Exploring the Correlation between EFL Learning Strategies and Educational Success in the Mongolian Context: An Analysis of Academic Performance in Mongolian Classrooms

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Abstract:

The research discovers what students felt was most positive about foreign language learning strategies and their student-centered methods. In particular, we focus on the EFL college students' learning strategies how students improve their skills in learning English as a foreign language. Mongolia's dominant English classroom instruction pedagogy is still teacher-centered, where students learn language under instructions of their teachers. Students are not encouraged to develop learning strategies and focus on content knowledge and vocabulary; hence, this is thematic in nature as a credible thesis statement. Teachers can aid struggling EFL learners in attaining skills by adapting their learning strategies. Therefore, the findings of this research are helpful for English language teachers to manage activities for their students and encourage them to choose proper methods in their classrooms. The study indicates the differences in EFL college students' learning strategies in relation with their characteristics. The characteristics consist of majors, gender, grades and classroom activities that improve students' English skills. EFL learners frequently interact with language learning methods at the higher education level through developing their abilities. The findings indicate that students who are interested in learning English are more likely to control their efforts and regulate their foreign language learning process based on the highlighted elements of this research question. The findings are especially significant because they suggest strong evidence of English education improvement at the higher or increased levels.

Keywords: vocabulary, learning strategies, academic achievement, EFL

1. Introduction

1.1 When advanced classifications of language learning strategies were acquired in the 1990s, a great deal of research on learning strategies was conducted (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). The study's further growth attempted to pinpoint the methods for mastering the language's constituent parts of grammar and vocabulary as well as the methods for mastering the specialized language abilities of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. As a foreign language English is an essential tool for communication between countries around the world.

1.1.2 Since vocabulary is a fundamental part of all languages, it is important while learning a foreign language (Nation, 2013; Willis & Ohashi, 2012). EFL learners frequently acknowledge that the main cause of their challenges in learning, understanding, and using English is a lack of vocabulary (Nation, 2013). Since vocabulary is the foundation for all other skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, it

only becomes clear that vocabulary is an essential ability required to communicate in any language. This substantial body of research demonstrates an efficient decoding technique that enables pupils to recognize written words precisely, rapidly, and impulsively (Pikulski and Chard, 2003). Therefore, having a large and excellent vocabulary is crucial for understanding the meaning of different English words and paragraphs (Rupley et al., 1999).

2. Literature Review

Vocabulary learning strategies

2.1 Vocabulary acquisition is the process by which people expand their vocabulary when learning a new language. This holds true for learning a first or second language. Vocabulary is a group of words that are divided into two groups: lexical words that provide information and functional words that serve grammatical purposes. Learning grammar and syntax is linked to, but distinct from, expanding one's mental vocabulary (Wollacot, 2020). A key element of learning a new language is expanding one's vocabulary. New word definitions are frequently emphasized in literature and conversations. According to Susanto (2017), vocabulary is regarded as the most crucial component of language learning and is crucial for a language learner. Vocabulary is vital when learning a new language. A learner's vocabulary acquisition is influenced by or influenced by a number of things. The study is crucial because, as time passes, there is an increasing need to address the new limitations that are arising in language learning.

Academic achievement

2.2 Academic achievement in the context of language education refers to how successfully language learners have picked up a new language (Cho et al., 2018). Numerous studies have been conducted to determine the effects of student-related variables, such as motivation, self-concept, and self-efficacy, on language learners' academic achievement because it is possible that their personal traits and attributes will contribute to improving their academic achievement (Ma, 2022). Another important component of students' academic success is teacher creativity, which is defined as "the utilization of imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting" (Jeffrey and Craft, 2004, p. 78). Nunan (2013) defined it as "the recombination of familiar elements into new and previously unheard forms" (p. 70) in another description. More precisely, the ability of language instructors to provide their students with opportunities to utilize the language they have learned in fresh and creative ways is a key component of their creativity (Wang et al., 2021). The statement "It is believed that innovative teaching raises language learners' motivation, interest, and academic success" is a general observation that reflects the consensus in the field of language education. It is not directly attributable to a single professor, as it is a widely accepted principle among many educators and researchers. However, many scholars have contributed to the understanding and promotion of innovative teaching methods in language learning, including Zoltan Dornyei, who is known for his work on motivation in language learning, and Howard Gardner, who proposed the theory of Multiple Intelligences, which has influenced educational practices. Additionally, numerous studies and articles published by various professors and researchers have explored and supported the idea that innovative teaching can lead to improved motivation, interest, and academic success among language learners.

EFL learning in Mongolia

2.3 Since 2000, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (MOECS) has been carrying out programs to improve education in English at the higher level. The MOECS worked very closely with international partners to diversify the available resources, including textbooks and curricula, in order to implement changes in the English curriculum. Officials concentrated on the curricula within the framework of English education reform, raising the standard of English and bringing it into line with international standards in order to satisfy Mongolia's increasing demand for English language training. In order to promote the development of a higher-level curriculum that is suitable for their needs, Mongolian EFL researchers have

set out to identify the difficulties experienced by Mongolian EFL university students and how they might support effective teaching strategies. Some studies examined a number of factors that might have contributed to the historically low performance of EFL students in learning English, such as a lack of curricula, the poor quality of English teachers, students' motivation to study, and the school atmosphere.

Exemplification in consideration from the past

In the past The British Council had models that have been implemented through various initiatives to increase motivation in Mongolian students for English language learning. Some of these programs and strategies include:

i. Teacher Training: They offer professional development programs for English teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge, which can lead to more engaging and motivating classroom environments.

ii. English Language Assessments: Administering internationally recognized English language exams such as IELTS, which can provide students with clear goals and motivation for improvement.

iii. Exchange Programs: Facilitating educational exchanges between Mongolian and English-speaking countries, allowing students to experience language immersion and cultural understanding.

iv. School Linking: Connecting schools in Mongolia with schools in the UK or other English-speaking countries to encourage collaboration and cultural exchange, which can increase students' interest in learning English.

We therefore, ought to consider the application of these examples from a Mongolia University's standpoint within this analysis.

3. Research Questions
3.1 The study intends to unravel the following questions:

1. What strategies do EFL learners employ in their vocabulary learning for academic achievement?
2. Are there any differences in vocabulary learning strategies based on grade levels?

4. Methodology
4.1 The present study employed the quantitative research methods to identify the types of vocabulary learning strategies and their use pattern of EFL students. The researcher described the particulars of the research method that was employed in this study. To answer the afore-mentioned research questions, systematic data collection procedures were used, and the gathered data were analyzed as precisely as possible. This study's participants were found at Otgontenger University in Ulaanbaatar. The data collection method consists of two questionnaires as the demographic information questionnaire and vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire.

5. Data analysis and results
5.1 All study participants asked to complete questionnaires which consisted of nine items with Likert scale. It aimed to obtain information about the participants' gender, major, grade and vocabulary learning strategies. Moreover, items for Vocabulary Learning Strategies. Six items were selected such as note taking, translation, dictionary use, synonyms, antonyms and critical thinking. These strategies are included in the textbooks which use in English education at higher level. Then, participants' academic achievement is one of the vital questions for English instructors.

5.2 Therefore, the placement test of academic English was taken from EFL students. Finally, the analysis of differences in the scores of Vocabulary Learning Strategies based on Grade Levels was done to answer the research questions.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Demographic Information

Characteristics		N=142
Gender	Male	30.4 %
	Female	69.6%
Major	Aviation	48%
	Laws	32%
	Foreign officer	10%
	Tourism industry	10%

5.3.1 Table 1 shows the descriptive statistic results of participants. 30.4 percent is male participants and 69.6 percent is male students. The majors of participants are aviation service, laws, foreign officer, and tourism industry. All participants have been studying academic English in their bachelor degree.

Table 2. Items for Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Item	1*	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Note taking	5	19	40	52	26	3.4	0.8
Translation	6	20	33	33	40	3.5	1.0
Dictionary use	8	32	50	22	30	3.4	1.0
Synonyms	2	52	28	32	28	3.3	1.0
Antonyms	6	48	54	20	14	3.3	1.0
Critical thinking	15	65	40	12	10	3.0	1.0
Total						3.3	1.0

5.3.2 The 5-point Likert scale is a rating system that allows respondents to express their opinions. 142 participants responded the survey and data was analyzed. As seen in Table 2 the translation strategy is significant among all 6 items. The second significant vocabulary learning strategy is dictionary use for participants. However, the critical thinking strategy was less significant among items.

Table 3. Participants' Academic Achievement

N	Academic achievement					Learning experience	
	1*	2	3	4	5	1	2
142	2	61	72	3	4	58	84

Academic achievement: 1=A1, 2=A2, 3=B1, 4=B2, 5=C1
Learning experience: 1=5-8 years, 2=more than 8 years

5.3.3 Table three shows participants' academic achievement and learning experience. English instructors investigate their students' English level and try to improve their achievement during learning period. The 5 levels such as A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1 are the criteria for all participants of this study. Also, the study examined learning experience such as between 5-8, and more than 8 years. Majority of the participants have been learning English more than 8 years.

Differences in Vocabulary Learning Strategies Based on Grade Levels

5.4 The purpose of the study is to investigate whether there are significant differences in the scores of vocabulary learning strategies among grades of EFL students. As seen in Table 4, the differences in the

scores of learning strategies summarized are based on the participants' first, second, and third grades. The collected data was analyzed using a one - way ANOVA.

5.5 The purpose of this research is to investigate the differences in the scores of vocabularies learning strategies among grades of EFL students. The statistics analysis of the differences in the scores summarized based on the participants' first, second, and third grades is shown in the Table 4.

Table 4. Differences in the scores of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Based on Grade Levels

Items	First (n=70)		Second (n=33)		Third (n=39)			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	Sig.
Note taking	3.3	0.7	3.8	0.9	3.5	0.96	1.2	0.2
Translation	3.4	1.1	3.9	1.1	3.3	0.8	0.8	0.4
Dictionary use	3.1	0.9	3.5	1.2	4.0	1.0	3.0	0.1
Synonyms	3.0	0.9	3.7	1.0	3.4	1.2	1.2	0.2
Antonyms	3.3	0.9	3.6	1.3	3.1	0.8	0.5	0.5
Critical thinking	3.0	0.9	3.0	1.2	2.8	1.2	0.1	0.8

5.6 Moreover, the study focused on the differences in the scores of vocabularies learning strategies based on grade level. As seen in Table 4, dictionary use strategy is the most significant for the third grade, but critical thinking strategy was negative. For the second-grade participants translation strategy is the most significant, but critical thinking strategy is less significant than other items. The first-grade students responded that translation strategy is the most significant.

Table 5. Post-Hoc Test Results for Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Note taking	I	II	-.49565	.31480	.267
	I	III	-.23411	.28838	.698
	III	II	-.26154	.34957	.736
Translation	I	II	-.46522	.39865	.479
	I	III	.05017	.36519	.990
	III	II	-.51538	.44268	.481
Dictionary use	I	II	-.36957	.38796	.610
	I	III	-.86957	.35540	.048
	III	II	-.50000	.43081	.483
Synonyms	I	II	-.61304	.40500	.295
	I	III	-.37458	.37100	.575
	III	II	-.23846	.44973	.857
Antonyms	I	II	-.29565	.38733	.727
	I	III	.15050	.35482	.906
	III	II	-.44615	.43011	.558
Critical thinking	I	II	.08696	.42258	.977
	I	III	.24080	.38711	.809
	III	II	-.15385	.46926	.943

5.7 The most significant result in the analysis is found in the comparison between groups I and III for the dependent variable "Dictionary use." The mean difference is -.86957 with a standard error of .35540, which yields a significance level of .048. This suggests that there is a statistically significant difference in the performance of group III compared to group I regarding the use of dictionaries.

5.8 The other comparisons have higher significance levels (.267, .698, .479, .610, .295, .575, .727, .809, and .943), indicating that the differences in performance between the groups for the other dependent variables (Note taking, Translation, Synonyms, Antonyms, and Critical thinking) are not statistically significant at the typical alpha level of (α) .05.

6. Conclusion

6.1 According to this study, students in the second grades employ note taking, and translation strategies effectively than they use those in the first and third grades. The dictionary uses strategies scores of the third-year students rise during the English learning period, and this determines how they use dictionaries more to accomplish their objectives.

6.2 The studies of vocabulary learning strategies and its benefits strategies have brought notable educational changes to EFL programs in many countries. EFL instructors immediately changed their instructional methodology to help their students attain their academic and general English outcomes within their classroom activities.

6.3 This study's effort may be relevant for English instructors' professional development in addition to having teaching implications that will assist them in teaching more successfully. Teachers can develop pedagogical designs that help use appropriate feedback on their students' foreign language achievement within the context of vocabulary strategies.

6.4 English language teachers at universities in the 21st century can significantly benefit from enhanced training that embraces the digital age to improve their pedagogical strategies and student engagement. One avenue for such training involves incorporating technology-enhanced language learning (Hasumi, Toshiyuki & Chiu, 2024) into their curricula. This includes the use of interactive whiteboards, educational software, and mobile devices that provide a more immersive and personalized learning experience for students. Teachers can attend more workshops and seminars hosted by professional organizations like the TESOL International Association, which offer insights into the latest digital tools and their effective integration into language teaching practices. Additionally, online professional development programs, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and webinars, allow educators to update their skills and knowledge without geographical constraints.

6.5 For instance, the University of Oxford offers a free MOOC titled "Integrating Technology for English Language Teaching," which explores various digital resources and their potential applications in the classroom. Furthermore, collaboration with technology specialists or instructional designers can help teachers create engaging digital content that aligns with their course objectives. The aforementioned has also been discussed in an article referring to English language teaching through a community of practice in the Sultanate of Oman in relation to the implications for policy implementation from the top of the educational sphere. (Al-Habsi, T., Al-Busaidi, S., & Al-Issa, A. 2021).

6.6 These collaborations can lead to the development of interactive lessons, digital assessments, and online platforms that support blended or fully online learning environments. By staying informed about emerging educational technologies and implementing them in their classrooms, English language teachers can better prepare their students for the digital literacy demands of the modern world, ensuring that they are equipped with the skills necessary for academic and professional success. Thus, for an educator not only to contribute to a student's capacity to learn, but also to the motivational engagement factors themselves.

In conclusion, this study has illustrated that we require a more 21st century approach to ELT methodologies that can facilitate both teachers and the tech-savvy student body throughout Mongolia's Higher Education Linguistic Curricula.

7. Delimitations

7.1 The parameters within this research were to merely use the data, which has already been defined, in the public scientific sphere, and still within the framework of international debate, however:

a)   Data which has not been included, are citations pertaining to in rhetorical nature that is still been litigated within both national and international jurisprudence guidelines. Thus, this aforementioned literature will not be included in any statistical nature of this draft. Empirical Data only recognised and therefore cited.

b)   The procedures and methods that have not been undertaken are elements such as and direct journalistic inquiry via face-to-face interviews (Direct Engagement). This is attributed to both the political and legal sensitivities of the issues portrayed in this study inclusive of the author's geographical location.

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