the texts they study (Carroll, 1971). The level of difficulty of the tests also correlates greatly with the vocabulary repertoire.

McLaughlin (2012) also assures that learning vocabulary is connected to success in both L1 and L2. The more words students learn in L1, the more successful they will be in learning L2. These students gradually become more successful in their achievements and improve their language competence. The pinpoint in this discussion is that understanding the texts or the information the learner receives is fundamentally linked to understanding the vocabulary that he or she stores in his or her mind. Without understanding the meanings of things, learning is weak and new information is impaired. Moreover, the importance of understanding the received vocabulary relates to L1 and L2 (Becker, 1977). The amount of vocabulary which students comprehend in L1 consolidates understanding and storing vocabulary in L2. Consequently, understood vocabulary can be used successfully in other contexts, and this is what McLaughlin (2012) names 'the ability to decontextualize language'.

University students mostly face difficulty in memorising vocabulary as they do not follow appropriate strategies in learning. If they follow successful strategies in learning vocabulary, they will be more successful in communication and negotiating meaning (Marius, 2018). Thus, deliberate vocabulary learning, using cards, could be an appropriate strategy for university students in Northwest Syria.



English has become the medium of science studies and technology all over the world. It has also become the Lingua Franca of communication as it is used internationally (House, 2002) in addition to using it in different aspects of life (Crystal, 2003), and one of these areas is Northwestern Syria. Thus, learning English is urgent. In addition, vocabulary is the main pillar in using English as it carries information and without it, no idea will be communicated.

The educational system in Northwestern Syria, where the current study is conducted, is divided into the school stage and the university stage, and students study English in both stages as supplementary subjects (Meygle, 1997). The school stage is divided into three levels: Primary, Preparatory and Secondary. The Primary stage consists of two levels: the First Ring which is from 1st to 4th grades and the Second Ring which includes 5th and 6th grades. The Preparatory stage is from 7th to 9th grades where formal study is optional. The Secondary stage is from 10th to 12th grades. Formal study in this stage is also optional. After passing all tests in the school stage, students can enrol in the university stage. However, in order to get a BA in English Language, the students study for four years in the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

### 1.2. Problem statement

Students in all stages in Northwest Syria mostly study English through reading and writing focusing on grammar (Rajab, 2013) while vocabulary does not receive enough attention. Students do not follow appropriate strategies to learn vocabulary and they mostly follow rote learning (Rajab, 2013). University students in the Department of English also face the same problem as they have not been able to use good strategies to learn vocabulary. Thus, it is recommended by Afzal (2019) to investigate this problem for university students. As using cards is a deliberate method of learning vocabulary, Komachali & Khodareza (2012) recommend it be used by university students.

Being a teacher at the English department at Idlib University, the researcher himself has received many requests from students asking for an appropriate method for learning vocabulary. As Wilkinson (2017) suggests, using cards is a useful method for university students to use for learning vocabulary. However, the focus of the current study is on first-year English majors as they are freshmen, and constructing successful methods in learning vocabulary is expected to help them be successful in their studies in general.

### 1.3. Objectives of the study and research questions

The main objective of the research is to help students memorise vocabulary. They should also use vocabulary correctly. In addition, it is of great concern to investigate the difficulties that learners encounter when they use cards. The major objectives of the research are the following:

1. To help students memorise and use vocabulary appropriately.
2. To explore the challenges that learners encounter in adopting deliberate vocabulary learning.

To fulfil the aforementioned objectives, the research process can be guided by the following questions:

Question 1: How can first-year English major students utilise cards to memorise and use vocabulary appropriately?

Question 2: What are the main challenges that English majors encounter in implementing deliberate vocabulary learning using cards?

#### 1.4. Significance of the study

Most learners need help in the field of learning vocabulary. Although many studies—conducted out of Syria—tackled vocabulary learning at the school stage, only a few of them investigated the difficulties which the students encountered at the university stage. Thus, a study investigating the impact of using specific strategies on learning vocabulary by university students could be highly significant, contributing to the development of language learning and adding something to the field of knowledge.

The learners of English as a second language in Syria usually find it difficult to learn vocabulary as they need appropriate strategies to use. On the one hand, the current strategy is expected to find solutions for the learners to learn vocabulary. On the other hand, being the first study in this field in Northern Syria, it could pave the way for other studies to investigate other strategies, helping the learners to develop their language and be more successful in learning English. Consequently, the learners of English could find it easier and more interesting to learn English, and they will be able to deliver their experience to their classmates and friends, and even their future students. Hence, learning English, in general, may develop.

The current study could prove the effectiveness of using cards at the university stage. As university students are adults and their cognitive mechanisms are mostly developed, repetition is expected to be a successful technique because it helps the learners move information from short-term memory to long-term memory automatically, so they can memorise information easily and quickly (Fillmore, 1976; McLaughlin, 2012). Moreover, as the technique of cards requires the participants to learn



vocabulary in context, using examples and definitions, their learning should be effective (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020), and this technique is considered a project which helps university students build good learning habits (Skehan, 1998). In short, the current study studies the feasibility of using such a technique in learning vocabulary; it integrates different aspects of learning, and this could consolidate other relevant studies and help develop the theories of learning.

### 1.5. Literature Review

During the past decades, L2 vocabulary learning has become of great research interest. Vocabulary serves as the foundation for learning a second language (L2), and it is the building block from which learners begin their second language acquisition. As a result, it is relevant to the early stages of language development. Essentially, communication lies at the core of all language-related facets. That is, learners' active learning grants them a space for hypothesis testing to develop new methods of learning (Savignon, 1991). However, as vocabulary underpins learning English, the question of what vocabulary the learners should learn is always there.

#### 1.5.1. The concept of vocabulary

It is next to impossible to learn all words in a language even by native speakers and it is important first to understand what 'word' means (Todd, 1987) and second how many words a learner needs to memorise to be successful in learning a language, and the main types of words are tokens, types, families, and lemmas (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985).

First, by counting every word in a sentence, we are counting tokens (Nation, 2000). In a sentence like "Sami is happy but Salwa is not happy.", eight words are counted regardless of their repetition. Second, using tokens to count words, we count what occurs when a learner produces a sentence. In comparison, repeated words can be counted only once because they are the same (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). Thus, the previous sentence includes 6 words, not 8, because "is" and "happy" are counted once. Third, "word family" means words including the same stem (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985) so the words "happy" and "happily" are counted only once because they carry the same stem and the difference is only in form. Fourth, "lemmas" refer to words of the same stem but divided into groups (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). For example, *help*, *helps*, *helped*, and *helping* are all members of the same lemma because they all have the same stem (*help*), and they are all verbs while *help* as a noun is another lemma.

#### 1.5.2. Criteria for vocabulary selection

Counting and defining words may not be the main concern of the user of a language. Deciding on the appropriate vocabulary to learn may be an important goal depending on what a learner is going to use language for, so the language learned should meet the learners' needs (Nation, 2014; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). The learners may, for example, live in a foreign country so he/she needs to communicate with others, mainly native speakers or specialize in English to be a teacher, for example. However, the previously mentioned items are motivations to learn English although the strongest motivation is the internal one for achieving personal interests (Nation, 2014).

The frequency-based study is another criterion to highlight the importance of vocabulary for learning (Mindt, 2011). The high frequency of vocabulary in the corpus means that some words are used more than others, and this gives them more importance. Michael West (1953) wrote his General Service List of English Words (GSL) which included roughly 2,000 words. Averil Coxhead (2000) also listed 570 word families in his Academic Word List (AWL). AWL contained words from four academic disciplines: science, commerce, law, and arts. However, the repertoire of vocabulary by an educated native speaker is roughly 20,000 words. Nation (2014) concluded that if a learner learns the 2,000 words included in West's list, he/she has a strong opportunity of having learned the most repeated words.

### 1.5.3. Using cards for learning vocabulary

Using an appropriate strategy is crucial for learning vocabulary; otherwise, it could be difficult to understand and store vocabulary, on the one hand, and the stored ones could be easily forgotten, on the other hand. Using cards is a very important technique for learning vocabulary (Nation, 2014). From the perspective of language-focused learning or fluency development, Nation highlights the effective role of using cards for learning vocabulary. It is a deliberate learning method. It is also goal-directed, fast and long-lasting.

Moreover, this method of learning and memorising vocabulary is easy and interesting (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). It is simply using cards which are easy to carry in the learner's pocket. These cards are a type of game that the learner shuffles and reviews from time to time. Each card is allocated for one word. The required word is written on one side of the card while the definition of this word and an example of its use are written on the other side. Other things can be added to the back of the card, like the meaning or translation of the word and a drawing. To be successful in using cards, eight steps are suggested by Nation (2014):



Write the word on one side of the card and its meaning on the other. It is very helpful to connect the word in L1 to its meaning in L2.

Work on vocabulary gradually; start with a few words, up to 20, and gradually increase the number of items, up to 50 items in order to be easy to memorise.

Repeat the items as it is very important and make a space between repetitions. Start with short periods and then increase the period gradually.

Use appropriate processing techniques for difficult words.

Avoid the impact of interference: if some words share similar spelling or close meaning, put them in different groups, otherwise, the spelling or meaning of one item will affect the other word.

Shuffle the words because if they are learned organized in the group, they will be learned in order and it will be difficult to isolate a word from the group.

Repeating words aloud helps memorise them and store them in long-term memory.

Learn words in context by using them in collocates, phrases or example sentences.

#### 1.6. Previous Studies

The technique of learning vocabulary using cards might be considered one of the main techniques in teaching and learning vocabulary. This technique was applied to learners of different ages and in different countries, and, in common, they assured the success of this technique and its usefulness for the learners in memorising and understanding the required elements; three studies have been selected to be studied.

The study by Afzal (2019) investigates the challenges university English major students encounter, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. Afzal's study, conducted in the context of teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, where Arabic is the primary language. The research was conducted at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU), the English department. It employs repetition through cards as a key technique, highlighting the importance of reviewing. Afzal's study involved 100 male undergraduate students across various levels, a sample that could be enhanced by including both genders for a more comprehensive analysis, in contrast to the current study which included male and female participants. However, the lack of details on participant division into control and experiment groups, as well as the absence of inter-level comparisons, limits the study's scope. Additionally, admitting applicants at different



competency levels without a placement test introduces variability, complicating the attribution of improvements solely to the intervention. However, the use of vocabulary cards proved advantageous, facilitating overall English language learning although limited progress was noted in pronunciation, spelling, and technical word usage. Afzal recommended diverse teaching strategies to aid students in learning vocabulary in context, advocating for cultural vocabulary emphasis and learner autonomy. However, details on result analysis programs and data collection tools are lacking in the research.

Sheridan and Markslag (2007) explored how teachers could enhance vocabulary learning success using cards, a study with relevance to the current research focusing on university-level participants, albeit without specifying their specialization. While their study included secondary school students, details such as participant numbers and study duration were omitted. Unlike the current study's emphasis on repetition, Sheridan and Markslag highlighted cooperative learning and translation into the native language. They utilized a word list from Browne's (2014) New General Service List (NGSL), which covers a significant portion of commonly used words. Their repetition technique, encountering each word 6 to 20 times, mirrors the current study's approach. Cooperative learning strategies were applied, although potentially more suitable for younger learners. The systematic organization of vocabulary cards into packs, balanced for difficulty, was a shared aspect. Five key points were outlined for effective vocabulary learning, aligning with the current study's objectives. Sheridan and Markslag concluded that card use fosters language skills and fluency but noted challenges like repetition boredom and logistical issues. However, data collection tools and result analysis programs were unspecified.

Wilkinson (2017) investigated deliberate vocabulary learning through card usage, emphasizing the pivotal role of vocabulary in rapid language progression. Conducted at a private university in Western Tokyo, the study targeted English as a foreign language. Participants utilized cards for one semester, selecting 250 words from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Each card featured a word in L2 and its L1 meaning, accompanied by example sentences. The research posited that mastering 3,000 to 10,000 words was essential for comprehending 95% to 98% of text and proficient communication in the target language. However, no specific references were provided to support this vocabulary target or corresponding comprehension percentages. In addition, repetition emerged as a central technique, mirroring the current study's approach to card-based vocabulary learning. Qualitative questionnaire interviews were employed to gather participant feedback, although the absence of quantitative tests represented a limitation. Despite this, participants expressed positive views on card



usage, citing its simplicity, portability, and quick memorization of words. The technique's adaptability for studying anywhere was lauded, along with the effectiveness of expanded spaced retrieval for memorization. Initial challenges in recalling word meanings on the reverse side of cards diminished with practice. Participants also preferred dividing words into packs for easier review. While the study did not specify the analytical program used, Wilkinson (2017) concluded that card usage offered numerous benefits, facilitating easy recall of word form and meaning.

## CHAPTER TWO: Research Methodology

The research was conducted over ten weeks following the quantitative and qualitative methods. It went over several steps, keeping an eye on answering the research questions. After the participants were selected according to their language competence, they were divided into the experiment group (Grp1) and the control group (Grp2). Then the vocabulary was selected and compared to the General Service List by West (1953). Next, the study employed a pre-test, a post-test, and a questionnaire.

### 2.1. Participants

All participants were first-year students of English at Idlib University, Syria. They were about 19 years old. According to the education system in Syria, they have studied English for 12 years at school using the same curriculum (English for Starters) for twelve years. They studied at primary, elementary and secondary schools, and as they were subject to certain admission measurements to enroll in the Department of English, they were expected to have the same language proficiency level. Moreover, they have lived in the same war circumstances so they had similar learning background. However, the Department of English comprised 210 students in the first year. About 30.5 per cent of the population participated in the study; there were 64 students divided into 32 for the experiment group and 32 for the control one. They were all selected randomly.

### 2.2. Instruments

The current study used two research instruments to collect data and answer the research questions:

Pre- and post-tests

Questionnaire

#### 2.2.1. Pre- and post-tests

Two tests (pre-test and post-test) were used to answer the first research question. Both tests followed the quantitative method. They were designed to evaluate the development of the participants in learning vocabulary. Both

tests were based on Reading and Comprehension 1, a subject included in the study plan of the first-year English students and aiming at developing the students' vocabulary. The words included in the test were selected from randomly from the first ten units as these units were the required ones for the university exam. The subject *Read and Understand* by Kirkpatrick & Mok (2007) was taught in requirement of Reading and Comprehension.

In order to identify the students' vocabulary levels, both Grp 1 and Grp 2 took the pre-test. They did the test on paper to achieve a high level of credibility, and it took two hours to answer the questions. The pre-test included 60 questions, one point for each, and each question included one required word.

The questions were divided into eight sets of questions and each set measured either receptive or productive skill. Those questions ranged between elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. Relying on Bloom's (1960) taxonomy, the sets started with a comparatively easy question (multiple choice), as advised by a professor from the Education Faculty, to encourage the participants to do the whole test. The head questions are the following: (See appendix A).

The post-test was identical to the pre-test in form and content, but the participants did not know that they were the same. The post-test was done by both Grp1 and Grp2 ten weeks after the pre-test, and it was printed to achieve credibility. As the aim was to identify the development of the participants, the mean score of the post-test was compared to the mean score of the pre-test. The difference between the two mean scores answers the first research question about the impact of learning vocabulary using cards. Of course, Grp1's mean score was compared to Grp2's mean score.

### 2.2.2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire followed both the quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the second research question about the difficulties encountered by participants. It also investigated the participants' reactions towards the technique of using cards. However, the questionnaire included closed and open-ended questions. The closed type was easy to design and very common in questionnaires because it is used to obtain valid and accurate answers (Leung, 2001). A five-point Likert scale (1932) (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) was also used. In addition, the questionnaire included seven questions using the Likert scale while the eighth and ninth questions were open (See Appendix B).

### 2.3. Data collection procedures



The collected data was all primary as they were all taken directly from the participants themselves. First, the study was experimental as it was on participants. They did two tests, before and after the experiment and the difference between the mean scores of the two tests identified the development of the participants in learning vocabulary. Second, a questionnaire was used to evaluate the experiment as it collected the participants' responses.

#### 2.4. Description of the treatment

The treatment took eight weeks in which the participants were divided into experiment and control groups. A focused group discussion was also held in the first week to inform the participants with the technique of using cards and how to use them. The participants found it difficult to adhere by the technique but gradually found it easier to use the cards and it became a routine-like for them.

They complained of the difficulty of preparing the examples and the definitions so that the researcher helped prepare the definitions and examples as the focus was on using them on cards rather than preparing them. In addition, the control group complained to the researcher that he helped the experiment group in preparing both the definitions and examples, which were required in the exam at university. Therefore, the researcher took the ethical issues into consideration, not to be biased, and shared the list of definitions and examples with the control group. Then he held a focused group discussion with the control group and helped them find other techniques to study the vocabulary, like writing them in lists or using dictation.

During the intervention, the researcher needed to contact the participants to help them advance in the technique. He made two groups on WhatsApp (one for boys and one for girls) due to ethical considerations. He also needed to contact many of the participants individually because they did not participate on the groups. A considerable number of them also could not participate in some Follow-up forms because of the war and displacement circumstances but they all did the pre-test, the post-test and the questionnaire. Finally, all participants were thanked for their valuable efforts.

#### 2.5. Data analysis procedures

The collected information by the instruments was described and analyzed. Information was also organized and compared to each other in a meaningful way. Thus, the scores of the participants were described to identify their levels of the required vocabulary. The reactions of the participants in the questionnaire were also described and classified.

The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing the results at a high level of accuracy. T-test was used to make the required calculations, following the analytical procedures, in order to find out the significance of the results of the two tests. The mean scores of both Grp1 and Grp2 in the two tests were calculated and compared. However, using the SPSS program, tables were designed including the groups of the participants, their numbers, the mean scores of each group in the tests, the mean difference calculated by the program, the standard deviation from the average concerning the scores of the participants, the t-value calculated by the program to study the variation that exists within the sample sets, and the significance of the results. If the significance is over 0.5, there is no significant difference between the scores of the two groups.

### CHAPTER THREE: Analysis and Discussing Results

The results of all data obtained from different instruments were displayed and discussed carefully and critically. First, the results of the two tests were compared to see the efficiency of the treatment. After that, the questionnaire investigated the reactions of the participants towards the technique, how to use the cards and memorise the words, their evaluation of its usefulness, and the main difficulties encountered. To sum up, the results of all instruments were studied to answer the research questions and the analysis will involve data obtained from the research tools, one by one.

#### 3.1. Pre-test

The pre-test participants' scores were collected, reported and examined critically using the T-test program. Both Grp1 and 2 did the pre-test. The mean scores were listed in tables to study. Table 1 below shows a comparison between Grp1 and Grp2 in the pre-test.

Table 1: The mean scores of Grp1 and 2 in the pre-test.

Grp	Number	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Grp1	32	10.5625	0.1562	4.18089	0.137	0.892
Grp2	32	10.4063		4.93741		

Table 1 above points out that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups. Calculating the t-value, the significance (0.892) was above 0.05, indicating no significant difference between the two groups. This means that the levels of the two groups in English were similar, which was considered a good starting point for the two groups in the treatment.

#### 3.2. Post-test

Both Group 1 and Group 2 underwent the post-test, and their respective scores were consolidated into a single table for convenient comparison. The



participants' scores were collected and studied critically using the T-test program. Table 2 below presents a comparative analysis of the entire Grp 1 and Grp 2 in the post-test.

Table 2: The Mean Scores of Grp1 and 2 in the Post-test.

Grp	Number	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Grp1	32	32.2188	12.125	6.96875	7.248	0.001
Grp2	32	20.0938		6.40242		

The table above illustrates a distinct and statistically significant difference between the two groups in the post-test; the mean difference was high (12.125). With a significance value of 0.001 (above 0.05), it indicates a remarkable difference between the two groups.

Additional comparisons between the scores of each group in the pre-test and the post-test can be conducted to ascertain the actual progress or development of the groups over time, using cards. Initially, Table 3 presents the outcomes for Grp 1, offering insights into their tangible development throughout the study.

Table 3: The Mean Scores of Grp1 in the Pre-test and the Post-test.

Test	Number	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Pre-test	32	10.5625	21.65625	4.18089	17.374	0.01
Post-test	32	32.2188		6.96875		

A substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test results in Grp 1 was observed, with a significance value of 0.01, indicating a noteworthy distinction between the two assessments. This signifies the genuine development of participants in vocabulary learning, with an improvement of approximately 22 points.

Conversely, Group 2 did not exhibit a significant development in comparing the pre-test and post-test results, as stated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: The Mean Scores of Grp 2 in the Pre-test and the Post-test.

Test	Number	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Pre-test	32	10.4063	9.6875	4.93741	16.624	0.01
Post-test	32	20.0938		6.40242		

As indicated in Table 4, a substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was evident for Grp 2, signifying development in vocabulary learning. However, Grp 1 significantly outperformed Grp 2. While the two groups demonstrated similarity in the pre-test, Grp 1 showcased a more remarkable advancement of approximately 22 points in the post-test, compared to Grp 2's development of only about 10 points. This implies that Grp 1 is more than double ahead of Grp 2 in terms of improvement.

In summary, addressing the third research question, the utilisation of cards proved advantageous in fostering the development of vocabulary among participants. Those who incorporated cards in their learning process attained higher scores compared to those who did not use cards.

### 3.3. Questionnaire

Towards the conclusion of the project timeframe, the participants provided feedback on the utilisation of the card-based technique. Their responses to the questionnaire's inquiries were designed to evaluate the practicality of employing cards for vocabulary learning. The participants were required to furnish information regarding the extent to which flashcards contributed to the enhancement of their vocabulary. The questionnaire employed a mixed-methods approach, encompassing seven closed questions utilising a five-point scale (ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree") and two open-ended questions.

The initial query sought the respondents' assessment of the effectiveness of employing the card-based technique for vocabulary acquisition. Among the respondents, 44% expressed a strong agreement, another 44% agreed, and 12% were uncertain, while none disagreed or strongly disagreed. The overwhelmingly positive responses indicate a high perceived utility of the technique, as the majority either agreed or strongly agreed on its effectiveness.

In response to the second question regarding plans to employ cards for vocabulary learning, no respondents expressed strong disagreement about using cards in the future and only 6% expressed no certainty. In contrast to the preceding question, indicating room for improvement in encouragement, 22% strongly agreed and 47% agreed on planning to use cards in the future. Therefore, the overall sentiment was encouraging and using cards deemed appropriate for usage.

The third question focused on respondents' recommendations for others to use cards. The majority were positive: 53.125% agreed while 37.5% strongly agreed with suggesting the use of cards. Additionally, only 9.375% were uncertain and none disagreed or strongly disagreed with recommending the technique to others. Despite some uncertainty about personal plans to use cards in the future, and a small percentage (6.25%) not intending to use them, the overwhelming consensus (no disagreements and only 9.375% uncertainty) in recommending the technique reflected strong encouragement for considering cards as an appropriate method for learning vocabulary.

Delving into specific details, the fourth question explored the perceived benefits of using definitions and examples in the memorisation of words. A



mere 3.125% expressed disagreement and none strongly disagreed. Conversely, a significant 50% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed and 9.375% were undecided. These outcomes strongly indicate the perceived benefits of incorporating definitions and examples in the process of word memorisation.

The results of the fifth question complemented those of the fourth, both about utilising definitions and examples. Following the memorisation of words, the fifth question examined the actual usage of those words. A significant 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 40.625% agreed, 9.375% were undecided, and none disagreed or strongly disagreed. The collective outcomes of the fourth and fifth questions underscore the significance of incorporating definitions and examples, indicating their importance in both the memorisation and practical application of words.

The sixth question tackled the significance of memorising words through repetition, a fundamental aspect of the card-based technique. The majority of respondents affirmed the importance of repetition in word memorisation, as 41% strongly agreed and 41% agreed. Only 18.75% expressed uncertainty while none opted for "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." The respondents' strong support for the importance of repetition in memorising words is evident from the results.

The seventh question sought respondents' perspectives on whether the card-based technique assisted them in applying memorised words in various contexts. Notably, no respondents strongly disagreed and only 3.125% expressed disagreement, with a modest 15.625% indicating uncertainty. In contrast, a significant 46.875% strongly agreed and 34.375% agreed. Consequently, the majority of respondents perceived the use of cards as beneficial in effectively applying memorised words in the correct contexts.

Throughout the eighth question, there were three main difficulties: time pressure, memorising items and keeping and organizing cards. There were some other minor difficulties mentioned by only a few respondents so these difficulties were neglected, like the pronunciation of words, their translation and the respondents' low level of English. Some other respondents did not mention any problems applying the technique of learning vocabulary. Time pressure was the main difficulty encountered by most participants as the largest percentage of students identified it. Retrieving words was the second difficulty encountered by the respondents. Keeping and organizing cards was the third difficulty encountered. In response to the final question, where respondents were invited to share their perspectives on the card-based technique, various viewpoints were expressed. Some participants highlighted the challenge of time constraints, citing difficulties in effectively studying the cards due to other academic commitments or



employment. A practical suggestion emerged to alleviate this challenge by reducing the number of cards carried, facilitating easier reviews.

On the positive side, a substantial number of respondents praised the technique, describing it as good, easy, useful, excellent, and helpful. They emphasized its efficacy in aiding the memorisation of words and successful application in diverse contexts, including writing in other subjects. Overall, these responses indicated a mixed but generally favourable perception of the card-based technique.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion

### 4.1. Findings

This study demonstrated a significant improvement in language proficiency among university students who engaged in deliberate vocabulary learning using cards. The analysis of the data collected yielded significant insights. The participants exhibited advanced levels of vocabulary proficiency during the post-test, indicating success within the sample, aligning with the objectives of the research to assess the impact of this specific learning strategy. Following the card-based vocabulary memorisation technique, Grp 1 consistently outperformed Grp 2 in the post-test scores. The mean scores for the experiment group displayed a statistically notable enhancement, affirming the efficacy of the card-based approach.

Detailed examination of the questionnaire responses shed light on the participants' experiences and perspectives. The majority of the participants conveyed a positive stance on the card-based technique, emphasizing its effectiveness in retaining and applying vocabulary. While challenges such as time constraints and card design were acknowledged, they were overshadowed by the perceived benefits. In short, the following findings could be concluded:

Using cards, as a deliberate vocabulary learning technique, is a successful technique to memorise vocabulary by learners.

Deliberate vocabulary learning is appropriate to apply at university for students to help them learn and use English as a second language

This technique helps the learners find a solution for the difficulty in learning vocabulary.

Recommendations to others were predominantly positive, underscoring the method's suitability for enhancing vocabulary acquisition.

The main challenges that learners encounter in adopting deliberate vocabulary learning are time pressure, memorising items and keeping and organizing cards.

Despite all the difficulties encountered, the participants continued working and advancing in learning vocabulary. This highlights the positive impact of the technique.

Repetition is an important technique that is very useful for learning vocabulary.

Learning vocabulary in context, using vocabulary definitions and examples, helps memorise the words and use them correctly.

In summary, the findings suggest that employing cards for vocabulary memorisation had a positive impact on the participants' performance. The overall feedback from the participants supports the incorporation of this technique into language learning practices.

#### 4.2. Implications

The identified implications drawn from the findings aim to support learners in their progression toward acquiring English as a second language. Educators can guide their students in implementing these implications, fostering the expectation of enhanced progress in English proficiency.

The utilisation of cards for vocabulary learning is not confined to pre-university stages, as suggested by certain studies; it is also effective and advantageous for adults at the university level.

This method aids in storing information in long-term memory and later retrieving it when necessary, proving beneficial for individuals who struggle with information recall.

Repetition proves to be a highly beneficial technique, aiding learners in reinforcing information and facilitating easy memorisation.

#### 4.3. Suggestions for further research

The researcher suggests the following research points to be investigated by other researchers in Northwest Syria.

The current study showed that time pressure significantly impeded the effective use of cards for vocabulary learning. Therefore, it is advised to investigate the impact of time pressure on university students and find solutions for it.

Using cards fostered learning vocabulary and was a successful technique in this field. The other researchers are advised to study the impact of using cards on learning different types of information, like memorising lines of poetry and topics in different subjects.



The utilisation of the card technique incorporated various methods, including repetition, and it was employed by typical students. Hence, examining the effects of this approach on individuals facing specific learning challenges could offer valuable insights.

The positive impact demonstrated by university students in using cards for learning vocabulary highlights a potential area for further research. Investigating the effects of employing cards for vocabulary learning among school students, particularly starting with elementary students who are in the initial stages of learning English, could be a valuable avenue for future researchers.

The present research employed homogeneous groups, consisting of participants from both genders (male and female), without exploring potential differences between them. This provides an opportunity for future researchers to investigate and compare the distinct effects of using cards on each gender.



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## Appendixes

### Appendix A: The pre-, post- and delayed test

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A research project entitled "The Impact of Using Cards in Deliberate Vocabulary Learning on the First-year English Majors in Northwest Syria."

**Dear participants, please circle the correct answer.**

=====

Choose the appropriate word to fill in the spaces.

The ..... has left a parking ticket on the windscreen, and the motorists realise that they will have to pay a fine.

a- traffic warden   b- guard   c- traffic man   d- policeman

The need to .....terrorism is, surely, one of the most important issues.

a- face   b- hinder   c- eradicate   d- fight

Increasingly, doctors are telling us that, in order to live a long and healthy life, we must follow a healthy .....

a- diet   b- system   c- vitamin   d- wholefood

Organic products are much more expensive than those which are grown using modern ..... methods.

a- rare   b- conventional   c- unique   d- easy

Most people who do not smoke regard smoking as an ..... habit which causes them some discomfort

a- common   b- dangerous   c- appropriate   d- antisocial

Because of our busy way of life, we rely too much on ..... foods, not taking the time to prepare a nourishing meal for ourselves.

a- nutrition   b- healthy   c- hand-made   d- convenience

Parental worries about computer games often relate to their effect on their children's health and on their social .....

a- powers   b- skills   c- habits   d- fears

Each generation has different ideas, making ..... between the two extremely difficult.

a- communication   b- life   c- argument   d- transport

It is perfectly possible for children to achieve such ambitions. However, their parents may well have other ideas, which can lead to family .....

a- conflict   b- harmony   c- restrictions   d- confidence

Parents are worried that video games will prevent their children from developing their .....

a- study   b- ambitions   c- creativity   d- goals

Some psychologists say that the desire of the class bully to ..... the others is a result of an inferiority complex or some personal unhappiness.

a- encourage   b- help   c- call   d- dominate

Provisions are now being made for people with disabilities, but they need many more .....

a- facilities   b- tools   c- factors   d- equipment

If motorists ignore the sign that says 'NO PARKING', they realize that they will have to pay a .....   a- money   b- bill   c- fine   d- ticket

Since many children usually play by themselves, they live rather ..... lives.

a- isolated   b- communicative   c- social   d- healthy

Both politicians and scientists are now looking at the ..... of energy-saving and waste disposal.

a- titles   b- issues   c- branches   d- benefits

Many people regard the old as having a very low ..... in society and treat them accordingly.

a- position   b- level   c- situation   d- status

Business people may feel that their children will have more status in an academic ..... than in the world of commerce.

a- profession   b- work   c- study   d- group

Chocolate is also said to cause headaches in some people, and is considered to be one of the main ..... of migraine.



a- synonyms b- effects c- triggers d- hardships

It has been suggested that there should be a ..... of people who wish to opt out of having their organs removed for transplant surgery, so that it is easy to find them.

a- stress b- restriction c- register d- transition

A child with red hair can be a ..... for the school bully.

a- goal b- game c- target d- symbol

Define the underlined words in the following sentences.

The disposal of nuclear waste causes particular concern because it is radioactive and so possibly dangerous to life.

.....  
.....  
.....

Parents are also worried in case the violence of many of the games will cause their children to become more aggressive.

.....  
.....  
.....

Under the present British scheme, people are asked to carry donor cards and put their names on the national donor register.

.....  
.....  
.....

Gaining access to such narrow or high places can be far from easy.

.....  
.....  
.....

Frequently, too, in terrorist attacks on civilian targets, some kind of advance warning is given.

.....  
.....  
.....

Fill in the spaces with words from the list. Use each word once.

energy – tailbacks – passive – assault – stress – club – nursing

The production of packaging uses a great deal of .....

With so many ..... and bottle-necks on so many roads, motoring is no longer a pleasure.

The victims of bullying do not report to their teachers because they are afraid of more physical .....

Some parents just succeed in causing too much ..... in their offspring.

The game is popular at ..... level.

Match each word with its correct definition:

To treat someone or a group of people in a different and often unfair way.

The external surroundings in which people, animals and plants live.

a machine at a roadside parking space into which you put coins to pay for parking.

Lasting for only a short time.

A series of actions which are carried out for a particular purpose.

Transport  
discriminate  
environment  
parking meter  
transitory  
process  
quality of life

Fill in the spaces with the appropriate missing words. You are given the first letter.

He has been able to show, by means of brain scans, that playing computer games stimulates activity in only part of the players' brains, the part associated with v..... and movement.

Passengers have to wait in queues at the check-in and at p..... control.

In order to kick the habit of smoking, smokers rely on their own w.....

Experts have been warning for some time of the health risks caused by inhaling the s..... from other people's cigarettes.

Most parents try to get their children to work hard at school and achieve a ..... success by doing well in exams.

In many countries, products which have been genetically modified are supposed to show this information on their l.....



Parents who have worked hard to establish a business may find out that their children prefer a different o.....

So great is the bullying problem that many schools have been forced to draw up an official s..... for dealing with it.

A large number of the v..... which clog our cities are private cars.

The lines painted down the edge of the road indicate parking r.....

Choose the appropriate synonyms for the underlined words.

People who are otherwise quite law-abiding are apt to take a bit of a risk when it comes to traffic offences.

a- assault   b- behavior   c- crime   d- irony

Both businesses and government have a new respect for what is known as grey power.

a- workers   b- old people   c- machines   d- white hair

Soccer is becoming more and more popular on a worldwide scale and these qualifying legs are causing much excitement.

a- body parts   b- branches   c- cards   d- stages

The foods which are now known to be high in cholesterol can be a contributory factor in heart disease.

a- failure   b- illness   c- hurt   d- tiredness

The cartons, wrappers, etc. are often difficult to dispose of when they become waste material.

a- get benefit of   b- get rid of   c- use   d- rely on

Give appropriate antonyms for the underlined words; give one antonym for each.

I don't enjoy physical activities.

The children who play computer games are dumber than other children.

Some devices make life easier for disabled people.

You get to the departure gate, board the plane, find your seat and fasten your seat belt ready for take-off.





School bullies can make other children's lives a misery.

Use only five of the following words in meaningful sentences.

Monitor – access – justify – factor – equipped - restrictions – contribute –  
impact – interact

Good Luck

Appendix B: The Questionnaire

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MA student, Applied Linguistics.

A research project entitled "The Impact of Using Cards in Deliberate Vocabulary Learning on the First-year English Majors in Northwest Syria."

Dear participants, please circle the correct answer.

=====

The technique of using cards was useful in learning vocabulary.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

You plan to use the cards to learn vocabulary in the future.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Others are recommended to use cards for learning vocabulary.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

The definitions and examples were beneficial in memorising words.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

The definitions and examples were beneficial in using words.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Repetition helped you memorise the words.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

The technique of using cards helped you use the memorised words in different contexts.

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

What are the main difficulties you encountered using cards?





.....  
.....  
.....

Please add anything you would like concerning this technique.

.....  
.....  
.....

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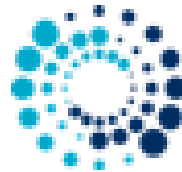
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