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# The relationships of learning strategy instruction, autonomy, and motivation in L2 vocabulary learning*

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Research on motivation and autonomy in language learning has suggested that learning contexts emphasizing autonomy will likely foster learners' motivation (Dickinson, 1995; Noels et al., 2001). To encourage autonomy, instructions on learning strategies have been presumed to facilitate autonomous learning and thus lead to high motivation (Dörnyei, 2003, 2005). This study explored the effects of learning strategy instruction on learners' autonomy, motivation, and also the relationships between autonomy and motivation in L2 vocabulary learning. 44 adult learners of English participated in this study. One-semester vocabulary learning strategy instructions with an emphasis on autonomous learning were implemented in the experimental group. A questionnaire including learners' perception on motivation, autonomy, and usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies was administrated. The results support that there is a close relationship between intrinsic motivation and self-assessed ability to use L2 learning strategies. The learners in the experimental group assessed themselves as being more capable of applying various learning strategies than those in the control group. However, the learners seem to have fixed ideas concerning their own and their teachers' responsibilities. This calls into question the widespread assumption that strategy instruction necessarily increases learner autonomy in the sense of taking responsibility for the aspects of one's own learning.

**[Strategy/Autonomy/Motivation/L2 vocabulary learning/Self-determination]**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Autonomy with motivation is generally considered as one of the most important driving forces for successful language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Yang, 2011) and previous empirical studies on language learning strategy instruction have hinted the positive effects of learning strategies on learner autonomy and potentially motivation (Dörnyei, 2003; Nakatani, 2005; Tseng et al., 2006). Though many studies show positive effects of learning strategies on language acquisition (The EPPI-Centre: Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London, 2005), the overall evidence of those results was rather weak because of short experimental periods, absence of control groups, and different ways of evaluating strategies. Moreover, many studies still showed contradictory results of the effects of language learning strategies (Cohen, 1998; Park, Lee, & Kang, 2005; Rubin et al., 2008). More specifically, whether or not learning strategy instruction actually leads to learners' motivation and autonomy still remains unanswered even though there is a study which found positive relationship between vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and self-regulation (Tseng et al., 2006).

Considering the aforementioned limitations, the present study aimed to explore the relationship between learning strategy instruction, motivation, and autonomy focusing on L2 vocabulary learning with both a control group and an experimental group. There are several reasons that we focus on L2 vocabulary learning in this study. First of all, vocabulary is the core element in language itself and its acquisition (Hudson, 2007). Vocabulary learning has been commonly perceived by L2 learners as a major stumbling block in both reading and writing (Leki & Carson, 1994) partly because vocabulary development is a long term and continuous learning process with knowledge accumulated through repetitive word exposure. Krashen (in Hudson, 2007) emphasized the importance of vocabulary, remarking "language learners do not carry around grammar books, they carry around dictionaries" (p. 227). In addition, the concept of L2 learning is too broad and people tend to use the term to embrace diverse acquisition processes for answering specific questions (Tseng et al., 2006). Notwithstanding the overall importance of L2 vocabulary learning and the concern of the broad term of language learning, there is a more fundamental reason for the focus. Autonomous learning is particularly appropriate for vocabulary acquisition since each learner's vocabulary knowledge is very idiosyncratic and vocabulary learning happens throughout learners' life. Each individual comes across many different words in different contexts depending on individual interest, major, and background, accordingly using different vocabulary learning strategies and achieving different results (Parry, 1991, 1997). Vocabulary learning, therefore, could be most effective if instructions and practices

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provide L2 learners with any possible strategy that they could implement by themselves outside classrooms and raise their awareness of autonomy in L2 vocabulary learning especially considering limited instructional periods and L2 learners' limited information on vocabulary learning strategies (Laufer, 2003; Wesche & Paribakht, 2000). If autonomous learning is essential for L2 vocabulary learning, then it is time to ask whether or not learning strategy instruction aiming at enhancing autonomy actually affects autonomy as well as motivation in L2 vocabulary learning.

To better know the relationships of learning strategy instruction, motivation, and autonomy in L2 learning, the following three research questions were formulated:

1. What are the effects of learning strategy instruction on L2 learners' motivation in learning vocabulary?
2. What are the effects of learning strategy instruction on L2 learners' autonomy in learning vocabulary?
3. What is the relationship between autonomy and motivation in L2 vocabulary learning?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Self-Determination Theory

Research on motivation in L2 learning has been dominated by Gardner and his associates who use large survey studies mostly conducted in Canadian bilingual/bicultural contexts (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, R. C., 1959; Gardner & Lambert, W. E., 1972; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Gardner's motivation model, now called the socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985, 1988) viewed motivation as a rather stable learner trait. Since Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) urge on more L2 educational context grounded research, there has been a shift towards emphasizing the dynamic and cognitive nature of motivation. Viewing motivation as a continuously evolving construct subject to various internal and external changes confronted by individual learners, this re-conceptualization opened up the research agenda of probing into the relationship of motivation and classroom language learning behaviors (Dörnyei, 2000, 2003; Ushioda, 2001). As suggested by Dörnyei (2003), examining relationships between motivation and learning behaviors links L2 motivation research more closely with processes in L2 acquisition.

Self-determination theory of motivation, conceptualized by Deci and Ryan (1985, 1995), is along the same line of capturing both the dynamic dimension and classroom

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relevance of motivation. Self-determination theory focuses on "the degree to which people endorse their actions at the highest level of reflection and engage in the actions with a full sense of choice" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). Three orientations were proposed by self-determination theory: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. According to the extent to which the motivation is self-determined or internalized within the learner, different types of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation can be classified on a continuum.

**FIGURE 1**

**Orientation Subtypes Along the Self-Determination Continuum**

**(Adapted from Deci and Ryan, 2000)**

| Behavior | Non-self-determined | | | | Self-determined |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of Motivation | Amotivation | Extrinsic Motivation (EM) | | | Intrinsic Motivation (IM) |
| Type of Regulation | Non-Regulation | External Regulation | Introjected Regulation | Identified Regulation | Knowledge<br>Accomplishment<br>Stimulation |
| Locus of Causality | Impersonal | External | Somewhat External | Somewhat Internal | Internal |

At the least determined end is amotivation, demonstrated when learners find no competence nor see value in doing actions including language learning. Extrinsic motivation is displayed when the purpose of language learning is for instrumental outcomes. Three subtypes of extrinsic motivation include external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation. External regulation, at the least determined end of the extrinsic motivation continuum, refers to the pressure or reward from the social environment to learn language such as receiving good grades. Next on the continuum is introjected regulation, which refers to more internalized reasons for learning a target language, for example, to show that one is a good citizen. Identified regulation means the personal choice or value placed on the outcome of language learning. Choosing to be the kind of person who can speak more than one language is one example of identified regulation.

Intrinsic motivation means to do something for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. Vallerand (1997) further divided intrinsic motivation into knowledge, accomplishment, and stimulation. The knowledge type of intrinsic motivation refers to the feelings associated with exploring new ideas and developing knowledge. The

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accomplishment type of intrinsic motivation refers to the sensations related to mastering a task or achieving a goal. The satisfied feeling experienced after resolving a communication gap is an example. The stimulation type of intrinsic motivation refers to the excitement or pleasure simulated by performing the task. Such feelings of satisfaction come from a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which are defined as basic psychological needs in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). That is, experiencing perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness is hypothesized to facilitate more self-determined motivation such as identified regulation and intrinsic motivation, as people are likely to return freely to the activities that satisfy their psychological needs.

## 2. Motivation and Autonomy

Educators generally consider autonomy with motivation as one of the most important driving forces for successful language learning and it is also accepted as an essential part of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1995). As for the definition of autonomy in language learning, Holec (1981) is considered a pioneer in bringing the concept of autonomy into language learning. In his renowned book *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*, he defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning…Autonomy is thus a term describing a potential capacity to act in a given situation – in our case, learning – and not the actual behavior of an individual in that situation" (p.3). Subsequently, many L2 researchers have defined autonomy in various ways. One of the most popular definitions of autonomy comes from Dickinson (1987, 1995). Dickinson listed characteristics of autonomy in the language field as the following: (1) taking responsibility for one's own learning; (2) being able to control one's own learning; (3) perceiving that one's learning successes or failures are to be attributed to one's own efforts and strategies. Though the definitions of autonomy may differ, they usually include the notion of learners taking responsibility of their own learning, taking ownership in making decisions through the learning process, and the ability to take charge of their own learning (Dickinson, 1987, 1995; Holec, 1981; Littlewood, 1999; Spratt et al. 2002).

L2 researchers have turned to consider the potential role of autonomy and (intrinsic) motivation in language learning (Dickinson, 1995; Dickinson & Wenden, 1995; Dörnyei, 1994, 1998; Littlewood, 1996; Oxford, 1994). Previous studies mainly looked at the relationship between motivation and autonomy regarding general language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2003; Dickinson, 1995; Vandergrift, 2005; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006; Victori & Lockhart, 1995). Noels et al. (1999) found that more self-determined types of motivation were related to perceptions of the environment as non-controlling, lower

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feelings of anxiety, and the intention to continue L2 studies. They suggested that such findings supported the argument that language programs emphasizing autonomy will be likely to foster student motivation. Dickinson (1995) and Dörnyei (1998) argued that intrinsically motivated learners are more effective learners since the locus of control is internalized. With adult francophone learners of English, Noels et al. (2001) concluded that greater perceived autonomy and competence were found to be an indicative of more identified regulation and intrinsic motivation, which in turn predicted greater motivational intensity.

## 3. Motivation, Autonomy, and Learning Strategies

As a manifestation of motivated learning behaviors and autonomous learning, learning strategies have been investigated with L2 motivation by previous research (MacIntyre & Noels, 1996; Schmidt et al., 1996). The aims of previous studies on motivation and learning strategies have often focused on linking learners' motivational disposition with their actual learning behaviors related to learning strategies. With 2,089 college ESL learners, Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) found that motivation did indeed affect strategy use, particularly the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Schmidt et al. (1996) discovered that secondary school students with high levels of determination, instrumental motivation, and sociability reported active use of cognitive and organizing strategies. Vandergrift (2005) looked into the relationships of motivation, listening proficiency, and the strategies students reported using when listening to authentic texts in French. He found that students reporting a greater use of metacognitive strategies also showed more motivational intensity.

In discussing learning strategies and autonomy, researchers did not directly use the term autonomy in their interpretation of learning strategies. However, the effects of learning strategies on autonomous learning were implied in their statements. Tseng et al. (2006) stressed that "the most important aspect of strategic learning is not the exact nature of the specific techniques that students employ but rather the fact that they choose to exert creative effort in trying to improve their own learning" (p. 95). This remark is in line with Chamot and Rubin (1994), which stated that "good language learners cannot be described in terms of a single set of strategies but rather through the ability to understand and develop a personal set of effective strategies" (p. 372). Wenden (1995) also mentioned that autonomous learners should be self-directed in terms of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning process as well as mentally active in terms of using different strategies considering their learning. According to Dörnyei (2003), learning strategies are techniques that learners apply with "their own free will" to improve the effectiveness of learning (p. 16). Similarly, empirical studies on learning

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strategy instruction have hinted the positive effects of learning strategies on learner autonomy. Nakatani (2005) mentioned that learners' awareness of their own learning process could affect the degree of target language acquisition. The results from O'Malley et al. (1985) also showed the usefulness of raising learners' awareness on their own learning process through learning strategy instruction. However, many studies still showed contradictory results of the effects of language learning strategies (Cohen, 1998; Rubin et al., 2008). More specifically, whether or not learning strategy instruction actually leads to learners' motivation and autonomy still remains unanswered.

## III. METHOD

### 1. Participants

The participants of this study were forty-four English as a Second Language (ESL) students enrolled in academic reading courses in the English Language Institute (ELI) at a US university. The ELI academic reading course is specifically designed for graduate and undergraduate ESL students judged in need of additional help with academic English reading. The students were placed into the ELI reading courses (Intermediate or Advanced) based on their TOEFL scores and a placement examination administered upon their arrival at the university. The TOFEL scores of learners are between 173 and 250 on the CBT, or 500 and 600 on the PBT. Twenty-two students in two reading classes were assigned to an experimental group and the other twenty-two students in other two classes were assigned to a control group. The majority of both groups of students were from East-Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, mainland China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and East Timor. The gender ratio in each class was 50 percent female and 50 percent male. It is meaningful considering that previous research of autonomy and motivation is mostly done with Anglo-Canadian students in bilingual contexts, and there could be cultural constraints between Asian and Western students regarding motivation and autonomy (Lepper et al., 1999; Littlewood, 1999).

### 2. Instrument

To probe into learners' conception of autonomy and motivation, a questionnaire was designed with the following four sections. Section one focused on learners' level of motivation. The questions were modified from Language Learning Orientations Scale — Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation Subscales (LLOS-IEA)

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in Noels et al. (2000). The LLOS, based on self-determination framework, was created specially to examine learners' language learning motivation and has been used increasingly by L2 researchers. Three questions were designed respectively for amotivation, external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation. Nine questions were devised for intrinsic motivation with three questions each addressing knowledge, accomplishment, and stimulation. In this study, the questions in LLOS were slightly modified in order to ask about English vocabulary learning motivation specifically. Using a 7-point Likert scale just as in Noels et al. (2000), the students were asked to indicate how much they agreed with each of the statements.

Sections two and three aimed to gauge learners' level of autonomy. Similar to the autonomy questionnaire by Spratt et al. (2002), Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy emphasizing the notions of ability and responsibility was used in the current study. In section two, to explore learner's concept of responsibility, thirteen questions were created on the following aspects of autonomous vocabulary learning; determining learning goals, defining contents and progressions, selecting appropriate learning methods, monitoring the progress of acquisition, and assessing their own learning. The students were asked to determine the degree of responsibility for each aspect of learning, by marking on a 7-point Likert scale in both "Yours and Your teacher's" ovals. The third part of the questionnaire asked the students to assess their ability in various aspects of autonomous vocabulary learning on a 7-point Likert scale. The questions accord with section two which focused on setting objectives, contents, methods, assessments, and monitoring learning. Eleven questions were used for this section.

Spratt et al. (2002) also investigated how often learners engaged in various learning activities as a manifestation of autonomous learning behaviors. If selecting particular strategies under different learning conditions or being able to use strategies effectively is the key to autonomous learning, frequency on how often a learner practices strategies does not inform us everything about strategy use nor does it tell us much about how autonomous a learner is (Tseng et al., 2006; Yamamori et al., 2003). Therefore, instead of exploring the frequency of strategy use, the researchers asked the students to assess how useful they think each of the vocabulary learning strategy will be for their future learning in section four, hoping to provide pedagogical implications for L2 learners as well as L2 educators. It was also aimed to see the relationship between students' level of autonomous learning and their perception on the effectiveness of various vocabulary learning strategies. This section of the questionnaire contained twenty one vocabulary learning strategies and the participants assessed how useful each one is on a 7-point Likert scale.

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## 3. Procedures

Procedures and requirements for the participants included remaining in the course over the semester, attending all sessions, and being willing to work in the completion of the assigned tasks of the course.

The academic reading courses met twice a week for 75 minutes each. Four experienced EAP (English as Academic Purposes) reading teachers taught each class following the same systematic sequence listed in the course syllabi except for the vocabulary learning strategy instruction part. The participants in both groups learned general vocabulary learning strategies such as using context clues and using word parts from the same textbook across the classes. In addition to the general vocabulary learning strategies, only the experimental group received vocabulary learning strategy instruction aiming at raising learners' awareness of autonomy in L2 vocabulary learning. To address both ability and responsibility defined as key elements of autonomous learning, instructional units in the experimental group contained tasks which introduced learners to self-learning vocabulary strategies. The learners in the experimental group were directed and exposed to various vocabulary learning tools such as thesaurus, online dictionary, online corpus, concordances, and collocation dictionary, so that they could utilize them outside the class. The experimental group students had received instructions on how to use the diverse learning tools using their regular class time at the beginning of the semester. Moreover, vocabulary learning materials which pushed learners to use their receptive vocabulary to productive mode were designed with reading and writing connection activities on various topics. Feedback focusing on vocabulary usages in students' writing was provided from instructors and the students were asked to revise their own writing with a focus on word usages with various tools and strategies that they could utilize outside the classrooms. That is, only the experimental group students had an opportunity to use vocabulary they were interested in and expected to acquire using writing activities. The experimental group learners were also guided to reflect and assess their vocabulary learning progress for themselves. This included reflecting upon the strategies experimented and assessing their effectiveness. In addition, the learners in the experimental group did group discussion activities which allowed them to have oral production opportunities by explaining newly learned words to peers. Through this, the students were expected to become more aware of the vocabulary learning strategies appropriate for individual learning styles and for different learning conditions.

After piloting, the finalized version of the questionnaire was distributed and administered in regular class time at the end of the semester. Before starting to answer the questionnaire, a consent form explaining voluntary participation and anonymity of participant identities was distributed. The participants had approximately 25 minutes

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to complete the questionnaire.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SPSS 13.0 for windows was used for the data analyses and the significance level was set at $p<.01$. First, we checked the reliability of the questionnaire for each category using Cronbach alpha and Table 1 displays the reliability. The reliability is fairly high especially considering the small number of items for each category. The rather low reliability of identified regulation might come from the mixed (both extrinsic and intrinsic) characteristics of it on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation continuum (Noels et al. 2000).

**TABLE 1**

**Reliability for Motivation, Autonomy, and Future Strategy Use**

| Categories | *k* | alpha (α) | Item Mean (Max=7) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amotivation | 3 | 0.70 | 5.58 |
| EM-External regulation | 3 | 0.67 | 5.37 |
| EM-Introjected regulation | 3 | 0.61 | 4.48 |
| EM-Identified regulation | 3 | 0.43 | 5.16 |
| IM-Knowledge | 3 | 0.71 | 5.01 |
| IM-Accomplishment | 3 | 0.76 | 4.79 |
| IM-Stimulus | 3 | 0.71 | 4.89 |
| Your responsibility | 13 | 0.86 | 5.52 |
| Teacher responsibility | 13 | 0.87 | 4.69 |
| Ability | 11 | 0.87 | 4.92 |
| Future Use of strategies | 21 | 0.94 | 4.80 |

### 1. L2 Vocabulary Learning Strategy Instruction and Motivation

First, this study explored the effects of learning strategy instruction on L2 learners' motivation in vocabulary learning. Table 2 displays the mean of each group for motivation items. Both groups showed fairly high mean scores indicating that the learners were highly motivated regarding L2 vocabulary learning.

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**TABLE 2**

**Descriptive Statistics for Motivation**

| | *N* | Group | Mean | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Amotivation | 22 | Control | 17.00 | 3.93 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 16.50 | 4.41 |
| EM-External regulation | 22 | Control | 15.68 | 3.72 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 16.50 | 2.96 |
| EM-Introjected regulation | 22 | Control | 12.64 | 4.15 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 14.73 | 3.95 |
| EM-Identified regulation | 22 | Control | 15.36 | 3.35 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 15.73 | 2.88 |
| IM-Knowledge | 22 | Control | 15.36 | 3.51 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 15.23 | 3.96 |
| IM-Accomplishment | 22 | Control | 14.32 | 3.94 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 14.41 | 2.84 |
| IM-Stimulus | 22 | Control | 14.23 | 4.58 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 15.09 | 3.02 |
| Extrinsic Total | 22 | Control | 43.69 | 9.63 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 46.95 | 8.65 |
| Intrinsic Total | 22 | Control | 43.91 | 11.13 |
| | 22 | Experiment | 44.73 | 8.63 |

*Note.* The Likert scale number was reverse coded for amotivation. Thus, the higher number for amotivation means the higher degree of motivation. The maximum score for each motivation subtype is 21.

To discover whether there is any difference between the control and experimental groups we conducted a MANOVA for motivation scales. According to the results of the MANOVA, there was no significant difference between the groups across all the motivation subtypes even though the experimental group had slightly higher scores except for amotivation and knowledge. Even though the experimental group showed more homogeneity compared to the control group considering standard deviations, both group of the students seemed to be well aware of the importance of L2 vocabulary learning for their academic success considering their high scores on intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation scales. However, if we note that both groups had numerically highest scores in external regulation scale, it could be a sign that the students in both groups would like to study English vocabulary mainly to have better grades in other courses and to further obtain academic success.

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## 2. L2 Vocabulary Learning Strategy Instruction and Autonomy

The effects of learning strategy instruction on L2 learners' autonomy in learning vocabulary were investigated. Questionnaire sections 2 and 3 were created for exploring the relationship between learning strategy instruction and autonomy in L2 vocabulary learning. The participants' response average was calculated for the three autonomy categories, two for responsibility (your responsibility and teacher responsibility) and one for ability (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3**

**Descriptive Statistics for Autonomy**

| | Group | *N* | Mean | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your Responsibility | Control | 22 | 73.45 | 8.79 |
| | Experiment | 22 | 70.05 | 13.43 |
| Teacher Responsibility | Control | 22 | 59.14 | 16.62 |
| | Experiment | 22 | 62.86 | 11.38 |
| Ability | Control | 22 | 52.05 | 10.93 |
| | Experiment | 22 | 56.27 | 10.23 |

*Note.* The maximum score for each responsibility type is 91 and the maximum score for ability is 77.

Even though there exist numerical differences between the two groups, there is no significant difference between the two groups. Overall, the students in both groups put more responsibility on themselves and less responsibility on their teachers regarding L2 vocabulary learning, demonstrating that the learners attributed successful learning of L2 vocabulary mostly to their own efforts.

To see clearer picture of autonomy, we selected and compared the three items with the highest means in learner responsibility and teacher responsibility from the two groups. The two items with the lowest item means in learner responsibility and teacher responsibility from both groups were also examined (see Table 4 — Table 7). The shaded items are the responses that appeared in both of the groups. The students shared two highest items among three and one lowest item among two for learner responsibility. More interestingly, they shared all the three highest items and one lowest item for teacher responsibility. These results showed that both groups of students had clear perception of their own responsibility and their teacher responsibility. In addition, students tended to think that managing activities outside class is their own responsibility and administrating activities in-class is their teacher responsibility.

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**TABLE 4**

**Top Items Identified as Learner Responsibility (Highest Three Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 6.32 | Make sure you make progress in learning English vocabulary outside the ELI class. |
| | 6.32 | Decide what English vocabulary you learn outside class. |
| | 6.23 | Make sure you work harder in learning English vocabulary. |
| Experiment | 5.82 | Decide what English vocabulary you learn outside class. |
| | 5.77 | Make sure you work harder in learning English vocabulary. |
| | 5.73 | Decide the objectives of your English vocabulary learning. |

**TABLE 5**

**Items Least Identified as Learner Responsibility (Lowest Two Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 4.91 | Choose what materials to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |
| | 4.95 | Choose what activities to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |
| Experiment | 4.77 | Choose what materials to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |
| | 4.86 | Decide how long to spend on each vocabulary learning activity. |

**TABLE 6**

**Top Items Identified as Teacher Responsibility (Highest Three Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 5.82 | Choose what activities to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |
| | 5.73 | Choose what materials to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |
| | 5.50 | Evaluate your English vocabulary learning. |
| Experiment | 6.27 | Evaluate your English vocabulary learning. |
| | 5.86 | Choose what activities to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |
| | 5.82 | Choose what materials to use to learn English vocabulary in your ELI class. |

**TABLE 7**

**Items Least Identified as Teacher Responsibility (Lowest Two Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 2.86 | Make sure you make progress in learning English vocabulary outside the ELI class. |
| | 2.91 | Decide what English vocabulary you learn outside the ELI class. |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Experiment | 3.05 | Make sure you make progress in learning English vocabulary outside the ELI class. |
| | 3.90 | Make sure you work harder in learning English vocabulary. |

The same procedure was done with the ability part and Tables 8 and 9 demonstrate the results. We found that the experimental group indicated more competence in various aspects of vocabulary learning.

**TABLE 8**

**Top Items Identified as Learner Ability (Highest Three Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 5.09 | Identify your weakness in English vocabulary. |
| | 5.05 | Choose vocabulary learning materials outside class. |
| | 5.05 | Evaluate your ELI class in regards to English vocabulary learning. |
| Experiment | 5.55 | Evaluate your ELI class in regards to English vocabulary learning. |
| | 5.50 | Evaluate your English vocabulary learning. |
| | 5.32 | Decide how long to spend on each vocabulary learning activity. |

**TABLE 9**

**Items Least Identified as Learner Ability (Lowest Two Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 4.14 | Choose vocabulary learning objectives in class. |
| | 4.27 | Evaluate your English vocabulary learning. |
| Experiment | 4.73 | Choose vocabulary learning activities outside class. |
| | 4.82 | Choose vocabulary learning objectives outside class. |

The learners in both of the groups seem to have rather fixed ideas concerning the responsibility component whether or not they had received learning strategy instruction in L2 vocabulary learning, which aimed to enhance autonomous L2 vocabulary learning. These findings are in line with Spratt et al. (2002) and the seemingly fixed beliefs are not easily altered by providing learning strategy instruction. These findings also call into question the widespread assumption that strategy instruction necessarily increases learner autonomy in the sense of taking responsibility for all aspects of one's own learning.

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## 3. L2 Motivation and Autonomy

This study also investigated the relationship of motivation and autonomy. A Pearson correlation was first carried out with data from all the participants. As can be seen from Table 10, the result of the analysis indicated that motivational subtypes — amotivation, external regulation, identified regulation, and all subtypes of intrinsic motivation (i.e., knowledge, accomplishment, and stimulation) — positively correlated with learners' self-assessed ability on L2 vocabulary learning strategies.

**TABLE 10**

**Correlations between Motivation and Autonomy (All Participants Combined)**

| | Your Responsibility | Teacher Responsibility | Ability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amotivation | 0.09 | 0.26 | 0.32* |
| EM-External regulation | 0.14 | 0.23 | 0.32* |
| EM-Introjected regulation | -0.12 | -0.03 | 0.05 |
| EM-Identified regulation | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.33* |
| IM-Knowledge | 0.03 | 0.19 | 0.40** |
| IM-Accomplishment | 0.18 | 0.11 | 0.45** |
| IM-Stimulus | 0.24 | 0.30* | 0.41** |
| Extrinsic Total | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.25 |
| Intrinsic Total | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.47** |
| Your Responsibility | 1.00 | 0.22 | 0.27 |
| Teacher Responsibility | 0.22 | 1.00 | 0.33* |
| Ability | 0.27 | 0.33* | 1.00 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

It seems that if learners perceived themselves to be more capable of utilizing vocabulary learning strategies, the more self-determined they would be on the motivational scales. Regarding the responsibility component of autonomy, the result showed that there were almost no significant correlations between motivation and learners' responsibility or teacher responsibility.

To further examine the effects of vocabulary learning strategy instruction, the same correlations were calculated separately for the experimental and the control groups. Table 11 shows that, for the control group, self-assessed ability is positively correlated with all sub-types of intrinsic motivation and none of the extrinsic motivation scales. For the experimental group, a different pattern emerged in which the self-assessed ability correlated only with amotivation (see Table 12).

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**TABLE 11**

**Correlations between Motivation and Autonomy (The Control Group)**

| | Your Responsibility | Teacher Responsibility | Ability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amotivation | 0.34 | 0.28 | 0.22 |
| EM-External regulation | 0.34 | 0.14 | 0.24 |
| EM-Introjected regulation | 0.03 | -0.24 | -0.07 |
| EM-Identified regulation | 0.36 | -0.03 | 0.40 |
| IM-Knowledge | 0.32 | 0.14 | 0.61** |
| IM-Accomplishment | 0.28 | 0.08 | 0.61** |
| IM-Stimulus | 0.38 | 0.27 | 0.44* |
| Extrinsic Total | 0.26 | -0.06 | 0.20 |
| Intrinsic Total | 0.35 | 0.18 | 0.59** |
| Your Responsibility | 1.00 | 0.37 | 0.12 |
| Teacher Responsibility | 0.37 | 1.00 | 0.19 |
| Ability | 0.12 | 0.19 | 1.00 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**TABLE 12**

**Correlations between Motivation and Autonomy (The Experimental Group)**

| | Your Responsibility | Teacher Responsibility | Ability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amotivation | -0.07 | 0.27 | 0.46* |
| EM-External regulation | 0.03 | 0.35 | 0.40 |
| EM-Introjected regulation | -0.16 | 0.19 | 0.08 |
| EM-Identified regulation | -0.16 | 0.23 | 0.23 |
| IM-Knowledge | -0.13 | 0.27 | 0.24 |
| IM-Accomplishment | 0.12 | 0.17 | 0.25 |
| IM-Stimulus | 0.19 | 0.33 | 0.34 |
| Extrinsic Total | -0.12 | 0.28 | 0.25 |
| Intrinsic Total | 0.04 | 0.29 | 0.31 |
| Your Responsibility | 1.00 | 0.17 | 0.45* |
| Teacher Responsibility | 0.17 | 1.00 | 0.52* |
| Ability | 0.45* | 0.52* | 1.00 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed

Since the amotivation scales were reverse coded, this correlation still demonstrated that the better learners assess themselves to be, the higher the motivation (considering

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only the amotivation scale). No other extrinsic or intrinsic motivation subtypes, however, significantly correlated with learners' autonomy for the experimental group. Table 12 indicates that there were significant correlations between ability and the two responsibility categories only in the experiment group.

The relationship of motivation and autonomy revealed that mainly intrinsic motivation subtypes correlated highly with self-assessed ability; however, motivational categories did not correlate with learners' willingness to take responsibility nor with learners' perception on teacher responsibility. Our results showed partial agreement to the theoretical assumption of self-determination theory in that self-assessed ability, one construct of autonomy, positively correlated with intrinsic motivation. Spratt et al. (2002) suggested a more complex relationship between motivation and autonomy by stressing that the relationship between motivation and autonomy could be dynamic and operate in different directions. Our results are in accordance with the complex relationship between motivation and autonomy. Besides, it seems that motivational categories only predicted the ability part of autonomy, not learners' perception of responsibility. This might indicate that for ESL adult learners, the ability component of autonomy plays a more crucial role in L2 vocabulary learning motivation.

One possible explanation to the absence of correlation between motivation and responsibility could be that learners' beliefs on their own responsibility and autonomy are culturally based (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Lepper et al., 1999; Littlewood, 1999). Littlewood (1999) and Lepper et al. (1999) suggested that learners from Asian countries have different concept of autonomy from that of Western learners and there exist cultural diversities between Asian and Western students regarding autonomy. Learners' fixed ideas on their and their teachers' responsibilities could also explain the lack of significant level of correlation. Another possibility is to view autonomy not as a stable learner trait, but as an individual characteristic that is continuously developing. While one semester of vocabulary learning strategy instructions might successfully increase learners' confidence in applying learning strategies, their conception on autonomous learning, specifically responsibility, might still be in the process of transformation.

## 4. Future Use of Strategies

How often learners use particular learning strategies is not equivalent to how effectively they select and use learning strategies under different learning conditions, and frequency might not inform us how autonomous learners are (Tseng et al., 2006; Yamamori et al., 2003). For the last part of the questionnaire, we asked the learners to rate how useful each learning strategy is for their future learning. The three strategies rated most useful for the control and experimental group differed in that the control

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group chose more traditional and commonly used strategies to be most useful as can be seen from Table 13. The experimental group, on the other hand, chose strategies that they learned through the instructional units. Such pattern indicated that there were instructional effects in terms of learners' perception on usefulness of strategies.

**TABLE 13**

**Strategies Identified to be Most Useful in Future Learning (Highest Three Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 5.36 | Look up a dictionary for meanings on unknown words. |
| | 5.27 | Look at how a certain word is used differently in different texts. |
| | 5.27 | Try to memorize new words. |
| Experiment | 5.86 | Use the strategy of context clues in learning new words. |
| | 5.63 | Practice the new words you have learned in speaking (conversation). |
| | 5.55 | Replace different words with the ones you have repetitively used in writing. |

Table 14 shows that one particular strategy, 'assess yourself on how many words you have learned' was rated to be the least useful by both groups. It seems that whether learners have received autonomous learning strategy instruction or not, assessment was not considered as a part of self-learning. There was no significant correlation between autonomy and future use of strategies.

**TABLE 14**

**Strategies Identified to be Least Useful in Future Learning (Lowest Two Means)**

| Group | Mean | Item |
|---|---|---|
| Control | 4.14 | Assess yourself on how many new words you have learned. |
| | 4.18 | Use online tools to help you learn new words. |
| Experiment | 4.64 | Assess yourself on how many new words you have learned. |
| | 4.77 | Plan what words you would like to learn. |
| | 4.77 | Reflect upon your vocabulary learning strategy. |
| | 4.77 | Ask teachers the meaning of unknown words. |
| | 4.77 | Ask your peers the meaning of unknown words. |

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## V. CONCLUSION

If autonomous learning can indeed be defined as the ability and the willingness to take responsibility in learning, the higher self-assessed ability scores on various aspects of autonomous vocabulary learning from the experimental group in the current study might be a piece of evidence that instructional intervention on learning strategies has positive effects on autonomy. Learners' confidence seemed to be the result of knowing various learning strategies available and having the opportunities to experiment with different strategies in order to discover the ones most suitable for individual learning styles and particular contexts. Such instructional effects implied that, pedagogically, there is a need for teachers to acquaint learners with diverse language learning strategies so that learners can have a pool of strategies to select over the learning process. Providing diverse vocabulary learning tools not only allows independent learning ability but also encourages learners to develop individual learning strategies suitable for their learning styles.

From our results, it seems that while the ability of autonomous learning could be improved over one-semester instruction, the rooted perception of learner and teacher responsibility could not be easily influenced by learning strategy instruction. Such results might point to the pedagogical implication that instructions on learning strategies should include more awareness raising activities specifically aiming at the notion of responsibility in order to re-conceptualize learners' perception of their responsibilities in learning. Moreover, the effort of instruction and attention on L2 vocabulary learning and learner responsibility should be persistent since learners' perception towards responsibility could not be easily changed within a short period of instructional time.

The current study is limited by the sample size, specific language area (L2 vocabulary learning), and the participants' backgrounds. The study need to be replicated with different groups of learners especially with learners from different cultural contexts in a larger sample size. Other methodologies besides questionnaires such as in-depth follow-up interviews would also be encouraged to better answer the questions on the relationships of learning strategy instruction, autonomy, and motivation in not just vocabulary learning but also L2 learning in general. Longitudinal studies which examine how learners' motivation and autonomy fluctuate during the learning process will also be able to provide more insights on the temporal variation of motivation and autonomy.

This study explored the effectiveness of learning instruction on both learners' motivation and autonomy, with a particular reference to L2 vocabulary learning. We also examined how the motivation orientations proposed by self-determination theory related to learners' autonomy. Though relationships of motivation and autonomy were not as strong as expected, and the students displayed rather fixed perceptions about their own

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responsibility and teacher responsibility as to autonomy, the study does contribute to figuring out the ways of enhancing L2 learners' motivation and autonomy through classroom instruction and provide tips of how to further investigate the relationship of motivation and autonomy.

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## APPENDIX

Examples of Questionnaire

**Part I: Motivation**

*How much do you agree with the following statements:*

Completely Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Agree

1. Amotivation: I cannot come to see why I study English vocabulary.
2. External Regulation: I study English vocabulary in order to get academic success later on.
3. Introjected Regulation: I study English vocabulary to show myself that I am a good student because I have a wide English vocabulary.
4. Identified Regulation: I study English vocabulary because I choose to be the kind of person who has a wide vocabulary in more than one language.
5. Intrinsic Motivation – Knowledge: I study English vocabulary for the pleasure that I experience in knowing more about English vocabulary in different texts.
6. Intrinsic Motivation – Accomplishment: I study English vocabulary for the pleasure I experience when surpassing myself in English vocabulary learning.
7. Intrinsic Motivation – Stimulation: I study English vocabulary for the good feeling that I experience while speaking in English using the words that I know.

**Part II: Responsibilities –Your Responsibility / Teacher Responsibility**

*When you are learning English vocabulary, whose RESPONSIBILITY should it be to:*

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely

1. Make sure you make progress in learning English vocabulary in the ELI class.
2. Make sure you make progress in learning English vocabulary outside the ELI class.
3. Decide the objectives of your English vocabulary learning.
4. Decide what you should learn next in your English vocabulary.

**Part III: Ability**

*If you had the opportunity, how good do you think you would be at:*

Very Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Good

1. Choosing vocabulary learning objectives outside class.
2. Choosing vocabulary learning materials in class.
3. Evaluating your English vocabulary learning.
4. Choosing vocabulary learning activities in class.

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**Part IV: Usefulness of Strategies**

*In the future, how useful do you think the following activities will be:*

Not Useful at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Useful

1. Use a thesaurus (synonym dictionary) for learning new words.
2. Look at how a certain word is used differently in different texts.
3. Practice the new words you have learned in writing.
4. Use online tools to help you learn new words.
5. Reflect upon your vocabulary learning strategy.
6. Note down new words through reading texts outside the class.

**Examples in: English**

**Applicable Languages: English**

**Applicable Levels: Tertiary**

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