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**The Effect of Personalized Vocabulary Plans
on Learner Autonomy in L2 Vocabulary Learning**

by

Theresa M. Koller

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Master of Arts

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Abstract

Autonomy involves learners taking responsibility and control of their language learning. A great deal of language learning happens outside of the walls of the classroom. So for language learners to succeed and continue beyond their ESL courses, they must at some point take charge of their learning process. In explicit vocabulary learning, learner autonomy can be promoted by giving the learner choices, providing input on planning and recording methods, teaching useful review strategies and encouraging reflective practice.

Personalization has been proposed as a potentially significant propellant for learner autonomy in language learning for decades. It has recently come to the forefront of the conversation in general education as well. This research builds on studies showing a connection between the use of vocabulary notebooks and autonomy while looking more closely at the relationship between personalization and autonomy in L2 vocabulary learning.

The primary question for this research was: Will ESL learners benefit from developing their own personalized vocabulary learning plan (PVP) that is based on their starting vocabulary level, perceived needs and personal vocabulary goals? The conclusion was that most participants did benefit in some key areas, though not all. The PVP was a useful tool in developing learner autonomy when used for planning, student-teacher collaboration and reflective practices. Additionally, this study provides evidence that, for some aspects of vocabulary learning, there is a relationship between a learner's perception of ability and the degree of responsibility he or she assumes. This study confirms that one way to encourage learners to become more autonomous is to increase their confidence in their own abilities.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Developing learner autonomy is a goal of many second language (L2) instructors, programs, and institutions. Autonomy involves learners taking responsibility and control of their language learning (Cotterall, 2008; Holec, 1979; Lennon, 2012; Nation, 2001; Ushioda, 2008). The challenge for teachers is to give the right kind and amount of support that balances the need for instruction with the need for self-determination (Holec, 1979; Nation, 2001). In explicit vocabulary learning, learner autonomy can be promoted by giving the learner choices, providing input on planning and recording methods, teaching useful review strategies and encouraging reflective practice (Fowle, 2002; Lennon, 2012; Nation, 2001; Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995).

Background and Need for this Study

In 2005, Hunt and Beglar noted that, in spite of studies showing a positive influence from personalization and autonomy in first language (L1) vocabulary acquisition, there is a lack of related research in L2. This, together with my own experiences abroad in which I and other well-intentioned adult language learners floundered in putting together our own foreign language plans, has sparked my interest in this topic. Personalization has been proposed as a potentially significant propellant for learner autonomy for decades (Barker, 2007; Moir & Nation, 2008; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994), yet until recently there was relatively little written about it and I have not found any empirical studies focused on the relationship between personalization and autonomy in L2 vocabulary.

Purpose of the Study

Promoting learner autonomy is a desirable goal in second language teaching, but autonomy is not an easily measured entity. Likewise, second language acquisition can be an enormous process that is also challenging to measure. This study considers one vital component of that process, learning new vocabulary. A few studies have examined the connection between the use of vocabulary notebooks and autonomy with mixed outcomes (Fowle, 2002; McCrostie, 2007; Walters & Bozkurt, 2009). This research builds on those studies while looking more closely at the relationship between personalization and autonomy in L2 vocabulary learning.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this research is: Will ESL learners benefit from developing their own personalized vocabulary learning plan (PVP) that is based on their starting vocabulary level, perceived needs and personal vocabulary goals?

Specifically, if learners develop a PVP with input from their instructor or tutor:

1. Will the learner become more proficient in the ability to select, study, and learn vocabulary?
2. Will the PVP promote learning words more deeply?
3. Will the learner's vocabulary size increase at the targeted frequency levels?
4. Will the learner become more autonomous in vocabulary learning?
5. Are learner perceptions of personal ability and autonomy related?

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions and Descriptions of Autonomy

Researchers have described learner autonomy in various terms and most definitions include some aspect of the learner's capacity or ability to assume responsibility for their learning. Additionally, learner autonomy is often equated with learners having choice, making decisions, and taking control of their learning (Cotterall, 2008; Holec, 1979; Lennon, 2012; Nation, 2001). Lennon states that very good language learners have always taken charge of their own learning. While learner autonomy is not dependent on the syllabus or teacher it can certainly be enhanced and encouraged by both. Nearly 40 years ago, Holec (1979) wrote about the "new educational concept" (p.2) of self-directed learning in adult language education in Europe. Holec, whose definitions and distinctions continue to be referenced and built upon, sees autonomy not as an inborn trait but as an ability that is acquired, usually "by formal learning, ie in a systematic, deliberate way" (p. 3). He elaborates that autonomy is not a behavior but a "potential capacity" (p.4). While this capacity can certainly be reached by the learner apart from outside intervention, it can also be encouraged by the teacher and overall educational environment. Holec proposes that learner autonomy involves learning how to learn, a process that can and should be cultivated through the teacher. He stresses that teachers must find the right balance of support and gradual withdrawal to promote learner autonomy.

Likewise, Nation (2001) describes autonomous learners as taking control and responsibility for their own learning and notes that a learner can still be autonomous even in a class that is strongly teacher-led. Nevertheless, he writes that the teacher must help foster the

“attitude, awareness and capability” (p. 404) that learners need to take personal charge of their learning - even as they release control to the learner. Nation’s explanation of *attitude* refers to the learner’s desire to take responsibility for learning while *awareness* is the learner’s attention to how they are learning. Reflection on the learning process is a necessary part of developing learner autonomy. Nation points out the power of reflection and the close connection between metacognitive awareness and autonomy. Reflection and discussions about language learning experiences raise learner awareness which in-turn increases motivation for the learner to take control of his or her learning (Ushioda, 2008).

Finally, Nation goes into great detail about the *capability*, that is the knowledge and skills, learners need to be autonomous. Nation offers 8 principles of autonomous learning which he broadly categorizes as:

- The goals of vocabulary learning
- What should be learned and in what order
- Learning procedures
- Checking learning

(pp. 395-404)

Learner and Teacher Roles in Autonomous Learning

Putting the learner in charge of learning decisions necessitates a conceptual change from traditional roles for both learners and teachers. Firstly, the learner must be willing to accept responsibility for his or her learning; the learner is no longer a passive recipient of knowledge but an active, self-directed agent (Holec, 1979; Lennon, 2012). Holec asserts that the learner cannot be forced to assume responsibility; rather the potential for autonomy must be developed over time within the process of learning language. This is where the teacher and the learning structure come in.

In writings on learner autonomy the teacher's role has been described variously as: facilitator, supporter, counselor, aid, resource provider, scaffolding provider, role model, guide, motivator and cheerleader (Lennon, 2012). Although writers such as Lennon, Nation (2001), and Oxford and Scarcella (1994) see autonomous teacher roles as vastly different from traditional roles, these descriptions could in fact be used for traditional teachers. The difference lies in the approach. In the autonomous classroom, the teacher's responsibility is to use "the correct amount of support, fine-tuned to the particular learner or group of learners, and progressively reduce support as learners gradually become more autonomous as a result of making decisions about their learning" (Lennon, 2012, pp. 29-30). This is by no means an easy task, Nation (2001) and Lennon both use the word *challenge* to describe this balancing act of support and withdrawal. Autonomous learning must not be mistaken for self-instruction. It does not mean abandoning or leaving students on their own; students need to work together with their teachers as well as with other students in developing autonomy in the classroom (Niehaus, 2012). In fact, Zmuda, (2015) brings in one more title-role for the teacher which espouses this concept: *partner*.

Throughout the literature on autonomy and self-determination are the concepts of learner *choices* and *decision-making* (Cotterall, 2008; Holec, 1979; Lennon, 2012; Nation, 2001). “A defining characteristic of autonomous learners is their ability to make decisions about their learning which take account of the context in which they are learning” (Cotterall, 2008, p. 118). However, Woolfolk (2011) warns against giving students “unbounded choices” (p.494), that is open-ended, undefined choices. Language learners need guidance and understanding to make informed decisions about their learning (Ushioda, 2008).

Personalization

Personalization has become the new buzzword in childhood education. It is a movement that is gaining momentum and the attention of educators, curriculum writers, nonprofits, and technology developers (Cavanaugh, 2014). Personalization includes differentiation, which is adapting instruction to students’ ability levels, but then it goes beyond. Personalization involves the learner in the planning and implementation of the learning process. One can find reference to personalization of vocabulary instruction in literature on L2 learning (Hunt & Beglar, 2005; Oxford & Scarcella 1994), however, from the start of this study a clear definition of the term was found to be elusive. As it turns out, this researcher was not alone in the quest for a definition. Cavanaugh observes, “‘personalized learning’ seems to be everywhere, though there is not yet a shared understanding of what it means” (2014, p. 4).

Language learners are individuals. They come pre-packaged with diverse backgrounds, abilities, experiences, interests, needs and goals. Cotterall (2008) calls for teachers to acknowledge this heterogeneity, debunking the notion of a singular profile of *the* good language learner. She further asks teachers to recognize the influence of situation on learning. There is no

one-size-fits-all best strategy or approach; as the context changes so the effectiveness of a given strategy will change. To cultivate learner autonomy, teachers and researchers must focus more on “individual learners, and their unique motivations, experiences, and stories” (Cotterall, 2008, p. 119).

Researchers have referred to individualization in terms of considering the learner’s style, needs, goals, and nature (Holec 1979: 7; Moir & Nation, 2008: 160; Oxford & Scarcella 1994: 236). Moir and Nation (2008) write about learners personalizing tasks and they equate low personalization with “limited interaction with the task, and a lack of ownership” (p. 163). Increased emphasis on learner-centeredness in language learning has come with a push to customize instruction for specific classes or groups of learners. While this is not individual, we may gain some insight by looking at these efforts and considering their application at the individual level. Furthermore, as language is a social construct, language learning is rarely an individual endeavor. Educational, interpersonal, and individual goals often intertwine (Ushioda, 2008). Thus, even a personalized or individualized learning plan must consider the broader context of the learning environment.

If teachers are to aid learners in personalizing their learning they must first know their needs and preferences. In a survey of 997 tertiary level learners and their 50 teachers there was a great disparity between the teachers’ intuition about student preferences and the types of tasks their learners actually preferred (Spratt, 1999). Therefore, Spratt advises greater student involvement in curriculum planning and syllabus design. She also recommends teachers “build learner choices” into their lessons (p 151). One answer to the teacher-student disconnect is to use teacher-designed, class-specific questionnaires to guide course planning (Davies, 2006). Davis

recommends short, simple, specific questionnaires that take learners' experiences and opinions into account, giving them "a voice and a considerable measure of influence in shaping current and future courses" (p.5). Given the success of questionnaires for personalizing class content, it may be that more directed surveys can be created to guide or inform personalized planning on an individual level.

Obviously, for these class-specific questionnaires to have real value, the teacher must then act on the students' suggestions. Promoting learner autonomy through personalization may be easier said than done. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) asked 61 teachers about both desirability and feasibility of student involvement in decision making for six components of their courses: classroom management, teaching methods, assessment, topics, activities, materials and objectives. For every element teachers were more positive about their desire for student choice than about feasibility. In other words, teachers indicated that they want to promote learner autonomy but they don't know if it is really possible. Without tools and real-life examples of successful student choice scenarios it is unlikely teachers will introduce personalized learning into their classrooms. Furthermore, even when teachers are committed to provide a personalized learning experience, they may still be limited by constraints from their district or other entities.

While autonomy, individualization and personalization may be closely related concepts, there is a clear distinction. An individualized learning plan may be developed that is quite specific to a specific learner, but if the learning decisions are made by the teacher it does not foster autonomy. Holec (1979) writes:

the extent to which the learner is taken into consideration forms no criterion for judging the extent to which learning is self-directed: individualization effected by taking into

account the learner's needs, his favourite methods of learning, his level, and so on, leave the learner in the traditional position of dependency and do not allow him to control his learning for himself" (p. 8).

Thus a personalized learning plan is not necessarily a direct path to autonomy unless the learner is given a legitimate say in the planning and the outworking of the plan. Zmuda, Curtis and Ullman (2015) note in their book that personalized learning may take place along a spectrum, from fully student-directed to a teacher-driven experience. They support, "a balanced approach through which the teacher and student collaborate in the design of the learning experience" (p 14).

What Learners Need to Take Charge of Their Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning begins with choosing which words to focus on. Therefore, a personalized approach to vocabulary acquisition should start with training learners how to self-select vocabulary that is useful and appropriate for their specific needs and goals. Personalization requires an assessment of the learner's current vocabulary level and needs, while a push for autonomy equips the learners to use those measurements to make decisions about their learning goals and how they will reach them.

1. Knowledge of Word Frequencies. A great deal has been written over the past six decades about the importance of laying a solid vocabulary foundation with high-frequency words. Coxhead (2006) and Nation (2001) recommend that English language learners focus on the highest frequency words first. One of the most widely known and accepted frequency lists is the General Service List (GSL) created by Michael West in 1953. This list has about 2,000 word families that cover approximately 90% of conversational English and 78.1% of academic texts.

When the Academic Word List (AWL) is added to the GSL, coverage of academic texts increases to 86.6% (Nation, 2001). This wide coverage from a few thousand word families explains why vocabulary researchers put such an emphasis on learning these foundational words early-on. As Coxhead points out, learning words from the 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 word levels does not offer students nearly as much benefit for their effort as the first 2,000 level or even AWL words. A new GSL was published in 2013 based on a 273 million-word corpus – more than 100 times that of West’s original GSL. Knowledge of the words on the new GSL is said to give readers of general English texts more than 90% coverage (Browne, 2013).

For the most part, beginning ESL students are largely unaware of frequency lists and how to choose vocabulary. McCrostie (2007) looked at the vocabulary notebooks of 124 university EFL students to find out what kinds of words learners selected as well as the sources of and reasons for students’ choices. McCrostie’s overall finding was that learners do not choose words wisely. He discovered that 82% of the words that the students wrote came directly from class textbooks and handouts with another 6.5% from other written texts. While McCrostie expresses concern about an overreliance on texts for vocabulary, one of the results of this source is that many of the words learners selected are those on the AWL and 3,000 and higher frequency word levels. Unfortunately, most of the students’ vocabulary test scores revealed that they did not have proficiency at the 2,000 word level yet. McCrostie’s conclusion is that beginning and low-intermediate students should not be left to choose their own words without training in selection strategies.

Folse (2004) states that part of knowing a word may include knowledge about that word’s frequency. This is because frequency is often (though not always) tied to level of difficulty for

learning. Frequency also gives the learner information about a word's usage. According to Folse, learners are usually better off employing more widely-used words than their lesser-used synonyms, particularly if they wish to sound more native-like in their speech. Nation (2001) suggests that learners can be trained to notice word frequency by simply paying attention to reoccurrences of words in their readings. He also recommends that teachers provide the 2000 high-frequency words and the AWL as checklists that learners can use "as a frequency guide" (p. 396).

2. Self-awareness: Personal Vocabulary Level and Objectives. Once learners have a basic understanding of the usefulness of frequently used words they can consider their current level of vocabulary knowledge compared to their needs and goals. A learner's vocabulary level can be tested using Nation's (2001) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT). The VLT is a simple test of meaning intended only to measure a learner's knowledge of words at the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 frequency levels as well as Academic word knowledge. There are productive and receptive versions of the VLT and it has been found to be "reliable, valid and very practical" (p. 22).

Ultimately, personal needs and goals must be determined by the learner. Because language learning is individual, vocabulary objectives should fit the learner. English language learners cannot thrive on high frequency words alone. There are many reasons for ELLs to seek out low frequency words. For example, university ESL students need academic vocabulary for their general studies but they may also need technical vocabulary for their major and knowledge of the local vernacular together with popular slang to fit into their new social setting. Personal interest is a high motivator and makes many low frequency words easier to learn and retain

(Barker, 2007). Different words require varying degrees of energy and attention to acquire (Barker, 2007; Nation, 2001) Learners must consider their overall time-budget for vocabulary and decide how much they want to spend on certain types of vocabulary as well as on individual words

3. Vocabulary Choices. Hunt and Beglar (2005) have hypothesized that self-selection of vocabulary would enhance L2 vocabulary instruction in the same manner as it does in the L1 classroom. Self-selection of vocabulary requires that learners think about their current knowledge and assess their own perceived needs (Fowle, 2002). This is part of the *awareness* and *capability* which Nation (2001) states is necessary for learners to take control of their own vocabulary learning. “Relating learning to personal needs and goals is at the centre of taking responsibility for learning” (Nation, 2001, p. 227). In a later interview, Nation reiterates that an overdependence on teacher input does not produce meaningful learning (Miura, 2005). In a study of 850 Chinese EFL students, Gu and Johnson (1996) found a strong correlation between learner self-initiation and general English proficiency. The self-initiation in their study included choosing vocabulary that was neither directed by the teacher nor on their exams.

If learners are to self-select vocabulary that takes their own interests and needs into account they need more than just knowledge of frequency lists. Beyond checking for frequency, learners need additional criteria to decide for themselves the usefulness of a given word or set of words for them personally. Moir found that most learners in her study did not have a well-reasoned approach for choosing words; many times they chose words for the simple reason that the word was unknown (Moir & Nation, 2008). Barker (2007) makes the point that learners are not well-served by an approach that depends too heavily on teachers and textbooks as a source

for vocabulary because this leaves them unprepared for the unstructured vocabulary they will encounter outside of the classroom.

After examining students' vocabulary notebooks Barker determined that learners are generally uncertain about vocabulary selection and what information they should record about the words they have selected. After many years of corpus-based lexical research, we now have a great deal of information about the kinds of vocabulary learners may need. Barker proposes that there is a logical "next step" which is to teach our students how to select their own words. To do this, Barker developed a "cost/benefit analysis" (p. 524) approach to vocabulary selection. The *cost* is the time and energy required to learn a word, while the *benefit* is the usefulness of that word for the learner. Barker has designed a series of questions for learners to ask themselves about a word when they are deciding whether or not to put effort into learning it. Barker's questions are hierarchical, with more important features coming first. For example, the number of encounters with a word comes before ability to pronounce it, thus giving it more weight. Barker acknowledges that sometimes lower level questions may be more important with certain words, so the order is not absolute. The checklist offers one way to train learners in personal vocabulary selection strategies. For example, teaching learners to consider how many encounters they've had with a word will encourage them to pay attention to frequency within their own context.

The most important point to Barker's system is that it trains learners to apply reasoning to their vocabulary choices, regardless of whether they make the *right* choice every time. He notes that teachers can reinforce the importance of analysis by occasionally asking students, "Why did

you choose this word?” There is no one-and-only right answer to the question, just that the learner shows some measure of reason is going into their decision making process.

4. A Variety of Strategies. In addition to word-selection, learners must also become skilled in strategy-selection if they are to take charge of their learning. This implies having a number of strategies to choose from. There is no single “Best Vocabulary Strategy”. In fact, there are numerous researchers who emphasize the need for learners to have a wide variety of strategies and the knowledge of how and when to apply them to varying contexts (Barcroft, 2009; Fan, 2003; Hunt & Beglar, 2005; Griffiths, 2008; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001, Moir & Nation, 2008). There is a close connection between strategy use, learner ability to work independently, and learner autonomy (Niehaus, 2012).

A word of restraint is in order however, lest we become overzealous in throwing strategies at learners. Moir and Nation (2008) stress the importance of modeling strategies for students and giving them plenty of opportunity to practice. Fluency in a few good strategies that learners actually use is far better than knowledge of a multitude of strategies that go unused.

The literature is teeming with vocabulary strategies and classifications of those strategies. For example, Schmitt compiled a taxonomy of fifty-eight vocabulary learning strategies under five categories (Niehaus, 2012), while Gu and Johnson (1996) listed ninety-one strategies under eight categories. Clearly, a comprehensive look at vocabulary learning strategies is beyond the scope of this study. There are four learning strategies relevant to this study. The first is a vocabulary planning and recording strategy which then makes way for the following strategies of spaced repetition, retrieval, and generation.

4.1 Use of Vocabulary Notebooks and Spaced Repetition for Planning and Review.

Vocabulary notebooks have been promoted as useful tools for both language learning and for fostering learner independence (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Fowle, 2002). Most current studies in vocabulary notebooks refer back to Schmitt and Schmitt's 1995 article on vocabulary notebooks. A key feature of their notebooks or cards is mobility. Vocabulary should be recorded in a loose leaf binder or on cards to allow words to be moved, grouped, or even used for classroom activities. Schmitt and Schmitt state simply, "organized material is easier to learn" (p.134). Memory research shows that spaced repetition is more effective than massed repetition (Nation, 2001: 219). Mobility of the entries lets learners move familiar words further back in their notebook as they spend less time on these older items. Rearranging and grouping words, for example in hierarchies or by parts of speech, allows students to organize and connect their words in different manners.

Schmitt and Schmitt's (1995) oft-cited piece suggests that learners be trained over several weeks how to put items such as collocations, key words, illustrations, and part of speech into their notebooks. They propose an incremental approach. Learners start by recording word pairs, (ie: the L2 word together with an L2 synonym or an L1 translation). Later, students return to previously recorded words to add new information at different times over a three week training period. This approach ensures students are returning to recently added words and systematically expanding their understanding of those words. After students have been trained in what they can include in their notebooks they can then decide which elements are most helpful for them. The point is to give learners various tools to promote autonomous learning.

Folse (2004) believes that the notebook is not primarily about what goes in it but instead how often the learner reviews what they have recorded. He advocates keeping vocabulary notebooks spacious and orderly to encourage learners to continually refer back to what they've recorded. Nation (2001) makes similar suggestions for recording words, favoring simplicity over too many details. "Other kinds of information –collocates, etymology, constraints, grammatical pattern – could be put on the word card but it is best to see word cards as only one step in the cumulative process of learning a word and not expect too much from this strategy alone" (p. 305). Hirschel and Fritz (2013) compared learner use of a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) program that included spaced repetition to use of vocabulary notebooks and to no method of recording and recall. Students using both the CALL program and the vocabulary notebooks had statistically significant gains over those in the control group. Those in the CALL group slightly outperformed the vocabulary notebook group and control groups in long term retention scores.

Ultimately, which approach a teacher or program chooses for the formatting and use of vocabulary notebooks will depend on the purpose. Building on Schmitt and Schmitt's (1995) approach, a language center in Thailand trained 300 secondary students in the use of vocabulary notebooks as a means to cultivate autonomous learning modes (Fowle, 2002). Because of this training goal, students were taught a number of different methods for recording their vocabulary, similar to Schmitt and Schmitt's recommendations. Learners were encouraged to use those techniques that suit their learning style and to self-select vocabulary that was useful and of interest to them, though little is mentioned about the criteria students were given to make such decisions. While Fowle offers no numerical data for improvement in learner autonomy, the

teachers at the center believe students have become less teacher-dependent and “more aware of their own responsibility/ability in assessing their own learning needs and goals, and, in some contexts they are able to consider more effectively how these may be best achieved” (p. 385). In this case, giving students an array of choices in vocabulary selection and recording seems to have cultivated more independent learning.

A 4-week empirical study however, came to a different conclusion about the outcomes of vocabulary notebook use (Walters & Bozkurt, 2009). This study considered how using vocabulary notebooks affected vocabulary acquisition as well as learner autonomy. The researchers recorded substantially greater gains in acquisition and use of target words in the treatment group than in the control group. On the other hand, they did not find any measurable impact on learner autonomy as a result of using vocabulary notebooks. This finding, however, needs to be weighed against the short length of time given to the research. It seems unrealistic to expect a surge of learner autonomy in a 4-week time span.

4.2 Retrieval to Establish Word Knowledge. Retrieval is one of the skills Nation (2001) lists for vocabulary learners to increase their autonomy. Retrieval involves recalling some aspect of a word such as form, meaning, or use. In receptive retrieval the written or spoken form of the word may be presented and the learner must recall its meaning or use. Productive retrieval entails recalling the form when presented with meaning or use. Nation suggests that learners studying from vocabulary lists or notebooks can cover part of the information while trying to recall that aspect of the vocabulary.

4.3 Generation to Establish Word Knowledge. Generation is a reencounter of a previously met word in a new context that requires the learner to think about the word in a new way (Nation, 2001). It may be receptive, as when hearing or reading a word in a new light, or it can be productive when the learner uses the word in different context than it was learned. Generation can include making associations with collocations and sentences, mnemonic strategies, word analysis and semantic mapping. Generation is about making new connections that deepen knowledge of a word.

This is a very small sampling of strategies that may enhance learner autonomy. Any useful strategy, appropriately applied can aid the learner's ability to take charge of her own learning. In fact, there is a growing body of literature that equates or even replaces the term 'strategy' with 'self-regulation' (Griffiths, 2008). Unfortunately, knowing *about* effective strategies does not always translate into *using* effective strategies.

Perceived Usefulness and Actual Use of Strategies by Learners

When it comes to vocabulary strategies, it seems that learners are inclined to choose the path of least resistance. A survey of 10th grade German EFL students found that the learners did not tend to choose strategies according whether they believed them to be useful or not (Niehaus, 2012). The students were presented with 25 vocabulary learning strategies and asked which they perceived as least and most useful. Three of the five strategies believed to be least useful were also least used, while three of the five strategies reported as most useful were not used. In other words, students' perceptions of usefulness only partially guide their actual usage. For both discovery (acquiring meaning) and consolidation (remembering) vocabulary, participants consistently chose strategies which require little thought, such as rote repetition, over those that

involve deeper mental processing, like studying the spelling or sound of a word. Citing Schmitt, Niehaus points out that although memory strategies are effective for long-term recall, they are time-consuming and require more mental processing. She also notes that the results from her survey are similar to those of other studies (such as O'Malley and Chamot, 1990 and Reiss, 1985), finding that learners tend to choose strategies that do not require the "elaborative or active mental processing" (p. 224) that memory strategies entail.

Similarly, in a study of adult learners it was found that even though many of the learners knew that their strategies were ineffective they were reluctant to adopt more efficient ways to learn (Moir & Nation, 2008). Like the Niehaus (2012) study above, most of the learners relied on rote learning. While all of Moir's 10 participants were hard-working, motivated, and spent a great deal of time on vocabulary learning each week, only one, Abdi, was considered effective in his use of strategies. Unlike his fellow learners, Abdi learned various aspects and meanings of his selected words and tried to use them appropriately. He used a wider range of strategies than the other learners. He learned more and could use more of what he learned. Moir and Nation consider that the poor learners' limited range of vocabulary learning strategies and the constraints of the course and teacher expectations hindered them. Although all of the learners were introduced to several strategies in their course, they did not become comfortable with them and thus did not incorporate them into their personal study habits. Finally, the weekly test may have sabotaged the learners' adoption of long-term retention strategies (Nation, 2001, p375). While exams may motivate study, they can also have the effect of learning for the test rather than learning the language (Lennon, 2012, p.47).

Barcroft (2009) also found that the strategies participants reported as most frequently used (MFU) in a word-picture learning activity were not the ones deemed to be most effective. Following a learning task, 93 first-year learners of Spanish took receptive and productive post-tests and then answered open-ended questions about their strategy use. A total of 12 categories of strategies were used by students. Unsurprisingly, the strategies that were most effective in terms of aiding recall were not the ones most frequently used. Using mnemonic techniques and visualization were only named by five and two participants respectively as their most frequently used strategy in spite of evidence that these produced the highest target word recalls. Of course, these results must be considered in light of the method of presentation: picture-word pairs and the short-term format of the learning and recall. It may be that a delayed post-test would encourage different strategies for long term vocabulary retention. Perhaps the most important, and least surprising, finding in Barcroft's study is the significant positive correlation between the number of strategies used by a participant and their recall scores.

Learner Ability and Assignment of Responsibility

Are all learners ready and able to take on autonomous learning? There have been a couple of studies looking at the connection between learner capability, learner confidence and autonomy. The studies reviewed below refer back to Holec's description of autonomy as a learner taking responsibility for decisions about their learning.

Chan (2001) was surprised to discover that the learners in her exploratory study in a Hong Kong University had positive attitudes about autonomous learning in spite of their very traditional educational backgrounds. She concludes that learners have "a natural inclination for self-direction" (p. 514). Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) then administered a questionnaire to

508 students enrolled in mandatory English classes at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to determine if the students were ready for autonomous learning roles. Their survey measured autonomy according to whether respondents assigned responsibility to themselves or to their teachers for various aspects of their learning. The researchers compared responses about student's perceptions of their own abilities to their assignment of responsibility in nine areas of decision making about their own language learning. They found relationships at the $<.05$ level for four of nine question pairs. Through the survey results and follow-up interviews the researchers concluded that the students did not have a clear sense of their own abilities or responsibilities. In contrast, the students had clear expectations about teacher responsibilities for making decisions. Some students indicated that lack of previous experience or present opportunity to make decisions about their learning affected their responses.

Cotterall (1999) asked 131 ESL university students in New Zealand about six key areas of language learning, including teacher and student roles, their self-efficacy, and their strategies related behaviors. About 58% felt that an instructor's ability to show students *how to learn* was more important than expertise in language teaching. In the area of self-efficacy, a little more than half rated themselves as being average language learners and nearly one-third thought they were above average. On the questionnaire, respondents indicated that they were willing to implement strategies they were unfamiliar with or not confident in using. Cotterall found this to be a "promising" outcome; however, the later studies of Neihaus (2012) and Barcroft (2009) mentioned above show that what learners believe to be effective and what they actually do in practice may be quite different. Similarly, in a study of pronunciation learning strategies employed by learners, Brown (2013) found there was "a clear gap between what learners say

they do and what they actually do in regard to learning pronunciation” (p. 54). Brown attributes this gap to a lack of learner competence in pronunciation learning strategies.

Nevertheless, as Cotterall points out, the findings in her study do show a willingness on the part of the respondents to learn new strategies. In addressing learners with low perceptions of their ability, Cotterall says, “providing teachers with a means of identifying and supporting individual learners who need to develop their sense of self-efficacy before they engage in learning tasks may lead to a crucial intervention in the language learning experience of such learners” (p. 10). This brings the on-going and ever-expanding conversation about autonomy and self-perception of ability full-circle.

This brief literature review shows the interconnectedness of autonomy, learning strategies and personalization of learning goals. L2 vocabulary learners need strategies that will give them more control of their own learning. However, unless these learners see the value of those strategies, have sufficient practice and competence in using them, and have taken ownership of their vocabulary goals, they are unlikely to choose mentally taxing processes over those that are familiar and easier.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were international students enrolled in a Midwest U.S. college. 4 females and 9 males with varying English-learning backgrounds participated. They were from South America, Africa, East Asia and the Indian Subcontinent. All 13 participants were members of the researcher's 200-level college ESL class which focused on developing listening and speaking skills for the American university setting. They had an intermediate level of academic English vocabulary, based on their starting scores of the Vocabulary Levels Test.

Materials

The materials used for the study were: The Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), a questionnaire (Appendix A) that was issued at the beginning and end of the study, a vocabulary planning worksheet (Appendix B) and plan template (Appendix C) for learners, and word cards created by the study participants. Additionally, every participant received a packet of learning materials that included their VLT score, a list of vocabulary words at their frequency level, a sample vocabulary card (Appendix E) as a guide for recording new vocabulary, and an adaptation of Barker's cost/analysis (Appendix F) to use as a checklist. The VLT was issued program-wide at the beginning of the course.

The questionnaire had a total of 32 questions. There were 16 questions in each of two sections: responsibility and ability. For every question about learner/teacher responsibility there was a corresponding question about the participant's perception of their own ability in that area of vocabulary learning. The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold. First, it was to get a

snapshot of participants' level of autonomy as measured by who they believe is responsible for their vocabulary learning. Second, was to find out whether participants feel capable in basic vocabulary planning and learning strategies. The general format and question types in section one are based on the questionnaire developed by Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002), however the survey is much shorter and the questions are specific to vocabulary. Pearson correlations were used to find out if there was a relationship between respondents' perception of ability and their assignment of responsibility.

The pre-planning worksheet has four sections to help participants think about their goals. Section 1 asks participants to prioritize the types of words they will focus on and their word sources. Section 2 has them prioritize aspects of word knowledge from 1-9. Section 3 has open-ended questions about participants' current and desired study strategies and section 4 asks about their study habits and learning styles.

Procedures

This was a classroom-based research study. Participants were members of the researcher's 200-level college ESL class. All members of the class received the same materials and instruction whether or not they chose to be participants in the study. All students in College ESL took a Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) at the beginning of the course, as a measure of their familiarity with vocabulary from the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2006). This tests the breadth of their vocabulary and is part of the curriculum for the class. Participants were given their scores from the VLT and an explanation of what their scores indicated. At the beginning and end of the study, students took the survey of responsibilities and abilities in class. They were given 20 minutes to complete it, though most finished in 10-15 minutes.

Students filled out the pre-planning worksheet in class to help them think about their own vocabulary goals and priorities. The next class period, they were asked to use the worksheet as a guide to write out their Personal Vocabulary Plans for learning. As part of their PVPs, participants chose 4 priority areas to focus on. Participants then met with the instructor for personal conferences to talk about their PVPs and how they would reach their goals.

Over the next three weeks, (in four 10-minute sessions), the students were given their vocabulary learning packets which included vocabulary cards with examples of entries. Following Schmitt and Schmitt (1995), all students received training on how to add information to the vocabulary entries over the three-week period. After that time, they were free to choose whatever they thought best to include for their card entries. Students were told at the beginning that, although the instructor would collect and view their cards from time-to-time, they would not be graded on their vocabulary cards. Throughout the semester, participants studied self-selected vocabulary and reflected on their vocabulary learning strategies through online discussion posts and brief in-class discussions. Vocabulary was worth ten percent of a student's overall grade and vocabulary-specific instruction constituted approximately ten percent of class time over the course of the semester.

All students in the class/study were quizzed at regular intervals on their vocabulary according to the course plan, whether participating in the study or not. Students were allowed to choose the self-selected vocabulary that they want to be tested on. Before each quiz, students wrote and numbered 20 of their self-selected words. The teacher then administered the quiz for 5 of the self-selected words. (Appendix D). The same format was used each time that there was a

vocabulary quiz, so the students became familiar with it. The scores from these quizzes informed the students and the teacher about ongoing progress.

At weeks 3, 6 and 9 students were asked to bring 20 of their vocabulary cards for a class activity. They used a grid to check the categories of information they had included on their cards. There were 7 possible categories to check: translation, definition, collocation, sentence, word family, concept map and pronunciation. The researcher then collected the cards and the students' self-reports. The reports were checked for accuracy and the cards were returned the following class session. A total of 60 vocabulary words per participant (780 words) were analyzed for entries, though not all 13 students turned in a card for each word each time.

Half-way through the 9-week study, the participants met individually with the researcher to discuss what was working with their plan and what they wanted to change. Participants were able to make adjustments to their plans at this time. At the end of the study, participants were given the VLT again. Individual VLT scores were recorded and given to the students but they had no direct affect on students' course grades.

Finally, the students took the same Responsibility-Ability questionnaire again with 3 additional questions about their Vocabulary Plans and goals:

What effect did writing a Personal Vocabulary Plan have on you?

What effect did writing a Personal Vocabulary Plan have on how you studied?

Do you feel you accomplished your goals this semester?

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

There were four sets of data to be analyzed for this study. The first set of data came from the questionnaire that was issued at the beginning and end of the study. Second, the sampling of entries which students made on their vocabulary cards were coded and analyzed. Third, the scores from the VLTs that were taken at the beginning and end of the semester were recorded to get two snapshots of participants' breadth of vocabulary. Finally, participants' in-class vocabulary quiz scores from the beginning of the study were compared to those from the end of the study to measure participants' depth of vocabulary learning.

Pre-study and Post-study Questionnaires

The data from sections 1 and 2 of the questionnaires were assigned numerical (Likert scale) values from 1-6. These were coded and cross tabulations were run between corresponding items using SPSS to determine relationships between participants' perceptions of their capabilities in vocabulary learning (section 2) and their assignment of responsibility for learning (section 1). The question pairs were also grouped into 5 categories of: content, word knowledge, personal needs and goals, strategies, and assessment. Correlations of responsibility and ability questions within each category were also analyzed. The relationship is considered significant when the p value is $<.05$.

In the pre-study survey results, there was only one question-pair which showed a positive correlation between responsibility and ability. The questions were:

#9 Who is responsible to decide how many words you should learn this semester?

#26 I feel confident in my ability to know how much vocabulary I need to learn this semester.

There was positive correlation of .742 (significance level =.004) with this pair of questions which were in the category of *Content*. When category is considered there was one more significant correlation in this same category, *Content*:

#14 Who is responsible to choose your vocabulary?

#26 I feel confident in my ability to know how much vocabulary I need to learn this semester.

These questions had a statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.751$; $p=.003$).

In contrast, the post-study survey results showed significant positive correlations between 6 of the question-pairs, another 5 between questions in the same category, and 3 relevant cross-category correlations. This is a total of 14 significant correlations.

Table 4.1: Responsibility-Ability Questions with Significant Correlations from Post-study Questionnaire

Category	Who is responsible to...	I feel confident in my ability to...	Correlation		
			Same Category	Same Category	Cross Category
1 Content (what and how much)	9 - decide how many words you should learn this semester?	26 - know how much vocabulary I need to learn this semester	.568*		
	14 -choose your vocabulary?	17 - pick which words I need to learn	.589*		
	9	17		.804**	
	9	30- set my vocabulary goals (Cat. 3)			.573*
	14	21 - decide which words will be most useful for me to learn (Cat. 2)			.573*
2 Word Knowledge	7 - know which words are common in English?	20 - find out if an English word is common?	.566*		
	13- know if a word will be useful to you?	21 - decide which words will be most useful for me to learn	.649*		
	7	21		.755**	
	13	19 - plan my vocabulary learning (Cat. 3)			.699**
4 Strategies	8 - know which strategies are best for learning about English words?	24 - decide which vocabulary strategies are best for me to use	.604*		
	5 - determine the best way for you to learn vocabulary?	27 -use appropriate strategies to help me remember the words I study		.640*	
	15 - know strategies that help you to remember English words?	24		.691**	
5 Assessment	2 - test your vocabulary knowledge?	25 - test myself on vocabulary	.575*		
	2	31 – evaluate my own vocabulary learning		.603*	
SUM			6	5	3

* $\alpha = <.05$ ** $\alpha = <.01$

Pre-study and post-study questionnaire responses to Section 2 (ability) questions were also compared. The table below shows changes in each participant's self-assessment of abilities. A 0 indicates the respondent gave themselves the same rating for a particular item on the pre-study questionnaire as for the post-study. A positive number signifies they rated themselves higher at the end than the beginning and a negative number indicates they rated their ability lower on the post-study questionnaire for the given question.

Table 4.2: Changes in Individual Perception of Abilities (6 point Likert)

Question Categories:	Content	Word Knowledge	Personal Needs/ Goals	Strategies	Assessment	Average change per question
Questions	17, 23, 26	20, 21, 28, 32	19, 22, 30	24, 27, 29	18, 25, 31	
Subject 1	0.33	-0.75	-0.67	0	0	-0.22
2	2.00	-0.75	0.33	-0.33	0.67	0.38
3	0.33	0.25	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.32
4	-1.67	-0.75	-0.67	-1.00	0	-0.82
5	0	0.75	1.00	-0.33	1.00	0.48
6	0	0	-1.00	-0.33	-0.33	-0.33
7	-0.33	-0.75	1.00	1.67	2.00	0.72
8	0.33	0.50	0.67	1.33	-0.33	0.50
9	0	0.25	0	0.33	0.33	0.18
10	0	0	0	-0.33	1.00	0.13
11	-0.33	-1.00	0	-1.33	-1.00	-0.73
12	-0.67	0.50	0	0.67	-0.33	0.03
13	-1.33	-0.75	-2.33	-2.33	-3.00	-1.95
Avg. per category	-0.10	-0.19	-0.10	-0.13	0.03	- 1.30/13= -0.10

Highlighted cells indicate an increase in the participant's perception of abilities

In table 2 each subject's responses are recorded under the five categories. For example, Subject One's responses in *Content* went up just one third of a point on the 6-point Likert scale for the three questions asked in this category. This participant had an average decrease of 0.22

across all 16 questions. In the area of *Content*, 4 subjects increased, 4 stayed the same and 5 decreased.

Pre and post-study differences for Section 1, “Responsibility”, were calculated in the same manner as Section 2.

Table 4.3: Changes in Individual Assignment of Responsibility (6 point Likert)

Question Categories:	Content	Word Knowledge	Personal Needs/ Goals	Strategies	Assessment	Average change per question
Questions	1, 9, 14	3, 7, 11, 13	4, 6, 10	5, 8, 15	2, 12, 16	
Subject 1	2	1.25	0	1	-1.7	0.52
2	3	0.75	3	1.33	2	2.02
3	1.67	0.75	1	1.67	0.67	1.15
4	-0.7	-0.3	0.67	0	0.67	0.08
5	-0.3	0.5	0	0.33	1.67	0.43
6	-0.3	2.25	0	0.67	-1.3	0.25
7	-0.3	-2	-1	-1.3	-1.3	-1.20
8	0.67	0	0	0.67	-1	0.07
9	-0.3	0.25	-0.3	0.33	1.67	0.32
10	2	-0.5	-0.7	1	0.67	0.50
11	-0.3	-0.3	-1	0.33	-1	-0.45
12	0	0	-0.3	-1	-0.7	-0.40
13	0.67	-0.8	0	-2	-3	-1.02
Avg. per category	0.59	0.15	0.1	0.23	-0.2	2.27/13= 0.18

Highlighted cells indicate an increase in the participant’s assignment of responsibility to self

Table 4.3 shows the changes in each participant’s assignment of responsibility from their pre-study to post-study questionnaires. Again, a positive number represents an increase in the respondent’s assignment of responsibility to himself or herself while a negative number signifies the subject assigned less responsibility to himself or herself.

For example, on average, Subject One's responses in *Content* went up 2 points on the 6-point Likert scale (33%). This participant had an average change of 0.52 across all 16 questions. The highest average change for the entire group was the Content category at 0.59, or about one half of one point on the 6-point scale. The greatest individual increase was seen with Subject 2, with an average increase of 2 points across the 5 categories; Subject 7 had the greatest decrease, with a drop of 1 point or more in 4 of the 5 categories. Overall, the group increased an average of about 2.3 points or approximately .18 each across all 16 questions in their assignment of responsibility.

Finally, participant responses to the last question on the questionnaire was put into the table below.

Table 4.4: Participant Assessment of Learning Goals Reached

Do you feel you accomplished your vocabulary goals this semester?				
	Not at all	Some	Mostly	Completely
1			X	
2			X	
3			X	
4			X	
5			X	
6			X	
7		X		
8			X	
9			X	
10			X	
11				X
12			X	
13			X	
TOTAL	0	1	11	1

The above chart shows that 12 of the 13 participants felt that they mostly or completely reached the vocabulary goals they had set in their personal plans.

The one part from the questionnaires that was not coded or considered was the assignment of teacher responsibility. In individual interviews with participants, as well as with instructors who took a similar pilot survey, several interviewees noted that responsibility for some aspects of vocabulary learning lie with both the teacher and the student. These responsibilities are not necessarily in an inverse relationship with one another. For example, one noted that it is both the teacher's and the learner's job to *mostly* "know strategies that help you to remember English words."

Word Card Entries

The largest data set was the word card entries. Student-participants selected a total of 110 words throughout the semester to be tested on. At weeks 3, 6 and 9 word cards were requested and collected from those participants that had them. Students were not required to turn in a word card for every word they chose to be tested on. For the 780 words examined, the 13 subjects made 650 word cards, an average of 83%. One participant ("subject 11") used a single-sheet table with the word, definition, collocation and part of speech. His entries were counted the same as card entries.

Table 4.5: Word cards provided by participants

Week	Words submitted for testing	number of cards provided	total entries
3	13 *20 = 260	191	727
6	13 *20 = 260	240	921
9	13 *20 = 260	219	820
Total	13 *60 = 780	650	2468

The information participants wrote on their cards about each word was coded into 8 categories: translation, definition, collocation, sentence, word family, pronunciation, concept maps and spelling. A total of 2468 entries were made on the 650 cards. One participant included concept maps on her word cards, 10 in total. Because related concepts were not designated as a priority for any of the participants, this category was not included in the analysis. Writing a card entails spelling the vocabulary word; therefore “spelling” was attributed to every word having a card.

Table 4.6: Participants’ Word Card Entries

Translation	476
Definition/Synonym	390
Sentence	362
Collocation	296
Word family	207
Pronunciation	87*
Spelling	650
Total	2468

* Only two participants made pronunciation notes. They used L1 approximations on the front of their cards.

After recording the card entries and priorities for each participant, their individual entries were compared to the priorities they had given in their Personal Vocabulary Plans. Priority categories were matched with word card categories as follows:

Table 4.7: Priority Categories Coded With Word Card Categories

Participant priority	Word Card Entry
Pronunciation	Pronunciation notations of any kind
Spelling	Writing the card
Meaning	Translation, Definition or Synonym
Collocation	1 or more collocations
Use	Sentence

Table 4.8: Participant Priorities for Vocabulary Learning

Participant	Meaning	Collocation	Use	Word Family	Pronunciation	Spelling
1	3		4		1	2
2	3		1		2	
3	2	4	1		3	
4	4		2		1	3
5	2	3	4		1	
6	1	3	2			
7	3	1	2		4	
8	1			4	3	2
9	3	2	4		1	
10	3	4	2		1	
11	2	3	1			4
12	2	3		4	1	
13	2				1	3
# of listings	13	8	10	2	11	5

Participants 2, 6 & 13 have only 3 priorities because they listed areas that were combined into one category such as synonym and meaning.

Table 4.8 shows the priorities that participants had in their PVPs. The numbers represent the priority a participant gave to a specific category. For example, participant 1 listed pronunciation as his first priority, spelling as second and meaning as third. All 13 participants

listed meaning in their top four priorities, though only 2 had it as their number one priority. In the category of pronunciation, seven participants marked it as their top priority in vocabulary learning.

The following two pie charts show remarkable similarities between three of the participants' five top priorities. The larger percentage of card entries for spelling is due to the way spelling was coded: every card with a vocabulary word was counted as a spelling entry. The differences in pronunciation are discussed in the next chapter.



Figure 4.1: Participants' Top Priorities

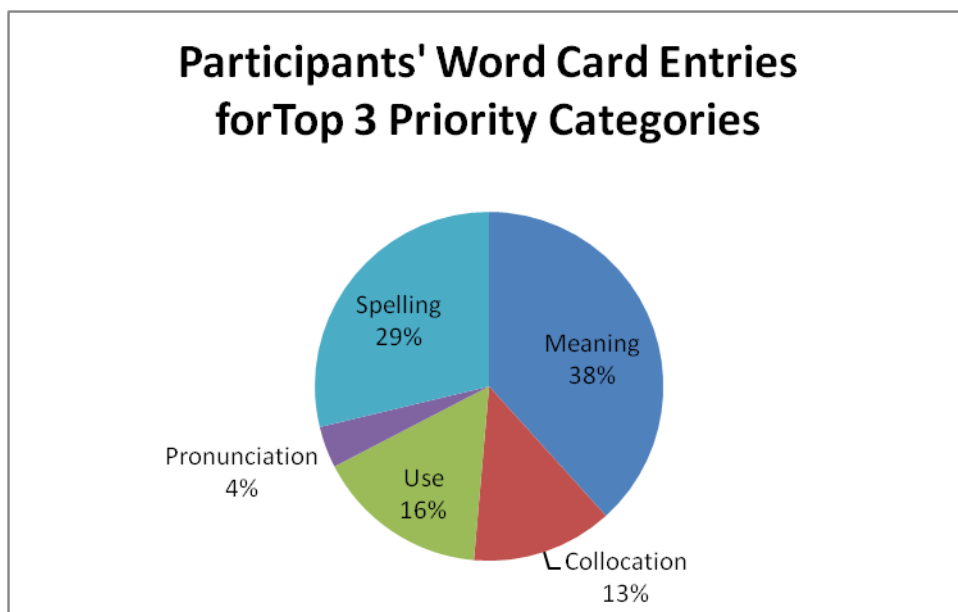


Figure 4.2: Participant's Word Card Entries for Top 3 Priority Categories

Next, each individual participant's top 3 priorities were compared to their word card entries to determine how their entries correspond to their personalized plans.

Table 4.9: Participant Top 3 Priorities Compared with their Word Card Entries

Subject	Number of Entries That Match Subject's Priority			Percentage of Entries That Match Subject's Priority			Percentage of Subject's Entries That Match Their <i>Top 3 Priorities</i>
	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	
1	23	60	58	0.07	0.18	0.18	0.43
2	20	0	60	0.11	0.00	0.34	0.45
3	60	60	0	0.24	0.24	0.00	0.48
4	0	24	40	0.00	0.14	0.24	0.39
5	0	11	13	0.00	0.07	0.08	0.15
6	40	37	37	0.23	0.21	0.21	0.66
7	0	20	20	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50
8	59	60	27	0.18	0.18	0.08	0.45
9	0	23	40	0.00	0.14	0.24	0.38
10	37	3	60	0.12	0.01	0.20	0.33
11	0	57	2	0.00	0.40	0.01	0.42
12	0	10	40	0.00	0.10	0.40	0.50
13	0	40	40	0.00	0.41	0.41	0.82
Group Average							0.46

Table 4.9 gives the numbers of card entries for each participant's top 3 priorities as well as the percentage of their overall entries for each priority. The percentage of individual card entries matched to stated priorities ranged from .15 to .82 with the majority of participants in the 30-50% range.

Finally, participants' word choices from week 3 and week 9 were analyzed for frequency level using lextutor.ca.

Table 4.10: Word Frequency Levels

Subject	Week 1 10 words each			Week 3 20 words each			Week 9 20 words each		
	K1-2	AWL	Off-list	K1-2	AWL	Off-list	K1-2	AWL	Off-list
1		10		1	18	1		19	1
2	1	9			20			20	
3	1	9			20			20	
4	1	5	4		20			19	1
5		10			19	1	7	3	14
6	3	1	6		20		5	8	7
7	3	6	1	14	5	2		20	
8		7	3		13	7	2	12	6
9		9*		1	16	3	1	16	3
10	2	8		2	18		3	13	4
11		10			20		1	19	
12		10			20			20	
13	1		9	2	2	16	1	4	15
Total words	12	94	23	20	211	30	20	193	51
% of total words	8.5	73.6	17.8	7.7	80.8	11.5	7.9	72.8	19.3

* In scanning Subject 9's Week 1 word list, the first word was cut-off.

Table 4.10 categorizes participants' self-selected vocabulary words according to common English frequency lists. "K1-2" are the first two thousand most frequently used English words. "AWL" is the Academic Word List compiled by Coxhead (2006) and "Off-list" are any words not occurring in those two categories.

Pre-study and Post-study Vocabulary Levels Test

Table 4.11: Vocabulary Levels Test

	Spoken Word Recognition			AWL 1-5 Written Word Recognition			AWL 6-10 Written Word Recognition			Overall Gain
	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain	
Subj.										
1	55	65	10	70	80	10	60	90	30	50
2		24			50			10		
3		37			63			40		
4	50	60	10	78	84	6	43	84	41	57
5	52	65	13	73	74	1	83	84	1	15
6	85	50	-35	61	75	14	61	80	19	-2
7	56	65	9	70	70	0	70	70	0	9
8	38	60	22	61	75	14	67	80	13	49
9	90	50	-40	80	78	-2	75	90	15	-27
10	34	60	26	61	65	4	50	75	25	55
11	49	66	17	78	61	-17	58	60	2	2
12	60	55	-5	76	88	12	87	90	3	10
13	59	71	12	65	90	25	43	61	18	55
SUM			39			67			167	273
Avg Gain			3.5			6.1			15	21

Dark shaded scores: 85% or higher. Light shaded scores: 80-84%

Participants' scores on the VLT were recorded and their gains or losses measured. There is no norm for gains on the VLTs, the goal is to reach a level of 85% or more to be able to comprehend academic speech and texts. Only three participants were at or above this level on a single test at the beginning of the semester with another two participants between 80 and 84%. At the end of the study, five participants had reached a level above 85% and 6 scored between 80

and 84% on a single test. Gains were generally greatest on the AWL 6-10 Written Word Recognition test and least in the Spoken Word Recognition test.

Vocabulary Quiz Scores

Participants' took regular quizzes on their vocabulary and their final vocabulary quiz was a cumulative exam of all 110 vocabulary words they had submitted throughout the semester.

Table 4.12: Vocabulary Quiz Scores

	Week 1	Week 3	Week 5	Week 7	Week 9	Final
1	50	85	100	100	88	78
2	25	55	25	69	100	87
3	40	60	16	88	56	87
4	40	40	88	100	75	100
5	40	95	100	100	100	92
6	50	93	58	69	94	90
7	50	85	100	94	100	87
8	88	100	100	88	100	92
9	60	93	100	100	100	93
10	60	60	88	88	88	88
11	88	98	100	100	100	92
12	75	80	58	75	100	87
13	50	68	42	75	100	73
Class Avg	55.0	77.7	74.9	88.0	92.3	88.2

Table 4.12 and Figure 4.3 illustrate the impressive gains that participants made in their vocabulary quizzes and exams over the course of the study.

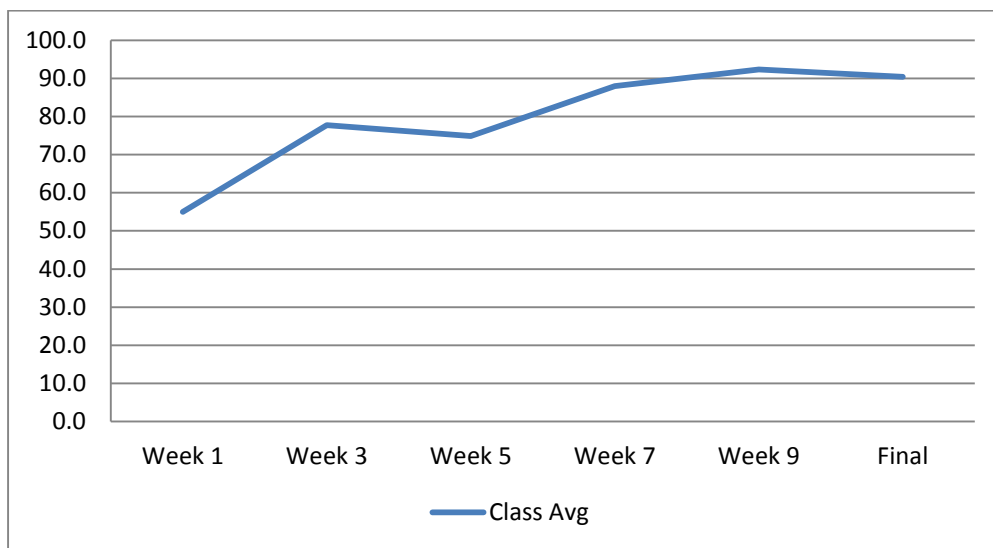


Figure 4.3: Vocabulary Quiz Scores, Class Average

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research and findings begins with a return to the primary question: Will ESL learners benefit from developing their own personalized vocabulary learning plan (PVP) that is based on their starting vocabulary level, perceived needs and personal vocabulary goals? In order to answer this broad query, the specific questions presented at the beginning of the study will be examined individually and together.

1. Will the learners become more proficient in their ability to select, study, and learn vocabulary?

The first question itself is complex and will be broken down into three parts: select, study and learn. Did the participants improve in their ability to *select* vocabulary words? Based on the participants' placement in an advanced ESL class and their admission to the university, this group of students should have been working to attain at least an 85% familiarity with words on the Academic Word List (AWL). Of course, they also needed to close any gaps they may have with the first 2,000 most frequent English words and they would undoubtedly need knowledge of some words that don't fall into either of these lists.

At study week 1 (week 7 of the semester), prior to writing the PVPs, 8.5% of the words participants selected were from the 2,000 most frequent English words, 73.6% came from the AWL, and more than 18% were deemed "off-list". Three weeks after writing PVPs, 81% of word choices were from AWL. By week nine, the choice of AWL words was similar to week three again at 72.8%.

Overall, it would seem that the participants had a generally good balance in their word choices before writing their PVPs and they continued with those kinds of selections throughout the study. In examining individual word choices, most off-list words were appropriate. These were primarily vocabulary for other content courses such as math and geography terms. Participant #5 also chose a number of chunk phrases; two others included colloquial words such as guzzling and cruise. Given that most participants made appropriate word choices before and after writing their PVPs, it does not seem the PVP played a major role in the selection aspect of their vocabulary learning.

One exception is Subject 13 who began the semester choosing mostly unusual and less useful words, (jubilation, clack...). On her PVP and in an interview she indicated that she wanted to focus on both academic words and slang. She needed to learn “off-list” words such as *thickener* and *blend* to help her in her food service job. She was also being exposed to words like sleek and knapsack with her growing circle of native and non-native peers. This participant continued to prefer off-list words but was trained to consider words that would be more useful to her (dawn, stubborn...) through in-class strategy discussions and a single tutorial session. In her case, the PVP alone would probably have had little effect. Her PVP was an instrument for her to articulate her learning goals and then for the instructor to give more directed guidance on which new words to focus time and attention.

The second part of the question asks whether learners became more proficient in their vocabulary study. Their word cards were examined for the kinds of information they chose to study and how these correspond to their personalized plans. The pie charts from the previous chapter show the top five categories that participants listed in their priorities:

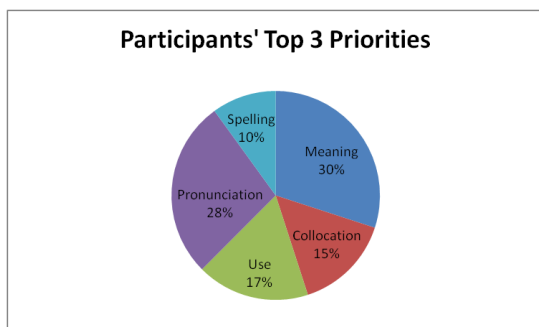


Figure 4.1

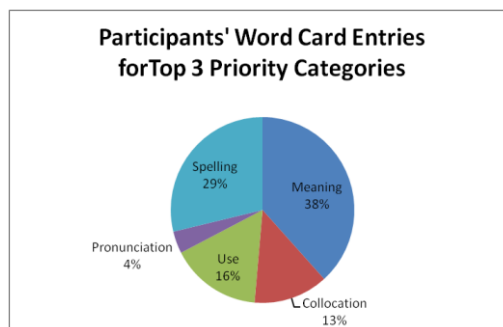


Figure 4.2

As a whole group, inclusion of information on word cards is closely related to stated priorities for three of the five categories. Only for spelling and pronunciation are there large differences. For spelling, this is probably due to the way spelling was counted in the data analysis: any word with a card was counted as a spelling entry, thus the total of spelling entries does not accurately reflect a participant's intention to focus on spelling or not. Every word card has the word written on it, thus inflating the spelling category.

The disparity between participants' prioritization of pronunciation and actual entries on their cards is similar to the findings of Brown (2013). Subjects in the Brown study did not make a single pronunciation notation on their word cards, possibly because writing a word card is a written rather than oral activity. Pronunciation was given a much higher priority by this group than those in the Brown study. This is most likely because the participants in this study were enrolled in a course with an emphasis on listening and speaking. MacDonald, Yule and Powers (1994) also note that "learners consistently give extremely high priority to mastery of pronunciation when opinions and preferences are investigated" (p. 76). All of the pronunciation entries in this study were made by just two participants who included L1 approximations of pronunciation on their cards. Some participants may have used online dictionaries to listen to

words, but this was not verified in this study. The fact that 10 of the participants listed pronunciation in their top three priorities but only two of them included the information on their cards should be an area of concern for instructors.

Teachers themselves often lack training in pronunciation (Derwing & Munroe, 2005) and this lack is resulting in a deficit for learners. Given the importance of phonological processing both for reading (Walter, 2008) and vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001) teachers must add learning strategies for pronunciation to their repertoire. Learning IPA or similar means of coding pronunciation can be a cumbersome undertaking. As Niehaus (2012) has shown, language learners tend to use easier strategies over those which require more effort, regardless of effectiveness. Thus researchers and teachers must work to find effective, learner-friendly methods for learning pronunciation of new vocabulary.

Another striking similarity to Brown's (2013) study is the percentage of card entries for the categories of *meaning* (38%) and *use* (16%). While Brown used the terms *definition* and *sentence* for these same categories, the percentage of entries was exactly the same as the present study. It makes sense, of course, that vocabulary learners need to know what a word means and how it is used, so these are aspects that the learners rightly gravitate towards in learning new vocabulary.

When word card entries were matched one-to-one with an individual's priority, the results were mixed. However, when the top 3 priorities were considered as a whole, nearly half of all entries fell into areas designated as priorities by participants. Participant 13, the same student who chose many off-list words had the highest match between her priorities and her card entries at 82 percent. Interestingly, this participant did not fit the mold of the "ideal" student. She

didn't want to follow the guidelines for long-term assignments and she didn't get high grades. However, in conferences and class interactions with this student it was clear that she had individualized goals for her English learning that went beyond the school setting and grades. It was initially surprising to discover how closely her plan and her actions corresponded. Upon further examination, her word choices and card entries display her degree of autonomy.

At the other end of the scale, only 15 percent of Participant 5's entries were according to his plan. However, a closer look reveals that he did include entries for his fourth priority, *use*, on all 60 of his cards. His top priority was *pronunciation* and, like the majority of participants, he had no entries for pronunciation. He only produced 17 entries for his second priority, *meaning*, which is unlike the emphasis on meaning of most other participants. For his third priority, a mere 13 *collocations* were entered. No post-study interviews were conducted so it is not known definitively why he didn't include these. However, in an online class discussion, he wrote,

I have a good strategy to memorize vocabulary... I think speaking something helps more reminding you and using them naturally and frequently. Yes, there must be plan to get success in anythings we want to do. In this semester i have planned to read Academic words and Daily used words. *I am following all my plans.* (Emphasis mine)

This post shows that the participant was mindful of the plan he had written. A review of this participant's comprehensive final vocabulary exam shows that he correctly supplied definitions/synonyms and collocations on all 12 questions for which they were required. Clearly, he found a useful strategy for learning meaning and collocations that did not entail writing them

on word cards. So, for this aspect of this student's learning, he did in fact achieve the goals set forth in his PVP.

Also, in response to two questions posed at the end of the study Participant 5 wrote, "I feel I somewhat achieved my goal because my first goal is to improve my pronunciation skill. Now my American friends understand the most of my pronunciation." And, "Every time I learned vocabularies, I looked up the pronunciation even if i knew the words, so that made wrong pronunciation correct." Again, card entries were not a true reflection of this participant's stated actions.

As for study habits, entries on the cards increased from week 3 to week 6, decreased from week 6 to 9, but were still higher overall from week 3 to week 9. In online discussions during weeks 4 and 5, several participants related a struggle to balance the demands of their various courses and keep up with learning new vocabulary. Individual mid-term conferences took place between study weeks 3 and 6. During the conferences, students were encouraged to review their vocabulary plan and consider if/how they were achieving their goals. The increase in entries is probably a reflection of the conferences which were based on the PVPs. This again points to the PVPs as a reference for student-teacher collaboration rather than a lone catalyst to participant autonomy.

The third and final part of question 1 asks whether learners become more proficient in their vocabulary learning as a result of writing and keeping a PVP. A check of pre and post study test scores gives a positive report of where participants started and ended. This part of the question is best discussed together with questions 2 and 3 below.

For this group of experienced ESL learners, the data does not support the first part of question one, except when applied to the learner that needed more direction in her word choices. The data more strongly supports the second and third part of the hypothesis that a personalized plan helps the learner become more proficient at studying self-prioritized aspects of vocabulary and learning vocabulary.

2. Will the PVP promote learning words more deeply?

The vocabulary quizzes were designed to measure depth of vocabulary knowledge, how well acquainted the learner is becoming with the word: its uses, friends, family members, etc. From the first quiz to the fifth, all participants had an increase in their vocabulary scores. These increases range from 13% to 75%, with a class average of 37%. These numbers, while impressive, are not completely reliable because there was also a steep learning curve for participants in figuring out how to best study for and take these specialized tests, so they would probably have seen some improvements regardless of study habits. A more legitimate measure of their depth of vocabulary learning is their final vocabulary exam (Appendix D). This comprehensive exam tested participants on 30 randomly selected words from all 110 words that students had self-selected over the course of the semester. As with the quizzes (Appendix C), students gave sentences, definitions/synonyms, parts of speech, family members and collocations for various words. Participant (13) had the fewest correct answers at 73% while one participant (4) was able to supply correct definitions, sentences etc. for 100% of the words she was tested on. The overall class score, at 88.2%, indicates that the participants did indeed become more proficient in learning vocabulary. The personalized plan promoted learning words more deeply.

3. Will the learner's vocabulary size increase at the targeted frequency levels?

The measure of vocabulary size, or breadth, of vocabulary is the VLT. Two participants entered the course after the VLT was administered so their gains cannot be measured. Nine of the 11 remaining participants had gains, 5 of more than 40 words. As noted in the data analysis, there is no norm for gains on the VLT. These tests are meant to be taken several times over a period of time to get a true picture of the student's vocabulary size. The goal is to reach a level of 85% or higher to maximize comprehension of academic texts. This level was only reached by 5 participants in any of the three post tests. Subjects 6 and 9 decreased in their scores. They started with scores of 85 and 90 in their recognition of spoken vocabulary and had considerable drops in that score. This may have been due to fatigue. The final VLT was given on the last day of class during finals week, after the vocabulary final. This was not an ideal time to take an aural test and may have affected outcomes.

Seven participants had higher scores in the AWL 6-10 frequency lists than the 1-5 lists. Given that the 1-5 lists would have words that university students are more likely to encounter, these participants may have benefitted more by concentrating on words from the higher frequency lists. Of course this is a generalization. In interviews and online discussions some participants stated that they were moving from using only the lists for their word sources to including vocabulary from other content classes. Here are a few online posts by participants from week 4 of the study (semester week 10).

P10: Sometimes I feel like I need more words that used in my major class. It is very important to me and it will be helpful to my education.

P8: Some of these words are coming from AWL list and some from my accounting class.

I also learn some new words in daily life, for example, when I go shopping, I learn the word "denim" that means jeans.

P4: I have just written the word on vocabulary card what I want to learn because I am learning so many words when I am hanging out friends and from my other classes. Even I don't know the meaning, I am still learning new words.

An ideal scenario is for learners to grow their L2 vocabulary broadly and deeply for the words they need. While frequency lists are an important guide, these participants' posts tell of the complexity of figuring out which words to spend their time on. Writing the PVP and reflecting on their vocabulary sources, study habits and goals helped the participants above to personalize and take possession of their own learning. It did not, however, focus their attention and energies on the frequency lists that might have been most useful for them. If PVPs are used for future studies or courses, a stronger consideration of starting vocabulary level and encouraging learners to set their goals around appropriate frequency levels is suggested.

In this study, five participants had substantial increases in their overall vocabulary size, while six had minimal or negative gains. As written and used in this study, the personalized plan did not help the majority of the learner's vocabulary size to increase at the targeted frequency levels.

4. Will the learner become more autonomous in vocabulary learning?

In comparing the pre-study to the post-study questionnaires, 9 of the 13 participants assigned more responsibility to themselves at the end of the study than they had at the beginning.

If assuming more personal responsibility for learning is taken as a sign of growing autonomy as put forth by Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002), then these learners did become more autonomous. However, it is not possible to know how much of the increase to attribute to the PVPs. The vocabulary program included personalization, teacher guidance, strategy instruction and reflective practices. How much each of these contributed to this increase cannot be measured. From the outset these were a package-deal. The literature on practices that promote learner autonomy (Cotterall, 2008; Holec, 1979; Nation, 2001) speaks to the need for each of these individual components working together to promote learner autonomy.

Of the 4 participants that assigned less responsibility to themselves, the greatest drop was from Participant 7. In looking at her word cards, she had 41 entries in week 3 but only 29 in the next two submissions. On her PVP she noted that she preferred to have words selected by both her and the teacher. Perhaps the most telling example of this student's lack of growth in autonomy is her word choices and her scores on the VLT. She had the highest number of words from the K1-2 frequency lists which could be an indication that, because she could self-select words, she was not challenging herself. On the VLTs, she started and ended with an AWL written word recognition score of 70 for both frequency groups.

Grades were very important to this student. After vocabulary cards were collected the first time, she nervously asked about the effect on her grade if she didn't write much. Upon finding out that there was no direct grade effect she wrote less on future cards. She also reverted back to a familiar strategy rather than incorporate new strategies for learning. In online discussions, she twice wrote about memorizing words as her primary learning strategy even though this was not a strategy that was taught in class. At the end of the semester, this participant

commented that she did not accomplish her vocabulary goals as much as she expected. She did earn an A- in the course. Apparently, she chose to put her efforts where grades were counted instead of gleaning the long-term benefits of self-direction and utilizing new strategies. This brings up a common challenge for teachers who want to promote autonomous and ongoing learning beyond the classroom: how to entice students to move beyond the immediate grade and onto learning for their own interests and larger goals?

5. Are learner perceptions of personal ability and autonomy related?

While the pre-study questionnaire showed only 2 significant correlations, both with the statement, “I feel confident in my ability to know how much vocabulary I need to learn this semester”, the post-study responses had 14 significant correlations of related responsibility-ability items. This is probably due to participants’ improved assessment of their own abilities and also a greater understanding of the terms and concepts in the questionnaire. Therefore, this discussion will center around the latter questionnaire, as it is a more authentic measure of the participants’ knowledge and insights.

Seeing so many significant correlations demonstrates that there is some association between learners’ perception of their own ability and their degree of autonomy. As participants’ perceptions of their own abilities went up or down for certain items, their assignment of responsibility went up or down in the same direction. The connection between learner ability and degree of autonomy may seem like an obvious assumption; this portion of the study provides empirical evidence that, for these particular items at least, there is a relationship. This is an important connection for the teacher and curriculum developer to recognize. If the goal is to help learners take charge and responsibility for areas of their own learning, they must believe that

they are capable in those same areas. Learners need both specific skills and confidence to take charge of their learning.

What Participants Said About the Effects of Making A Personalized Vocabulary Plan

Most participants clearly found the PVP helpful. At the end of the study, participants were asked, “what effect did writing a Personal Vocabulary Plan have on you” and “what effect did writing a Personal Vocabulary Plan have on how you studied or learned vocabulary?” They had no negative comments and some very positive and insightful remarks. A few of their comments are given here:

P1: Notice more words I read or hear.

P5: The plan makes me find what vocabularies are lacking.

P8: Let me focus on pronunciation and other areas when I was learning. (This is the participant that did consistently include pronunciation on her word cards.)

P9: It gives me the chance to study how I like to. They help me to choose those vocabulary which I need.

P12: It gave me an idea on how to plan my study...a clear path and way to work towards my vocabulary goals.

Four participants mentioned the concept of self-awareness and three others that it helped in planning.

Limitations of the Study

As noted in the literature, autonomy is an intangible concept and not easily measured. The methods for measuring autonomy in this study, the word cards and the questionnaires, are imperfect but they provide some means of looking for signs of growing autonomy in the

participants. As was seen with the comments from Participant 5, the word cards clearly didn't show the whole picture of what the learner was doing to achieve his goals.

The small number of participants and lack of a control group are also notable limitations. Having fewer participants did allow the researcher to examine more aspects of the participants learning process, such as their online discussions and individual feedback. However the sample size for the questionnaire is small making minor variations in responses more pronounced. Because there was no control group, there is no way to tell how much of the learning gains or the increases or decreases in responsibility/ability responses are due to the PVP or other factors.

Questionnaires, while easy to administer and code, have inherent flaws. Respondents vary in the degree of reflection and weight they give to their responses. Administering a questionnaire in English to English language learners also has obvious drawbacks. Respondents may not understand some of the terms in the questionnaire and they may feel fatigue from reading and responding in English. Furthermore, having diverse background learning experiences, the learners may or may not have been exposed to the strategies and concepts presented for their consideration.

Finally, this study was conducted with an advanced group of young adult learners in the researcher's class. The participants were experienced and capable language learners long before this study. While selecting their own vocabulary and making their own goals was a new concept for many, if not all of the participants, most were ready and able to take charge of their vocabulary planning and learning. A younger or less advanced group of learners may have very different experiences and results. Also, the researcher as teacher may have inadvertently made adjustments to the instruction to accommodate learners that affected outcomes.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies are needed on how instructors and language learners approach pronunciation. A further study might look into how learners focus on pronunciation when they view it as priority for themselves. What do learners do to learn pronunciation? How do teachers encourage their students to notice and learn pronunciation? How effective are online sources and are learners utilizing those sources?

An additional area of research to build on this study would be to examine the differences in autonomy readiness between more and less advanced groups of second language learners. Studies of the effects of personalization on learners of different ages are also needed. Furthermore, as on-going learner autonomy is one of the major goals of personalization, learners that have been introduced to personalized learning plans should be studied over a period of time to assess whether or not there are long-term benefits.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

In the context of this study, the PVP was used as tool to promote learner planning and reflective practices as participants tried out various strategies for vocabulary learning. Most participants at least partially considered their PVPs as they made choices about which words to study and which aspects of those words to concentrate on. Participants did not fully follow their own plans, but the plans helped them to make more conscious choices about their learning. They often referred back to them in their online evaluations about their vocabulary learning processes. On the final questionnaire, participants had favorable opinions of the effects of the PVPs, several citing an increased awareness of their needs and goals. The majority of participants had some gains in vocabulary breadth and all increased their vocabulary depth considerably. While those gains cannot be attributed to any single factor, the PVP does appear to have been a useful tool.

This study provides evidence that, for some aspects at least, there is a relationship between a learner's perception of ability and the degree of responsibility he or she assumes. As stated in the beginning of this study, a great deal of language learning happens outside of the walls of the classroom. So for language learners to succeed and continue beyond their ESL courses they must at some point take charge of and own their learning process. This study shows that one way to encourage learners to become more autonomous is to increase their confidence in their own abilities. For vocabulary learning, this means training in various effective strategies. One particular area of concern is strategies for learning pronunciation. Instructors who want to help learners grow in autonomy must teach strategies to increase the learner's ability to acquire and learn the pronunciation of new words.

So, in a final return to the overriding question of this research, it can now be stated that ESL learners benefitted from developing their own personalized vocabulary learning plans that were based on their starting vocabulary level, perceived needs and personal vocabulary goals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Section 1: **RESPONSIBILITIES**

When taking an ESL class at SCSU whose responsibility is it to:

			Not at all	A little	Some what not	Some what so	Mostly	Compl etely
1	- select the vocabulary you need to learn?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
2	- test your vocabulary knowledge?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
3	- provide information about words (meaning, how to use them...)?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
4	- know what your vocabulary goals should be?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
5	- determine the best way for you to learn vocabulary?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
6	- plan how often you should study vocabulary outside of class?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
7	- know which words are common in English?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
8	- know which strategies are best for learning about English words?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						

Section 1: **RESPONSIBILITIES** –continued-

When taking an ESL class at SCSU whose responsibility is it to:

			Not at all	A little	Some what not	Some what so	Mostly	Comp letely
9	- decide how many words you should learn this semester?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
10	- know your vocabulary level & needs?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
11	- have knowledge about English words (pronunciation , part of speech...)?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
12	- make sure you are making progress in vocabulary learning?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
13	- know if a word will be useful to you?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
14	- choose your vocabulary?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
15	- know strategies that help you to remember English words?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						
16	- evaluate your vocabulary learning?	Yours						
		Your teacher's						

Section 2: **ABILITIES****I feel confident in my ability to:**

		Not at all	A little	Somewhat not	Somewhat so	Mostly	Completely
17	pick which words I need to learn						
18	make sure I am making progress in vocabulary learning						
19	plan my vocabulary learning						
20	find out if an English word is common						
21	decide which words will be most useful for me to learn						
22	identify my English vocabulary needs						
23	choose vocabulary words that are useful to me						
24	decide which vocabulary strategies are best for me to use						
25	test myself on vocabulary						
26	know how much vocabulary I need to learn this semester						
27	use appropriate strategies to help me remember the words I study						
28	find information about a word (meaning, part of speech, pronunciation, how to use it...)						
29	use learning strategies to study vocabulary						
30	set my vocabulary goals						
31	evaluate my own vocabulary learning						
32	keep an organized system of what I learn about a word						

APPENDIX B

Planning Worksheet for Personalization

Planning Worksheet for Personalization

What Is Most Important to You?

Section 1 Vocabulary types

Please number from 1-5 with 1 being the most important. (1=most important, 5=least important)

For me, it is most important to study:

- Academic words – the words that will be in college text books
- Slang, idioms, popular expressions for social conversations
- Practical words that help me live in the U.S. (ex: words for shopping & traveling around)
- Technical words for my major
- Other: _____

This semester I want to study:

Choose as many answers as you want

- Words I choose
- Words from the ESL textbook
- Words suggested by my ESL teacher(s)
- Words I hear from friends
- Words I hear or read from my other classes
- Other (Describe): _____

Section 2 Aspects of knowing a word

Please number from 1-9. (1=most important, 9=least important)

When I study a word, I want to focus on:

- Pronunciation, how it sounds
- Spelling, how it is written
- Word parts (prefix, suffix, root, tense marker)
- Meaning
- Synonyms – words that mean the same thing
- Grammar – how to use the word in a sentence
- Part of speech (noun, verb ...)
- Collocations – which words are usually used with this word
- Use - where, when and how often I can use this word

Section 3 Strategies

How do you study new English words? *Please write at least 4 strategies that you use.*

Example: I cover my words and look at the meaning then I try to guess the word

Do you want to learn more strategies for learning vocabulary? Yes No

What kind of strategies do you want to learn? _____

Section 4 Study habits & Planning

If you know the most commonly used 2,000 English word families plus the 570 AWL words you will be able to understand most conversations and many texts.

How many AWL words do you want to know by the time you finish your first year of university? _____

How many do you plan to learn this semester? _____

This is _____ words per week.

How do you prefer to study English vocabulary outside of class? *Choose as many answers as you like*

by yourself

with a friend who speaks the same language as you

with a native English speaker

using a computer program or website (like Quizlet.com)

other ideas: _____

How often do you plan to study English vocabulary outside of class? _____

How many minutes do you plan to study English vocabulary every week? _____

Is there anything else you want to add to your vocabulary plan? _____

APPENDIX C

My Personal Vocabulary Plan

MY PERSONAL VOCABULARY PLAN

Name & date

My starting vocabulary level: _____

Section 1 The kinds of words I will study:

1. _____

2. _____

The words I study will be selected by _____

Section 2 I will focus on improving my vocabulary in these areas:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Section 3 Strategies

In our class we will learn strategies for studying vocabulary. Do you plan to try the strategies you learn? _____ Will you keep a list of strategies that are useful for you?

Section 4 My study plan

Note: *Study* can include adding new information to a word, looking up meaning, adding a collocation, writing a sentence, using the word, practicing spelling, reviewing old words and more.

I plan to study vocabulary outside of class (how often): _____

I plan to study _____ minutes per week.

I plan to learn _____ words per week.

Additional: _____

APPENDIX D

Test Examples for Self-Selected Vocabulary

Test Examples for Self-Selected Vocabulary

On Overhead Projector:

From your vocabulary list

1. Write word # _____. Use that word in a sentence.*
2. Write word # _____. Give a definition or synonym for that word.
3. Write word # _____. What part of speech is that word?
4. Choose any word from your list, write it and write 2 other words from the same word family.
5. Choose any word from your list, write it and give a common collocation for that word.

*note: Credit was given for meaning and context; minor grammar errors were not counted

Example:

1. motivate Because I want to be healthy, I am motivated to exercise.
2. differentiate to understand the difference between similar things.
3. influence noun; verb
4. rational rationally, rationale
5. target easy target; intended target

Comprehensive Final Exam

From Quiz 1 List:

1. Word 3: _____ . Use in a sentence.

2. Word 4: _____ . Provide a definition or synonym.

3. Word 5: _____ . What part of speech is this word? _____

4. Choose any word from your Quiz 1 list and provide 2 other words from the same word family.

Word: _____ Family member _____

Family member _____

5. Choose any word from your Quiz 1 list and give a common collocation with that word. Underline your vocabulary word. (For example: if the word is idea, write **innovative idea**)

From Quiz 2 List

6. Word 6: _____ . Use in a sentence.

7. Word 7: _____ . Provide a definition or synonym.

8. Word 18: _____ . What part of speech is this word? _____

9. Choose any word from your Quiz 2 list and provide 2 other words from the same word family.

Word: _____ Family member _____

Family member _____

10. Choose any word from your Quiz 2 list and give a common collocation with that word. Underline the vocabulary word. (For example: if the word is academic, write **academic research**)

From Quiz 3 List

11. Word 9: _____ . Use in a sentence.

12. Word 14: _____ . Provide a definition or synonym.

13. Word 17: _____ . What part of speech is this word? _____

14. Choose any word from your Quiz 3 list and provide 2 other words from the same word family.

Word: _____ Family member _____

Family member _____

15. Choose any word from your Quiz 3 list and give a common collocation for that word. Underline your vocabulary word. (For example: if the word is research, write **conduct research**)

The same format continues for Quiz 4, 5, and 6 lists.

APPENDIX E

Word Card Example

Word Card Example

Front of card



Back of card

<p>Translation: <i>el ingresos; salario; entradas</i></p> <p>Collocations: <i>average _____, total _____,</i> <i>monthly _____, _____ tax</i></p>	<p>Definition or concept map:</p>
<p>Sentences:</p> <p>Working on campus is my main source of <i>income</i>.</p> <p>What is the company's annual <i>income</i>?</p>	

APPENDIX F

Cost/Benefit Analysis Questions

Cost/Benefit Analysis Questions

New word: _____

		Yes	No
1.	Is this a common word in English?		
2.	Is it a useful word for someone at my level to learn?		
3.	Is there any reason I should learn this word now?		
4.	Have I met this word before? (More than once? -Give two ticks)		
5.	Would I use the translation of this word in my language?		
6.	Do I have a special reason for wanting to know this word?		
7.	Will I meet or want to use this word?		
8.	Can I say this word?		
9.	Can I connect this word to any other word(s) I already know?		
10.	Can I personalize this word?		
11.	Will this be an easy word for me to remember?		
12.	Do I have room for this word in my budget right now?		

What am I going to do with this word? Tick one

1. Ignore it. It is not important or useful for me at the moment
2. Remember that I have met it. Write it down and wait to see if I meet it again
3. Write the word in my book with a translation. Come back to it later
4. Write the word with a translation, make a card, and plan a review schedule
5. Look in a dictionary to find the information I need to help me use this word and write it in my book or on a card. Come back to it later.
6. Do 5, then try to make an example sentence and ask someone to check it.

APPENDIX G

Paired Questions of Responsibility and Ability

Paired Questions of Responsibility and Ability

Category	Who is responsible to...	I feel confident in my ability to...
1 Content (what and how much)	1 -select the vocabulary you need to learn?	23 - choose vocabulary words that are useful to me?
	9-decide how many words you should learn this semester?	26 - know how much vocabulary I need to learn this semester
	14 -choose your vocabulary?	17 - pick which words I need to learn
2 Word Knowledge	3- provide information about words (meaning, how to use them...)?	32 - keep an organized system of what I learn about a word
	7- know which words are common in English?	20 - find out if an English word is common?
	11- have knowledge about English words (part of speech, pronunciation...)?	28 - find information about a word (meaning, part of speech, pronunciation, how to use it...)
	13- know if a word will be useful to you? (type & frequency)	21 - decide which words will be most useful for me to learn
	3- provide information about words (meaning, how to use them...)?	32 - keep an organized system of what I learn about a word
3 Personal Needs and Goals	4- know what your vocabulary goals should be?	30- set my vocabulary goals
	6- plan how often you should study vocabulary outside of class?1	19- plan my vocabulary learning
	10- know your vocabulary level & needs?	22 - identify my English vocabulary needs
4 Strategies	5 - determine the best way for you to learn vocabulary?	29 - use learning strategies to study vocabulary
	8 - know which strategies are best for learning about English words?	24 - decide which vocabulary strategies are best for me to use
	15 - know strategies that help you to remember English words	27 -use appropriate strategies to help me remember the words I study
5 Assessment	2 - test your vocabulary knowledge?	25 - test myself on vocabulary
	12- make sure you are making progress in vocabulary learning?	18 - make sure I am making progress in vocabulary learning
	16 – evaluate your vocabulary learning	31 – evaluate my own vocabulary learning

APPENDIX H
Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Title: The Effect of Personalized Plans on Learner Autonomy in L2 Vocabulary Learning

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Introduction

College students who are using English as a second language must learn an enormous amount of vocabulary to succeed in the academic setting. They must continue to add to their vocabulary not only while they are enrolled in their ESL classes but also afterwards. Therefore, they need to develop skills and personal responsibility, or autonomy, for their own vocabulary learning.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of making a personalized learning plan on learner autonomy in English vocabulary learning.

Study Procedures

- The study took place over a 9 week period.
- You took a survey at the beginning and end of the research.
 - Your 2 surveys will be compared to note if you record changes in your abilities and responsibilities for aspects of vocabulary learning.
- You made a Personalized Vocabulary Learning Plan to fit your needs.
- You wrote vocabulary words and what you wanted to learn about them on vocabulary cards.
 - The information you wrote on your vocabulary cards will be compared to your plan.
- Your ESL test scores will be used as part of this project.

Confidentiality & Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

- ❖ Your name will NOT be used after the data have been recorded for analysis.
- ❖ Your participation is **voluntary**. You may withdraw any time if you want.
- ❖ Even if you decide not to do this, it will NOT affect your relations with your instructor, the researcher, or the university.
- ❖ Your participation will NOT affect your grades.
- ❖ The result from the research may be presented or published. (Your name will NEVER be used.)
- ❖ The data will be used ONLY for academic research. If you are interested to know about the results, we can share that information with you when it becomes available.

If you give your permission to use the data for research, please sign below.

Are you at least 18 years of age? **Yes** ___ **No** ___

If you answered NO, please stop. Thank you.

Name in Print: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____