Perceptions of the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students' Program Toward Vocabulary Learning Strategies

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to investigate the benefits received by international students at the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students' program (ELICOS) of the University of Canberra College English Language Centre (UCCELC) in Australia in implementing Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS). The benefits are in terms of finding new vocabulary outside of the classroom, writing the words directly while encountering new words, making a connection for the meaning of the words, studying the aspects of the new words, rehearsing, saying the new words aloud and jotting the word down, getting an image of the first time they met the words, and using new vocabulary in daily conversation. A qualitative design was used to collect information from six international students from various nations, including Indonesia, China, the Philippines, and Japan, utilising interviews. The interview data were analysed and presented using qualitative research processes such as coding, grouping, argument creation, and drafting. The findings of this study demonstrated that students in the ELICOS program use a variety of vocabulary learning strategies, including cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social strategies. Furthermore, all students reported that they gained a considerable beneficial impact on their language learning proficiency by applying behaviors of some particular vocabulary learning strategies These findings have significant implications for increasing the quality of language teaching and learning processes, as well as enriching the research repertory in the field of VLS.

Keywords: perception, vocabulary learning strategies, ELICOS

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki manfaat yang diterima oleh mahasiswa internasional di program Kursus Intensif Bahasa Inggris untuk Mahasiswa Luar Negeri (ELICOS) dari University of Canberra College English Language Centre (UCCELC) di Australia dalam mengimplementasikan Strategi Pembelajaran Kosakata (Vocabulary Learning Strategies - VLS). Manfaatnya adalah menemukan kosakata baru di luar kelas, menulis kata-kata tersebut secara langsung ketika bertemu dengan kata-kata baru, membuat hubungan makna kata-kata tersebut, mempelajari aspek-aspek dari kata-kata baru tersebut, berlatih, mengucapkan kata-kata baru tersebut dengan lantang dan menuliskan kata tersebut, mendapatkan gambaran ketika pertama kali bertemu dengan kata-kata tersebut, dan menggunakan kosakata baru tersebut dalam percakapan sehari-hari. Untuk mengumpulkan informasi dari enam mahasiswa internasional dari berbagai negara, termasuk Indonesia, Cina, Filipina, dan Jepang, dengan menggunakan wawancara. Data wawancara dianalisis dan disajikan dengan menggunakan proses penelitian kualitatif seperti pengkodean, pengelompokan, pembuatan argumen, dan penyusunan. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa dalam program ELICOS menggunakan berbagai strategi pembelajaran kosakata, termasuk strategi kognitif, metakognitif, memori, dan sosial. Selain itu, semua siswa mengakui bahwa mereka mendapatkan dampak yang cukup menguntungkan pada kemampuan belajar bahasa mereka dengan menerapkan aspek-aspek VLS. Temuan ini memiliki implikasi yang signifikan untuk meningkatkan kualitas proses belajar mengajar bahasa, serta memperkaya khazanah penelitian di bidang VLS.

Kata kunci: *persepsi, strategi pembelajaran kosakata, ELICOS*

Introduction

English, the most widely used language, has the power to foster understanding and connections among speakers of all cultural backgrounds. This condition makes English an important language to master.[1][2] Having good English skills increases one's chances of obtaining a good job, makes it easier to read literature from various parts of the world, expands the opportunity to further education, facilitates understanding of technology, and facilitates broad networking.

Vocabulary is an important resource for language learners to master when developing a language. Vocabulary is one of the most significant parts of second language acquisition, and it is essential for all language skills and foreign language learning.[3][4][5] The definitions of new words are regularly emphasised, whether in publications or vocal contact. Vocabulary is seen as important in language education and is of utmost importance to language learners. Vocabulary is an important aspect of learning a foreign language. Few studies suggest that teaching vocabulary can be challenging since some teachers are unsure of the best practices to follow and occasionally are unsure of how to begin putting an instructional emphasis on vocabulary learning.[6]

It has been demonstrated that both successful and failed (English as a Second Language) ESL or English Foreign Language (EFL) learners can be impacted by language learning practices. Successful language learners use a greater variety of language learning techniques than unsuccessful language learners.[7] It is evident that language learning techniques are crucial to second language acquisition. Language learning strategies are methods or approaches that language learners employ to increase their proficiency in acquiring (second language) L2 abilities. Moreover, the key to operationalizing all language skills—speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar, vocabulary, and translation—is to develop a language-learning approach.[8]

The discrete aspect of vocabulary acquisition, which facilitates the application of successful techniques, maybe a contributing factor to the preference for applying several strategies for vocabulary learning over learning various language learning activities.[9] Another contributing aspect is the inclination in classrooms to prioritize separate tasks over integrated ones, like presentations. It can be because pupils place a high emphasis on language acquisition. Language instructors can assist students in expanding their vocabulary on their own, apart from teachers, outside of the classroom.[10] They can support students in their autonomous learning

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[1] Irum Fatima and Zahid Hussain Pathan, 'Investigating Learning Strategies for Vocabulary Development: A Comparative Study of Two Universities of Quetta, Pakistan', *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7.2 (2016), 7–12.

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[4] Jean Kaya and Krassimira Charkova, 'The Most and Least Frequent Vocabulary Learning Strategies of High School English Language Learners', *International Journal of English Language Education*, 2.2 (2014), 122–41.

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[9] Norbert Schmitt and Diane Schmitt, *Vocabulary in Language Teaching* (Cambridge university press, 2020).

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process by helping them recognise and practice different vocabulary acquisition tactics.

Cohen and Macro (2007) identify four key factors that affect how second language learners apply vocabulary learning strategies: (a) learners' proficiency level; (b) gender and individual differences; (c) strategy use development; and (d) context and situation of learning.[11] All of these significant aspects that influence the employment of vocabulary learning techniques should be taken into account by educators who instruct students in vocabulary learning strategies as well as researchers who are interested in identifying the strategies students employ to acquire vocabulary.

When learning vocabulary, language learners typically employ methods more frequently than when acquiring other language abilities.[12] Two reasons why the usage of VLS is more common than other tactics were elucidated by Schmitt & Meara (1997) are the following: the first is that pupils can apply effective learning strategies since vocabulary learning is more discrete; second, students' increased awareness of the value of vocabulary in language learning.[13] Therefore, using VLS to improve vocabulary is crucial to language acquisition and can help children become proficient in speaking, writing, listening, and reading, among other language abilities.

A vocabulary learning strategy is a set of steps that students use to acquire vocabulary.[14] These steps include task analysis, planning, usage, monitoring, and assessment. To provide specific and suitable vocabulary acquisition tactics, the students' analysis is then configured with the unique learning context and scenario. Therefore, depending on their individual characteristics, objectives, or settings, learners might use a variety of ways when acquiring vocabulary through language learning procedures.

The components of the taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are developed from the classification of language learning strategies (LLS), which is a subset of VLS.[15] [16] Language learners must apply language learning methods in order to identify learning materials, and VLS is one of them.[17] Schmitt & Meara (1997) created a taxonomy of VLS that included memory techniques, social strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies, all grouped around R. Oxford (1990).[18] Typically, the four VLS classifications were developed as a component of a study on how learning strategies are used by students.[19]

The taxonomy of vocabulary acquisition strategies is presented in the following table, which combines the concepts of R. Oxford (1990) and Schmitt & Meara (1997).[20] [21] The five categories include metacognitive cognitive, memory, social, and activation strategies.

[11] Andrew D Cohen and Carol Griffiths, 'Revisiting LLS Research 40 Years Later', *Tesol Quarterly*, 49.2 (2015), 414–29.

[12] Qing Ma, *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition* (Peter Lang, 2009), LXXIX.

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[16] Ian S P Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language Google EBook* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[17] Cohen.

[18] Schmitt and Meara.

[19] Read.

[20] Rebecca Oxford, *Language Learning StrategiesWhat Every Teacher Should Know* (Heinle & heinle Publishers.;, 1990).

[21] Schmitt and Meara.

Table 1. Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Metacognitive	Cognitive	Memory	Social
*Selective Attention: concerning on identifying a word to learn. Eg. Look up a word I am interested in *Self-initiation: finding new words out of the classroom. Eg. Besides textbooks, I look for other interesting readings. *Consolidating: words that have been encountered. Eg. Using English language media and spaced word practice	*Guessing: use background knowledge to find meanings *Use of dictionary *Organizing lexical information and using mechanical means Eg. Use note taking. *Using new words in different context. Eg. Try to use newly learned vocabulary	*Rehearsal: repetition *Encoding: mnemonic techniques Eg. Imagery, visual, auditory and keyword method.	*Discovering: Eg. Ask classmate for meaning. *Practicing words with others. Eg. Interact with native speakers.

Source: Oxford [22], Schmitt and Meara[23]

The foundation for mastering the four main language abilities is vocabulary, and VLS is the instrument that helps pupils acquire vocabulary efficiently. According to studies by Green & Oxford (1995), there is a considerable correlation between successful language learning and the frequency of learning method application.[24] However, the desire to look into the connection between successful language learning and learning strategies has yielded contradictory results.[25] Additionally, a few students stated that using language learning tactics helped them advance quite well in their classes.[26] It is clear from the aforementioned assertions that when pupils gain VLS, their vocabulary skills will improve.

Regarding some gaps appear in the research field of vocabulary learning strategies, this current research aims to fill the gaps by identifying the benefits obtained by students in applying VLS used by international students at the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students' program (ELICOS) of University of Canberra College English Language Centre (UCCELC) in Australia. The benefits are in terms of finding new vocabulary outside of the classroom, writing the words directly while encountering new words, making a connection for the meaning of the words, studying the aspects of the new words, rehearsing, saying the new words aloud and jotting the word down, getting an image of the first time they met the words, and using new vocabulary in daily conversation. By realizing and understanding the usefulness of VLS, students will be motivated and encouraged to apply more strategies in language learning.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative research design that aims to uncover in-depth knowledge to generate the most valuable data. This study aims to identify the benefits gained by international students at the University of Canberra College English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia in the implementation of VLS.

Purposive sampling was used to select research participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method most often used in interview-based research where samples are selected based on their relevance to the research questions and objectives. "The rationale for purposive sampling is to make the sample more appropriate to the aims and objectives of the research, thereby increasing the rigor of the research and the trustworthiness of the data and

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[22] Oxford.

[23] Schmitt and Meara.

[24] John M Green and Rebecca Oxford, 'A Closer Look at Learning Strategies, L2 Proficiency, and Gender', *TESOL Quarterly*, 29.2 (1995), 261–97.

[25] Madeline E Ehrman and Rebecca L Oxford, 'Cognition plus: Correlates of Language Learning Success', *The Modern Language Journal*, 79.1 (1995), 67–89.

[26] Oxford.

results."[27] To improve the quality and optimise the information collected during the research, selecting participants from different countries was essential. Six international students from Indonesia, China, the Philippines, and Japan were the subjects of this study. There was no pressure to participate as the six participants were voluntary; they were those who had the time and willingness to participate. The students were enrolled in the University of Canberra's ELICOS program. They are overseas students who are studying English as a foreign or second language. The University of Canberra's ELICOS program has grown into one of Australia's oldest English language centres offering intense English language training to international students.

In collecting data, the researcher chose semi-structured interviews. The interview was conducted to explore the complexity of students' VLS which included eight questions formulated concerning Oxford and Schmitt's taxonomy of vocabulary learning process. This taxonomy was chosen because it is considered the most comprehensive, most widely used, and suitable taxonomy developed in English vocabulary learning. Each interview question presented was accompanied by a brief explanation of the information from the question. The clues provide students with basic and precise information about the questions they will answer. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also used to anticipate the possibility of some follow-up questions arising during the interviews.

The framework for data analysis was based on grounded theory. Coding is the most important aspect of grounded theory in qualitative analysis. The results of the interviews will be evaluated, sorted, and broken down into the categories of Oxford and Schmitt's VLS taxonomy. The analysis process follows the standard process for qualitative data which includes coding, categorising, making arguments, and compiling the analysis results.

Finding and Discussion
Finding

In relation to the students' perception of VLS, they were asked about the benefits of the implementation of VLS they chose, and the usefulness of VLS applied.

In discovering new words, all students confirmed that finding new vocabulary outside of the classroom including newspapers, advertisements, novels, movies, and restaurant menu lists is easier and more appealing. Since they feel curious about the information and find that the new words are interesting, they can remember the word for a long period. They also admitted that the vocabulary that exists in public is often used commonly so that they can directly apply it in their daily conversation.

The following are the participants' responses regarding the query:

S3: "We are human, by finding the words in real life like in a public space is very useful that we can directly use them in daily conversation"

S2: "I am interested in advertisement and the message conveyed on it, I tried to get the meaning of some new words from it, and I remember them"

S1: "I am curious about the information on BBC news. It is easier to catch the meaning and I can see the spelling."

While encountering new words the students revealed that they write the words directly whether on scrap paper, in a vocabulary section in a book, or a special vocabulary notebook. Some students write the words with the meaning and other students prefer writing the words with other aspects including parts of part of speech, collocation, and even the example of the word used in a sentence. They believe

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[27] Steve Campbell and others, 'Purposive Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples', *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25.8 (2020), 652–61.

that by writing down the new words they encounter, they can remember them for a longer period because they see and write. It is also useful because they can open their notebook if they forget some information related to the words.

> S4: " I write organize the information about the new vocabulary including part of speech, collocation and the use of words in sentences in my vocabulary notebook. It is very useful because I can remember something more easily if I write it down and I can open my notebook if want to find some information related to those words"

Making a connection for the meaning of the words, guessing the meaning from context, analyzing the affixes or roots are the best ways to get an image of the new vocabulary, and looking at the dictionary is the second option if the students encounter difficulties and need to explore more information about the new words.

> S1: "When I encounter new words, I just try to guess the meaning from the context and if I cannot get the meaning, I then open monolingual dictionary but if I still get difficulties, I just open a bilingual dictionary. These strategies are very beneficial because they help me to obtain the related information faster and easier"

Furthermore, all students admitted that studying the aspects of the new words helps them to remember the new words in a longer period.

> S6: "When I discover a new word, I check the pronunciation and spelling to get comprehension. If the spelling is wrong, we cannot pronounce it properly and I forget them easily.

> S1: "I study all aspect when encountering a new vocabulary including the meaning, how to

pronounce, how to spell and also part of speech because by knowing part of speech we can get other new vocabulary and I can easily remember the words if I fully understand them"

Rehearsal, saying the new words aloud, and jotting the word down many times help the students memorize the word easily because they can see and when they do speak, they remember.

> S1: "I speak out the new words several times and put them into sentences"

> S4: "I try to memorize the new words by writing them down more than five times. I think it is more useful because I can see the spelling"

> S6: "to remember new words, I do a rehearsal the words many times and if it does not work, I have to write"

Getting an image of the first time they met the words assists the students in retrieving their vocabulary and asking intelligent friends or native speakers for meaning helps them remember their vocabulary faster.

> S5: "if I forget the meaning of a word, I then memorize the context or the place where the first time I saw the word"

> S3: "I just ask my intelligent friends or native speakers if I forget the meaning of words and they can solve my problems"

Furthermore, three students believe that they can gain benefits when they use vocabulary in daily conversation with teachers, classmates, or friends because it can increase their confidence and proficiency as well as get beneficial feedback.

> S2: "I always try to use new vocabulary when I speak and talk to my teachers, classmates, or native speakers in order to get feedback from them and make me get used to utilizing the words appropriately.

Lastly, the students believe that reviewing vocabulary periodically is beneficial to maintain their vocabulary.

S4: "I review my vocabulary periodically through writing and reading my vocabulary notebook"

Discussion

The research results show that ELICOS students use an extensive range of VLS[28]. Learners utilise numerous language learning strategies in many complex circumstances, including the classroom, home, market, library, and transportation[29]. Students use a large range of behaviors to some specific language learning strategies to develop their L2 competence or in specific language skill areas[30]. Furthermore, vocabulary learning procedures are used in varying proportions, with some strategies being more prevalent than others. Cognitive strategy behaviors are the most often utilised, followed by metacognitive strategy, memory strategy, and, least of all, social strategy[31].

Students utilise cognitive strategies more frequently than any other method during language learning. This finding aligns with previous studies by Asgari and Mustapha[32], Dóczi[33], Fatima and Pathan[34], Gu and Johnson[35], Ma[36], and Takac[37]. The interview results show that practically all of the students use cognitive strategies when encountering new words, organising knowledge about the words, studying some elements of the words, and applying the new terms in their daily lives. Cognitive strategies are methods of recognising learning materials that incorporate awareness, worries, and actions and conceptualising the process[38].

Furthermore, all students use a dictionary to learn language in various contexts, which is called a cognitive technique. The employment of a dictionary has been admitted as the second choice when applying another cognitive strategy does not work in a certain context Nation[39], argued that a dictionary allows learners to explore comprehensive information on the receptive and productive components of understanding a word and that students can gain not just from the type information but also from how it is portrayed.

Students use cognitive strategy more often than other VLS because they believe that it can help them understand new words, discover the meaning of the words, study the aspects related to the words, retrieve their vocabulary, and make use of the words in their daily lives. Having a vocabulary notebook helps the students organize new words so that they can find the information they need easily. Utilizing a dictionary is the fastest way to get the meaning of new words and guessing the meaning from context or affixes to give the students a clear understanding of the words and help them retrieve the words more easily. Obtaining lists of high-frequency and academic words with a range of information is

[28] Suci Fitriani and Febria Sri Artika, 'International Students' Vocabulary Learning Strategies at the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students' Program', *Jurnal Educative: Journal of Educational Studies*, 5.2 (2020), 136–48.

[29] Anne Burns and Jack C Richards, *The Cambridge Guide to Learning English as a Second Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

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[38] Cohen.

[39] Ian S P Nation.

important and they are available in the dictionary[40]. Furthermore, studying the aspects of new words including pronunciation, spelling, and part of speech, and how the new word is used in a sentence helps the students obtain deep understanding and gives them more confidence to use the new words in writing and speaking activities. Students need to be aware of other aspects of words; not only knowing the meaning of the words but also some important aspects which are needed in speaking or writing[41]. Lastly, students admitted that directly activating the new words through speaking and writing helped them to get beneficial feedback from teachers, friends, or native speakers.

Metacognitive methods are explored as the second most prevalent VLS strategy among language learners at ELICOS, following cognitive strategies[42] [43]. Griffiths [44] asserted that cognitive and metacognitive strategies coexist and are interdependent on one another. Some metacognitive strategies that all students apply are expanding new language outside of the classroom, including from newspapers, advertisements, novels, movies, and restaurant book menus. Furthermore, some students acknowledged periodically reviewing their vocabulary with others or by themselves. By using metacognitive strategies, students demonstrate that they effectively organise and monitor their learning process.

All students asserted that they use metacognitive strategies to discover new words and to maintain their vocabulary. In discovering new words, they gain benefits from watching movies and reading news, novels, advertisements, and restaurant book

recipes that they can memorize the words over a long period through something because they are interested. When they watch and read something including interesting books or movies, they feel curious, and they can record the word easier. Regarding the efforts to maintain vocabulary, students believe that if they review their vocabulary periodically makes them familiar with the words and helps them to keep the words in their mind for a very long period. One of the most important strategies to encourage remembering is through repetition by recycling old material or organizing reviews using a computer[45].

The ELICOS program may also have a role in the high usage of memory strategy, as their propensity for using behaviors in metacognitive strategy is as great as memory strategy participants[46]. Many pupils expressed a high preference for memorising vocabulary and retrieving words from memory. They form a memory association and a mental linkage with new words by rehearsal, which includes speaking the words out, writing them down, and reviewing them multiple times. The pupils also employ a memory strategy to recall vocabulary by recalling the first time they met and encountered the words.

Concerning memory strategy, students obtain benefits when they apply the memory strategy behaviors to memorize new words and retrieve vocabulary. Students acknowledged the advantage of memory strategies in short-term and long-term retention which is the aim of learning and the effectiveness of memory strategies in vocabulary learning has been proven in several studies[47] [48].

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[40] I S P Nation, 'Teaching ESL/Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and W SL/EFL Reading and Writing Reading and Writing', 2009.

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[47] Derin Atay and Cengiz Ozbulgan, 'Memory Strategy Instruction, Contextual Learning and ESP Vocabulary Recall', *English for Specific Purposes*, 26.1 (2007), 39–51.

[48] Alan Beaton, Michael Gruneberg, and Nick Ellis, 'Retention of Foreign Vocabulary Learned Using the Keyword

Students believed that the best way to memorize the new words was by rehearsing, saying them aloud, looking at them, and writing them down several times. These behaviors provide them with a long-term memory for their vocabulary enrichment.

The socio strategy becomes the least frequent strategy utilised by students when acquiring vocabulary[49] [50]. It contradicts the studies conducted by Wu [51] and Hong-Nam & Leavell [52] which discovered that people prefer to use social strategies over cognitive and metacognitive ones. When obtaining and using words, only a few students exhibit social strategy behavior. Only one of the six students admitted to employing a social approach while collecting vocabulary, such as asking native speakers for meaning to solve the difficulty. Furthermore, three students indicated that they try to employ new terminology by talking with their teachers, friends, and native speakers.

Social strategies have been identified as the least popular strategies among language learners.[53] [54] As the least favored strategy used, a small number of students revealed that they gain benefits from socio strategy when they apply its behaviors in retrieving vocabulary and making use of the new words. The students claim that asking native speakers for meaning is easier and faster. Furthermore, practicing new words directly with teachers, friends, and native speakers can make them more confident, enhance their language proficiency, and even have a chance to obtain some beneficial feedback.

Conclusion

The result of the research revealed that all respondents in ELICOS programs employ a diverse VLS. It is identified that cognitive strategies are the most popular and social strategies are the least favored strategy among language learners. All students admitted that they gain different benefits based on the strategies they use. Furthermore, all students confessed that they gained a considerable beneficial impact on their language learning proficiency by applying behaviors of some particular vocabulary learning strategies.

It is hoped that language teachers can incorporate these VLS into their teaching practice to help the students employ the appropriate VLS to achieve success in vocabulary mastery. Regarding the students, it is expected that they can get an adequate understanding and awareness to employ the effective VLS that suits them to improve their proficiency in vocabulary language learning. Furthermore, the findings of this study are also likely to contribute to the research studies in the context of VLS. Therefore, this study can be used as one of the pieces of literature for researchers who are conducting a study related to VLS.

This study still has several shortcomings. The first limitation of this research is that there were a limited number of participants involved in this study. Only six ESL students of the ELICOS program situated in Australia had a chance to participate in this interview. Hence, the result of this study cannot be generalized to all ESL students registered in this program or other ELICOS programs in Australia. The second limitation is that this study only had an interview as a research instrument which might encounter some challenges including building rapport and creating neutrality. Getting a temptation to stray from the main purpose is a possible challenge during an interview due to unexpected interviewees' behaviors and building a good rapport

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Method: A Ten-Year Follow-Up', *Second Language Research*, 11.2 (1995), 112–20.

49 Ma, LXXIX.

50 Nur Hanisah Safian, Sharmila Malakar, and Seyed Ali Rezvani Kalajahi, 'Exploring Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by UPM TESL Undergraduates', *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 5.5 (2014), 1–4.

51 Wu.

52 Kyungsim Hong-Nam and Alexandra G Leavell, 'Language Learning Strategy Use of ESL Students in an Intensive English Learning Context', *System*, 34.3 (2006), 399–415.

53 Asgari and Mustapha.

54 Schmitt and Meara.

with the interviewees is another challenge due to unresponsive participants [55]

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