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GRADUATION PAPER

**LEARNER AUTONOMY IN VOCABULARY
LEARNING - A STUDY ON STUDENTS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL STANDARD PROGRAM, VNU**

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ABSTRACT

The study, as its name reveals, has been conducted with the hope to identify the awareness of learner autonomy in vocabulary learning among students of the International Standard Program (ISP), VNU. Being a newly-developed program with different goals and objectives, as well as different targeted learners, the International Standard Program has not yet been given much serious research. Focusing on their language learning, specifically vocabulary learning, this study aims at finding out ISP students' use of methods and materials in learning vocabulary, as well as the role of their teachers in stimulating their autonomous vocabulary learning. For these objectives, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed in the research conduct, including two questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observations. Analysis of data collected among 147 students and 24 teachers, particularly 10 interviewed students, 5 interviewed teachers and 4 observed classes revealed a mismatch between ISP students' full awareness of the importance of vocabulary learning, as well as autonomy in vocabulary learning, and their determination to learn vocabulary by themselves. Two outstanding explanations are attributed to their lack of guidance and motivation and their dependence on teachers' involvement in their learning. From this reality, some practical implications were proposed with a view to improving students' autonomy in their learning in general and in vocabulary learning in particular.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
List of figures:	vi
PART A: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study	1
2. Aims and objectives of the study	2
3. Significance of the study	2
4. Scope of the study	3
5. Methods of the study	3
6. Overview of the study	3
PART B: DEVELOPMENT	5
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
1.1. Definitions of key concepts	5
1.1.1. Learner autonomy.....	5
1.1.1.1. Definition of learner autonomy	5
1.1.1.2. Components of learner autonomy	6
1.1.1.3. Levels of learner autonomy	7
1.1.1.4. The role of teacher in learner autonomy	8
1.1.1.5. Learner autonomy in interaction with the language education theories	9
a. Learning strategies and self-regulation	9
b. Motivation	9
c. Individual differences and socio-cultural approaches.....	10

d. Teacher development	10
1.1.2. Vocabulary and vocabulary learning.....	11
1.1.2.1. Vocabulary	11
a. Definition of vocabulary	11
b. The significance of vocabulary in language learning	11
1.1.2.2. Vocabulary learning	11
a. Aspects of vocabulary learning	11
b. The incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition.....	12
c. Approaches to vocabulary learning.....	12
d. Vocabulary learning strategies.....	13
1.1.2.3. Learner autonomy in vocabulary learning	18
1.2. Review of related studies	19
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	20
2.1. Participants and settings	20
2.1.1. The International Standard Program	20
2.1.2. Description of participants	21
2.2. Research instruments.....	22
2.2.1. Questionnaires	22
2.2.1.1. Questionnaires for students	22
2.2.1.2. Questionnaires for teachers	23
2.3.2. Teachers' assessment of the effectiveness of the methods to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning.....	39
PART C: CONCLUSION	41
1. Summary of major findings.....	41
2. Implications	41
3. Contribution of the study.....	42

4. Limitations of the study.....	43
5. Recommendations for further research	43
REFERENCES	44
APPENDICES	49

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND ABBREVIATIONS

List of figures:

No.	Figure	Page
1	Figure 1.1 Components of learner autonomy in foreign language learning	7
2	Figure 3.1: Students' perception of the importance of learning vocabulary	27
3	Figure 3.2: Students' level of interest in vocabulary learning	29
4	Figure 3.3: Students' assessment of their vocabulary mastery	29
5	Figure 3.4: Students' perception of the importance of Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary Learning	30
6	Figure 3.5: Students' autonomous learning habit in Vocabulary Learning	31
7	Figure 3.6: Sources of material used by ISP students in their autonomous vocabulary learning and their frequency of use	32
8	Figure 3.7: Frequency of students' use of vocabulary learning strategies in their autonomous vocabulary learning	33
9	Figure 3.8: Frequency of teachers' use of methods to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning	37
10	Figure 3.9: Teachers' assessment of the effectiveness of the methods to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning	39

List of tables:

No.	Table	Page
1	Table 1.1: Levels of learner autonomy in language learning	7-8
2	Table 1.2: Gu and Johnson's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	14
3	Table 1.3: Nation's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning	14

	Strategies	
4	Table 1.4: Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	15-18

List of abbreviations:

ISP	The International Standard Program
VNU	Vietnam National University
ULIS	University of Languages and International Studies

PART A: INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

Learner autonomy has recently emerged as a buzzword in the context of education. Educational paradigms have shifted away from teacher-centered learning towards more learner-centered models, which is of no exception reflected in the language teaching and learning process (Nunan 2000). According to Dimitrios (1999, p. 129), “one of the most important spin-offs of more communicatively oriented language learning and teaching has been the premium placed in the role of learners in the language learning process”

Among all academic fields in language education, vocabulary is one that possesses an immense potential of learner autonomy implementation. Vocabulary learning itself is a demanding task, possibly “the largest and most important task facing the language learner” (Swan and Walter 1984, pp.19). Incredible attempts have been made by teachers in the teaching of vocabulary, as noticed in Allen (1983). Within University of Language and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ULIS, VNU), vocabulary is integrated in other language skills and the task of vocabulary acquisition is totally left to the students. The case is seen not only among students majoring in English but also in such non-majors as students of the International Standard Program (ISP students in short) coming to study English in ULIS for their first year at University.

In the research area, there have been quite a great number of studies on learner autonomy and vocabulary learning individually, yet surprisingly not so much interest have been placed in the connection between these two fields. Acknowledging the crucial importance of learner autonomy and the adaptation of autonomy in vocabulary learning, the researcher is inspired to carry out a research on the current situation of her own university entitled “*Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary Learning – A study on Students of the International Standard Program, VNU*”.

2. Aims and objectives of the study

Initially, the study aims at identifying ISP students' awareness of learner autonomy and vocabulary learning. By doing so, the researcher wishes to have an insight into students' use of materials and strategies in their process of autonomous vocabulary learning. Secondly, the researcher investigates the issue from the teachers' perspective, so as to figure out the techniques employed by teachers to foster students in their vocabulary learning and the effects of such techniques on the students. The data collected will serve as a basis to propose solutions for better use of teacher's instructions in fostering students' autonomy in learning vocabulary and accordingly benefits the future generations of the International Standard Program.

In brief, the study would seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are perceptions of autonomy in vocabulary learning among students of the International Standard Program?

2. What strategies are used by the students for learning vocabulary autonomously and what are the obstacles encountered by the students in using those vocabulary learning strategies autonomously?

3. What techniques are employed by teachers to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning and to what extent are the employed techniques effective in fostering students in their autonomous vocabulary learning?

3. Significance of the study

On doing this research, the researcher aims at realizing the significance of learner autonomy in vocabulary learning, which will be of great benefit in some respects:

First of all, it will provide descriptive information on autonomous vocabulary learning, together with major difficulties experienced by the students during their learning process.

Secondly, it is expected to serve as a guideline for the ISP students in particular and language learners in general to discover their own way to best improve their vocabulary learning, develop autonomy in learning vocabulary, and ultimately expand their lexical knowledge.

Last but not least, the study will hopefully be a reliable source of reference for students, teachers and especially researchers interested in the topic.

4. Scope of the study

Given the fact that vocabulary is a broad and complicated area, it is impossible to cover all its facets within the scope of a graduation paper. Therefore, the research focuses on the strategies employed by students as part of their autonomous learning and the challenges facing them. Regarding the sample size, only a limited number of the population will be involved in the research as the most typical and thoroughly selected participants.

5. Methods of the study

In order to meet the objectives of the study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be employed in its conduct. First, two survey questionnaires will be delivered to students and teachers of six classes of the International Standard Program. After the surveys, observations will be conducted in the classes, and then interviews with teachers and ten selected students will be carried out. This triangulation is to mitigate the bias of the information obtained from either the survey or the observation alone while improve the validity of the findings (Johnson, 1992, cited in Gass and Mackey, 2005). Next, gathered data will be processed, implications will be made based on the findings, and conclusions will be drawn out.

6. Overview of the study

This paper has three parts:

Part A: Introduction describes Rationale, Aims of the Study and Research Questions, Methods of the Study, Scope of the Study, Significance of the Study and Overview of the Study.

Part B: Development consists of three chapters:

Chapter I: Literature Review lays the theoretical foundation for the study with definitions of key terms and review of some related studies worldwide and in Vietnam.

Chapter II: Methodology presents details about the methods and the procedures of the study.

Chapter III: Results and Discussions presents the students' perception of learner autonomy in vocabulary learning, as well as the strategies employed by them and the role of teachers in helping them learn vocabulary autonomously. In this chapter, difficulties are also highlighted and implications on possible solutions will also be discussed.

PART C: Conclusion ends the study with a summary of the main points, the limitations, and suggestions for further research.

PART B: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This second chapter reviews the literature of the study, specifically the theoretical background and a number of studies related to the research topic.

1.1. Definitions of key concepts

1.1.1. Learner autonomy

1.1.1.1. Definition of learner autonomy

The idea of learner autonomy is not new, with prior ELT terms being known as “individualism”, “learner independence” (Smith, 2008). The notion of learner autonomy originated from the fields of politics and moral philosophy (Benson, 2001), and was first developed and formally introduced by French teacher-researchers, among whom was Henri Holec (1979, p.20), who conceptualized “learner autonomy” as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”. This ability, according to Holec, is not an innate ability but in fact acquirable by means of learning. Dickinson (1987, p.85) views autonomy as “a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his or her learning and implementation of those decisions”. By this, he emphasizes the importance of one’s responsibility in planning their own learning and the determination to fulfill that responsibility. The definition is generalized by Little (1991, p.16) with autonomy being “essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning”. Meanwhile, Fazey & Fazey (2001, p.345) define the concept of “autonomy” through the definition of “autonomous people”:

*Autonomous people are **intrinsically-motivated**, perceive themselves to be **in control of their decision making**, take **responsibility** for the outcomes of their actions and **have confidence** in themselves.*

(Fazey & Fazey 2001, p.345)

The understanding of Fazey & Fazey (2001) about autonomy is much the same as Dickinson's (1987). The determination to implement a decision, after all, stems from one's belief in himself and his ability.

Overall, the definitions vary, yet the two major features of learner autonomy are present through, which are:

- Students should be responsible for their own learning, given the fact that all learning can in any case only be carried out by the students themselves and also because of the necessity for them to develop the ability to continue learning after the end of their formal education.
- Taking responsibility involves learners in taking ownership (either partial or total) of many processes which have traditionally been attributed to the teacher, such as deciding on learning objectives, evaluating progress, etc.

1.1.1.2. Components of learner autonomy

The identification of Learner Autonomy components are based on the framework of William Littlewood. According to Littlewood (1996), two components contributing to learner autonomy are ability and willingness, and each component itself can be divided into two smaller components.

As shown in figure 1.1 below, ability is the combination of both knowledge and skills, more specifically the knowledge about alternatives to make choices and the skills to work out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Meanwhile, willingness depends on possessing both the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required. These components, though distinguished in theory, are closely linked in practice. In order for a person to be successful in learning autonomously, all these four components should necessarily be present. One who is highly motivated still will not be able to learn autonomously without the necessary knowledge or skills to organize his/her time, etc.

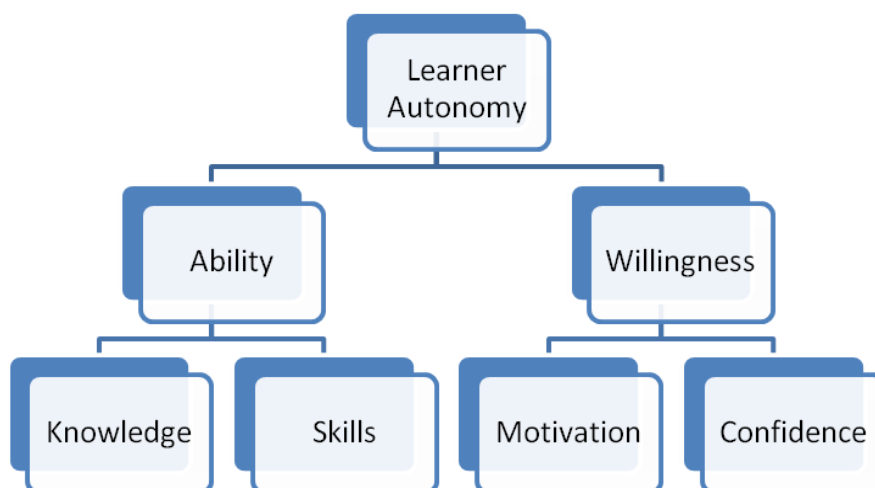


Figure 1.1 Components of learner autonomy in foreign language learning

(Adapted from Littlewood 1996, pp.430)

1.1.1.3. Levels of learner autonomy

The concept of “autonomy” involves the level of behavior at which a person makes independent choices. The choices that determine a person’s behavior operate within a hierarchy of different levels.

According to Littlewood the levels of learner autonomy in language learning can be classified as follows:

No.	Levels of Learner Autonomy
1	Learners are able to make their own choices in grammar and vocabulary (e.g. in controlled role-plays and simple tasks involving information exchange).
2	Learners choose the meanings they want to express and the communication strategies they will use in order to achieve their communicative goals
3	Learners are able to make more far-reaching decisions about goals, meanings and strategies (e.g. in creative role-playing, problem-solving and discussion);
4	Learners begin to choose and shape their own learning contexts, e.g. in self-directed learning and project work;
5	Learners become able to make decisions in domains which have traditionally belonged to the teacher, e.g. about materials and learning tasks;
6	Learners participate in determining the nature and progression of their own syllabus

7	Learners are able to use language (for communication and learning) independently in situations of their choice outside the classroom
---	--

Table 1.1: Levels of learner autonomy in language learning

(Adapted from Littlewood 1992, pp.429-430)

As seen above, at the bottom of the hierarchy are “low-level” choices which control the specific operations through which the activity is carried out. At the top are “high-level” choices which control the overall activity - whether to perform it at all, its overall direction, and so on.

1.1.1.4. The role of teacher in learner autonomy

Although learner autonomy involves learners themselves for the majority, teachers also play a critical role in this process. Balçıkanlı (2000) proposed twelve strategies that teachers can use to foster learner autonomy in the classroom:

1. Encourage students to be interdependent and to work collectively.
2. Ask students to keep a diary of their learning experiences.
3. Explain teacher/student roles from the outset. Asking students to give their opinions on the issue of roles
4. Progress gradually from interdependence to independence.
5. Give students projects to do outside the classroom.
6. Give the students non-lesson classroom duties to perform (taking roll, writing instructions, notices, etc. on the board for the teacher).
7. Have the students design lessons or materials to be used in class.
8. Instruct students on how to use the school's resource centers: the school library, the language lab, and the language lounge.
9. Emphasize the importance of peer-editing, corrections, and follow-up questioning in the classroom.
10. Encourage the students to use only English in class.
11. Stress fluency rather than accuracy.
12. Allow the students to use reference books, including dictionaries (preferably English-English with Japanese annotations), in class.

(Adapted from Balçıkanlı 2000)

The twelve strategies proposed by Balçıkanlı emphasize the active role of students in their learning and teachers play the role of a guider. With these strategies, students are facilitated with guidance and methods to take care of their own learning.

1.1.1.5. Learner autonomy in interaction with the language education theories

As the idea of autonomy has made its way to the mainstream language education context, it has also begun to interact with other important concepts in the field. Significant concepts can be seen such as learning strategies and self-regulation, motivation, individual differences and socio-cultural theory, and teacher development.

a. Learning strategies and self-regulation

Wenden (1991, pp.13) asserted the close connection between learning strategies and the concepts of “strategy training”, “learner training” and “learner development”. Since the late 1980s, learning strategies have been adapted by European scholars in their work on learner training, and writers on learning strategies also began to include the theories of autonomy in their research. (Wenden 1991; Cohen 1998; Macaro 2001; Oxford 2003, as cited in Benson 2001). In the 1990s, autonomy was more closely associated with learning strategies than it was with any other language education concepts and recently learning strategies, learner training and learner development continue to be a focus of interest (Benson2001). In the same way, Dornyei (2005, p.191) suggested “self-regulation” and Rubin (2001, p.20) suggested “learner self-management”, both of which share a close link with learner autonomy.

b. Motivation

As stated earlier, motivation plays the role of a contributing factor to build up learner autonomy. The link between motivation and autonomy is expressed by the fact that both are centrally concerned with learners’ active involvement in learning. In fact, the idea of learner autonomy was mostly

integrated into L2 motivation studies through Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory. In their theory, the role of intrinsic motivation and a "sense of personal autonomy" was highlighted. Similarly, Dornyei (2001, p.116) categorized "creating learner autonomy" as one section of his taxonomy of motivational strategies. Within the scope of the study, these can serve as an evidence of the interaction between autonomy and motivation in language learning.

c. Individual differences and socio-cultural approaches

In between the period of 1980s and 1990s, learner autonomy in language learning was regarded as individualism, or "learning in isolation" (Benson 2001, p.47). Although there is a clear conceptual link between autonomy and individual difference, there has been relatively little interaction between the two, as pointed out by Benson, 2001. According to this author, learners develop individual identities because of socio-cultural approaches rather than through the language learning process.

d. Teacher development

The idea of teacher autonomy was first introduced into the language teaching literature by Allwright (1990) and developed by Little (1995). Quite different from the ordinary understanding of teacher autonomy as teachers' freedom to exercise discretion in curriculum implementation, the concept of teacher development in the language teaching literature implies teachers' autonomy as a professional attribute and the link between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy (Benson 2001). Therefore, the role of the teacher is to help learners gradually get to know the directions in their learning, such as setting objectives, finding learning resources or assessing their own learning, etc.

1.1.2. Vocabulary and vocabulary learning

1.1.2.1. Vocabulary

a. Definition of vocabulary

According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary Sixth Edition (2000), vocabulary is: 1) "all the words a person knows or uses", and 2) "all the words in a particular language". As the paper particularly focuses on the students' learning of vocabulary, "vocabulary" should be understood in the first denotation.

In association with vocabulary is the term "word", which, according to McCarthy (1995, p.31), "when we speak of the vocabulary of a language, we are speaking primarily, but not exclusively, of the words of that language". Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (Flexner 2003) defines "word" as "a unit of language, consisting of one or more spoken sounds or their written representation that functions as a principle carrier of meaning". Thus, vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meaning in a broader sense.

b. The significance of vocabulary in language learning

David Wilkins in Thornbury (2002, p.13) stated the importance of vocabulary as "*without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed*". Vocabulary is considered central to language learning, as learners study vocabulary not only for itself but also for all the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Besides that, vocabulary is developed gradually, therefore, the more vocabulary learners possess, the easier it is for them to make progress in their learning. Thus, it is important that learners be equipped with sufficient vocabulary in their learning process.

1.1.2.2. Vocabulary learning

a. Aspects of vocabulary learning

Vocabulary learning does not only involve the acquisition of new words but also the process in which learners make use of such new words in their language learning. To support this, Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) proposed two

types of mental processing involved in the task of vocabulary learning, which are:

- 1) Discovering the meaning of a new word.
- 2) Practicing and memorizing the “discovered” word.

Cook and Mayer (1983, pp.14-27) also mentioned similar aspects, named “storage encoding/retrieval encoding” and “addition of new information to memory/assimilation of the new information to existing knowledge”.

b. The incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition

“The Incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition” is a term referred to the process of accumulating word knowledge. This process is a consequence of the multiple dimensions of knowing a word, which suggests that knowledge of a lexical item is not “an all-or-nothing proposition” (Takac, 2008). The process of word accumulation happens as a matter of fact when learners gradually identify more “dimensions” of the words as a result of recurrence with those words during their learning process.

c. Approaches to vocabulary learning

Two approaches to vocabulary learning are proposed in Schmitt’s (2000, p.20) as being *Incidental and Intentional Vocabulary Learning*.

Incidental vocabulary learning is an approach in which vocabulary can be learnt when one is communicating in the language, most probably in the written form. The approach takes place more frequently among proficient language learners, who, at the same time, are making a double benefit with their learning. Intentional vocabulary learning, on the other hand, focuses directly on lexicons and as its name reveals, is an approach in which learners intentionally study certain items of vocabulary alone.

Talking about the pros and cons of the two approaches, Krashen (1989) proposed a research review that incidental vocabulary learning produces a better result than intentional vocabulary learning. However, in order to learn vocabulary incidentally, learners must already have the ability to read, which is not easy if they are at the first stages of second language learning, and thus not

all language learners are able to do this. Furthermore, it takes time and effort as learners have to read extensively to come across a certain word, thus incidental vocabulary learning is also slower than intentional vocabulary learning.

In order to make the best use of both approaches, scholars such as Nation (1999) and Schmitt (2000) state the correlation between them both. Nation (1999) concluded that intentional learning is suitable to apply for the most frequently used words, while those of lower frequency can and should be learnt incidentally. Schmitt (2000, pp. 122-3) added that the learning of word meaning can be acquired by intentional learning, meanwhile such vocabulary fields as collocations should be achieved through exposures in incidental learning.

From the above literature, it is noticeable that the role of learners themselves is crucial and they are to take responsibility for their own learning.

d. Vocabulary learning strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies can be considered as a subset of general learning strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p.201) defined learning strategies as “the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information” Specifically about vocabulary learning strategies, there have been quite a few proposals by scholars of second and foreign languages. In this research, three taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies are picked out for illustration and comparison.

Gu and Johnson (1996, cited in Ghazal, 2007) proposed a taxonomy in which vocabulary learning strategies are divided into four categories, namely meta-cognitive, cognitive, memory and activation. Each category is clarified by sub-categories as follows:

- **Meta-cognitive:** strategies include selective attention to the important words and self-initiation, which is the use of different means to clarify word meanings.
- **Cognitive strategies:** involve guessing, using dictionaries and not-taking skills.

- **Memory:** includes rehearsing the words and encoding them by imaging and associating with others.

- **Activation:** is the way new words are used in different contexts.

The taxonomy of Gu and Johnson are summarized by Ghazal (2007) in the following table:

Table 1.2: Gu and Johnson’s Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

(Adapted from Ghazal 2007, pp.134)

Category	Sub-categories
Meta-cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Attention: Identifying essential words for comprehension • Self-initiation: Using a variety of means to make the meaning of words clear
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guessing: Activating background knowledge, using linguistic items • Use of dictionaries • Note-taking
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsal: Word lists, repetition, etc. • Encoding: Association (imagery, visual, auditory, etc.)
Activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using new words in different contexts

Another set of vocabulary learning strategies was identified by Nation (2001, p.218), which covers three major categories: planning, sources and processes. Details about the strategies are presented in the following table:

General class of strategies	Types of strategies
Planning: Choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing words • Choosing the aspects of word knowledge • Choosing strategies • Planning repetition

Sources: Finding information about words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing the word • Using context • Consulting a reference source in L1 and L2 • Using parallel in L1 and L2
Processes: Establishing knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing • Retrieving • Generating

Table 1.3: Nation’s Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Comparing between the two, Nation’s taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies is much simpler than Gu and Johnson’s, given that it uses simple language and expressions to describe the strategies. Gu and Johnson’s is much more complicated, which involves many psychological terms like “*cognitive*”, “*meta-cognitive*”, etc. However, in terms of content, the taxonomy proposed by Gu and Johnson is more thorough, which covers the level of mental processing rather than mere description of the strategies.

Schmitt (1997) offered a more comprehensive taxonomy of 58 strategies, which are grouped into two major categories that stay in strict accordance with the two aspects of vocabulary: *Strategies for discovery of a new word’s meaning* and *strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered*. Besides that, separation was made to further classify the strategies. Therefore, five groups are presented: Determination strategies (DET), Social strategies (SOC), Memory strategies (MEM), Cognitive strategies (COG) and Meta-cognitive strategies (MET). With the comprehensiveness of the taxonomy, it is used as a main source of adaptation of the study.

Strategy Group	Strategy
<i>Strategies for Discovery of a new word’s meaning</i>	
DET	1. Analyze part of speech

DET	2. Analyze suffixes and roots
DET	3. Check for L1 cognate
DET	4. Analyze any available pictures or gestures
DET	5. Guess from textual context
DET	6. Bilingual dictionary
DET	7. Monolingual dictionary
DET	8. Word lists
DET	9. Flashcards
SOC	10. Ask teachers for a L1 translation
SOC	11. Ask teachers for paraphrase or synonym of a new word
SOC	12. Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word
SOC	13. Ask classmates for meaning
SOC	14. Discover new meaning through group work activity
<i>Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered</i>	
SOC	1. Study and practice meaning in group
SOC	2. Teacher checks students' flashcards or word lists for accuracy
SOC	3. Interact with native speakers
MEM	4. Study words with a pictorial representation of its meaning
MEM	5. Image a word's meaning
MEM	6. Connect words to a personal experience
MEM	7. Associate the word with its coordinates
MEM	8. Use semantic maps

MEM	9. Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives
MEM	10. Peg method
MEM	11. Loci method
MEM	12. Group words together to study them
MEM	13. Group words together spatially on a page
MEM	14. Use new word in sentences
MEM	15. Group words together within a storyline
MEM	16. Study the spelling of a word
MEM	17. Study the pronunciation of a word
MEM	18. Say new words aloud when studying
MEM	19. Image word form
MEM	20. Underline initial letter of the word
MEM	21. Configuration
MEM	22. Use Keyword Method
MEM	23. Affixes and Roots
MEM	24. Parts of speech
MEM	25. Paraphrase the word's meaning
MEM	26. Use cognates in study
MEM	27. Learn the words of an idiom together
MEM	28. Use physical action when learning a word
MEM	29. Use semantic features grids
COG	30. Verbal repetition
COG	31. Word lists

COG	32. Flashcards
COG	33. Take notes in class
COG	34. Use the vocabulary section in textbook
COG	35. Listen to tape of word lists
COG	36. Put English labels on physical objects
COG	37. Keep a vocabulary notebook
MET	38. Use English-language media
MET	39. Testing oneself with word tests
MET	40. Use spaced word practice
MET	41. Skip or pass new word
MET	42. Continue to study word over time

**Table 1.4: Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies
(1997, pp. 207-208)**

1.1.2.3. Learner autonomy in vocabulary learning

Autonomy is an essential part of learning, as affirmed by Scharle and Czabo (2000, p.4) that "success in learning very much depends on learners having a responsible attitude". Language learning, in particular, is a lifelong process that takes a lot of effort from the learners (Scharle and Czabo 2000) and in this whole process, vocabulary is an area that possesses the greatest potential for autonomous learning adaptation (McCarthy 1990, p.129). Thornbury (2002) insisted that every L2 language learner have their own way of acquiring vocabulary, thus this process is much of an individual process. Moreover, the amount of class time for vocabulary learning is very limited, not to mention the fact that vocabulary is integrated in other language skills, therefore the need for self-study is extremely vital.

1.2. Review of related studies

The subject of vocabulary and autonomy has been discussed through a large body of research. The most significant works can be attributed to researches like Nation (2001) with suggestions of three factors of autonomy, known as attitude, awareness and capacity, Nation and Waring (1997) with studies on different aspects of vocabulary, or O'Malley and Chamot with particular attention to vocabulary learning strategies. As regards the factors of learner autonomy, Scharle and Szabo (2000) also proposed seven factors, which not only involves the “learner factors” but also “teacher factors”. According to their belief, teachers have a role in sharing information with the learners and having control over the learners’ decision making and task fulfillment. The idea of teachers’ role was not mentioned in Nation (2001) but it was in fact suggested as stimulant of learner attitude, awareness and learning capacity.

In Vietnam, the concept of learner autonomy has not been familiarized among scholars. In the university where the researcher is currently studying, there are several studies, most of which are research papers on similar topics, such as the one by Ngo (2009) which provides a thorough insight into vocabulary level and vocabulary learning strategies of second year students at the English Department of the University, or by Lê (2010) and Giang (2010) with an account of autonomous learner in learning vocabulary. Such studies have made a significant contribution to the understanding of the topic.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The following chapter depicts in detail the methodology of this research paper. It includes the description of the sample, justification for and narration of the three data collection instruments. Furthermore, an elaborate report on the procedures of data collection and data analysis are also incorporated.

2.1. Participants and settings

2.1.1. The International Standard Program

Initiated in 2007 as a response to the globalization context, the International Standard Program (ISP) is a project of Vietnam National University focusing on developing high-quality human resources that meet the international standard. The project aims at training students of 16 majors (as for undergraduates) and 23 specialties (as for graduates and postgraduates) of all member Universities of Vietnam National University (VNU). Students are trained with an international standard curriculum, in which the language of instruction is English. Therefore, one of the tasks required by the program is facilitating fundamental English language for the students, which was assigned to University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS). Before 2010, the job of teaching English was done by assigning teachers of ULIS to member universities of VNU who were conducting the Strategic Mission Program to teach students during their first year at University. Since 2010, students of the program were sent to ULIS, mingled and placed in 20 classes in accordance with their English level and spent the whole first year studying English. By 2011, keeping a similar notion, the program was continued and developed to 24 classes, which are divided into two groups according to their level of English Proficiency. In their first year at ULIS, students of ISP classes have to go through 600 periods of English a week, which are divided into five modules, each module comprises six weeks of study and after this first year, students are expected to get 6.0 IELTS band score. (Vietnam National University Official Website, 2011)

2.1.2. Description of participants

In accordance with the targeted research questions and instruments of data collection, two groups of participants were involved in this research, including group A (students) and group B (teachers).

Group A consists of 147 first-year students from eight classes of the International Standard Program (ISP students) who are currently learning English at University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ULIS-VNU). Four of the classes are high-level classes, and the other four are of lower level – this division was based on their entrance English examination results at the beginning of the school year. The participants are around 19 years old and their English competence at the time of the data collection was pre-intermediate to intermediate level. These students are chosen because they are studying English intensively - 20 periods of English a week, and they are compelled to attain the standard level of English in order to accomplish the program. Besides, the students are not English-majored and do not have a long time exposure to English language learning, thus in this stage, they are supposed to acquire a great deal of knowledge of the English language, particularly English vocabulary and skills (Nation & Carter, 1989).

Group B includes 24 teachers who are teaching ISP classes, 20 of them are Vietnamese teachers and the rest 4 teachers are foreigners. These participants are chosen because they are directly in charge of the eight targeted classes in semester II, academic year 2011-2012. Their teaching experience as well as knowledge of the classes will be of great help to the researcher's work and add more reliability to the research.

As the two groups of participants were chosen, contacts were made for their acceptance to participate in the research. Questionnaires were delivered; observations with comprehensive checklists were made during their lessons and finally interviews were conducted with a selected number of participants for thorough clarification.

2.2. Research instruments

2.2.1. Questionnaires

2.2.1.1. Questionnaires for students

In order to identify the student participants' attitude towards autonomous vocabulary learning, as well as the strategies they use, the obstacles they encounter and their teacher's role in helping them learn vocabulary autonomously, a comprehensive questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire was originally in English but was also translated into a Vietnamese version in order to help students understand better.

In the first part of the questionnaire, there are multiple choice questions that ask about students' perception and attitude towards vocabulary learning and autonomy in vocabulary learning. These include: (1) information about students' self-assessment of their vocabulary level, (2) their acknowledgement of the importance of vocabulary learning and autonomy in vocabulary learning, (3) their interest in learning vocabulary and (4) reflection on their time spent and resources utilized in learning vocabulary autonomously.

The second part of the questionnaire aims at figuring out the strategies employed by ISP students in learning English vocabulary autonomously and the frequency with which they use such strategies. The list of strategies is adapted from Schmitt's Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (1997, pp.207-208) with modifications to fit the context of the research. The strategies are divided into two groups: (1) Strategies to discover the meaning of new words and (2) Strategies to consolidate words. In order to find out students' frequency of using those strategies, a likert scale was designed, ranging from 1 – never to 5 – always.

In the third part of the questionnaire, the participants are given statements about the role of teachers in helping them learn English vocabulary autonomously and they are asked to show their level of agreement with those statements according to a scale from 1 – totally disagree to 5 – totally agree. The statements are based on the taxonomy of twelve strategies that teachers can use to foster learner autonomy in the classroom proposed by Balçıkanlı (2000).

To meet the aim of the research, the researcher chooses only the strategies that are applicable to vocabulary learning to put in the questionnaire. Besides, there is a part for the participants to mention other methods that their teachers use, if there are any.

Finally, in the last part of the questionnaire, there are questions asking about the students' difficulties, their assessment of their teachers' role in helping them learn English vocabulary autonomously and their expectations of their teachers to foster their autonomy in English vocabulary learning.

2.2.1.2. Questionnaires for teachers

The questionnaire for teachers was designed with a view to discovering the ISP teachers' attitude towards English vocabulary teaching and learning, the methods that they use to stimulate students' autonomy in learning English vocabulary, in terms of both frequency and level of effectiveness, together with their difficulties and suggestions in employing those methods.

In Part A of the questionnaire, four multiple choice questions are given to the teacher participants, including questions about (1) their assessment of their students' vocabulary proficiency, (2) their judgment of the importance of teaching and learning English vocabulary, (3) their judgment of the importance of autonomy in their students' vocabulary learning and (4) their judgment of the role of teachers in fostering students' autonomy in vocabulary learning.

In part B and C of the questionnaire, a list of seven methods that teachers use to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning is presented, which was adapted from Balçıkanlı's taxonomy (2000). The methods were critically chosen so as to fit the aim of the research as to identify teacher's role in stimulating learner autonomy in vocabulary learning only. Teachers are asked to reflect on the frequency with which they apply these methods, based on a Likert scale from 1 – never to 5 – always, and their assessment of the methods by sorting out from the most to the least effective. There is also room for the teacher participants to add any other methods that they use besides the methods proposed by the researcher.

Lastly, two questions about the teachers' experience in promoting autonomy for their students' vocabulary learning were raised in part D, in which teachers can talk freely about the difficulties they meet and the solutions they recommend.

2.2.2. Observations

The next type of data collection in the study was classroom observation. Observation is the most basic research technique we can employ in classrooms (Miller, 2004). As Hopkins (cited in Mr Donough, J and Mr Donough, S. 1997, p.101) describes, "observation is a pivotal activity with a crucial role to play in classroom research". In this research, classroom observation was conducted in order to bolster the qualitative and quantitative results, which is, to clarify the validity of the interview answers of the teachers and students participated. To be more specific, it aims at identifying the correlation between teacher and student autonomy in vocabulary learning in the classroom. The observation scheme (see Appendix 4) was adapted from the taxonomy of strategies used by teachers in fostering learner autonomy in the classroom, developed by Balçıkanlı (2000). It helps reckon the types of activities conducted by the teachers and the frequency with which teacher's methods are used in the classroom.

2.2.3. Interviews

Besides observations, the qualitative data of this study were collected via semi-structured interviews as well. According to Best and Kahn (1986), the use of interview yields the advantage in which by building rapport with the interviewees, the interviewer will be able to get some confidential information which they might be reluctant to express through writing. Moreover, as the interviews are conducted face-to-face, interviewees' difficulties in understanding the questions can be clarified by the interviewer.

In the collection of data for this research paper, the interviews serve as a medium for ISP teachers and students to share their personal points of view regarding their autonomous vocabulary learning, which they might not be able

to point out via the questionnaire as well as their internal factors which were unobservable in the classroom. In both interviews for teachers and for students, their difficulties and suggestions to improve the effectiveness of autonomous English vocabulary learning were paid particular attention to. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews ensure the comparability of responses across participants as the topic areas to be covered are pre-defined (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, the interviews, which were carried out after the questionnaire survey and classroom observations, also enrich the final findings as the interviewees are required to provide more in-depth explanations on the discovered patterns (Dörnyei, 2007). In other words, the interviews play an important role in validating the observation and questionnaire findings of this study.

During interviews, detailed notes were carefully taken. Audio recording devices were also employed at the participants' permission to aid the data collection process. The interviews were carried out in both Vietnamese and English, depending on the interviewees' interest.

2.3. Data collection procedures

The process of data collection consists of three phases, which were conducted at different points of time:

Phase 1

150 questionnaires were delivered to ISP students in person, 146 were returned. Instructions were given clearly; all the terms were clarified to assist participants in understanding correctly the wording in the questionnaires. The researcher was also present to answer any questions arising in the process.

Questionnaires were also sent to eleven teachers in person or via emails.

Phase 2

At the teachers' consent, four classroom observations were conducted with the use of the pre-designed observation checklist. The researcher made four observations altogether, at four different classes of different skills.

Phase 3

After the questionnaires were distributed and observations were made in ISP classes, interviews were conducted with five teacher participants, including four Vietnamese teachers and one foreigner, and ten student participants who manifest significant features as seen from their response to the questionnaires and the in-class observation. All of the interviews were recorded for further examination.

2.4. Data analysis procedures

Firstly, the collected data was classified to answer the research questions. The data gathered through the questionnaires were expected to answer all the five research questions. The classroom observations and the interviews provided more thorough answers, adding more values to those given through the questionnaires. The three methods of self-reflection through questionnaires, independent observation of the researchers and interview complement each other for the most objective result.

Descriptive statistics were employed. The data obtained from the questionnaires were calculated and transferred into numerical form. After that, for each research question, data were summarized into graphs to assist the synthesis, comparison and generalization of the data.

Qualitative data like participants' answers to the open ended questions during the interviews was summarized so that the researcher can refer to when illustrating the data analysis.

Notes from observations are used to prepare relevant questions for the later interviews.

Responses collected from teachers and students will then be compared to find out the differences and similarities, from which implications to enhance the effectiveness of students' autonomy in Vocabulary learning are drawn.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapter provides major findings from the collected data and discussion to reveal the answers to three research questions. Each research question will be justified by two parts: first, the results from the questionnaires, interviews and observation and second, detailed discussion of the findings where comparison between teachers' and students' answers will be discussed. Finally, pedagogical implications will be drawn from the findings of the study.

3.1. Research question 1: What are perceptions of autonomy in vocabulary learning among students of the International Standard Program - VNU?

For the first question in the questionnaire, students were asked to give their judgment of the importance of English vocabulary learning. The results showed that students are highly aware of the importance of learning English vocabulary, with 129 students (87.8%) acknowledging that learning vocabulary is very important and the other 18 (12.2%) also see it as important. According to their response to the questionnaire, none of the students surveyed consider learning English vocabulary as unimportant, and no significant differences were found between students of the higher level and those of lower one regarding their judgment of the important of learning English vocabulary. The results of the first question are demonstrated in the pie-chart below:

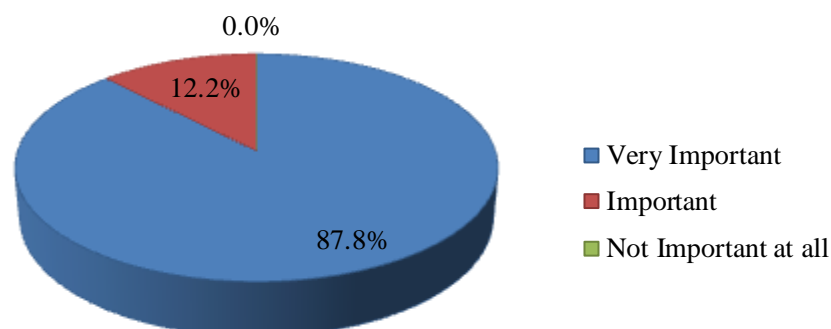


Figure 3.1: Students' perception of the importance of learning vocabulary

Students' response to the questionnaire also corresponds with their answer in the interview. To be more specific about ISP students' awareness of the importance of learning vocabulary, many of them share the same opinion that vocabulary is the basis for proficient use of English and without vocabulary, they would not be able to express themselves. Students believe that learning vocabulary helps them enrich their vocabulary competence and makes oral communication more interesting, as well as minimize repetition in written communication. Interestingly, some even look at the advantage of learning vocabulary in the biological sense that it makes our brain develop more quickly and more flexible reactions to different circumstances. They also associate the role of vocabulary in learning the four English skills and thus believe that "vocabulary should be paid equal attention as the four English skills: Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading". (Student A, Appendix 8)

With a view to discovering more about students' attitude towards vocabulary learning, the researcher went on to investigate their level of interest in this field. When being asked this question, 31 out of 147 students surveyed showed their interest in learning vocabulary, while the majority (68.4%) are neutral and a minority of 8.3% are uninterested. (See **Figure 3.2: Students' level of interest in vocabulary learning**) This result came as a surprise that urged the researcher to figure out the reason why there was only such a small number of students who are keen on learning vocabulary. The researcher raised this situation in the interview with ten representative students and figured out that students are discouraged from broadening their vocabulary due to the fact that it is such a tough field and furthermore they are coping with so many new words during their learning. These are among the difficulties they encounter and will be discussed more thoroughly in the second research question about the obstacles students meet when learning vocabulary by themselves, however, it can be briefly concluded that although the majority of students are aware of the importance of vocabulary, yet their level of interest in this field is only moderate.

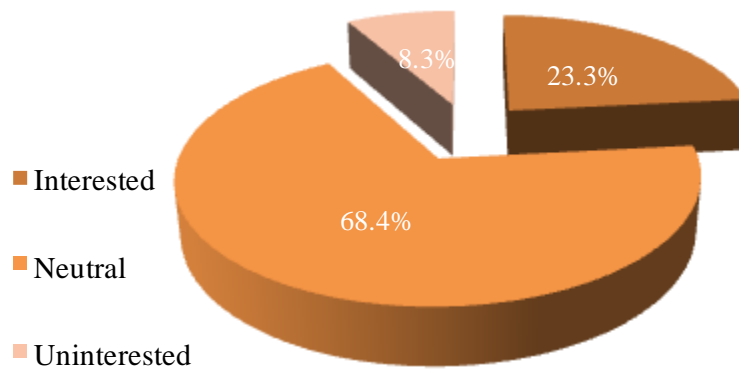


Figure 3.2: Students' level of interest in vocabulary learning

As part of the investigation into ISP students' attitude towards vocabulary learning, the researcher also wanted to find out their mastery of vocabulary, so the third question was raised, asking about students' assessment of vocabulary mastery. The students' responses to this question were converted into the pie-chart below:

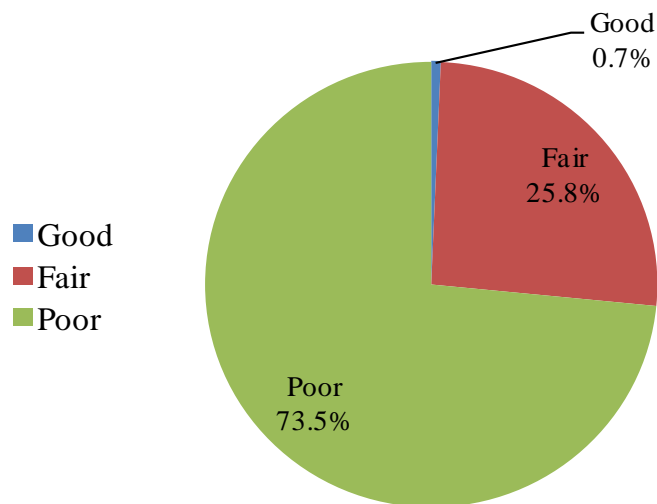


Figure 3.3: Students' assessment of their vocabulary mastery

As shown in Figure 3.3, only one out of 147 students surveyed assessed their vocabulary mastery as “good”, about a quarter are at “fair” level and the rest 73.5% of them admitted having “poor” vocabulary mastery. To the researcher’s surprise, 63 out of 71 students of the high level group consider their vocabulary mastery as being “poor”, while only 45 out of 76 students of the lower level share that opinion. In the attempt to explain these statistics, the researcher identified two main reasons: Firstly, it is a fact that the students’ level of English proficiency is around pre-intermediate to intermediate and they do not have a long time exposure to English, therefore their vocabulary may be limited. Secondly, a social aspect should not be ignored, that is “self-ratings are likely to be influenced by modesty” (Uskul et.al, 2010, p.194).

In the next question, students were asked about their perception of the importance of learner autonomy in vocabulary learning, which is also the most focused concern of the research. The results are revealed in Figure 3.4, with a high number of 88.4% of the students regarding learner autonomy as very important in learning vocabulary, 10.9% of them consider it as important and only one student thinks that learner autonomy is not important at all when learning vocabulary. The results were optimistic, showing that most of the students are highly aware of the learner autonomy and its role in vocabulary learning.

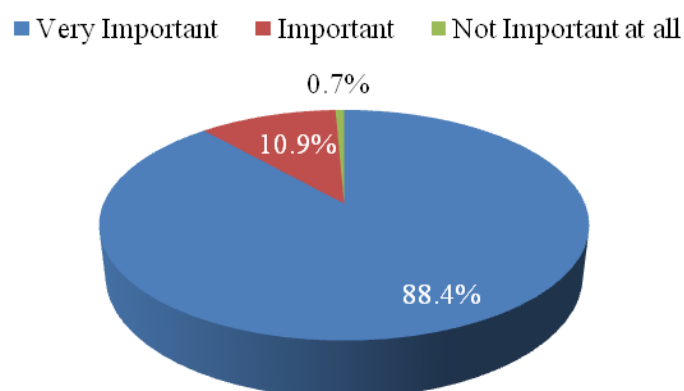


Figure 3.4: Students’ perception of the importance of Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary Learning

To have a deeper insight into ISP students' autonomy, the researcher asked them to reflect on their learning habit while learning vocabulary. Students were given a list of different points of time and asked to choose those that best fit their learning habit (See Figure 3.5 below). The majority of responses fall into the options "sometimes when I feel like" with 65 students agreed upon and "when I come across an interesting vocabulary item", which is the agreement of 54 students. There were 34 students who appeared to be highly industrious and autonomous and answered that they would study vocabulary whenever they have time. A smaller number of students study vocabulary before exams or when they are asked to do so by their teachers. As students could choose more than one option for this question, some of them stated that they learn vocabulary either when they come across an interesting item or when they feel like. From the interview with representative students, the researcher also found out that most of the students learn vocabulary for pleasure and there were some particular classes whose teachers focus close attention on reviewing vocabulary, therefore the students find that as the reason that urges them to learn vocabulary by themselves.

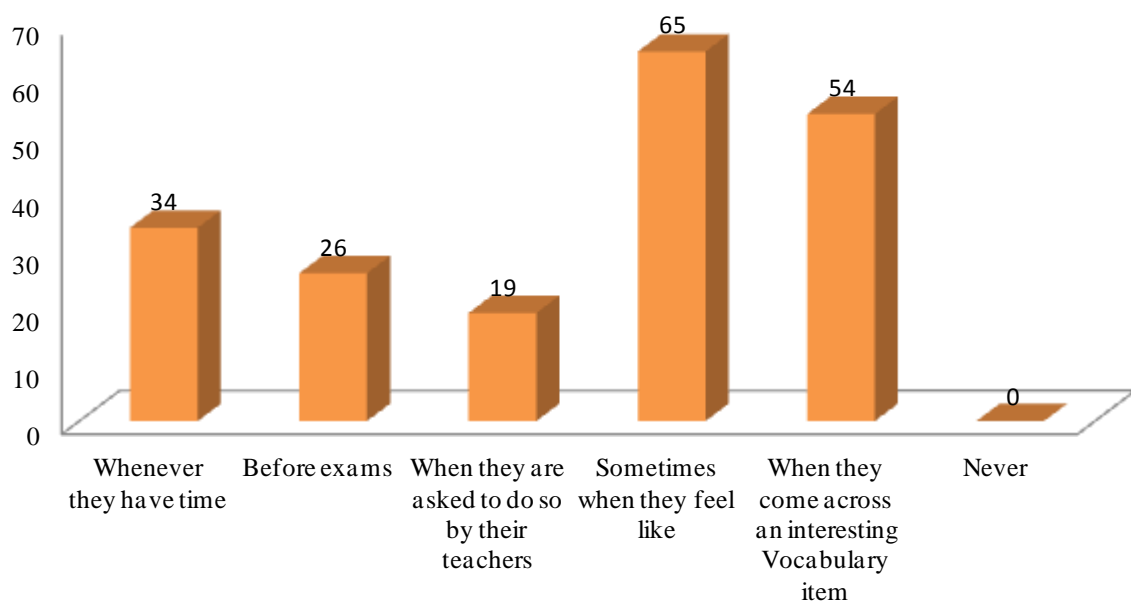
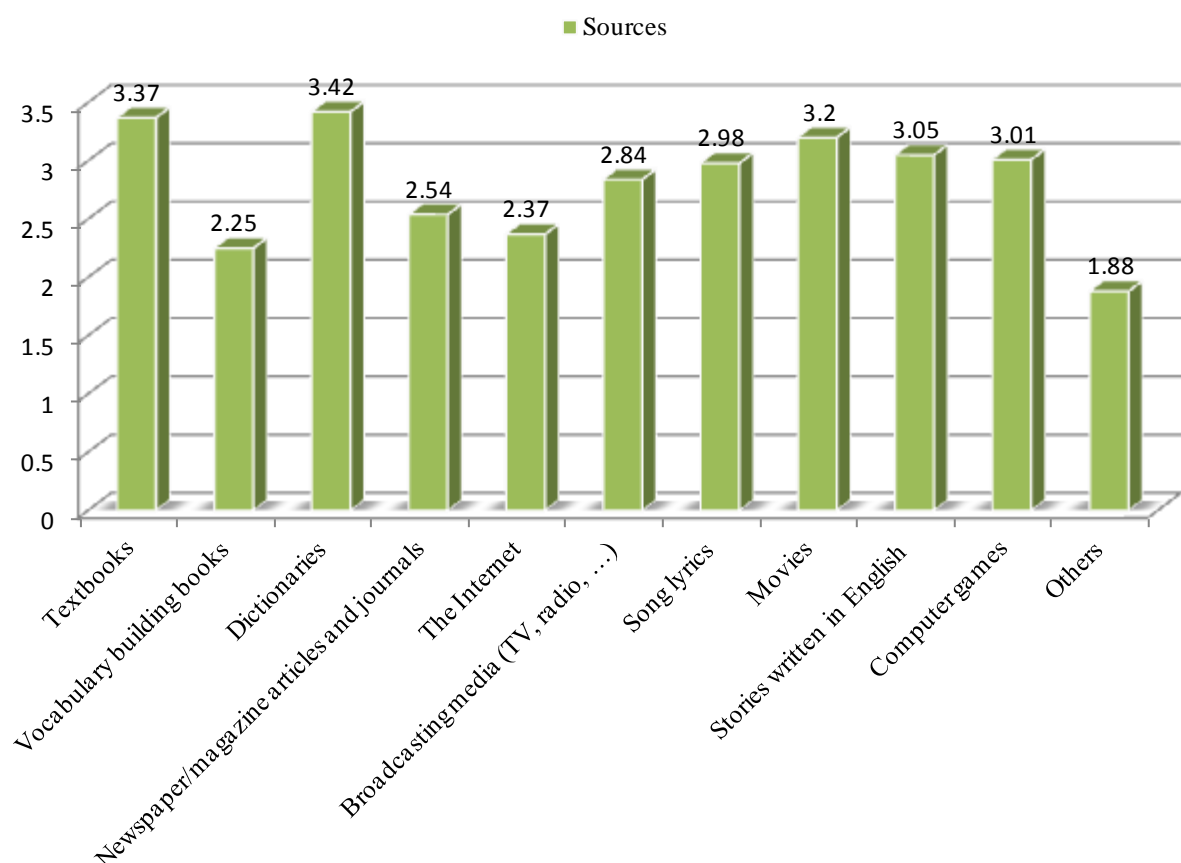


Figure 3.5: Students' autonomous learning habit in Vocabulary Learning

Besides students' self-study habits, the materials that they use when learning vocabulary by themselves are also of great concern to the researcher. Various sources were proposed, and students were asked about the frequency with which they use such sources. From the results obtained and their mean calculation which is presented in Figure 3.6, no significant gap could be seen among the use of different sources, and "dictionary" is the number-one source that ISP students learn vocabulary from, followed by textbooks (mean = 3.42 and 3.37 respectively). Besides that, students also refer to non-academic sources such as movies, English stories or song lyrics, and computer game is also a source that they usually refer to. The choices were also clarified in the students' interviews that they prefer "learning for pleasure", therefore they choose to learn from such sources besides their class time. Thus, it can be seen that this result is closely consistent with the result about students' learning habit. Surprisingly enough, some students even recommended a source that they mostly learn from – their friends and teachers and this source was listed in their "others" option.

Figure 3.6: Sources of material used by ISP students in their autonomous vocabulary learning and their frequency of use



3.2. Research question 2: What strategies are used by the students for learning vocabulary autonomously and what are the obstacles encountered by the students in using those vocabulary learning strategies autonomously?

3.2.1. Students' autonomous vocabulary learning strategies

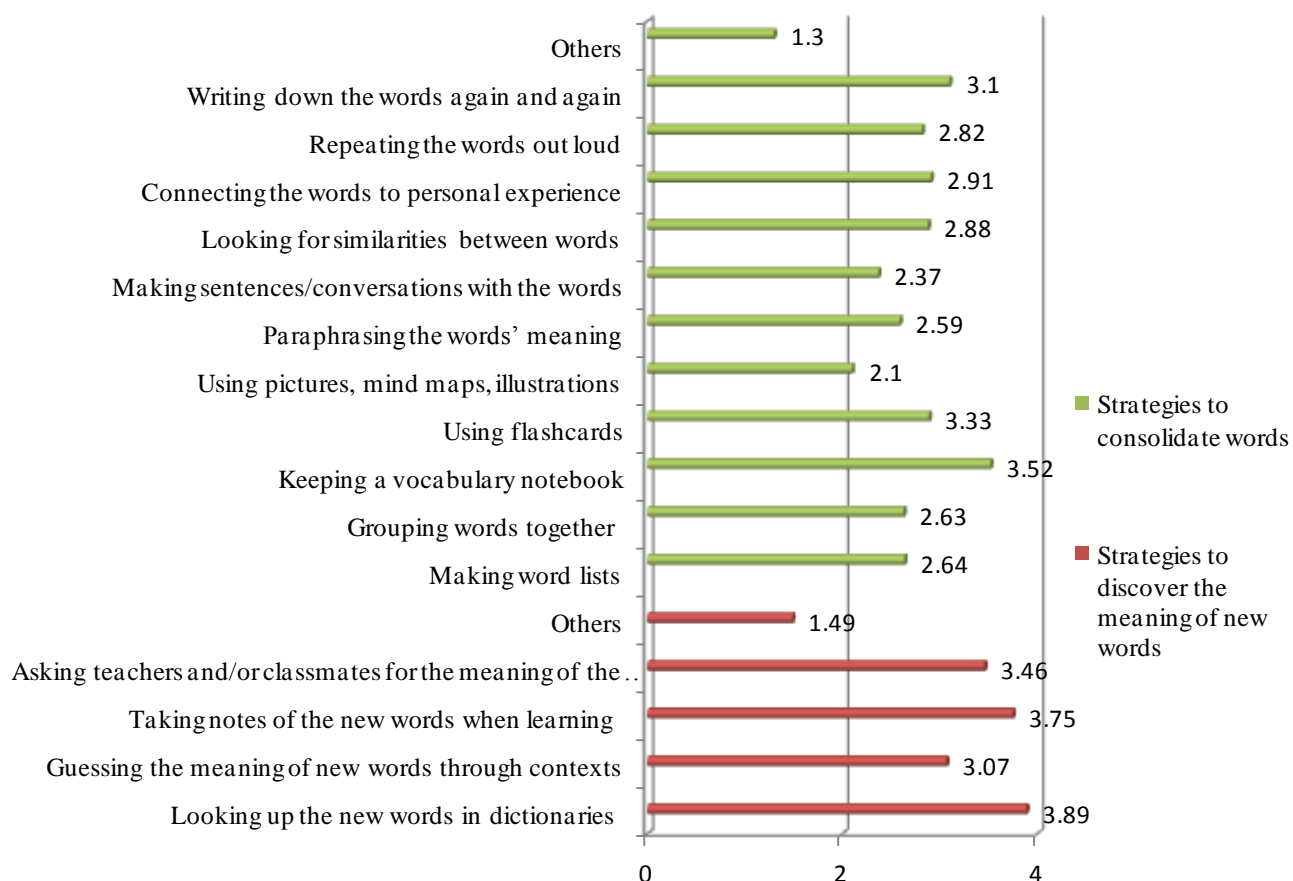


Figure 3.7: Frequency of students' use of vocabulary learning strategies in their autonomous vocabulary learning

Figure 3.7 demonstrates the students' use of different strategies in their self-study of English vocabulary. The red bars represent the strategies to discover the meaning of new words, and the green ones represent the strategies to consolidate words. Those strategies were adapted from Schmitt's taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies (1997, pp.207-208) with an integration of some strategies that are overlapped each other and omission of some strategies that are not applicable with autonomous learning. From the chart, it is evident

that the strategies to discover the meaning of new words have higher means than the strategies to consolidate words. It shows that students are more concerned about knowing what the words are than revising them after knowing their meanings. Among the “discovery” strategies (Schmitt, 1997), students have a tendency to refer to dictionaries most when they want to explore the words’ meanings. Besides that, many students often take notes of the words they learnt in class for self-study, particularly those that are strikingly impressive to them. Some others confessed that they normally learn from their friends and teachers: “by hearing my teachers and friends say new words, I can learn how to use them” (Student B, Appendix 8)

Regarding the strategies to revise vocabulary, “keeping a vocabulary notebook” and “using flashcards” are two strategies that are used most frequently by ISP students. Many of them learn by writing the words again and again until they remember them, and some others connect the words with their personal experiences in order to remember them, or finding the similarities between words. This also corresponds with their reflections in the interviews and with teachers’ recommendation of the effective strategies to learn vocabulary, according to their experience. Below is an extract from the interview with one of the students that specify his vocabulary learning strategies:

“...I learn new words by using flashcards, when I have free time I will take them out and try to remember them. Besides, I have a list of vocabulary that I group together by topics and by the similarity in their meanings so that I can find them when I am in need. During class time, I try to use unfamiliar words and words that I am not sure about their usage, so that my teachers can recognize them and help me correct them. (Sometimes I even use unfamiliar words in my tests)...”

(Student C, Appendix 8)

Surprisingly enough, while many teachers suggested using mind map as an effective method to learn vocabulary, it is not frequently used by students at all. As students were asked about this, they responded that it was because they

were not taught how to use mind maps appropriately; and furthermore because they found it time-consuming to make the mind maps, thus they choose to write the words down on notebooks instead.

3.2.2. Obstacles encountered by the students in autonomous vocabulary learning

Learning vocabulary is not a matter of the day (Lado 1977) and thus it requires a great deal of effort from the students. In their self-study of vocabulary, ISP students have reported quite a number of difficulties and the five most common are:

1. Students have difficulty remembering the words for a long time.
2. Students have difficulty applying the words appropriately.
3. Students are lazy and not motivated enough to self-study vocabulary regularly.
4. The huge number of new words to learn vs. students' limited memory capacity.
5. Students have difficulty deciding which words should be prioritized to learn.

Regarding the obstacles, the results obtained from students' questionnaire response are backed up by interviews with some representatives, together with their suggestions to overcome such obstacles. Many students claim that they can remember the meaning of the words very quickly and easily, yet they find it hard to remember them for a long time, particularly those words that are not commonly used. Students attribute this obstacle to the fact that not all the words have a deep impression on them, therefore the task of memorizing them is more challenging and compelling. In this case, students suggest spending more time and gradually check their memory of those words when they are feeling at ease (Student D, Appendix 8). The matter of time is also a suggested solution to overcome their problem with remembering a large number of words. Besides, the matter of applying the words and phrases they have learnt is what both teachers and students consider an obstacle. According to a foreign teacher surveyed, she found it a real hindrance to both teachers and students that Vietnamese students are just learning the "book words" and they

do not search to grow outside of classroom work. Teachers can help them sometimes but teachers cannot always show them how to apply all the words. When they are asked to figure out the possible reason for this, students discovered that it was possibly because they were dependent on dictionaries just for the words' meaning without caring about other aspects and usages. A recommendation was raised that students try to use the new words that they learnt during their class time. If they are correctly used, then they have an example for the word. If not, they have the chance to get it corrected by their teachers and friends. Students also suggest using Google search as a means to find authentic examples of how the words are really used.

Regarding the other two difficulties, an agreement was seen between ISP teachers and students that orientations are necessary, in order to keep students on the right track and motivated to learn vocabulary. "Once they are motivated, learning will take care of itself", said teacher A (Appendix 9). More detailed discussion about teachers' orientation will be displayed in the next part about teachers' methods to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning.

3.3. Research question 3: What techniques are employed by teachers to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning and to what extent are the employed techniques effective in fostering students in their autonomous vocabulary learning?

3.3.1. Techniques employed by teachers to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning

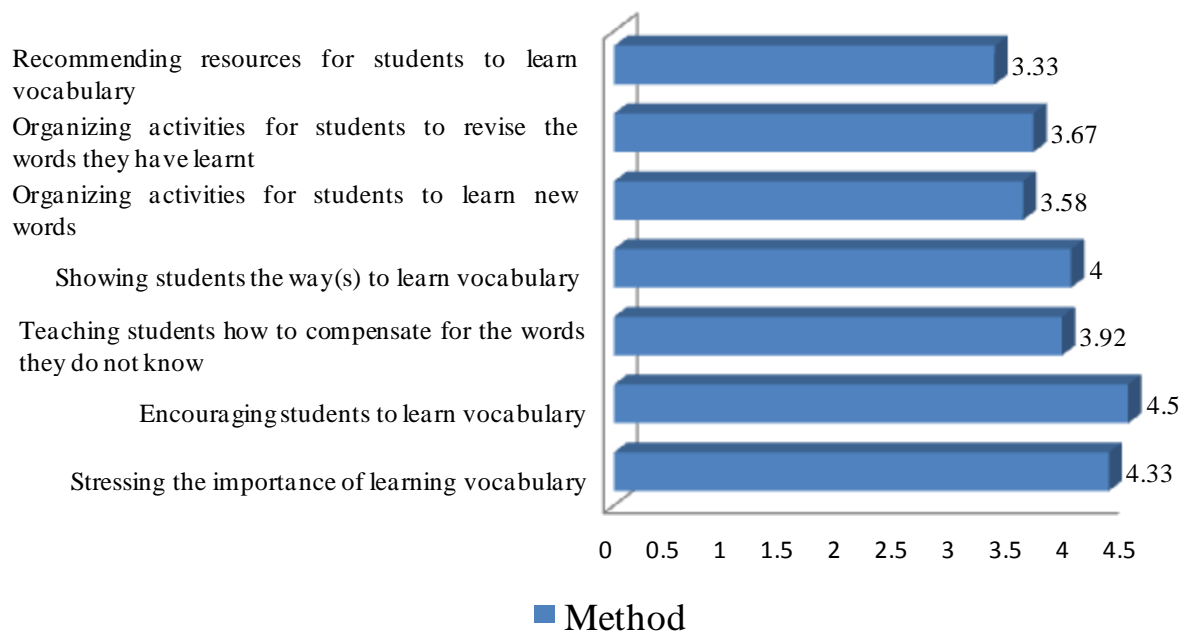


Figure 3.8: Frequency of teachers' use of methods to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning

The bar chart in Figure 3.8 above demonstrates the frequency that teachers use their methods to foster students' autonomy in learning English vocabulary. It is evident that considerable effort was put into motivating students by encouraging them to learn vocabulary and stressing the importance of vocabulary learning. In observing ISP classes and interviewing ISP teachers, the researcher could realize their efforts in making students aware of the role of vocabulary in their learning. One of the interviewed teacher compared learning English words to conquering a girls' heart, that students can only win once they truly love her (Teacher A, Appendix 9). Teachers also focus much on showing students the way to learn vocabulary. According to them, it is really crucial that an orientation be conducted at the beginning of the course, so as to offer students guidance of the effective methods to apply. From the researcher' observation, timely instructions and encouragement are also given in the lessons. The majority of teachers' instructions are on the use of words, which many students find difficult. Students are not required to study all of the words that they encounter in a lesson but instead only the "high-frequency" words and phrases are recommended (Teacher A, Appendix 9). In another class that the

researcher observed, the teacher was tentative to her students' lack of vocabulary. In her speaking class, there were some students who seemed to be reluctant and slow in response; therefore, the teacher encouraged those students to continue with their speech by using other expressions that are close in meaning. The students were then shown the appropriate expressions and reminded to remember them. This method also ranked fourth in frequency of use by teachers.

Different forms of instructions and advice are what teachers pay a great deal of attention to when they teach ISP students. Besides that, teachers also organize activities for students to learn, as well as revise vocabulary, though with lower frequency than the “instructions and advice” methods. Among the surveyed teachers, there was one who was particularly keen on organizing activities for students to review the words they have learnt by “charging” students one candy for every word that they cannot remember in the review part. By this, students are more aware of learning and revising the words after each lesson – as reported in student D’s response. There was another method, which is considered “worth-applying” by most ISP teachers, yet they are used less frequently due to teachers’ and students’ lack of time in their lessons – that is “recommending resources for students to learn vocabulary”. As a matter of course, different teachers have their own ways to help students’ make the best use of the suggested resources to become more autonomous. Below is a teacher’s idea about this:

“... I hold that students can be autonomous only in what they want to do. By that I mean when the teacher gives the students the source, students rarely pay attention to it if that learning material doesn't give them the shortcut to success. With regards to ISP students, their ultimate target is IELTS; therefore there is a small chance that they will embrace materials that build up their vocabulary range or reinforce their grammar competence. However, if the teacher addresses the book as one of the keys to achieve band 9 in IELTS, the students will rush to buy it instantly...”

“... For ISP students, I would suggest them make use of BBC learning English. There they give materials ranging from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate level. All those are under the form of news, talk, interview, which are authentic and likely to be fruitful for their IELTS cramming...”

(Teacher B, appendix 9)

3.3.2. Teachers’ assessment of the effectiveness of the methods to foster students’ autonomy in vocabulary learning

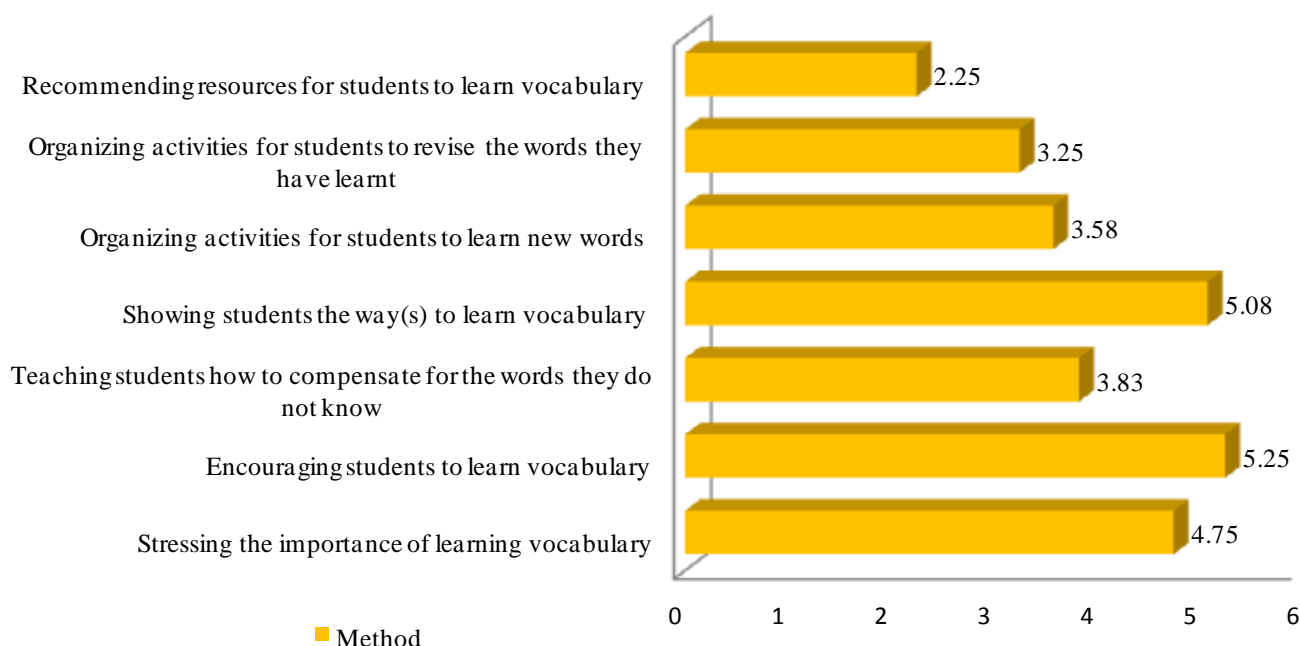


Figure 3.9: Teachers’ assessment of the effectiveness of the methods to foster students’ autonomy in vocabulary learning

As part of their questionnaire (see Figure 3.9), teachers were asked to assess the effectiveness of the methods they use to foster students’ autonomy in learning vocabulary. Details on how effective the methods are were obtained from the researcher’s interviews and observation in some of the teachers’ classes.

The teachers were asked to order the methods that they use according to their level of effectiveness, from the least (1) to the most (7) effective. There was also room for teachers’ own methods other than those suggested, yet no

one suggested any other methods so the rank was just from 1 to 7, and the mean was calculated accordingly. As illustrated in Figure 3.8, the two methods that are considered most effective and far out-rank the other methods are “encouraging students to learn vocabulary” and “showing students the way(s) to learn vocabulary”, and next followed by “stressing the importance of learning vocabulary”. As teachers highly appreciate the effectiveness of encouraging students to learn vocabulary, or in other words, motivating them, thus there is no surprising it is the method that they use most often. “Motivation” is the word that appears in all of the teachers’ response to the research questionnaire and interviews. From their own experience, teachers highly stress the link between being motivated and being able to self-study. This also well reflects “motivation” as a component of autonomy (Littlewood, 1996).

As for other methods, “organizing activities”, though seemingly not highly regarded by teachers, have a strong impact on students. In one of the students’ interview response, he said:

“...By revising vocabulary in every class and with the candies as rewards and punishments, our teacher’s activities do not impose too much pressure on us but in fact, they really make us concentrate on learning vocabulary without feeling forced to do so...”

“...I appreciate the “guessing meaning” games, which do not only improve our academic skills but also soft skills like team work skill, and make us more cunning. All these skills are necessary for us if we want to learn vocabulary by ourselves...”

(Student A, Appendix 9)

Summary

With the presentation and discussion of the collected data, this chapter has consecutively provided answers to the three research questions. Major findings in detail will be summarized in the conclusion, the final chapter of this research paper.

PART C: CONCLUSION

This final chapter will summarize and evaluate the outcomes of the whole paper by summing up the major findings as regards students' autonomy in vocabulary learning, the difficulties that they meet as well as the teachers' role in students' autonomous vocabulary learning. Finally, the limitations of the research will be pointed out, paving way for recommendations for further studies.

1. Summary of major findings

The study was conducted with a population of 147 students and 24 teachers of the International Standard Program with the primary aim to investigate the students' autonomy in vocabulary learning and the teachers' role in fostering their autonomy. Through the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires, observations and semi-structured interviews, major findings of the study are summarized as follows.

Firstly, students of the International Standard Program are fully aware of the importance of learning vocabulary, as well as the importance of learner autonomy in learning vocabulary.

Secondly, students make use of a variety of sources and methods to learn vocabulary by themselves, yet they do not use them very frequently and encounter a lot of difficulties, most of which are due to their huge workload and their lack of guidance in their autonomous vocabulary learning.

Finally, even though students are well aware that autonomy is important in learning vocabulary, they are not motivated enough to learn vocabulary by themselves and are still dependent on teachers' involvement in their learning. Therefore, teachers' help in fostering ISP students' autonomy is highly recommended.

2. Implications

As stated in the Introduction part, the research seeks to foster the next generations of ISP students' autonomy in vocabulary learning, both from the

students' and teachers' sides. From the above-mentioned findings, several implications can be drawn as follows:

(1) Teachers of the International Standard Program should focus on orientations and guidance for the students, not only at the beginning of the courses but also throughout their learning process. In fact, ISP students are not majored in English, not to mention many of them are just beginners, thus they lack the necessary skills to study by themselves. Therefore, they will perform better in their learning with the guidance and support of their teachers.

(2) ISP teachers should keep motivating students in their study in general, and in learning vocabulary in particular. ISP students are not English-majored and do not have a high level of English proficiency, hence twenty periods of English a week and the compulsion to obtain 6.0 IELTS band score would be a burden on them if they are not constantly encouraged and motivated.

(3) Students' inability to catch up with the heavy amount of language input calls for the authorities' consideration to design the English program to be more suitable to their level and with gradual increase in difficulty level thus enables them to make gradual progress.

3. Contribution of the study

Being the first formal research on learner autonomy in learning vocabulary of students of the International Standard Program - VNU, results of the research can serve as a source of reference for both teachers who involve in teaching those students as well as the authorities of the program. The research offers an insight into ISP students' difficulties and needs in their autonomous learning, thus giving teachers a better understanding and recommendations to facilitate learning of their students. On a larger scale, implications of the research might be a source of consideration for ISP authorities to adapt a better curriculum that really suits the students.

4. Limitations of the study

Despite the researchers' efforts, there exist a number of limitations in the study due to time pressure and the lack of resources. Three major shortcomings are discussed below.

In the first place, in the effort to identify the strategies used by ISP students to learn vocabulary by themselves, the researcher proposed a list of strategies that are carefully chosen and adapted from three scholars' frameworks, yet it was not yet really satisfactory as some of the strategies are still missing (which were then suggested by the students). If there were a second chance, the researcher would make more attempts to construct a more comprehensive framework for this research.

Secondly, in the conduct of the research, a great amount of interesting and informative data was obtained, yet not all could be included in the research, for example: the difficulties that teachers encounter in fostering students' autonomy in vocabulary learning and the solutions to overcome such difficulties; the effect of the curriculum and learning environment on students' autonomy, etc. Due to time constraint and the page limit of an undergraduate paper, the researcher has not yet found ways to include such information in the research to provide a more thorough overview.

5. Recommendations for further research

Given the limitations of the research, some implications for further research can be drawn. First, more studies can be done on teachers' use of motivational strategies to stimulate students in their autonomous learning. Besides, researchers can also investigate the correlation between learner autonomy and motivation, thus proposing ideas on how learner autonomy could be fostered. Furthermore, a cross culture account of the issue would be a worth-considering idea, which looks into the differences between Asian and European students' autonomy on a particular field.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear fellow students,

My name is Tran Thi Ngan, I come from class 08.1.E1, FELTE-ULIS. Currently, I am conducting my graduation paper on "**Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary Learning – A study on students of the International Standard Program, VNU**". Your assistance in responding to the following questions is highly appreciated. The contents of your answers in this questionnaire are kept absolutely confidential and information identifying the respondents will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation!

Personal Information

Name:

Class:

Email:

Phone number:

Years of learning English: years

Your B1 score:

Name of your teacher(s) of English:

Part A:

In this part, you are going to answer questions about your attitude towards Learner Autonomy in English Vocabulary learning. Please circle ONE option for each of the questions.

1. Your judgment of the importance of English Vocabulary learning:

A. Very important B. Important C. Not important at all

2. Your level of interest in Vocabulary learning:

A. Interested B. Neutral C. Uninterested

3. Your assessment of your Vocabulary mastery:

A. Good B. Fair C. Poor

4. Your judgment of the importance of Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary learning:

A. Very important B. Important C. Not important at all

5. When do you learn Vocabulary autonomously?

A. Whenever I have time

B. Before exams

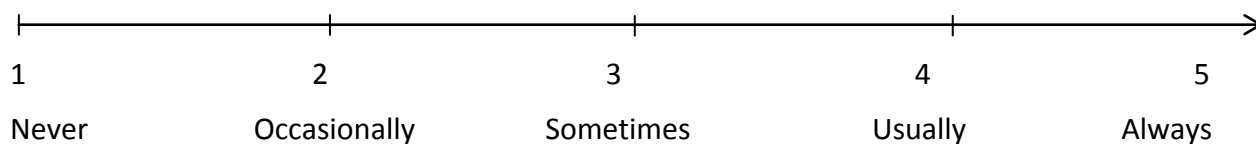
C. When I am asked to do so by my teacher

D. Sometimes when I feel like

E. When I come across an interesting vocabulary item

F. Never

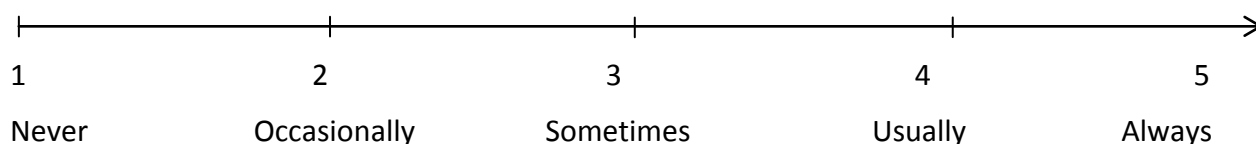
6. What are the sources of material that you use to learn Vocabulary autonomously and how often do you use them? *Please circle the numbers that best reflect your answers*



Sources of material	Frequency of use				
Textbooks	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary building books	1	2	3	4	5
Dictionaries	1	2	3	4	5
Newspaper/magazine articles and journals	1	2	3	4	5
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Broadcasting media (TV, radio, ...)	1	2	3	4	5
Song lyrics	1	2	3	4	5
Movies	1	2	3	4	5
Stories written in English	1	2	3	4	5
Computer games	1	2	3	4	5
Friends	1	2	3	4	5
Others (<i>please specify</i>)	1	2	3	4	5

Part B:

In this part, you are going to answer questions that describe the strategies you use while learning English Vocabulary autonomously. Please circle the numbers that best reflect your answers.

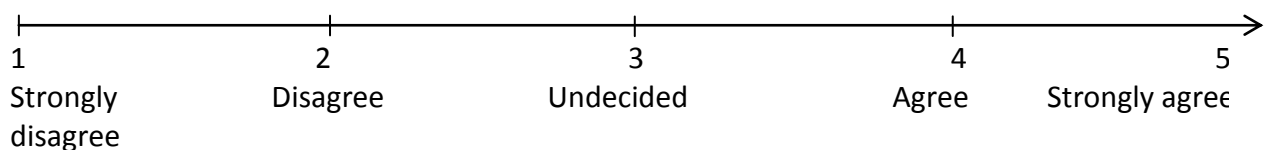


Strategy	Frequency of use				
Discovering the meaning of new words					
Looking up the new words in dictionaries	1	2	3	4	5

Guessing the meaning of new words through contexts	1	2	3	4	5
Taking notes of the new words when learning	1	2	3	4	5
Asking teachers and/or classmates for the meaning of the new words	1	2	3	4	5
Others (<i>please specify</i>)	1	2	3	4	5
Consolidating words					
Making word lists	1	2	3	4	5
Grouping words together	1	2	3	4	5
Keeping a vocabulary notebook	1	2	3	4	5
Using flashcards	1	2	3	4	5
Using pictures, mind maps, illustrations	1	2	3	4	5
Paraphrasing the words' meaning	1	2	3	4	5
Making sentences/conversations with the words	1	2	3	4	5
Looking for similarities between words	1	2	3	4	5
Connecting the words to personal experience	1	2	3	4	5
Repeating the words out loud	1	2	3	4	5
Writing down the words again and again	1	2	3	4	5
Others (<i>please specify</i>)	1	2	3	4	5

Part C:

In this part, you are going to answer questions about the role of your teacher(s) in helping you learn English Vocabulary autonomously. Please circle the numbers that best reflect your level of agreement with the statements.



Statement	Your level of agreement				
Our teacher stresses the importance of learning vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Our teacher encourages us to learn vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Our teacher teaches us how to compensate for words we do not know	1	2	3	4	5
Our teacher shows us the ways to learn vocabulary (<i>If possible, please specify which methods are suggested by</i>	1	2	3	4	5

<i>your teacher)</i>					
Our teacher organizes activities to for us to learn new words <i>(If possible, please specify which activities are usually conducted by your teacher)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Our teacher organizes activities to for us to revise the words we have learnt <i>(If possible, please specify which activities are usually conducted by your teacher)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Our teacher recommends learning resources for us to learn vocabulary <i>(If possible, please specify the resources that are recommended by your teacher)</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Besides the above methods, are there any other method(s) that your teacher uses to help you learn vocabulary by yourself? Please specify:

.....

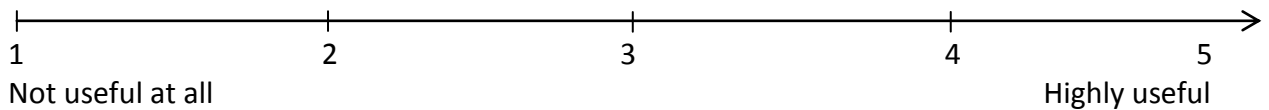
Part D:

In this part, you are going to give some reflection on your own autonomous vocabulary learning. Please feel free to write on the spaces following the questions.

1. What are the difficulties that you have in your learning English vocabulary?

.....

2. To what extent do you think your teacher’s help has been useful in your autonomous vocabulary learning? *Please circle the number that best reflect your answer.*



3. What are your expectations from your teachers in order to foster your autonomous vocabulary learning?

.....

End of questionnaire./.

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX 2: BẢN CÂU HỎI ĐIỀU TRA CHO SINH VIÊN

Chào các em,

Mình là Trần Thị Ngân, sinh viên lớp 08.1.E1 khoa Sư phạm Tiếng Anh, trường ĐH Ngoại ngữ. Hiện nay mình đang tiến hành khóa luận tốt nghiệp với đề tài “*Việc tự học từ vựng tiếng Anh của sinh viên Nhiệm vụ Chiến lược ĐHQGHN*”. Mình rất cần tới sự giúp đỡ của các em trong việc hoàn thành bản câu hỏi điều tra này. Nội dung câu trả lời cũng như mọi thông tin từ phía các em sẽ được giữ bí mật và chỉ hoàn toàn phục vụ cho mục đích nghiên cứu. Vì vậy, mong các em trả lời thật với những gì các em vẫn làm khi học từ vựng tiếng Anh.

Rất cảm ơn sự giúp đỡ của các em!

Thông tin cá nhân

Họ và tên:

Lớp:

Email:

Điện thoại:

Em đã học tiếng Anh được năm

Kết quả thi học phần B1 của em:

Tên các giáo viên dạy Tiếng Anh của em:

Phần A:

Trong phần này, các em sẽ trả lời các câu hỏi về quan điểm của em đối với việc tự học từ vựng Tiếng Anh. Hãy khoanh tròn MỘT lựa chọn cho mỗi câu hỏi.

1. Em đánh giá việc học từ vựng tiếng Anh là:

A. Rất quan trọng B. Quan trọng C. Không hề quan trọng

2. Em nghĩ em thích học từ vựng ở mức độ nào:

A. Thích B. Bình thường C. Không thích

3. Em đánh giá như thế nào về vốn từ vựng của mình:

A. Tốt B. Khá C. Kém

4. Em đánh giá tầm quan trọng của việc tự học trong khi học từ vựng tiếng Anh:

A. Rất quan trọng B. Quan trọng C. Không hề quan trọng

5. Em tự học từ vựng tiếng Anh khi nào? (*Khoanh tròn MỘT hoặc NHIỀU lựa chọn*)

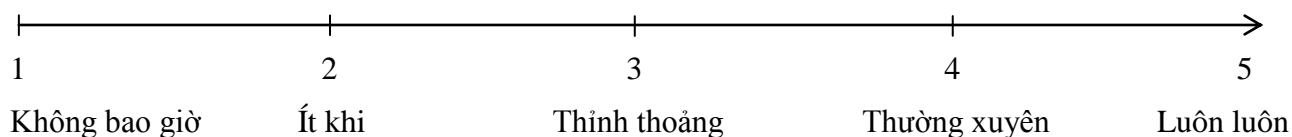
A. Bất cứ khi nào em có thời gian

B. Trước khi thi

- C. Khi cô giáo yêu cầu học
- D. Đôi lúc khi em thấy thích
- E. Khi em gặp một từ/cụm từ thú vị
- F. Không bao giờ

6. Em tự học từ vựng từ những nguồn nào và hãy cho biết tần suất sử dụng các nguồn đó?

Hãy khoanh tròn 01 con số tương ứng với câu trả lời của em.

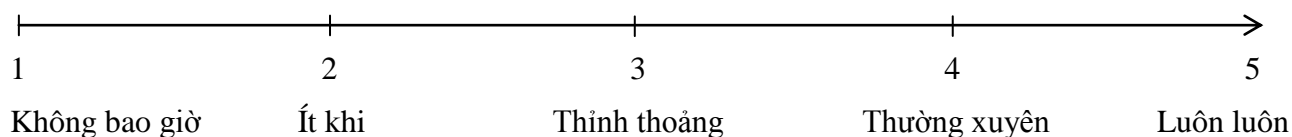


Nguồn tài liệu	Tần suất sử dụng				
Sách giáo khoa	1	2	3	4	5
Sách hướng dẫn học từ vựng	1	2	3	4	5
Từ điển	1	2	3	4	5
Báo, tạp chí	1	2	3	4	5
Mạng Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Phương tiện phát thanh, truyền hình (TV, radio...)	1	2	3	4	5
Lời bài hát	1	2	3	4	5
Xem phim	1	2	3	4	5
Đọc truyện Tiếng Anh	1	2	3	4	5
Chơi game	1	2	3	4	5
Học từ bạn bè	1	2	3	4	5
Nguồn khác (hãy kể tên).....	1	2	3	4	5

Phần B:

Trong phần này, các em sẽ trả lời câu hỏi về phương pháp học từ vựng tiếng Anh của mình.

Hãy khoanh tròn 01 con số tương ứng với câu trả lời của em.

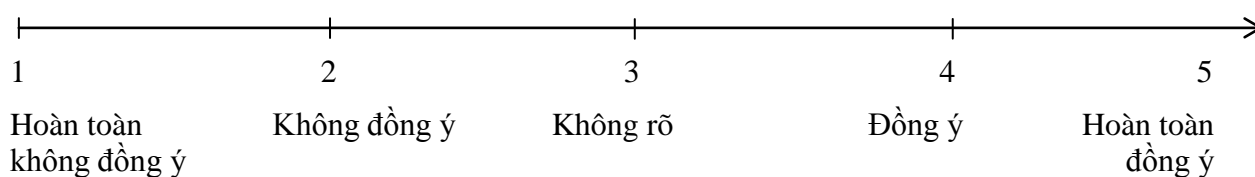


Phương pháp	Tần suất sử dụng				
<i>Nắm bắt nghĩa của từ</i>					
Tra từ điển	1	2	3	4	5
Đoán nghĩa dựa vào văn cảnh	1	2	3	4	5

Ghi lại từ trong quá trình học trên lớp	1	2	3	4	5
Hỏi thầy cô/bạn bè nghĩa của từ	1	2	3	4	5
Phương pháp khác (<i>hãy kể tên</i>).....	1	2	3	4	5
Ôn tập, củng cố từ vựng					
Lập các danh mục từ vựng	1	2	3	4	5
Nhóm các từ lại với nhau	1	2	3	4	5
Ghi từ trong vở/sổ từ	1	2	3	4	5
Sử dụng Flashcard (thẻ nhỏ bằng giấy, một mặt ghi từ, một mặt ghi nghĩa của từ, ví dụ, hoặc các từ liên quan)	1	2	3	4	5
Sử dụng tranh ảnh, hình vẽ, minh họa...	1	2	3	4	5
Giải thích nghĩa của từ theo cách của mình	1	2	3	4	5
Đặt câu, hội thoại với từ mới	1	2	3	4	5
Tìm điểm tương đồng giữa các từ (nếu có)	1	2	3	4	5
Liên hệ từ cần học với bản thân	1	2	3	4	5
Đọc to từ mới, nhắc đi nhắc lại	1	2	3	4	5
Viết đi viết lại từ mới	1	2	3	4	5
Phương pháp khác (<i>hãy kể tên</i>).....	1	2	3	4	5

Phần C:

Trong phần này, các em sẽ trả lời câu hỏi về vai trò của thầy/cô giáo trong việc giúp đỡ các em tự học từ vựng tiếng Anh. Hãy khoanh tròn 01 con số tương ứng với mức độ đồng ý của em.



Nhận định	Mức độ đồng ý của em				
Thầy/cô giáo em nhấn mạnh vào tầm quan trọng của việc học từ vựng	1	2	3	4	5
Thầy/cô giáo em khuyến khích các em học từ vựng	1	2	3	4	5
Thầy/cô giáo em dạy các em phải làm gì trong trường hợp các em không biết một số từ mới nào đó	1	2	3	4	5
Thầy/cô giáo em dạy các em các cách để học từ (<i>Em vui lòng kể tên các cách học từ mà em được thầy cô dạy</i>)	1	2	3	4	5

Thầy/cô giáo em tổ chức hoạt động để các em học từ mới (Em vui lòng kể tên một số hoạt động thường được thầy cô tổ chức)	1	2	3	4	5
Thầy/cô giáo em tổ chức hoạt động để kiểm tra việc học từ của các em (Em vui lòng kể tên một số hoạt động thường được thầy cô tổ chức)	1	2	3	4	5
Thầy/cô giáo em giới thiệu các nguồn tài liệu giúp các em học từ vựng (Em vui lòng kể tên một số nguồn tài liệu được thầy cô giới thiệu)	1	2	3	4	5

Ngoài các phương pháp trên, thầy/cô giáo của em có sử dụng phương pháp nào khác để giúp các em tự học từ vựng không? Nếu có em vui lòng kể tên:

.....

Phần D:

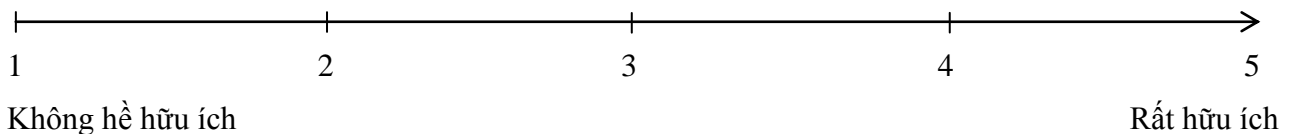
Trong phần này, các em hãy đưa ra một số nhận định về việc tự học từ vựng của chính mình. Hãy viết lại vào khoảng trống sau mỗi câu hỏi.

1. Em gặp những khó khăn gì trong việc tự học từ vựng tiếng Anh?

.....

2. Em đánh giá về sự trợ giúp của thầy cô trong việc giúp các em tự học từ vựng:

Hãy khoanh tròn 01 con số tương ứng với câu trả lời của em.



3. Em mong chờ điều gì ở thầy cô để giúp em tự học từ vựng được tốt hơn?

.....

Kết thúc bản câu hỏi điều tra./.

Cảm ơn các em đã tham gia!

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear teacher,

My name is Tran Thi Ngan, I come from class 08.1.E1. Currently, I am conducting my graduation paper on "***Learner Autonomy in Vocabulary Learning – A study on students of the International Standard Program, VNU***". Your assistance in responding to the following questions is highly appreciated. The contents of your answers in this questionnaire are kept absolutely confidential and information identifying the respondents will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation!

Personal Information

Your name:

ISP class(es) that you are teaching:

Part A:

In this part, you are going to answer questions about your attitude towards English vocabulary teaching and learning. Please circle ONE option for each of the questions.

1. Your judgment of the importance of teaching and learning English vocabulary:

A. Very important

B. Important

C. Not important at all

2. Your assessment of your students' vocabulary proficiency:

A. Good

B. Fair

C. Poor

3. Your judgment of the importance of Autonomy in your students' vocabulary learning:

A. Very important

B. Important

C. Not important at all

4. Your judgment of the role of teachers in fostering students' autonomy in vocabulary learning:

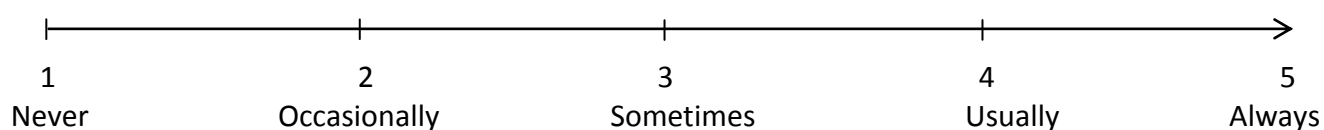
A. Very important

B. Important

C. Not important at a

Part B:

In this part, you are given a table showing the methods that teachers use to foster students' autonomy in vocabulary learning. Please circle the numbers that best reflect the frequency with which you use these methods in your classes.



Method	Frequency of use				
Stressing the importance of learning vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraging students to learn vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching students how to compensate for the words they do not know	1	2	3	4	5
Showing students the way(s) to learn vocabulary <i>(If possible, please specify which strategies are suggested to your students)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Organizing activities for students to learn new words <i>(If possible, please specify which activities you usually conduct in your classes)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Organizing activities for students to revise the words they have learnt <i>(If possible, please specify which activities you usually conduct in your classes)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Recommending resources for students to learn vocabulary <i>(If possible, please specify the resources that you usually recommend to the students)</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Besides the above methods, are there any other method(s) that that you use to help your students learn vocabulary by themselves? Please specify:

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Part C:

In this part, you are going to give your own assessment regarding the effectiveness of the methods that you use to stimulate students' autonomy in learning English vocabulary. Please order methods according to the level of effectiveness, from the most effective to the least effective.

No.	Method
1	Stressing the importance of learning vocabulary
2	Encouraging students to learn vocabulary
3	Teaching students how to compensate for the words they do not know
4	Showing students the way(s) to learn vocabulary
5	Organizing activities for students to learn new words
6	Organizing activities for students to revise the learnt words

7	Recommending resources for students to learn vocabulary
8	Your own method (please specify:.....)

Your order:

..... → → → → → → →

Part D:

In this part, you are going to give some reflection on your own experience in promoting autonomy for your students' vocabulary learning. Please feel free to write on the spaces following the questions.

1. What are the difficulties that you encounter in fostering students' autonomy in vocabulary learning?

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2. What solutions do you suggest to overcome these aforementioned difficulties?

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End of questionnaire./.

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX 4: OBSERVATION SCHEME

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENT AUTONOMY IN VOCABULARY LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

Class:

Teacher's name:

Observation time:

Lesson's focus:

Activities conducted by Teacher:

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No.	Teacher's method	Frequency of use (by counts)	Students' reaction
1	Stressing the importance of learning vocabulary		
2	Encouraging students to learn vocabulary		
3	Teaching students how to compensate for the words they do not know		
4	Showing students the way(s) to learn vocabulary		
5	Organizing activities for students to learn new words		
6	Organizing activities for students to revise learnt words		
7	Recommending resources for students to learn vocabulary		
8	Other methods		

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. What is your judgment of the importance of learner autonomy in learning English Vocabulary? (How important do you think it is?) Do you often spend time learning vocabulary by yourself? Can you tell me how you usually do that? What methods do you usually use to learn vocabulary by yourself?
2. What is your biggest difficulty when learning vocabulary by yourself? Have you ever tried investigating them and finding solutions to your difficulty? Can you specify?
3. Do you think that your teachers play a certain role in your autonomous vocabulary learning? In what aspects do you think your teachers can help you and by what specific means?
4. How do your teachers usually help you revise vocabulary in class? Are you satisfied with what your teachers have been doing? Do you have any recommendations for your teachers to better stimulate your autonomous vocabulary learning?

APPENDIX 6: BẢN CÂU HỎI PHÒNG VẤN SINH VIÊN

1. Em nghĩ gì về vai trò của việc tự học từ vựng trong khi học Tiếng Anh? (Em nghĩ việc tự học từ vựng quan trọng như thế nào?) Em có dành thời gian tự học từ vựng không và em học như thế nào? Em thường áp dụng các phương pháp nào khi tự học từ vựng?
2. Khó khăn lớn nhất của em khi tự học từ là gì? Em đã bao giờ tự lý giải và thử tìm cách vượt qua khó khăn đó chưa, và em làm như thế nào?
3. Em có cho rằng việc tự học từ vựng của các em cũng cần đến sự giúp đỡ của thầy cô không? Theo em, thầy cô có thể giúp đỡ các em ở những phương diện nào, bằng những hình thức cụ thể như thế nào?
4. Trên lớp, thầy cô thường giúp các em học và ôn tập từ vựng như thế nào? Em có hài lòng với những gì thầy cô em đã và đang làm không? Em có yêu cầu/đề nghị gì để thầy cô có thể giúp các em tự học từ được nhiều hơn không?

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

A. Interview questions for Vietnamese teachers

1. You consider autonomy in learning Vocabulary very important and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?
2. As from the students' response to the questionnaire, I could see that many of them expect to be guided the ways to learn vocabulary. Do you often do this in your classes and what method(s) do you think is/are effective for the students to apply?
3. I could see from your questionnaire response and from my observation in your class, you put much focus on helping students revise their vocabulary. Can you share more about the activities you often organize for the students to revise vocabulary and what do you think is the most outstanding benefit for them from these activities?
4. Do you think if students are suggested resources to learn, they can be more autonomous in their learning? From your own learning and teaching English experience, what are some useful resources that can help students with their vocabulary learning?
5. In your opinion, what is/are the possible reason(s) that make it hard for students to apply the words in either oral or written communication (a.k.a. turn the words into "live" words :D) What advice have you given your students to make better application of the vocabulary they learnt?
6. A lot of students are aware of the importance of self-study in learning vocabulary (or at least a lot of them claim so), however, they encounter many difficulties, and the most popular of all is their laziness. It means they cannot

win over themselves. From your experience as a teacher, could you please kindly show how to motivate students to be more autonomous in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning?

B. Interview questions for foreign teacher

1. You consider autonomy in learning Vocabulary very important and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?

2. As from the students' response to the questionnaire, I could see that many of them expect to be guided the ways to learn vocabulary. Do you often do this in your classes and what method(s) do you think is/are effective for the students to apply?

3. Do you often organize activities for your students to learn new words, and revise the words they have learnt, too? Which activities do you usually conduct and how is your students' reaction to those activities? (enjoy/fear/excited/...)

4. Do you think that teachers should sometimes recommend resources for their students to learn vocabulary? You said that Vietnamese students are just learning what they are told to learn in their books, so do you think that if they are suggested resources to learn, they can be more autonomous in their learning?

5. From your own experience, how do you compare between Vietnamese students' autonomy and students of your country in general? What do you think can be done to improve Vietnamese students' autonomy, particularly in learning English Vocabulary?

APPENDIX 8: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEW WITH STUDENTS

Student A:

Interviewer: What is your judgment of the importance of learner autonomy in learning English Vocabulary? (How important do you think it is?)

Student A: Well, in my opinion, vocabulary is really important and so is the importance to learn it by ourselves, because of the following reasons: First, in the Reading skill, with vocabulary we can catch the idea of the passages very easily. You know sometimes it is really troublesome when we don't know the meaning of some words, which really affects our understanding of the passage. Secondly, we'll perform better in the Listening skill with a wide range of vocabulary. In our Writing skill, we can also write more smoothly when we know a lot of words and phrases. Therefore, I believe that it is really really important to learn vocabulary and it should be paid equal attention as the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading.

Interviewer: Do you often spend time learning vocabulary by yourself? Can you tell me how you usually do that? What methods do you usually use to learn vocabulary by yourself?

Student A: Yes I do. When I am studying in class, I take note the new words, especially those that I find interesting, in a notebook. Besides, I usually search for short pieces of stories, read them again and again and try to guess the meaning of the words in the stories that I do not know, after that I'll also note them down in my notebook. I find it very effective to learn vocabulary regularly, some words a day and that's the way I usually do.

Interviewer: What is your biggest difficulty when learning vocabulary by yourself? Have you ever tried investigating them and finding solutions to your difficulty? Can you specify?

Student A: My biggest difficulty with vocabulary learning is how to remember them for a long time because normally I learn and forget them immediately in

the next day. This may be because the words do not have a strong impression on us, so it's such a challenge and compulsion to learn them by heart. Often I overcome this by choosing the right time to learn vocabulary, that is when I feel most motivated and comfortable.

Interviewer: Do you think that your teachers play a certain role in your autonomous vocabulary learning? In what aspects do you think your teachers can help you and by what specific means?

Student A: Besides self-study, I believe that our teachers play an important role in stimulating us to learn vocabulary. I'll set my teacher as an example. She checks our revision of vocabulary in every class, and the rewards are candies. I think this does not make us feel stressed when learning vocabulary but instead we often learn vocabulary very enthusiastically. Thus in my opinion, teachers can help students as a supervisor and at times a vocabulary checker.

From my experience, word-guessing games is a good idea that can be apply regularly in the classroom, it does not only enhance our academic knowledge but also helps us develop social skills such as team work skill, and those are really necessary for learning, remembering the words.

Interviewer: How do your teachers usually help you revise vocabulary in class? Are you satisfied with what your teachers have been doing? Do you have any recommendations for your teachers to better stimulate your autonomous vocabulary learning?

Student A: An activity that teachers usually carry out in the class is the small quizzes that help us revise the words learned in the previous lesson. I think this is a good way that help us not only revise the words but also remember the content of the lesson. But because we are focusing on the IELTS exam so I hope in the next module, teachers will teach us more of the academic words in order for us to use them properly.

Student B:

Interviewer: What is your judgment of the importance of learner autonomy in learning English Vocabulary? (How important do you think it is?) Do you often spend time learning vocabulary by yourself? Can you tell me how you usually do that? What methods do you usually use to learn vocabulary by yourself?

Student B: I see the role vocabulary while learning English is very important. Without words we cannot express what we want to say. Moreover, vocabulary makes more interesting conversations and writings. Thirdly, learning vocabulary and how to use it helps making our brains develop more quickly and flexibly, improving our reaction.

I usually spend time learning vocabulary, yes. Besides the four aspects: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, I have a no-less-important aspect of vocabulary. I learn vocabulary by using flashcards. Sometimes when I have spare time I may take them out and try to memorize the words. Besides, I make lists of vocabulary by grouping them together. When I am in class, I try to use the words that are unfamiliar so that if I make mistakes, my teachers can realize them and point them out for me. (I sometimes even use them in exams)

Interviewer: What is your biggest difficulty when learning vocabulary by yourself? Have you ever tried investigating them and finding solutions to your difficulty? Can you specify?

Student B: My biggest difficulty is how to use words appropriately and in the right context. Well, I think the reason for this is because I use dictionaries just as a tool to get the meaning of words. So my solution is try to make use of my classtime to speak out those words. If I use them correctly, then I have an example. If not, I learn from that. I also search google for the examples of the words I am not sure of.

Interviewer: Do you think that your teachers play a certain role in your autonomous vocabulary learning? In what aspects do you think your teachers can help you and by what specific means?

Student B: I think the role of teacher is very important, because teachers do not show us which way to go, but show us what the shortest way to go is. As mentioned before, if I just find the information on Google, I may get wrong information, so by this I mean teachers can help us have a clear thorough view of the new vocabulary.

There are many ways that teachers can help students: offering groups of words so that students can learn them systematically, or letting students role-play to use the words appropriately and minimize pragmatic mistakes.

Interviewer: How do your teachers usually help you revise vocabulary in class? Are you satisfied with what your teachers have been doing? Do you have any recommendations for your teachers to better stimulate your autonomous vocabulary learning?

Student B: I am quite satisfied with what my teachers have done to help us learn vocabulary. I just have a suggestion that teachers should play an active role in introducing new words to students. This means, even when students use structures that are really familiar, teachers may try to express them in other ways and let students learn new structures. Besides, teachers can tell funny stories that involve misunderstandings of words, so students can be motivated by them.

Student C:

Interviewer: What is your judgment of the importance of learner autonomy in learning English Vocabulary? (How important do you think it is?)

Student C: I think that learning vocabulary is very important because it is basis of using English fluently. Learning vocabulary helps learner obtain knowledge actively by topics which are close with life or business.

Interviewer: Do you often spend time learning vocabulary by yourself? Can you tell me how you usually do that? What methods do you usually use to learn vocabulary by yourself?

Student C: I do not often learn vocabulary at home. I study vocabulary mainly by doing exercises or reading papers. Almost time I know new words from everyone around me. When they use words which are new with me, I can understand how to use this word at this moment. I often apply new words in context or assign them with a specific situation.

Interviewer: What is your biggest difficulty when learning vocabulary by yourself? Have you ever tried investigating them and finding solutions to your difficulty? Can you specify?

Student C: My biggest problem in learning vocabulary is the problem of memory. I have no solution for this problem. I tried investigating this problem by reading syllabus or talking about new words with my friends

Interviewer: Do you think that your teachers play a certain role in your autonomous vocabulary learning? In what aspects do you think your teachers can help you and by what specific means

Student C: In my opinion, it is not necessary to request teaches' help because of having guideline in syllabus. However, we can learn experience from the teachers. In the class, the teachers can advise students how to learn or share their experience.

Interviewer: How do your teachers usually help you revise vocabulary in class? Are you satisfied with what your teachers have been doing? Do you have any recommendations for your teachers to better stimulate your autonomous vocabulary learning?

Student C: In the class, the teachers often emphasize new words; teach how to use in which situation and to pronounce right. I like the way the teachers explain new words

Student D:

Interviewer: What is your judgment of the importance of learner autonomy in learning English Vocabulary? (How important do you think it is?)

Student D: In my opinion, when learning any foreign language not only with English, the vocabulary is a very important part – it is difficult to learning all the English skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing without vocabulary knowledge.

Interviewer: Do you often spend time learning vocabulary by yourself? Can you tell me how you usually do that? What methods do you usually use to learn vocabulary by yourself?

Student D: I also spend time learning vocabulary - the type of rote learning, but when study secondary and high schools. When i enter the university, the above habit is very boring and tired. Instead of this habit, I often watch movies with subtitles, listening US-UK music, read English papers to improve my vocabulary. This solution is very effective without boring. However, this solution need more time to see result than previous one. Because of this, I think we can use both of these solutions to get high effect.

Interviewer: What is your biggest difficulty when learning vocabulary by yourself? Have you ever tried investigating them and finding solutions to your difficulty? Can you specify?

Student D: Actually, I think everybody has the same difficult: how to remember long and difficult to forget. I think that it's difficult because we have both a no effective way to learn and laziness. In order to solve this problem, I thought we have to find out a valuable method to learn and huge motivations. For me, my motivations are the passion with English and the ambition of great achievements.

Interviewer: Do you think that your teachers play a certain role in your autonomous vocabulary learning? In what aspects do you think your teachers can help you and by what specific means

Student D: From my point of view, although the help of teachers is necessary we should not depend on the teachers all the time. Each person has their all own way. Teachers can only assist us by share their experience but we must select and apply their experience ourselves effectively. Besides, we completely can find another method to apply as long as it is suitable and can bring effect.

Interviewer: How do your teachers usually help you revise vocabulary in class? Are you satisfied with what your teachers have been doing? Do you have any recommendations for your teachers to better stimulate your autonomous vocabulary learning?

Student D: The teachers often let us practice speaking, writing and also provide an amount of new structures which are common in certain situations under each topic in the syllabus. Moreover, there are some teachers who suddenly check students' homework to make sure the students do homework regularly. Personally I think the teachers have tried their best to give interest to students and to provide most of ways. So, it only depends on the students' attitude and try. For this reason, I think we should not expect anything from the teachers and satisfy with the things which the teachers brought.

Student E:

Interviewer: What is your judgment of the importance of learner autonomy in learning English Vocabulary? (How important do you think it is?)

Student E: I think that the best way to learn vocabulary is self-learning because learning vocabulary requires the good memory and hard working.

Interviewer: Do you often spend time learning vocabulary by yourself? Can you tell me how you usually do that? What methods do you usually use to learn vocabulary by yourself?

Student E: I often write new words, phrases into a notebook to learn. Sometimes I write into flash cards and I see this way help me learn vocabulary easier.

Interviewer: What is your biggest difficulty when learning vocabulary by yourself? Have you ever tried investigating them and finding solutions to your difficulty? Can you specify?

Student E: My biggest problem in learning vocabulary is the problem of memory. I have no solution for this problem.

Interviewer: Do you think that your teachers play a certain role in your autonomous vocabulary learning? In what aspects do you think your teachers can help you and by what specific means

Student E: From my point of view, the help of teachers is necessary because the dictionary can help us find the meaning of words but it cannot give us the meaning of phrases. It is teachers that can do it.

Interviewer: How do your teachers usually help you revise vocabulary in class? Are you satisfied with what your teachers have been doing? Do you have any recommendations for your teachers to better stimulate your autonomous vocabulary learning?

Student E: The teachers often let us practice speaking, writing and also provide an amount of new structures which are common in certain situations under each topic in the syllabus. Moreover, there are some teachers who suddenly check students' homework to make sure the students do homework regularly. Personally I think the teachers have tried their best to give interest to students and to provide most of ways. So, it only depends on the students' attitude and try. For this reason, I think we should not expect anything from the teachers and satisfy with the things which the teachers brought.

APPENDIX 9: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS

Teacher A:

Interviewer: You consider autonomy in learning Vocabulary very important and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?

Teacher A: Actually they are of the same question for me. So first of all I usually stress the importance of learning new vocabulary, especially the less common ones, because you know that we are teaching the ISP students, so they are somehow totally different from other students, that they have to get the IELTS test of band score from 5.5 to 6.0, so they have to use those kind of vocabulary. So before the course, before the semester, right on the first class I usually tell them that vocabulary is very important, but I cannot teach you all the vocabulary, and it is your task to learn it yourself. I stress the importance of learning vocabulary every day, in every class, especially the classes of writing and speaking. Actually students themselves can recognize that, because when you want to make a sentence, they don't know how to do it, and they ask "Excuse me teacher, what does this, this, this mean?" So at that time and show them "You see, it is very important, so you have to learn it, and sometimes I can help you, I can show you some vocabulary, but you just remember the words at that time, and then you forget, so you have to write it down, use it, and make sentences with it and try to remember, and next time I will come back and check how you revise the vocabulary you've learnt today."

Interviewer: I see, so do you think that with those methods that teachers use, students will learn vocabulary by themselves?

Teacher A: Actually I was a student, as the case they are now, and I know that we don't have much time, it is, to be honest, we are lazy, so we do not have

much time to revise vocabulary, but I think some of them, some of them are really focused on learning, so they learn every day, everywhere, not just the vocabulary but vocabulary is just one of the aspects.

Interviewer: I see, so you're talking about laziness, which, I think, appear to be an issue among the students. A lot of students are aware of the importance of self-study in learning vocabulary (or at least a lot of them claim so), however, they encounter many difficulties, and the most popular of all is their laziness. It means they cannot win over themselves. From your experience as a teacher, could you please kindly show how to motivate students to be more autonomous in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning?

Teacher A: I don't know other teacher will do what and how, but in my case I'll place stress on the motivation. I don't ask to teach the students who are intelligent, but I ask to teach those who are motivated and like learning. I often compare the way of learning English in general and learning vocabulary in particular like the way you want to flirt with a girl. If you want to conquer or to capture her heart, first of all you need to love her. So when you love English, you know that it is very important, and it is interesting, so they'll find the way to learn it by themselves, without the everyday push-ups by teachers.

Interviewer: I see, what a motivational strategies. So that's about the students who are fully aware that their learning is for themselves, how about those who are not?

Teacher A: They are the minority in the upper class and the majority in the lower class. So for those on the other end of the scale, I often, just still to motivate them, but what I ask from them is just very small. I give them, for example, after a class, you know the course book of the ISP this semester for Reading – they are really difficult because they are for the higher level, and there are a wide range of vocabulary which are idiomatic and less common, so they are very difficult especially for those of lower capacity. So for each class I just ask them to take out the highlight pen and just highlight ten to fifteen key

words, and then I ask them to learn by heart. Next time, in the next class, I will start with checking the vocabulary, but I just need those ten or fifteen words, the others you can forget. Something that you can't use, you can forget. I don't push you to learn.

Interviewer: So it won't be a burden on the students, right?

Teacher A: Yeah, yeah and I totally object to the way that you try to push the students to learn vocabulary, because for the less common vocabulary, we do not need them in everyday English, so they cannot use them and cannot make them their habit.

Interviewer: I see. The students normally they have the tendency to write everything down...

Teacher A: Yeah every new word they write it down, and then some definition, and the meaning in Vietnamese, and so many things, but after that they'll forget. I totally know that, so I tell them just five words, even five words but you can use them, it is better than ten words but you cannot use them.

Interviewer: OK, so shall we come more to specific strategies? So most of the students they expect to be guided the way to learn vocabulary. Do you often do this in your class and what method(s) do you think is/are effective for them to follow?

Teacher A: Yeah actually since I was a student I have tried to find the ways for me to learn vocabulary because it's very interesting, and if you have the vocab you can communicate, you can do everything you want in a new language. And at that time not many of my teachers could guide me, so when I become a teacher I try to compensate for the lack at that time. Now I often ask them to match the new words into a story, for example today they learn about "Close to somebody", and then "grow up together". I can ask them "who is your best friend?" "We grow up with each other, but still we are close to each

other”. So just some sentences to make a story and after that they can remember the new words.

Interviewer: I can see that this is a very good method because many students find it hard to apply the words, so in this way they can do it.

Teacher A: Yes they can make many types of stories, even funny stories, and at the next time I may ask “Who is your best friend” and they can apply the words.

Interviewer: I see, so what is your students’ response to this activity?

Teacher A: They enjoy the activity, especially when I let them “fill in the blank” like “We blah blah together” so they know that it is “grow up” and they are really fascinated when they discover the answer.

Interviewer: Yes, how about the resources? Do you often suggest resources for your students to help them learn vocabulary by themselves?

Teacher A: I want to, yes, but we don’t have much time. You know the vocabulary in the course book of the previous semester was really hard, it is really a burden on the students, so I just ask them to learn the vocabulary in the course book, and if they want to learn more, I can recommend the sources, however they didn’t ask for that, and I know it is reasonable so I just don’t try to push them. Sometimes we deal with the topics or the themes, I can bring the vocabulary list from other books and I tell them “If you like it, you can check it and you can buy the book.”

Interviewer: Alright, so after all, I would really want to hear the advice from you as a teacher, for the students to survive in this environment and to be able to learn vocabulary themselves.

Teacher A: Advice, still the first one is to do it yourself. The very first advice is to do it yourself, but sometimes you may feel that you are not really motivated, you can just stop there for a moment and come back, and as I say

“motivation” is the key word that I really stress on, and I think that when they are motivated, they really love English, they can learn everything not just the vocabulary. But of course this environment is very hard, very tough and it requires from you the skills to survive, so first try to survive. “Survive” here I mean we ask 5.5 to 6, so try to get 5.5 to 6, or at least 5.25 so that you can get 5.5, and after that when you are released you will find that you love it. If you learn just to get the high mark and just to pass the tests, you’ll find it’s a real burden, but when you are free you can see that it’s really interesting and you love it. So don’t try to push everything up, just feel free and just feel that you are in a good environment, you have tried your best and if you can’t get the final result, it’s not because of you but maybe of something else. So don’t blame yourself or don’t try to put yourself under pressure, because when you are under pressure you can do nothing.

Interviewer: I see, so maybe if I can be an ISP teacher I’ll try to convey that message to the students so that they can feel at ease when they study here. Thank you very much.

Teacher B:

Interviewer: You consider autonomy in learning Vocabulary very important and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?

Teacher B: Well, vocabulary building, to me, is the key to crack the IELTS exam. That's why from the very first lesson with my students I told them to prepare a notebook for new words. I even gave a rings and paper to make flashcards. They were advised to put down every new word they learn, not only from my lesson, into the flashcard. I additionally instructed them how to use the flashcard and how to revise them on regular basis. I meanwhile reinforced their exploration of synonyms for words they know in my lessons.

Interviewer: Your students must understand how important vocab is to them. I could see from your questionnaire response and from my observation in your class, you put much focus on helping students revise their vocabulary. Can you share more about the activities you often organize for the students to revise vocabulary and what do you think is the most outstanding benefit for them from these activities?

Teacher B: As far as I can see, regular checking proves the most effective in helping students revise their vocabulary. However, this kind of activity can be conducted with some kind of punishment for the losers and awards for winners. I asked my students to pay a candy for every word they forget and whoever got the highest score in vocab-checking activity would get the candies. One thing to note is that the vocabulary I checked come from all categories they have learnt, not only from the last lesson. Besides, vocab recall was also employed during the lessons. I guess basically they were two principal activities I use in my teaching. The students don't have much time, so I didn't draw them into

exploration of vocabulary meanings. I thus didn't hold many activities for this aspect of vocab learning.

Interviewer: Yeah I see. Well, I'm a bit curious to know what kinds of vocabulary students are usually checked. Are they any of the words that come from a textbook unit they've just learnt, or words that belong to topics, or phrases and idioms...?

Teacher B: The words mostly come from their textbooks. Some others are what I asked to note down for the practicality of the words in the exam.

Interviewer: I see. Well, there is also a common concern btw you as a teacher, and the students, that often they know the words (by meaning and by appearance) but are unable to apply them. In your opinion, what is/are the possible reason(s) that make it hard for students to apply the words in either oral or written communication (a.k.a. turn the words into “live” words) What advice have you given your students to make better application of the vocabulary they learnt?

Teacher B: There are two evident reasons for this matter. The most obvious one is that students have too little practice with what they acquired. Being able to use the words properly in writing and speaking is like giving a dancing performance. Learning merely the dance moves doesn't make a luring and artistic performance at all; instead practicing to combine the moves will actually do the job. The same things happen to the students when learning a language. To bring the words alive, they are expected to practice speaking and writing with the new words they have just learned, not the ones they already know.

Another subsequent explanation for this issue is likely that students have little exposure to the language. That means they read not much and at the same time, listen to English too little. Lack of authentic input will hamper their vocabulary application progress.

Well, my advice therefore would be practice more and spend time on accumulating adequate language input.

Interviewer: I love your comparison btw learning vocabulary and learning to dance and well, cannot agree more about the explanations.

Interviewer: Talking about students' autonomy, do you think if students are suggested resources to learn, they can be more autonomous in their learning? From your own learning and teaching English experience, what are some useful resources that can help students with their vocabulary learning?

Teacher B: Well I hold that students can be autonomous only in what they want to do. By that I mean when the teacher give the students the source, students rarely pay attention to it if that learning material doesn't give them the shortcut to success. With regards to ISP students, their ultimate target is IELTS; therefore there is a small chance that they will embrace materials that build up their vocabulary range or reinforce their grammar competence. However, if the teacher addresses the book as one of the keys to achieve band 9 in IELTS, the students will rush to buy it instantly.

For ISP students, I would suggest them make use of BBC learning English. There they give materials ranging from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate level. All those are under the form of news, talk, interview, which are authentic and likely to be fruitful for their IELTS cramming

Interviewer: Yeah, and I think I have more to ask you about authentic materials that students can learn from, but maybe another time perhaps Another question is, students they say that they want to learn vocab autonomously, but the problem is they do not know the method. Do you have any suggestions of the methods that prove effective for students to follow?

Teacher B: In classes I teach, I did give the students a mini-presentation on vocab learning methods, among which are: flashcard, wordlist, mind map, rote learning (repeating the words in mind or speak them out repetitively). Then I'm

pretty sure that students of mine would by no means complain anything about learning method but their laziness to apply one strategy - I mean one or more strategies.

Interviewer: Oh I see... well maybe the last but not least question: A lot of students are aware of the importance of self-study in learning vocabulary (or at least a lot of them claim so), however, they encounter many difficulties, and the most popular of all is their laziness. It means they cannot win over themselves. From your experience as a teacher, could you please show how to motivate students to be more autonomous in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning?

Teacher B: As mentioned earlier, one best method to motivate students is to give them what they want. When teaching my students vocabulary, I endlessly repeated that with the word I was giving them, they would be able to gain 1 IELTS band score higher than their current mark and this works very well for my. Many students from class 3,4,5,6 have shown interest in exploring academic and useful words by themselves. I even could see them use the words they had learned in the lessons, which are so gleeful. For students who have little motivation in learning better, I use vocabulary checking as a push and pull force that stimulate them to revise new words.

I even could see them use the words they explored by themselves in the lessons, which are so gleeful. For students who have little motivation in learning better, I use vocabulary checking as a push and pull force that stimulate them to revise new words.

Teacher C:

Interviewer: You consider autonomy in learning Vocabulary very important and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?

Teacher C: You know because of the students of the ISP they are now trying their best to achieve the goal of VNU, so firstly I always remind them about the importance of learning vocabulary, because if they want to get high mark in the IELTS. You have to understand the nature of the IELTS, so if students only have limited vocab in English, it'd be very hard for them to get high mark in IELTS. I have to divide my students into two groups, the first one is the high level students – so I always said to them that “Alright, now you have very good English grammar, but without the vocabulary, it's hard for other people to understand you, and especially if you want to master your skills in English, you must have the wide vocabulary. So vocabulary is actually one of the most crucial factors in learning language.” For the students of the lower level (those who study in the afternoon), actually they are not good at grammar, and also vocabulary. Their vocabulary is really limited so during the time I teach them grammar, I ask them to make the mind map and everything they can do to study vocabulary, because they have very very limited vocabulary in English, so I also said to them “If you want to study English, and if you want, firstly to understand grammar, you have to use them. You can just use the grammar when you have the vocabulary.” So there is a very strong bond between vocabulary and grammar.

Interviewer: So it's like orientations?

Teacher C: Yes.

Interviewer: And you do it at the beginning of the courses?

Teacher C: All the time, I have to remind them all the time because you know students they are kind of lazy when studying vocabulary, so I have to remind them all the time.

Interviewer: Alright thank you. So talking about the students' laziness, I think there's a very common issue that I've found among students, that is, a lot of students are aware of the importance of self-study in learning vocabulary (or at least a lot of them claim so), however, they encounter many difficulties, and the most popular of all is their laziness. It means they cannot win over themselves. From your experience as a teacher, could you show how to motivate students to be more autonomous in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning?

Teacher C: Yeah that comes from my own situation, too because I myself also find it hard to learn vocabulary at first, but my advice is, you must begin with your interest first, for example you can log on Youtube, you listen to some video clips, you listen to some songs you are interested in. So firstly, you listen, and you learn what you are interested in first, so it will raise your interest in learning vocabulary. The second point that I remind my students is "Now, don't think of yourself as an English learner, think of yourself as an English user. You learn English, but actually you learn to use that language, to make it your tool, so when you want to communicate in English, actually you have to know the words, choose the right words in the right situation. That's my point, so, firstly, start with your interest and second, use English as your tool. And thirdly it's about the study skills and their critical thinking, like they lack the study skills and they don't know how to do it, and when they tried a lot but they cannot remember the words, they feel kind of frustrated, and depressed, and then they give up. So I think that's very important for us to have orientations to guide the students the way, the study skills.

Interviewer: I can't agree with you more. So you talked about the application of English, can you be more specific about how you could make the students aware of the fact that they learn English for application, not just the book-English?

Teacher C: That's also when I explain to them about IELTS tests and the tests in English in general. You know for the students who get high mark in the IELTS exams, they are not only good at English but they also have to have critical thinking and very wide background knowledge, so at that time you have to use English to read for information, and also you have to use English to express yourself, so that's the point – use English as a tool. The application of English is not just about grammar, not just about the rules, but about the ways to communicate.

Interviewer: Yep, and many students they want to learn vocabulary by themselves, but they do not know the method, and they want to be guided the ways to learn vocabulary. Do you often do this in your classes and what method(s) do you think is/are effective for the students to apply?

Teacher C: A lot. Firstly I usually use the mind maps. I put the words and phrases into groups, and I create the very colorful mind maps. The second is I learn vocabulary through the English songs, and I also read a lot of novels in English – Pride and Prejudice, Twilight, Harry Potter, etc. so when you love something, you have the kind of motivation to understand that. And besides that I also use the flashcards to study vocabulary, but above all, the method that I think most effective is learning vocabulary through songs and when you read novels.

Interviewer: So we talk more about the activities, I mean the teachers' involvement in students' self-study in class. You often conduct the activities for the students to revise vocabulary in class and you prefer those that involve competitiveness right? So can you please specify on this?

Teacher C: Yes, about the warm up activity, that's a very good time for me to check their vocabulary. Firstly I give them the homework, and at the beginning of the next lesson I will check their homework, and I also ask some of them to come to the board and write the new words and also the pronunciation. I also try to create a lot of activities that check students' vocabulary at the beginning of each lesson.

Interviewer: So maybe the last question. I know that you are a very young teacher, so what are your difficulties while you are involving in helping students learn vocabulary?

Teacher C: I think that a learner's autonomy – that's the obstacle, because learning vocabulary requires a lot of time and the students must be very patient, and also they have to understand themselves, and invest enough time in learning vocabulary. Therefore, it's really important to raise students' awareness of the importance of learning English vocabulary and the teacher must motivate the students to learn vocabulary.

Interviewer: Well, that leads to the end of the interview. Once again thank you so much for your time.

Teacher D:

Interviewer: You consider autonomy in learning vocabulary very important, and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?

Teacher D: I often stress the importance of vocabulary in every skill. Show students that without Vocabulary, they can't express ideas effectively in speaking and writing and that they will have problems understanding what other people say and write. I encourage students to learn vocabulary whenever and wherever they can. Learn new words when studying in class, at home and even while travelling.

Interviewer: I see. Talking about students' use of vocabulary, I see from some of the students' response to their questionnaire, that they are unable, or find it difficult to apply the words they learnt in either oral or written communication. From your experience, what is/are the possible reasons for this and what advice have you given your students to make better application of the vocabulary they learnt?

Teacher D: There are many reasons for this. For example, their English is too poor. But in many cases, students just don't know how to guess the meaning from the context. For advice, I think students should improve their command of vocabulary every day, make a target of learning at least 10 new words a day and apply some strategies in learning vocabulary such as word grouping, making notes of vocabulary while reading for pleasure/watching TV, word cards, Regular revision and practice.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think "learning from the context" is the issue among students here, many of them are learning just for the sake of learning and seek nowhere else out of their books

Teacher D: And of course, they should practice the words they've learnt by reading out loud (for remembering pronunciation), making sentences with the new words, and try to use them whenever they can in speaking as well as in writing.

Interviewer: Yep I see. Students should really be given such advice.

Teacher D: In fact, that's still the sad situation of learning English in Vietnam. Many students still find that learning is a duty not an interest. Usually, students are too dependent on teachers.

Interviewer: Yes yes. So maybe we have more to talk about students' autonomy here. Do you think if students are suggested resources to learn, they can be more autonomous in their learning? From your own learning and teaching English experience, what are some useful resources that can help students with their vocabulary learning?

Teacher D: But in my opinion, a good and successful "cheater" should give students inspiration and make them interested in learning English not only in class but also at home

Interviewer: Yep, can't agree more.

Teacher D: I myself often emphasize that 30 % of a student's success belongs to the guidance of a teacher and the majority of it relies on his/her autonomy.

Interviewer: That's true, yep.

Teacher D: At the moment, in the market, there are plenty of books for Vocal learning. But for different levels, there are different books. Students should choose the books in which there are practice exercises.

Interviewer: Books are a traditional source, and do you think it is an irreplaceable one? Some students find their learning style outside of the books

Teacher D: For my classes, If I teach reading skill, I usually design a Vocabulary test after each unit just to check students' self-study. They can learn

by watching films, listening to songs, reading stories, not necessary from books. As I've said, students should learn anytime and anywhere.

Interviewer: Yep.

Teacher D: If they are aware of the importance of English in general and of vocabulary learning in particular, they can make a great progress. When I was small, I used to be very scared of learning English because I found it hard to remember English grammar and vocabulary.

Interviewer: Then how did you overcome that fear?

Teacher D: I kept trying since I thought that my sister could do it why not I. Gradually, I found a good method for myself and also felt motivated when being admired by my classmates when getting high marks.

Interviewer: You said that if students are aware of the importance of English and vocabulary, they can make great progress. That reminds me of a common & interesting case among students. A lot of them are aware of the importance of self-study in learning vocabulary (or at least a lot of them claim so), however, they encounter many difficulties, and the most popular of all is their laziness. It means they cannot win over themselves. I myself cannot explain this. From your experience as a teacher, could you show how to motivate students to be more autonomous in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning?

Teacher D: I think laziness is still a chronic disease of many students. In order to help students to overcome this problem, teachers should develop students' love for English by their enthusiastic teaching and guiding. Let's make them be aware of the importance of English and feel that English is a must in the modern life. In addition, every teaching course should start with an orientation lesson in which teachers are supposed to provide the requirements for the course. But, the most important thing is that students themselves should have a real motivation and find it necessary to overcome their laziness.

Teacher E:

Interviewer: You consider autonomy in learning Vocabulary very important and you also stated in your response to the questionnaire that you usually stress the importance of learning vocabulary to your students, as well as encourage them to learn vocabulary, so can you please tell me what specifically you often do to make the students aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, and how you could stimulate them to learn vocabulary?

Teacher E: I check for vocabulary frequently in order to create a pressure for them to learn.

Interviewer: As from the students' response to the questionnaire, I could see that many of them expect to be guided the ways to learn vocabulary. Do you often do this in your classes and what method(s) do you think is/are effective for the students to apply?

Teacher E: I ask them to have vocabulary notebook. I guide them to make notecard. I require them to learn new vocabulary based on word roots, grouping words together...

Interviewer: Do you often organize activities for your students to learn new words, and revise the words they have learnt, too? Which activities do you usually conduct and how is your students' reaction to those activities? (enjoy/fear/excited/...)

Teacher E: Yes. I often organize vocabulary games such as crosswords, hang man... They like it.

Interviewer: And what kind of words you often have them revise?

Teacher E: You mean verb or noun or adjectives?

Interviewer: No what kinds, I mean like words that belong to a particular topic, or the words they learn in the previous lesson

Teacher E: Oh I see. Normally words they learn in the previous lesson so that I can check their study.

Interviewer: So they have to learn all the new words before they go to class?

Teacher E: Well preferably. However I only check for important new words, common new words

Interviewer: You mean the words that are more likely to be applied?

Teacher E: Yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you. So talking about students' application of words, in your opinion, what is/are the possible reason(s) that make it hard for students to apply the words in either oral or written communication (a.k.a. turn the words into "live" words) What advice have you given your students to make better application of the vocabulary they learnt?

Teacher E: The 1st reason is that they did not learn the word in a context. They just learn the meaning, without the usage of the word, or a sample sentence in which it is used so they do not know how to use it properly. Secondly, it is due to the habit of using old, familiar vocabulary. One reason is that they are not required to choose a variety of expression when they are speaking/ writing... so they keep using old words and do not try the new ones.

Interviewer: Yep.

Teacher E: Advice: always try to find a better way / various ways to express an idea. Never limit yourself. When you learn, for example, a synonym (or hyponym, or whatever) of a word that you have already know, try to use the new word instead of the old ones.

Interviewer: Do you think if students are suggested resources to learn, they can be more autonomous in their learning? From your own learning and teaching English experience, what are some useful resources that can help students with their vocabulary learning?

Teacher E: Yes, we cannot give them the fish, but we can give them the rod, and they will fish themselves.

Interviewer: A lot of students are aware of the importance of self-study in learning vocabulary (or at least a lot of them claim so), however, they encounter many difficulties, and the most popular of all is their laziness. It means they cannot win over themselves. From your experience as a teacher, could you please show how to motivate students to be more autonomous in their learning, particularly in vocabulary learning?

Teacher E: Ok. First, set a goal and stick to it. For example: 10 new words per day, 50 per week but find the new words from what you like to read. Funny story? Anime? Newspaper? Games? Adult pages? - all is good, but be sure to write them down carefully, and learn them properly. Teachers may motivate students by giving them interesting reading sources, stories every lesson and ask them to read. I find chicken soup for souls stories are quite inspiring and suitable.