



Teaching Vocabulary Learning Strategies to Kurdish EFL University Students

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Rezhna Ibrahim Ali

Department of English, College of
Basic Education, Salahaddin
University-Erbil
rezhna.ali@su.edu.krd

Anjumen Muhammad Sabir

Department of English, College of
Education, Salahaddin University-
Erbil
anjuman.sabir@su.edu.krd

Qismat Muhammad Zahawi

Department of English, College of
Basic Education, Salahaddin
University-Erbil
qismat.hussin@su.edu.krd

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Abstract

Vocabulary development is a crucial component of learning a foreign language. Hence, teachers' knowledge of the optimal instructional practices for teaching vocabulary is of prime importance. The aim of the current paper is to (a) examine the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary learning strategies on improving Kurdish EFL students' vocabulary (b) find out the extent to which teaching vocabulary learning strategies improves students' vocabulary. To achieve these aims a quasi-experimental design was used. Eighty (80) second year students selected at college of Basic Education/ Salahddin University for the study. The participants took a Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) to measure their vocabulary knowledge and a pre-posttest, which were designed by the researcher depending on the students' scores in VLT. In this study, the researcher used paired samples t-test to analyze the collected data. Based on the results, it was found out that there is a significant difference between the students' outcomes after introducing the VLS. The vocabulary performance level of the experimental group participants increased significantly at the end of the vocabulary training course. However, the control group had a slight improvement in the posttest. These strategies are recommended as reading comprehension and vocabularies teaching techniques based on the findings of the current study.

Keywords: Teaching, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, and EFL Learners.

1. Introduction

The core of language development in the language system is vocabulary. Without studying vocabulary which is the building block of language, no language can be learnt. Many academics have shown how a deficiency in vocabulary obstructs everyday communication. Furthermore, for reading comprehension, vocabulary understanding is crucial. To communicate effectively in a foreign language, students and teachers need acquire and use a sufficient quantity of words, as well as be aware of how to use them appropriately. There are many approaches to define the term 'vocabulary'. According to Ur (1998, P.60), terms that we attempt to teach in a foreign language are referred to as vocabulary. A new vocabulary term, however, can be made up of two or three words to convey a single thought, as in the cases of the post office and mother-in-law. A helpful convention is to discuss vocabulary in order to address all such situations "items" instead of "words". Additionally, Burns (1999) defines vocabulary as the collection of words that a person, a class, or a profession uses. Coady and Huckin (1995) consider vocabulary as crucial to the learning of a typical language.



Kurdish students frequently have difficulty in learning English vocabulary. The students still struggle, and they often see foreign words as the first challenge to overcome despite extensive usage of the language in their daily life. This could be as a result of the fact that vocabulary has been recognized as being crucial to language use and that learners' struggles learning other languages were caused by their lack of vocabulary knowledge (Asgari and Mustapha, 2011). Among the important challenges in English language acquisition that have been taken into consideration during the past few decades are vocabulary learning techniques, or VLSs. Learning English as Foreign language (EFL) students sometimes criticize their inability to recall memorized vocabularies. Numerous researches in the area of vocabulary learning have been conducted in an effort to offer suggestions for solutions to this issue or even to deliver some helpful instructions to both students and teachers in this regard (VL). Students employ a variety of techniques to pick up new vocabulary words, but they don't seem to have a clear understanding of which strategies to use and which to avoid.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on students' vocabulary development, and the extent to which teaching vocabulary learning strategies improve their vocabulary. The study was carried out to find answers to the following research questions:

- 1- Is there any significant difference in the students' performance after introducing the vocabulary learning strategies through reading skill?
- 2- To what extent does VLS course improve Kurdish EFL students' vocabulary?

1.1 Significance of the Study

Learning new terms and memorizing a large amount of vocabulary to utilize later on have always been challenging for both groups of EFL and ESL learners. Learners experiment extensively and employs a wide range of vocabulary acquisition strategies. No one can memorize every word in a language, and even native English speakers can never master learning every word in the English language. On the other hand, not all language learners find it simple to learn and understand the meanings of new words, to memorize them and recall them when they want, to use them in the right context, or to increase their vocabulary size (Nyikos and Fan, 2007). However, learners should be aware of the best learning methods for them, as these methods can speed up their understanding and learning as well as help them learn as many useful words as possible. Thus, this study has a significance in the field of English vocabulary learning. It provides a wide investigation of the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by EFL students at college of Basic Education. Up to the researcher's knowledge, there are no empirical researches on VLSs are used with EFL Kurdish students.

2. Literature Review

Any language system must include vocabulary as a necessary component, and vocabulary knowledge is essential for both language comprehension and production. Few studies suggest that teaching vocabulary might be challenging, since some teachers are unsure of optimal practices in the classroom and occasionally are unsure of how to begin putting an instructional emphasis on vocabulary learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). The idea that students should be equipped with a variety of ways to learn vocabulary as well as to acquire unfamiliar terms to promote vocabulary growth and reading comprehension is based on the significance of strategies for understanding the meaning of unknown words. In other words, students who have a larger vocabulary size are more likely to understand the majority of the words in a text and to comprehend it better (Wright and Cervetti, 2016). The goal of these strategies is to provide students with the skills necessary to comprehend the meanings of new words, procure a greater number of words, and effectively use those words in communication (Thornbury, 2002). Due to its significance in language learning strategies, VLS should be used, and both teachers and students should be aware of this. A foreign language vocabulary is a crucial



component of language learning. Since vocabulary is made up of words of a language, learners cannot master the language without knowing the vocabulary. As stated by Rubin and Thompson (1994), since one cannot speak, understand, read, or write in a foreign language without a large vocabulary, acquiring vocabulary is a key factor to comprehend a foreign language. Having a large vocabulary is vital for properly using a foreign language and vocabulary shortage hinders students to use any structure or functions they may have mastered for better communication (Nunan, 1991). It implies that vocabulary-challenged students may struggle to clearly express themselves. Due to the issues mentioned above, it is essential to embrace VLS in the classrooms to improve students in learning vocabulary more efficaciously.

2.1 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies are any method or collection of learning behaviors that language learners employ to comprehend a new word's meaning, refresh their memory of recently taught terms, and increase their vocabulary are referred to as vocabulary learning strategies (Intaraprasert, 2004, P. 53). When EFL students acquire new words that they come across, they will forget or might not be able to utilize it later on. After some time, the word eventually becomes a part of their active vocabulary when they utilize it in speech or writing i.e., productive skills (Baker and Westrup 2000).

VLSs is used to refer to the deliberate activities, actions, or mental processes that learners adopt, more or less consciously, to help vocabulary learning. These steps guide interventions intended to improve vocabulary in the target language. VLS is strongly linked to successful vocabulary learning. Success entails improving the learning process' efficiency, independence, and adaptability to new circumstances. The classifications of vocabulary learning strategies given by various studies show that there are a broad variety of unique vocabulary learning processes.

2.1.1 The Taxonomies of Vocabulary Learning strategies

Various scholars have categorized vocabulary learning strategies in a variety of ways. One of these categorizations is a description of Schmitt's (1997) strategy taxonomy. This research followed Schmitt's taxonomy which is known as the best and most complete taxonomies of vocabulary learning techniques since it is compiled from different taxonomies. Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of VLS is based on Oxford's (1990) division of language learning strategies into direct (memory, cognitive, and compensation) and indirect (metacognitive, affective, and social) strategies. Schmitt added a new category, determination techniques, to account for situations in which the meanings of new words are discovered on one's own. He did, however, move some of the strategies to other groups while excluding emotive and compensatory strategies as categories. Schmitt's taxonomy is classified into 5 strategies; determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive.

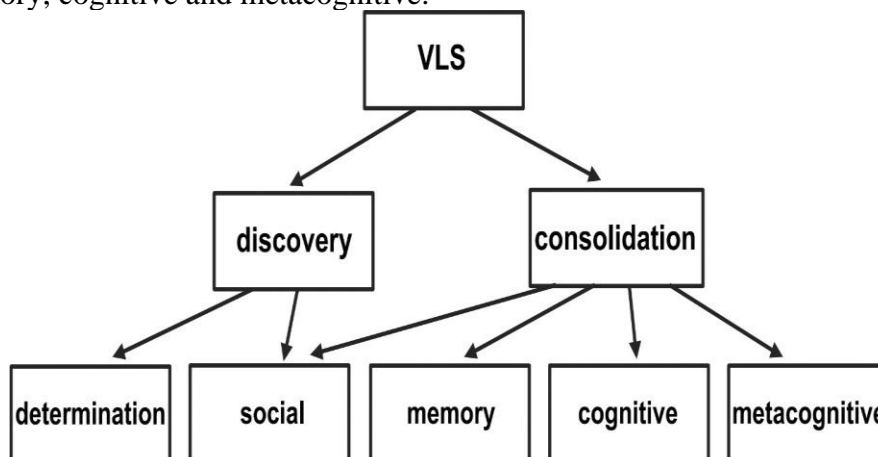




Figure 1. Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (1997, pp. 205-210)

The taxonomy of Schmitt is two-dimensional. The second dimension reflects the many procedures required to determine the usage and meaning of new words (discovery techniques) as well as how memory is organized for later use (consolidation strategies) was borrowed from (Nation, 2001).

Determination Strategy (belong into Discovery category): Students use this strategy to figure out a new word's meaning on their own without the aid of a dictionary.

Social Strategy (belong into both Discovery and Consolidation category): Students utilize this strategy to comprehend a word "by questioning a capable person"

Memory Strategy (belong into Consolidation category): This strategy is used by students to connect their prior knowledge with the previous one.

Cognitive Strategy (belong into Consolidation category): This strategy is used to interpret interprets or modify the target language words,

Metacognitive strategies (belong into Consolidation category): are used to make decisions about organizing, monitoring, or assessing the most effective study methods and provide a conscious picture of the learning process.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

The current study was carried out in Fall semester of the academic year 2021–2022. It lasted for 16 weeks. The participants were second year students at college of Basic Education from Salahaddin University. Additionally, the participants were Kurdish EFL student, including males and females. The researcher chose all the students (80) in the second grade. The students' ages were between (19-21). Most of the students who participated in the current study began their English learning at the first grade and had learnt English as a foreign language for 14 years.

3.2 Research Design and Procedures

The current study adopted an experimental study. The researcher informed the participants of the study about the goal, value, and usage of each of these strategies. Additionally, the researcher instructed them to use and access to the techniques of the strategies as well as the skills of the reading.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Data Collection Tools

Vocabulary Level Test, Pre-test, and posttest were used as the two data collection tools.

3.3.1.1 Vocabulary Level Test

VLT was administered because it is practical, affordable, and simple to use and understand the test (Schmitt, N. et al, 2011). The three components of the respondents' English vocabulary knowledge are assessed using the Vocabulary Levels Test, which comprises of three different questions about vocabulary examinations. The three various vocabulary tests are as follows:

1. Word Associates Test (WAT) (Read, 1998);
2. The word Frequency Level (Schmitt and Claphan 2001);
3. Phrasal expressions List (Martinez & Schmitt 2012);

The test consisted of three questions; each question included 10-items which was taken from the above VLT. The VLT was conducted in order to test students' vocabulary knowledge, to



assign students into experimental and control group, as well as to design the pre-posttests according to their results in VLT

3.3.1.2 The Pre and Post Tests

Pre-tests were given at the beginning of the semester, as specified, and post-tests were given at its conclusion (before and after the 20 weeks of teaching). The pre and post-tests were constructed to assess university students' vocabulary through reading skill. Slight modifications were made to the content of the test content. Both examinations evaluated the participants' vocabulary through reading comprehension.

3.4 The Framework of Teaching

This study incorporated vocabulary learning strategy instruction into language classes using Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. The strategy components in Schmitt's framework are divided into five groups: determination, social (discovery and consolidation), memory, cognitive, and metacognitive.

The experimental group was assigned to the vocabulary training following the aforementioned strategies. Prior to the experiment, the students were informed about the aim and the procedures of the experiment. The participants used vocabulary learning techniques under the direction of the instructor. Each strategy was explained in great detail, along with when, why, and how to employ it. Following that, each participant completed his/her own copy of the tasks. The participants were given numerous chances to learn about strategy use, both individually and in groups. The purpose of these practice sessions were to make the participants familiar with the tactics, assist them in using them more effectively, and enable them to assess and choose the tactics that were most successful for them.

The researcher followed "Active Skill for Reading" as the main textbook for teaching vocabulary through reading skill. The book introduces vocabulary-learning methods that might aid students in associating and remembering words, including how to group words, forming new words using mind mapping, learning affixes and roots, coming up with sentences utilizing the words, and producing pictures that correspond to the words. The aim, importance, and application of each of these tactics were explained to the students. Through class activities and assignments, the instructor assisted the participants in accessing and using other methods indicated in Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy in addition to those described in the textbook.

3.5 Data Analysis

The current study was undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of employing VLS course in EFL classes at university level and in order to answer the two research questions: is there any significant difference in the students' performance after introducing the vocabulary learning strategies through reading skill? and to what extent does VLS course improve Kurdish EFL students' vocabulary?

To answer the first research question; tests that offered a comparison of reading comprehension before and after participants received instruction in vocabulary learning strategies were found for this section of the analysis. The mean score of the students' results on the pre- and post-administration of the reading skill test were compared to investigate whether the students in the experimental group improved their vocabulary after receiving the treatment through VLS course.

The mean scores of Ex. Gr (Experimental group) students' achievement in the pre and post tests are compared. A t-test for both scores is utilized in order to test whether or not the difference is significant.

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics of EXG on the Pre and Post-test



Experimental group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	T. test	P-value
Pre-Test Ex. Group	40	56.7	18.1	-2.45	0.02
Post-Test Ex. Group	40	66.6	15.2		

The following figure illustrates the achievement of experimental group in both tests. The results are the students' achievements before and after the treatment of the VLS. They show that the vocabulary performance level of the EXG participants increased significantly at the end of the vocabulary training course.

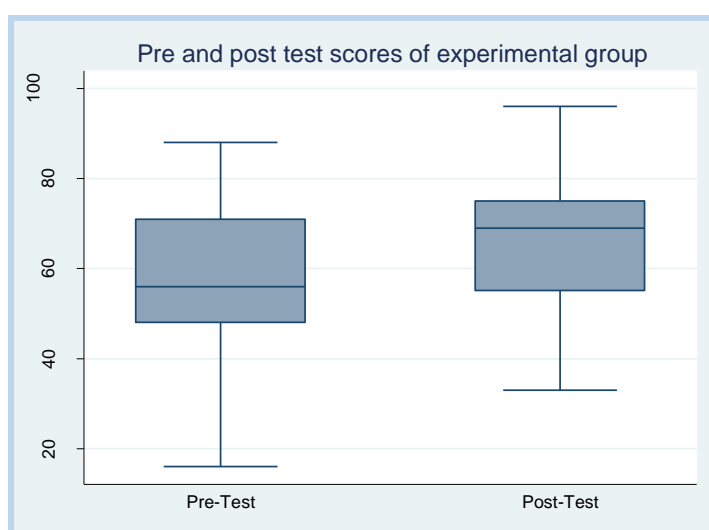


Figure 2 EXG Total Achievements in the Pre- and Post- test

According to the aforementioned data (Table 1), there are variations between the pre- and post-test mean scores for the EXGs' performance. On the post-test, the mean score of the EXG students increased from 66.6 with a standard deviation of 15.2 from a mean score of 56.7 with a standard deviation of 18.1 on the pre-test.

The results obtained from the reading comprehension tests show that there is a significant difference between the vocabulary achievement after the 16 weeks of training sessions, due to the method of assessment at $\alpha = 0.05$ (P-value= 0.02). The results indicate that the mean rank of the EXG in the post-test is higher than their mean scores in the pre –test group. Since the application of vocabulary learning strategy training program is statistically significant for the benefit of the experimental group. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a highly significant difference in the experimental group's performance in the reading comprehension test before and after the treatment, thus there is also a significant difference in students' performance after introducing the vocabulary learning strategies through reading skill

In the table (2) below; The reading comprehension test results of experimental (EG) groups that had received vocabulary learning strategy teaching is compared with the reading comprehension test results of control group (CG):

Table 2. Participants' (CG &EXG) Total' Achievement on the Reading Comprehension Test

	TYPE	N	Mean	Std. Err.	T. test	P-value
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Achievement in the pre- test	EG	40	56.7	3.3	1.8254	0.073
	CG	40	48.4	3.2		
Achievement in the post- test	EG	40	66.6	2.5	3.905	0.0002
	CG	40	53.3	2.3		

According to the results presented, the experimental group have done much better on the post-test reading comprehension test than the control group, in which a control and experimental groups are compared. Additionally, the experimental group that received instruction in vocabulary learning strategies showed greater test performance when compared to their pre-test reading comprehension test scores, while the control group have shown only a slight improvement in their post-test scores when compared to their pre-test scores. If we compare the mean scores of both groups in the pre-tests, it indicates that there is a slight difference between them. The outcome demonstrates that there are no noticeable disparities in their levels, which is a strong indication that there was no bias in the process of allocating students to the two groups. Additionally, it confirms that any improvement in the EXG's vocabulary ability that has been noticed is a direct result of the experiment's success and is not due to the high level of ExG's students. The results show a substantial difference in the mean ExG post-test score in favor of the VLS instruction that the ExG were exposed to during the experiment, with a statistical difference between the EXG and CG students' mean scores in their post-tests with a P- value of 0.0002. In other words, the fact that the ExG's post-test mean score increased shows how successfully VLS has been incorporated into the teaching of reading.

Table 3. The pre and post-tests of Control group

Control group	N	Mean	Std. Err.	T. test	P-value
Pre-Test CG	40	48.4	3.2	-1.28	0.205
Post-Test CG	40	53.3	2.3		

According to the above table (4), there is no statistically significant difference between pre and post test scores for the control group.

The table also shows that, in comparison to the experimental group, the control group has achieved only modest advancements in learning vocabularies. The control group and the experimental group were the groups from which the study's findings were drawn. According to the results, experimental group (i.e., those who were exposed to VLS materials) did better than the control group.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on Kurdish EFL students' vocabulary development and the extent to which teaching vocabulary learning strategies improve their vocabulary. The findings of the study demonstrated that teaching vocabulary learning strategies has a significant impact on vocabulary growth. The statistical analysis of the two research questions revealed that there were significant improvements in the mean scores of the participants in the experimental group. That is, the findings indicate that these vocabulary learning strategies have a positive effect on improving Kurdish learner's vocabulary. Additionally, there is a significant difference in the students' outcomes after the



VLS was introduced. At the end of the vocabulary training course, the EXG participants' vocabulary performance level dramatically improved. The control group did, however, perform marginally better on the posttest. Based on the results of the current study, several strategies are suggested to be used in teaching and vocabulary like determination strategy, social, cognitive, and metacognitive. The findings have important pedagogical ramifications for Kurdish EFL students taking reading comprehension and vocabulary classes.

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تدریس استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات لطلاب الكورد في الجامعة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

قسمت محمد زهاوي
qismat.hussin@su.edu.krd

انجومن محمد صابر
anjuman.sabir@su.edu.krd

ريزنه إبراهيم علي
rezhna.ali@su.edu.krd

ملخص البحث

تطوير المفردات هو عنصر حاسم في تعلم لغة أجنبية. ومن ثم ، فإن معرفة الاساتذة بالممارسات التعليمية المثلى لتدريس المفردات لها أهمية قصوى. الهدف من الدراسة الحالية هو (أ) اختبار فعالية تدريس استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات في تحسين مفردات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبي للطلاب الاكراد (ب) تحقيق مدى تحسين استراتيجيات تعلم المفردات في مفردات الطلاب. لتحقيق هذه الأهداف تم استخدام تصميم شبه تجريبي. و تم اختيار ثمانين (80) طالباً في السنة الثانية بكلية التربية الأساسية / جامعة صلاح الدين ضمن الدراسة. خضع المشاركون لاختبار مستوى المفردات (VLT) لقياس معرفتهم بالمفردات والاختبار القبلي اللاحق، والذي صممه الباحث اعتماداً على درجات الطلاب في VLT. في هذه الدراسة ، استخدم الباحث عينات مزدوجة لاختبار t لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها. بناءً على النتائج، تبين أن هناك فرقاً كبيراً بين نتائج الطلاب في تحسين VLS. ارتفع مستوى أداء المفردات للمجموعة التجريبية بشكل ملحوظ في نهاية دورة تدريب المفردات. ومع ذلك، كان لدى المجموعة الضابطة تحسن طفيف في الاختبار البعدي. يوصى بهذه الاستراتيجيات باعتبارها أساليب لفهم القراءة وتعليم المفردات بناءً على نتائج الدراسة الحالية.

المفردات: التدريس، إستراتيجيات تعلم المفردات، ومتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

گوتنه وهی ستراتژییه کانی هاوواتاکان به فیرخووانی کوردی له زانکۆ به زمانی ئینگلیزی وهکو زمانیکی بیانی

قسمت محممه زهاوي
qismat.hussin@su.edu.krd

ئه جوومه ن محممه صابر
anjuman.sabir@su.edu.krd

ريزنه ئبراهيم علي
rezhna.ali@su.edu.krd

پوخته

گه شه پیدانی هاوواتاکان بریتیه له پیکهاته په کی په کلاکه ره وه بۆ فیربوونی زمانیکی بیانی، گرنگی هاوواتاکان و فیربوونی زمان نه ریککی گرنکه بۆ وانه بیژانی زمان. ، ئامانجی ئهم توژیینه وه په بریتیه له (أ) دۆزینه وهی کاریگه ری گوتنه وهی ستراتژییه کانی هاوواتاکان و باشتکردنی هاوواتاکان به قوتاییانی کوردی به زمانی ئینگلیزی وه کو زمانیی گانه له زانکۆ (ب) لیکۆلینه وهی تا چهند گوتنه وهی ستراتژییه کانی هاوواتاکان ده توانن کاریگه رییان هه بیت له سه ره په پیدانی هاوواتاکان به فیرخووانی کوردی له پۆله کانی زمانی ئینگلیزی و هکو زمانیکی بیانی له سه ره ئاستی زانکۆ. بۆ گه یشتن به و ئامانجانه ریازی نیمچه تاقیکاری به کارهاتوو. که هه شتا (80) قوتایی قوئانی دووه می کۆلیژی په ره وهی بنه په تی له زانکۆی سه لاهه دین به شدارییان ئیدا کردوو. به شداریبووان تاقیکردنه وهی ئاستی هاوواتاکانیان ئه نجامدا بۆ پێوانه کردنی زانیاری هاوواتاکانیان و هه ره ها تاقیکردنه وهی پێشو، که له لایهن توژی ره وه دیزاینه کراوه به پیتی نمره ی قوتاییان له VLT، توژی ره که نمونه ی تاقیکردنه وهی جووته ی به کاره ییناوه بۆ شیکردنه وهی زانیاریه کۆکراوه کان. به پشتبه ستن به ئه نجامه کان ده رکه وت که جیاوازییه کی به رچاو له نێوان ده ره ئه نجامه کانی قوتاییاندا هه به دوا ناساندنی ستراتژییه کانی هاوواتاکان. ئاستی به شداریبووانی گروپی تاقیکاری له کۆتایی گوتنه وهی ستراتژییه کانی هاوواتاکان به فیرخووانی کوردی به زمانی ئینگلیزی وهکو زمانی بیگانه له زانکۆ به شیوه یه کی به رچاو زیادی کرد. به لأم گروپی کۆنترۆل که مپک پێشکه وتیان له دوا تاقیکردنه وهدا هه بوو. وه له سه ره بنه مای ئهم ئه نجامانه ده رکه وت که جیاوازییه کی به رچاو له نێوان ئه نجامی گوتنه وهی ستراتژییه کانی هاوواتاکان قوتاییانی کوردی له زانکۆ هه به. به پشتبه ستن به دۆزینه وه کانی توژی نه وه که ستراتژی وهک ته کنیکه کانی فیرکردنی ئیگه یشتن (Reading) گوتنه وهی ستراتژییه کانی دانه زمانیه کان پێشیار ده کرین .

وشه سازی: فیرکردن، ستراتژییه کانی فیربوونی هاوواتاکان، و فیرخووانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانیکی بیانی.