

The Relationships between the Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies and their Usefulness as Perceived by English Major Students in a Thai University

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Abstract

As vocabulary is a significant part of all English language skills, vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) have played an important role in English language learning. The present study aimed to investigate the relationships between the use and usefulness of VLSs as perceived by 72 English major students in a Thai university. The data were obtained from two research instruments: an adapted questionnaire from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies and a semi-structured interview. The findings from the questionnaire showed that the overall use of VLSs was at the moderate level and the perception of their usefulness was at the high level. In general, the perception on the usefulness of VLSs in all categories and sub-categories were found to have higher means than those of the VLSs used. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis showed a positive correlation between the use and usefulness of VLSs in the overall means and the means of both VLS categories (discovery and consolidation). For the subcategories, all except the determination VLS sub-category under the discovery category and the metacognitive VLS sub-category under the consolidation category were found to have a positive correlation. The analysis of the triangulated data between the two employed instruments showed that 'Use English-language media' was found to be one of the top five used and useful VLS reported, and 'Ask a teacher for L1 translation' and 'Underline the initial letter of the word' were found to be two of the least five used and useful VLSs reported. The findings from the present study can be a useful resource for Thai teachers regarding the teaching of VLS instruction in the classroom.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), VLS use, VLS usefulness, Thai university students, English major students

Introduction

Since Schmitt (1997) conducted his study to investigate what vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) Japanese learners used and believed to be helpful, a number of later studies have been conducted in many countries, including Thailand, using Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. Most of these studies, however, specifically focused on the frequencies of VLSs used by English language learners and their relationships with the learners' language ability or vocabulary size. Celik and Toptas (2010), Fan (2003), Lip (2009), and Wu (2005), however, investigated the relationships between what VLSs their learners used and what VLSs they believed to be helpful or useful. Celik and Toptas (2010) investigated VLSs used by Turkish EFL students, focusing on the frequencies and helpfulness ratings of strategy use, strategy patterns, and their change for students across different language levels. A part of Fan's (2003) large scale project concerning the learning

of English vocabulary by Hong Kong learners was to look at the discrepancies among the frequency of use, the perceived usefulness, and the actual usefulness of VLSs. Lip (2009) investigated postsecondary students in Hong Kong on the frequency of their use of VLSs and their perception of the VLSs' usefulness. Wu (2005) explored VLSs used by Taiwanese EFL students and their perceptions of the helpfulness of these strategies, the helpfulness ratings of the strategies, and the changes in the patterns of strategy use for students of different age groups.

In the Thai context, a number of studies have been conducted to investigate the frequencies of VLS use as related to the vocabulary size or vocabulary knowledge (e.g. Komol & Sripetpun, 2011; Mongkol, 2009; Nirattisai & Chiramanee, 2014). No research, however, has been found in the Thai context to investigate the relationships between what VLSs Thai learners use and what they believe to be useful. This study, hence, sought to fill out this gap. The findings of the study will be significant for Thai English teachers to gain more insights into how Thai university English major students perceive the use and usefulness of VLSs, in order to improve teachers' English VLS instruction in the classroom.

Literature Review

The Importance of Vocabulary Learning

Words are considered to be the foundation of a language, and vocabulary knowledge is considered to be an essential part of all language skills. Vocabulary knowledge, thus, has played a vital role in language learning. Penha (2006) as cited in Kaya (2014) stated that no reading, writing, speaking, listening or literature-based activity discussion can be taught to language learners without providing them sufficient vocabulary knowledge. As all of these language skills are important for language learning, teaching the skills will be ineffective if language learners' vocabulary knowledge is insufficient. Widdowson (1978) believed that non-native speakers who communicate with accurate vocabulary, but ungrammatical usage, can be better understood than those who only have the accurate grammar but use poor vocabulary. Thus, in order to accomplish their language learning goals, language learners are required to develop vocabulary knowledge of the language first.

Vocabulary learning strategies

Based on the assumption that successful learners take control of their learning, learning strategies used by successful learners have been a concern of researchers. Chamot (2005) stated that learning strategies are procedures that facilitate a learning task. With regard to language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) stated that language learning strategies are specific approaches which learners select in order to make the language learning easier. He further stated that language learning strategies are useful for learners to find suitable approaches in their language learning.

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) are considered to be an important aspect of language learning strategies. According to Nation (2001), VLSs constitute a subclass of language learning strategies, and they are also in a group of general learning strategies.

There are many vocabulary learning strategy categories classified by different scholars (e.g. Cohen, 1990; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001; Rubin and Thompson, 1994; Schmitt, 1997; Stoffer, 1995). However, the most popular and widely used classification belongs to

Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. Schmitt (1997) proposed his taxonomy by adapting it from Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, which he believed to be the most useful taxonomy for vocabulary learning purposes.

Schmitt's (1997) 58 VLSs are grouped into two main categories consisting of discovery and consolidation categories. Discovery strategies are the strategies used by learners to discover the words, and consolidation strategies are the strategies where a word is consolidated once it has been encountered. In discovery strategies, there are two subcategories: determination strategies (DETs) and social strategies (SOCs). In consolidation strategies, there are four sub-categories: social strategies (SOCs), memory strategies (MEMs), cognitive strategies (COGs), and metacognitive strategies (METs). DETs are individual learning strategies where learners learn new vocabulary individually without assistance. SOCs are learning by interaction, so learners acquire vocabulary by learning from other people such as teachers or classmates. MEMs involve relating words to background knowledge. COGs are similar to MEMs, but they do not involve mental processing and are more mechanical. METs are strategies with which learners can evaluate themselves and find an appropriate way to learn new vocabulary.

Schmitt (1997) explained that when learners want to find out the meaning of words using their knowledge of the language such as contextual clues or reference materials, or find out from other people, these strategies are all gathered in the main category of discovery strategies. On the contrary, consolidation strategies involve the way that learners learn new words by using word classes, spellings, and collocations. According to Schmitt, many strategies can be under both discovery and consolidation strategies, but only the most obvious ones are listed in both. For example, strategies of word lists and analyzing affixes and roots will be found in both discovery and consolidation strategies.

Related studies

Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies has been used in a number of research studies (e.g. Al-Khasawneh, 2012; Amirian & Heshmatifar, 2013; Celik & Toptas, 2010; Fan, 2003; Komol & Sripetpun, 2011, Mongkol, 2009; Nirattisai & Chiramanee, 2014; Lip, 2009; Wu, 2005). In general, the findings of these studies are similar in that the discovery category was reported as the most used VLS category. For the VLS sub-categories, determination sub-category was reported with a higher use than other sub-categories. In terms of individual VLSs, these studies also reported similar findings. They found using a bilingual dictionary, asking classmates for meaning, guessing from textual context, and breaking into sound segments were used most commonly. Fan (2003), on the other hand, found keyword technique, studying wordlists, and linking the word to similar sounds in the native language to be the least used VLSs.

The findings regarding the relationships between the use and usefulness of VLSs are incongruent as researchers reported different results. While Celik and Toptas (2010) and Fan (2003) found that there was a gap between their subjects' use and the related perceived usefulness of VLSs, Lip (2009) and Wu (2005) found that the frequency of VLSs use had an influence on their subjects' choices in choosing the most useful VLSs in their responses. Celik and Toptas (2010) found that their Turkish EFL learners perceived the metacognitive strategies as the most useful strategy category and the social strategies as the least preferred strategy category. Fan (2003) found recalling the meaning of the word to help understand the context to be the only VLS both often used and perceived as very useful, and the keyword

technique to be the least used and perceived useful. Lip (2009), on the other hand, found a strong correlation between used and useful VLSs in the students' perceptions. Four most frequently used and most useful VLSs reported were: analyzing the word by breaking it into sound segments, repeatedly spelling the word in mind, remembering words by doing a project, and asking classmates for meaning. Wu (2005) similarly found using an electronic bilingual dictionary, asking classmates for meaning, guessing from textual context, and using a bilingual dictionary to be the most use and useful VLSs as perceived by the students.

Methodology

Purpose of the study

This study aimed at investigating VLS use and usefulness as perceived by English major students in a Thai university. The research question for this study was: What are the relationships between vocabulary learning strategy use and usefulness as perceived by English major students in a Thai university?

Participants

The participants in this study were chosen using a convenience sampling method. Seventy two university students majoring in English in the academic year 2016 were selected to be the participants in this study. Ten students were asked to be the volunteers in a semi-structured interview session. Sixty three participants were females. Their ages were between 20 and 22 years old. More than a third had their GPAs between 3.01 – 3.50, and only 3 had their GPAs lower than 2.51. Most of them considered themselves to have average knowledge of English vocabulary.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were employed to collect the data. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: the participants' personal information, the participants' VLS use, and the participants' perception on the usefulness of VLSs. The second and the third parts of the questionnaire were adapted from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. Forty three VLSs in the adapted version were classified into two main categories: discovery and consolidation VLS categories. Under the discovery VLS category, there are two sub-categories: determination (DETs1-6) and social (SOCs7-11) VLS sub-categories. Under the consolidation VLS category, there are four sub-categories: social (SOCs12), memory (MEMs13-32), cognitive (COGs33-38) and metacognitive (METs39-43) VLS sub-categories. All VLSs items were rated with a five-point Likert-scale.

A semi-structured interview was employed to obtain the information for the most, the least, and the other used and useful VLS. The interview consists of 12 questions (questions 1-3 were concerned with the most, the least and other VLSs used by the participants under the discovery VLS category, questions 4-6 were concerned with the most, the least and other useful VLSs in the participants' perception under the discovery VLS category, questions 7-9 were concerned with the most, the least and other VLSs used by the participants under the consolidation VLS category, and questions 10-12 were concerned with the most, the least and other useful VLSs in the participants' perception under the consolidation VLS category).

Procedures

The objectives of the research study were explained to the participants before they were asked to fill out the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview was then conducted with 10 volunteers. The interviews which were conducted in Thai in order to avoid misinterpretation were recorded via a recorder with the interviewees' permission.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics of SPSS version 20.0 were used to calculate the percentages of the data collected from the background information. They were also used to calculate and compare the mean scores, standard deviations, and levels of VLS use and usefulness. Three levels of VLS use and usefulness were assigned using the established criteria suggested by Ketsing (1995): high (mean of 3.67 – 5.00), moderate (mean of 2.34 – 3.66) and low (mean of 1.00 – 2.33). The relationships between the means of used and useful VLSs were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. Data collected from the semi-structured interview was transcribed and quantified under Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. The data from the interview was used to triangulate with the data obtained from the questionnaire.

Results

To answer the research question the overall means, the means for each strategy category, the means for each strategy sub-category, and the means for each individual strategy items together with their standard deviations and levels were compared. Then, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used for the analysis of overall VLSs, overall VLS categories, overall VLS sub-categories, and individual VLS items to see the relationships between VLS use and usefulness.

Table 1

Perception toward overall use and usefulness of VLSs

Strategy	USE			USEFULNESS		
	X	S.D.	Level	X	S.D.	Level
Overall DETs	3.59	0.38	Moderate	4.06	0.41	High
Overall SOCs	2.94	0.66	Moderate	3.53	0.70	Moderate
Overall discovery VLSs	3.26	0.45	Moderate	3.79	0.45	High
Overall SOCs	2.92	0.90	Moderate	3.68	0.93	High
Overall MEMs	3.22	0.49	Moderate	3.89	0.50	High
Overall COGs	3.42	0.61	Moderate	3.99	0.60	High
Overall METs	3.20	0.51	Moderate	3.98	0.42	High
Overall consolidation VLSs	3.19	0.46	Moderate	3.89	0.43	High
Overall VLSs	3.23	0.41	Moderate	3.84	0.39	High

As seen from Table 1, the overall VLSs of the participants' use fall into the moderate level while those of the usefulness fall into the high-level. The same finding can be seen in the

overall discovery and consolidation VLS categories. All of the sub-categories of used VLSs under the two categories are at the moderate level, but for the usefulness all sub-categories except that of the social VLS sub-category are at the high level. It can be noticeable, however, that the mean of the social VLS sub-category ($x = 3.53$, $SD = 0.70$) is quite high at the moderate level (moderate: mean of 2.34 – 3.66).

Table 2

Perception toward use and usefulness of individual VLS items

Strategy		USE			USEFULNESS		
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level
Discovery-DETs							
DET1	Analyze the word's meaning from parts of speech	3.53	0.73	Moderate	4.08	0.86	High
DET2	Analyze the word's meaning from affixes and roots	3.21	0.76	Moderate	3.90	0.89	High
DET3	Guess the word's meaning from a textual context	4.00	0.75	High	4.31	0.72	High
DET4	Use a bilingual dictionary	4.44	0.72	High	4.10	0.99	High
DET5	Use a monolingual dictionary	3.32	0.85	Moderate	4.44	0.74	High
DET6	Use word lists	3.01	0.98	Moderate	3.51	0.80	Moderate
Discovery-SOC VLSs							
SOC7	Ask a teacher for L1 translation	2.47	1.02	Moderate	3.43	1.04	Moderate
SOC8	Ask a teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word	2.50	0.93	Moderate	3.50	0.94	Moderate
SOC9	Ask a teacher for a sentence including the new word	2.51	0.97	Moderate	3.90	1.00	High
SOC10	Ask a classmate for the word's meaning	3.82	0.92	High	3.35	0.93	Moderate
SOC11	Discover the word's meaning through group activity	3.39	1.02	Moderate	3.44	1.04	Moderate
Consolidation-SOCs							
SOC12	Study and practice the word's meaning in a group	2.92	0.90	Moderate	3.68	0.93	High
Consolidation-MEMs							
MEM13	Image the word's meaning	3.58	0.96	Moderate	3.85	0.97	High
MEM14	Connect the word to a personal experience	3.64	0.93	Moderate	4.31	0.83	High
MEM15	Associate the word with its coordinates	3.13	1.07	Moderate	4.11	0.92	High
MEM16	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms	3.64	0.81	Moderate	4.43	0.70	High
MEM17	Use semantic maps	2.43	1.04	Moderate	3.69	0.97	High

	Strategy	USE			USEFULNESS		
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level
MEM18	Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives	3.03	1.06	Moderate	4.01	0.86	High
MEM19	Group the words together to study them	3.17	1.04	Moderate	4.13	0.78	High
MEM20	Use the word in a sentence	4.08	0.78	High	4.67	0.58	High
MEM21	Study the spelling of the word	3.76	0.89	High	4.17	0.78	High
MEM22	Study the sound of the word	3.79	0.88	High	4.29	0.77	High
MEM23	Say the word aloud	3.44	1.01	Moderate	3.92	1.03	High
MEM24	Image the word form	3.74	0.93	High	4.04	0.87	High
MEM25	Underline the initial letter	1.75	0.94	Low	2.32	1.04	Low
MEM26	Configure the word	3.04	1.11	Moderate	3.47	1.08	Moderate
MEM27	Use keyword method	3.18	1.23	Moderate	3.65	1.14	Moderate
MEM28	Remember the word's affix and root	3.07	0.92	Moderate	3.63	0.98	Moderate
MEM29	Remember the word's part of speech	3.60	0.97	Moderate	4.08	1.04	High
MEM30	Paraphrase the word's meaning	3.32	0.99	Moderate	3.81	1.00	High
MEM31	Learn the word of an idiom together	2.85	0.89	Moderate	3.56	1.03	Moderate
MEM32	Use semantics feature grids	2.21	0.99	Low	3.75	0.97	High
Consolidation-COGs							
COG33	Repeat the word verbally	3.46	0.82	Moderate	4.17	0.91	High
COG34	Write the word repeatedly	3.49	1.10	Moderate	4.29	0.86	High
COG35	Take notes in class	3.93	0.92	High	4.17	0.83	High
COG36	Use the vocabulary section in your textbook	3.13	1.00	Moderate	3.60	0.89	Moderate
COG37	Listen to tape of word lists	3.13	1.02	Moderate	3.57	0.83	Moderate
COG38	Keep a vocabulary notebook	3.38	1.08	Moderate	4.17	0.85	High
Consolidation-METs							
MET39	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)	4.57	0.64	High	4.72	0.58	High
MET40	Test oneself with word tests	2.93	1.05	Moderate	4.18	0.84	High
MET41	Use spaced word practice	2.26	0.97	Low	4.26	0.94	High
MET42	Skip or pass the word	2.97	1.07	Moderate	2.07	1.13	Low
MET43	Continue to study the word over time	3.28	0.75	Moderate	4.68	0.55	High

(N = 72)

Table 2 shows that a majority of used VLSs are at the moderate level of usage (nine at the high level, thirty at the moderate level, and four at the low level), whereas most of the useful VLSs are ranked at the high level (thirty at the high level, twelve at the moderate level, and one at the low level). It can also be seen that nineteen VLSs fall into the same level of both used and useful VLSs (eight in the same high level, ten in the same moderate level, and one

in the same low level). Twenty-four VLSs, however, are reported at different levels between used and useful VLSs (twenty items at moderate/high levels, two are at low/high levels, one at moderate/low levels, and one at the high/moderate levels).

Table 3

Perception toward the use and usefulness of the top five VLSs

Vocabulary learning strategies		USE		Vocabulary learning strategies		USEFULNESS	
	Mean	S.D.	Level		Mean	S.D.	Level
MET39	4.57	0.64	High	MET39	4.72	0.58	High
DET4	4.44	0.72	High	MET43	4.68	0.55	High
MEM20	4.08	0.78	High	MEM20	4.67	0.58	High
DET3	4.00	0.75	High	DET5	4.44	0.74	High
COG35	3.93	0.92	High	MEM16	4.17	0.83	High

(N=72)

As seen in Table 3, all top five VLSs in both use and usefulness are reported at the high level. In addition, it is noticeable that there are two items (MET39: ‘Use English-language media’ and MEM20: ‘Use the word in a sentence’) that are reported at the high level in both use and usefulness. It can also be seen that DET4: ‘Use a bilingual dictionary’ is reported as one of the most used VLSs while DET5 ‘Use a monolingual dictionary’ is reported as one of the most useful VLSs.

Table 4

Perception toward use and usefulness of the bottom five VLSs

Vocabulary learning strategies		USE		Vocabulary learning strategies		Usefulness	
	Mean	S.D.	Level		Mean	S.D.	Level
MEM25	1.75	0.94	Low	MET42	2.07	1.13	Low
MEM32	2.21	0.99	Low	MEM25	2.32	1.04	Low
MET41	2.26	0.97	Low	SOC10	3.35	0.93	Moderate
MEM17	2.43	1.04	Moderate	SOC7	3.43	1.04	Moderate
SOC7	2.47	1.02	Moderate	SOC11	3.44	1.04	Moderate

(N=72)

As seen in Table 4, out of the five VLSs least used, two (MEM17: ‘Use semantics maps’ and SOC7: ‘Ask a teacher for an L1 translation’) fall into the moderate level, whereas, the other three (MEM25: ‘Underline the initial letter of the word’, MEM32: ‘Use semantics feature grids’, and MET41: ‘Use spaced word practice’) are reported at the low level. On the other hand, three of the least useful VLS items (SOC10: ‘Ask a classmate for the word’s meaning’, SOC7: ‘Ask a teacher for an L1 translation’, and SOC11: ‘Discover the word’s meaning through a group activity’) fall into the moderate level, and the other two (MET42: ‘Continue

to study the word over time' and MEM25: 'Underline the initial letter of the word') fall into the low level. It is noticeable that there are two items (MEM25: 'Underline the initial letter of the word' and SOC7: 'Ask a teacher for an L1 translation') which are ranked in both use and usefulness as one of the least five.

Table 5

Pearson Correlations of the participants' perception toward use and usefulness of VLS categories and sub-categories

Category	Sub-category	Correlation coefficient (r)
Discovery VLSs		.347**
	Determination strategies	.105
	Social strategies	.407**
Consolidation VLSs		.357**
	Social strategies	.251*
	Memory strategies	.312**
	Cognitive strategies	.293*
	Metacognitive strategies	.186
Overall VLSs		.392**

(N=72)** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the findings from the analysis of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. As seen, the overall VLSs together with the two VLS main categories and their sub-categories, except the determination and the metacognitive VLS sub-categories had a positive correlation.

Triangulation of Data

Regarding the triangulation of the data across the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview, MET39: 'Use English-language media' under the metacognitive sub-category of the consolidation VLS category was found to be the only item that was responded to as the most used and useful VLS. For the bottom five used and useful VLS items, one item under the social sub-category of the discovery VLS category (SOC7: 'Ask a teacher for an L1 translation') and the other item under the memory sub-category of the consolidation VLS category (MEM25: 'Underline the initial letter of the word') were found across the two instruments.

Conclusion and Discussion

The study has answered the research question by showing the result that the VLS use of English major students in a Thai university is significantly correlated with their perceptions of the usefulness of the VLSs. Generally speaking, it seems that the students use the VLSs and perceive them as useful. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Lip (2009) and Wu (2005). They found that the frequency of VLSs use among their students had an influence on the students' choices in choosing the most useful VLSs in their responses.

With regard to the determination sub-category under the discovery category, which was found to have no significant correlation between the use and usefulness, Thai English major students in this study seem to be aware of the usefulness of analyzing the word's meaning from parts of speech and from affixes and roots, and using a monolingual dictionary frequently while they reported using these strategies moderately. This result is understandable. English major students are trained to use a monolingual dictionary to get detailed information and examples of the word usage, so they value the usefulness of using such information. However, like most Thai students, the students seem to prefer using a bilingual dictionary as it is quicker and easier for them to find the word's meaning.

With regard to the metacognitive sub-category under the consolidation category which was found to have no significant correlation between the use and usefulness, Thai English major students in this study seem not to use the strategy of spaced word practice but value it highly. This result is explainable in that in using spaced word practice strategy, students need to study the new word over time, and this is very unlikely among most university students as studying at this level, there are always many assignments to be done from all subjects taken. The other noticeable strategy is skipping or passing the word. The students tend to use it moderately but do not see its usefulness as much. A possible explanation might be that the students do not dare to skip or pass the word as they do not know if the word is a low frequency one or not. It is important for the students to be aware that all the words cannot be learned, and they need to concentrate their limited resources on learning the most useful ones (Schmitt, 1997).

The result of the triangulated data which indicated that the strategy of using English-language media was reported among the most used and useful VLSs across both instruments shows that the study of English in the age of globalization is essential in terms of the internet and the advancement of technology. Nowadays, there are almost endless resources of English language learning through media available for language learners to choose (Schmitt, 1970). Media has played an essential role in the language learners' lives, and it includes not only the entertainment content but also a variety of useful authentic language materials. In addition, vocabulary related to media is rich and extremely varied. Therefore, it is reasonable for the students to confirm using media and to perceive this VLS as one of the most useful.

On the other hand, asking a teacher for an L1 translation and underlining the initial letter of the word were the two VLSs responded to the least positively across the two instruments. A possible explanation for asking a teacher for an L1 translation to be the least used and useful VLS is that the students in the study are English major students, so their proficiency in English is beyond using this strategy. They tend to be more independent learners and do not need to ask the teachers for the translation. The other explanation is that the students prefer not to interact with their teachers in part due to their Thai culture. In Thailand, many students are reluctant to ask their teachers because they are shy, and they are afraid of being looked at as asking non-sense questions. This kind of situation has long been a controversial issue in Thailand. Therefore, a teacher should be a role model person who motivates and encourages their students by giving them chances to ask questions and make them feel comfortable when asking. For the strategy of underlining the initial letter of the word, although Marchbanks and Lavin (1965) and Timko (1970) as cited in Schmitt (1997) considered it to be the most prominent in word recognition, the students in this study responded to it the least across the two instruments. A possible explanation is that the students may not be familiar with the strategy as they have not been trained to do so. In addition, as the students in this study are

high proficient learners, they may consider this memory technique to be the least useful in their vocabulary learning.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to investigate VLSs used and their usefulness as perceived by university English major students. The students' background such as learning styles, self-motivation, levels of interest in the English language, and levels of English proficiency, which were not considered in this study might have affected the findings of the study. In addition, due to the time constraint, the participants in the study were limited to only English major students at one public university in Thailand and to a small number of the interviewed participants. As a result, the findings may affect any generalization of the results of the study.

Further studies should be undertaken to expand the results of this study. First, research could be broadened to include students with lower proficiency in English, such as those who are not majoring in English, or students from other settings. Second, it would be valuable to conduct a research study using other research methods such as think-aloud protocol, or conduct a case study with a long period of observation to confirm the validity of the findings. In addition, as the present study aimed to find the relationships between the use and usefulness of VLSs, other studies should investigate the relationships of VLSs with other variables, for example, students' level of proficiency, students' experience in English learning, or student's learning styles. Additionally, due to the limited sample number of this study, future research is needed to broaden the number of respondents so that the results will be more representative. Further research in these areas would contribute to overall improvement of English vocabulary learning and teaching in Thailand.

Teaching Implications

As the study highlights the use and usefulness of VLSs perceived by university English major students, a number of pedagogical implications for high proficiency university EFL learners can be suggested.

The findings indicate that the overall use of VLSs in the study is at the moderate level. Oxford (1990) as cited in Petchsringam (2014) described that the moderate use of VLSs showed that students are aware of the strategies, but they still need to be encouraged by teachers to use them more for the effectiveness of vocabulary learning.

Regarding the most used and useful VLSs, the highest VLS reported is the strategy of 'Use English-language media'. As mentioned earlier, English-language media plays a vital role in Thai students' lives. Therefore, teachers should take the advantage of the benefits of this endless resource to be used as materials for their students. However, the difficulty level of the materials should be considered to make them more appropriate to learners.

The finding regarding the use of dictionary strategies was found to be contradicted. A bilingual dictionary was reported as one of the most used VLSs while a monolingual dictionary was reported as one of the most useful VLSs. As mentioned by the students, using a bilingual dictionary is quick and convenient. However, as a monolingual dictionary provides a variety of word usage and definitions in different contexts, teachers can model to their students how a monolingual dictionary can be used to help them learn words more

effectively. According to Wu (2005), teachers can encourage the students to gradually use a monolingual dictionary.

Some strategies that the students might not be familiar with or find useful at the lower levels, are underlining the initial letter of the word, using semantics feature grids, using spaced word practice, underlining the initial letter and skipping or passing the word. This result indicates that teachers need to bring these strategies into the classroom and help their students become familiar with them. Moreover, as mentioned in the findings, there are only thirteen VLSs among 43 that are at the low or moderate levels among the useful VLSs. This means that it should not be too difficult to motivate students to use the 30 VLSs they perceive useful at the high level as they already have positive attitudes toward the strategies.

Last of all, teachers should be aware of the need to move away from a teacher-centered learning environment to more student-centeredness. Realizing this, teachers can motivate their students to become independent language learners by employing appropriate vocabulary learning strategies when they need to discover and consolidate the meaning of a word they encounter.

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