A Review of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by EFL Learners (2020-2024): Current Trends

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Abstract

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), which are techniques or methods learners use to acquire innovative words (Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini, 2024), have been found to influence language learning outcomes. This paper reviews several academic journals focused on the use of VLSs within the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in Asia. The review follows a three-phase process—identifying, screening, and reading—to provide a thorough overview of both theoretical discussions and empirical research on VLSs. It starts with defining VLSs, followed by an exploration of their classifications. It then reviews recent empirical studies (2020-2024) that classify the types of VLSs used, assess the frequency of these strategies, and examine the relationship between VLSs and vocabulary mastery. It also highlights factors affecting VLS use, such as motivation, gender differences, proficiency level, critical thinking skills, and the explicit instruction of VLSs, and discusses how these factors impact vocabulary acquisition. The results indicate inconsistencies in the use of VLSs among EFL learners. For instance, a study of 219 Saudi learners found that memory strategies were most preferred (Al-Khresheh & Al-Ruwaili, 2020), while a separate study of 42 Omani college students highlighted the frequent use of cognitive strategies (Behforouz & Ghaithi, 2022). In contrast, a study involving 180 Indonesian students revealed that metacognitive and encoding strategies were most used, with cognitive strategies being the least utilized (Mistar, 2023). The goal of this review is to offer insights that could help refine VLSs for more effective vocabulary learning.

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Classification, Learner-Based Factors, Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the international spread of language is inevitable, with English undoubtedly taking the lead. This involves three key components: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Among these, vocabulary stands out as the most essential and dynamic element (Bai, 2018). It plays a crucial role in language acquisition, significantly

impacting both the receptive and productive skills necessary for effective communication (Choo & Ng, 2024; Son & Ly, 2024; Al-Khresheh & Al-Ruwaili, 2020).

Vocabulary acquisition is a core element of language learning, essential for understanding all forms of communication and comprehension. For learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), mastering vocabulary is particularly crucial, as it directly affects their ability to read, write, speak, and understand the language effectively. Without a strong vocabulary foundation, even advanced grammatical knowledge may not suffice for successful real-world communication (Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini, 2024). Conversely, limited vocabulary knowledge often leads to challenges in learning a second language (Chiew & Ismail, 2021). Effective vocabulary learning requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing not only the meaning of words but also their spelling, pronunciation, grammatical properties, connotations, morphological variations, and semantic relationships (Ghalebi, Sadighi, & Bagheri, 2020).

To support and enhance vocabulary acquisition, learners must employ effective vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), which are integral to the broader category of language learning strategies (LLSs). Research on LLSs suggests that language aptitude alone is not sufficient for language success. Rather, it is the learners' effort and the specific strategies they use in acquiring and retaining vocabulary that play a significant role in their ability to master the language (Alahmad, 2020). Therefore, understanding and utilizing these strategies is essential for improving vocabulary skills and overall language proficiency.

The studies on strategies for vocabulary learning have evolved, as demonstrated by the large volume of recent research (e.g., Alahmad, 2020; Aljasir, 2025; Al-Khresheh & Al-Ruwaili, 2020; Behforouz & Ghaithi, 2022; Chiew & Ismail, 2021; Ghalebi et al., 2020; Riyantika et al., 2024; Son & Ly, 2024; Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023). However, these studies reveal inconsistencies regarding the intensity and effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs). Despite the wealth of research on this topic, there is a need for a comprehensive review to resolve these inconsistencies, synthesize the findings, and identify areas that require further investigation.

This review explores the classification of VLSs as proposed by influential scholars widely cited in the field. The aim is to examine the intensity of VLSs use among EFL and L2 learners in academic settings, particularly in Asian countries where English is taught as an L2. To provide deeper insights, the review includes empirical studies from 2020 to 2024 on VLSs usage, learner-based factors influencing VLSs use, and the impact of explicit vocabulary instruction on VLSs implementation. It is hypothesized that learners use a variety of VLSs with varying degrees of intensity, influenced by several key individual factors. Specifically, the review posits that motivation, age, language proficiency level, and the presence of explicit vocabulary instruction significantly impact the choice and

frequency of VLS use. Initiative-taking learners and those with higher language proficiency are expected to employ metacognitive and cognitive strategies more frequently and effectively. Similarly, older learners or those with more academic experience may rely more on strategic vocabulary learning approaches. Furthermore, the integration of explicit vocabulary teaching is hypothesized to enhance the use and effectiveness of specific strategies, particularly those that involve deeper processing. These hypotheses are formulated to guide the review of how individual and instructional variables shape strategy use and vocabulary acquisition outcomes.

The methodology for this review is structured in three phases: first, identifying relevant research articles; second, screening the abstracts of articles aligned with the review's scope; and third, conducting an intensive reading of the full articles. For identifying articles, a scope for the initial review and search strategy was determined, where the search term included 'VLSs' and 'EFL' using ERIC and Google Scholar databases.

Literature Review

Definition of VLSs

Vocabulary learning strategies play a crucial role in helping learners acquire and retain innovative words effectively. According to Qiufang (2003 as cited in Bai, 2018), learning strategies are defined as behaviors or actions that learners use to enhance the effectiveness of their learning. This definition emphasizes that the purpose of using strategies is to improve learning; strategies are actions or behaviors, not just thoughts. Therefore, vocabulary learning strategies can be defined as the behaviors or actions learners use to make vocabulary acquisition more effective. Other researchers have shown that vocabulary learning strategies are specific actions or techniques employed by learners to acquire new vocabulary. These strategies can range from simple methods, like rote memorization and repetitive practice, to more advanced techniques, such as using mnemonics, contextual learning, or multimedia resources. The effectiveness of these strategies varies significantly among learners, depending on factors such as individual learning styles, motivation, and prior knowledge (Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini, 2024).

Classifications of VLSs

The classification of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) has been a major area of research in second language acquisition. Various scholars have proposed different frameworks for categorizing these strategies based on their approaches to vocabulary retention, recall, and use. This section reviews the key contributions of several researchers and their classifications of VLSs.

Influential scholars in the 1990s have proposed VLSs in numerous ways (Oxford, 1990; Schmit, 1997 & Nation, 1997 as cited in Son & Ly, 2024). In 1990, Rebecca Oxford

introduced Oxford's Taxonomy of Language learning strategies, a system that categorizes language learning strategies into cognitive strategies, which include methods like memory techniques; metacognitive strategies, which relate to planning and self-assessment; and social/ affective strategies, which involve activities such as seeking for help and coping with emotional elements such as anxiety during the learning process. Schmit, in 1997, categorized strategies into two broad types, discovery and consolidation strategies, and designated VLSs into five groups: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Learners employ Determination strategies without the assistance of others to figure out the meaning of a word by using strategies such as word class strategies, analyzing word components, guessing word meaning from context, and using a dictionary. For social strategies, learners can learn innovative words through interaction with others. Memory strategies involve imagination, group words, and collocation. Metacognitive describes how learners monitor, decide, and self-assess their learning process. Paul Nation introduced the taxonomy of vocabulary acquisition in 1997. It comprises of discovering meaning, consolidating form, and meaning, and using a word in context.

Gu and Johnson (1996) divide VLSs into four categories: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation. According to them, metacognitive strategies are to recognize fundamental words for comprehension. Learners then look for strategies, methods, and techniques to learn these words appropriately. Learners apply several strategies to find out the meaning of the words. Cognitive strategies involve guessing, using a dictionary, and note-taking. Memory strategies relate to transferring a newly learned word from short to long-term memory and determining pronunciation and meaning. To make word lists, pay attention to pronunciation, code using visual and verbal clues, and revise are required. Activation strategies allow learners to apply innovative words in various situations.

According to Akbari and Tahririan (2009), VLSs are classified into two main groups: first, strategies for discovering the meaning of an innovative word (comprehension strategies), and second, strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered (learning/acquisition strategies). Comprehension strategies include determination strategies and transactional strategies. Determination strategies are further divided into three main sub-strategies: guessing a word's meaning from context, word analysis, and finding meaning from a dictionary. About transactional strategies, since asking for the meaning from teachers or classmates was not the method through which words were learned in social interactions, this strategy is referred to as a transactional strategy.

More recently, Hashemi and Hadavi (2015) attempted to investigate the VLSs among 185 Iranian medical science learners of English as a foreign language. They identified eight VLSs use categories: dictionary use, guessing, memory, study preference, autonomy, note taking, selective attention, and social strategies.

Overall, the classifications emphasize dissimilar stages of vocabulary learning, from discovering meanings and consolidating knowledge to using words effectively in context. Strategies vary from cognitive and metacognitive to social and memory-focused techniques, with some emphasizing independent learning and others promoting interaction with peers or instructors.

Empirical Research on VLSs

Researchers from different countries have studied the VLSs used by L2 or EFL learners while learning new vocabulary and the factors affecting or influencing their language acquisition from the past two decades until now. Therefore, it is impossible to address all existing studies in just one paper. This section selectively reviews recent studies, specifically from Asian countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia, where English is learned as a foreign or second language published from 2020 onward. The selection of studies employed these criteria: 1) the studies were conducted in educational contexts regarding VLSs, 2) the studies involved vocabulary in English learning, and 3) the studies primarily related to English language learning as an L2 or a foreign language in Asian countries.

Research on VLSs Use

A huge body of studies have been done to explore what VLSs were employed while learners learning new vocabulary in academic contexts and mostly used a questionnaire regarding VLSs and an interview as an approach to find out the investigation. According to Zuhairi and Mistar (2023), the studies may be classified into two main categories: attempting to classify the type of VLSs and measure the extent of use of these strategies and assessing the relationship between VLSs and vocabulary mastery. This section reviews research among the first categories.

Several studies over recent years have explored vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) across diverse learner populations, revealing variations in strategy use and effectiveness. In 2020, Al-Khresheh and Al-Ruwaili (2020) conducted a study on a group of 219 male and female Saudi learners of English to determine their uttermost favorite VLSs using a vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire consisting of 42 items. All participants were from the English department. The results of descriptive statistics revealed that memory strategies were the most preferable, while determination, social and metacognitive strategies were used moderately and ranked in the middle. Cognitive strategies were reported as the least used strategies among the participants. The

researchers explained that mnemonic tools for vocabulary learning are effective. They consist of methods such as creating acronyms, associating innovative words with images, synonyms, and other keywords. These methods assist language learners in linking innovative words together in their minds.

In the same year, Ghalebi et al. (2020) examined a sample of 218 EFL students on BA, MA, and Ph.D. s of English language studies at an Iranian university to find out if learners with diverse levels of academic degrees differ in using VLSs. Open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires on VLSs were applied as the research instrument. Results based on quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed that undergraduate and postgraduate students significantly differed in their usage of VLSs, but there was no significant difference between MA and Ph.D. students in VLSs use. Regarding the most frequently used VLSs, it found that postgraduate students used metacognitive strategies the most, while determination and memory strategies were found to be the most frequently used strategies by undergraduate students.

Also in 2020, Alahmad (2020) investigated VLSs and their relation to vocabulary size in 41 Saudi female undergraduate EFL learners using a questionnaire to measure the frequency of VLSs use and a vocabulary test size. Results showed that although the learners used 17 strategies with a high frequency, 14 of 16 items of VLSs correlated negatively with vocabulary size, implying that the more the learners used these strategies, the less their vocabulary mastery would be.

Moving to 2021, Thiendathong and Sukying (2021) investigated VLSs used by 491 Thai high school students in science, language, and English programs, compared the use of VLSs between these programs of study, and examined the relationship between different strategies. Two instruments, a 47-item questionnaire of VLSs and a semi-structured interview, were used. All participants were assigned to complete the questionnaire, but only 21 were selected for the interview session to collect qualitative data. The results indicated that determination strategies such as using a dictionary were used the most frequently. By contrast, memory strategies were employed the least. Regarding the use of VLSs between different study programs, it showed that the English program participants outperformed the science and language program participants in all VLSs. In terms of the relationship between VLSs, the results revealed a significant positive relationship among all VLSs, indicating that the participants are likely to use more than one strategy when learning vocabulary and may use all types of VLSs to acquire and learn vocabulary. Building on this, Wahyudin et al. (2021) supported similar findings through research involving 120 non-English major participants, who used cognitive strategies the most frequently. In other words, the participants use innovative words in a sentence to remember them from time to time.

In 2022, Behforouz and Ghaithi (2022) explored the VLSs use of 42 Omani college students learning English as a foreign language. To collect the required data, a VLSs questionnaire was employed. The analysis of the data revealed that cognitive strategies were highly employed by the Omani EFL students, followed by determination strategies, memory strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies, respectively.

In 2023, Altalhab (2023) investigated the VLSs used by Saudi university students during their pair work. The participants were 40 Saudi male undergraduate students studying English as their major. Reading comprehension with multiple-choice questions and reading comprehension with filling in the gap were used as research instruments, and all the pairs' conversations were audio recorded. The results from examining the data and the transcripts of the pairs' conversations showed that the students used three main strategies to find the meaning of the new word during their pair work, i.e., using a dictionary, guessing the definition of a word from context, and asking for help from another student. In terms of preferences, it was found that using a dictionary was the most frequent strategy used, followed by guessing the meaning of a word, and the least used was asking the other student for their help with the meaning of unknown words. The researcher pointed out that the students preferred to use a resource that would lead them to the direct meaning of unknown words rather than guessing or asking another student. So, many students used their mobile phones to find word meanings.

Also in 2023, Ueno and Takeuchi (2023), by contrast, examined which VLSs are perceived as important and useful and how they are used by Japanese university students learning English as a foreign language. The researchers also investigated if higher and lower proficiency groups of students' perceptions and use of strategies vary. The participants were 40 first– to fourth-year Japanese students at three private universities in Japan studying English as their major. The participants were divided into two groups of higher (16) and lower (24) proficiency based on their English qualification. To measure the students' use of VLSs, an open-ended questionnaire was employed. The findings indicated that cognitive strategies related to word form, sound, association learning, and metacognitive strategies were perceived as important and useful and were employed frequently. Results from the two proficiency groups showed that the higher-proficiency group perceived metacognitive strategies as important, but these were not found in the lower-proficiency group.

In the same year, Zuhairi and Mistar (2023) examined the types of VLSs, the intensity of use, and their relationship with the vocabulary mastery of Indonesian EFL learners. The participants were 180 English education department students from three universities in Indonesia. A 50-item VLSs inventory and a 50-item vocabulary mastery were used as instruments and given to all participants. To categorize the VLSs use, Principal

Component Analysis (PCA), together with descriptive and correlational analyses, were employed. Six categories of VLSs, including cognitive, metacognitive, determination, memory, encoding, and activation strategies, were revealed in the study. It found that the students applied VLSs at a moderate level, with metacognitive and encoding strategies being employed the most and cognitive strategies being used the least. The six categories of strategies were significant predictors of vocabulary mastery, with metacognitive strategies being the best predictor.

All the above studies demonstrate that VLSs were applied by learners of English as a foreign language of different academic levels, ranging from high school to Ph.D., but with different frequencies of usage. Methodologically, these studies employed a range of approaches, questionnaires (Alahmad, 2020; Al-Khresheh & Al-Ruwaili, 2020; Behforouz & Ghaithi, 2022; Ghalebi, Sadighi, & Bagheri, 2020; Ueno & Takeuchi, 2023), questionnaire and interview (Thiendathong & Sukying, 2021), reading comprehension with multiple-choice questions and reading comprehension with filling in the gap (Altalhab, 2023) and VLSs inventory and vocabulary mastery (Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023). Despite the methodological diversity, these studies revealed the EFL learners' employing of VLSs in learning English vocabulary.

Research on Learner-Based Factors Influencing VLSs Use

Several learner-based factors have been found to have an impact on VLSs use in second or foreign language learning contexts, such as motivation (Lee, Ahn, & Lee, 2022), gender differences (Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini, 2024), critical thinking skills (Soleimani, Aghazadeh, & Bolou, 2024), and proficiency level (Aljasir, 2025). This section reviews the effects of the aforementioned factors on VLSs use in that order.

Lee et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between language learning motivation, VLSs, and two components of second language vocabulary knowledge, i.e., vocabulary size and depth. 185 secondary-level Korean learners of English as a foreign language were given a questionnaire regarding their motivation (intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation) and VLSs use examining through 23-item VLSs questionnaire. Vocabulary size was assessed using Nation and Beglar's bilingual version of the Vocabulary Size Test, and vocabulary depth was assessed using the Word Association Test adapted from that of Read's. The results revealed that motivation directly predicted VLSs and vocabulary knowledge and indirectly predicted vocabulary knowledge via VLSs. Additionally, it was found that intrinsic motivation had a stronger influence on the use of VLSs and vocabulary knowledge than extrinsic motivation.

Riyantika et al. (2024) explored VLSs in learning innovative words for EFL learners regarding gender differences. The participants were 30 male and female students investigated through a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and a semi-structured

interview. The results revealed differences in preferences in students' approaches to learning innovative words, representing wider cognitive and social learning patterns. Male students prefer visual and logical techniques, such as utilizing dictionaries, visual aids, and spaced repetition. These methods align with their visual-spatial learning style and their organized approach to memory retention. On the other hand, female students are more inclined towards social and contextual strategies, like collaborative learning, mnemonics, and digital tools, which complement their tendency for interactive and associative learning.

According to Soleimani et al. (2024), critical thinking is widely regarded as an essential concept in teaching and learning. Based on this, they conducted research to investigate the association between EFL learners' critical thinking capabilities and their VLSs across gender. The participants were a total of 140 Iranian male and female intermediate students from the Iran Language Institute in Urmia, Iran. The study used a survey approach, collecting data through the Preliminary English Test (PET) to homogenize students, Schmitt's VLSs questionnaire to identify the strategies they used, and Ennis' Cornell Critical Thinking Test to assess their critical thinking abilities. The study found a positive correlation between critical thinking and VLSs among Iranian EFL students, with male learners outperforming females in both areas. These findings support previous research showing that advanced critical thinking skills enhance vocabulary learning and that students with strong critical thinking abilities use a variety of learning strategies. The gender differences observed may be influenced by teaching methods and classroom culture, highlighting the importance of individual learning styles and preferences.

Aljasir (2025) examined 60 Saudi EFL learners' VLSs use based on their proficiency level using a demographic and background questionnaire, the think-aloud protocol, and a semi-structured interview. The learners were divided into two groups of beginner and advanced proficiency levels. The findings showed that beginner learners relied on basic memory and cognitive strategies, such as repetition, rote memorization, and bilingual dictionaries, which helped them achieve quick results and build foundational vocabulary. In contrast, advanced learners utilized more sophisticated strategies, like monolingual dictionaries, contextual guessing, and morphological analysis, which fostered a deeper understanding and long-term retention of new vocabulary.

In summary, motivation, gender, critical thinking capability, and language proficiency significantly affect how learners use vocabulary learning strategies. To highlight the findings of the above reviews, intrinsic motivation strongly influenced vocabulary learning strategies use and vocabulary knowledge, while extrinsic motivation had a weaker effect. Motivation directly predicted VLSs use and vocabulary knowledge. Male and female learners showed different preferences in VLSs use. Males favored visual and logical strategies (e.g., dictionaries, visual aids), while females preferred social and contextual

strategies (e.g., collaborative learning, mnemonics). Beginner learners relied on basic memory strategies like repetition and rote memorization, whereas advanced learners used more complex strategies, such as contextual guessing and morphological analysis, leading to deeper understanding and long-term retention. A positive correlation was found between critical thinking and VLSs use. Male learners outperformed females in both areas, suggesting that critical thinking skills enhance vocabulary learning and the use of diverse strategies.

Research on Explicit Instruction of VLSs

Recent research has highlighted the effectiveness of explicit instruction in vocabulary learning strategies for enhancing vocabulary acquisition and usage in English as a foreign language context. Studies by Nshiwi (2020) found that explicit instruction outperforms implicit methods in enhancing learners' vocabulary knowledge. These studies emphasize the value of explicit teaching approaches in improving vocabulary competence and reading skills among EFL learners. Similarly, Al-Ghazo and Ta'amneh (2022) as well as Choo and Ng (2024) demonstrate that targeted instruction through various platforms, such as MOOCs and video conferencing, leads to significant improvements in vocabulary usage and reading comprehension. The following section gives more details of these studies.

Nshiwi (2020) explored the impact of memory and cognitive strategies on vocabulary acquisition within the context of teaching English as a foreign language. It specifically examines the short-term effects of these strategies and investigates how EFL teachers incorporate them into their teaching, whether through implicit, explicit, or a combination of both methods. Using a mixed-methods approach, two primary tools were employed: a questionnaire to assess the memory and cognitive strategies used by both EFL teachers and intermediate learners and a vocabulary test to evaluate the effect of these strategies on vocabulary learning. The study involved a sample of 36 intermediate learners, divided into experimental (15 students) and control (21 students) groups, along with 30 EFL teachers. The data were analyzed descriptively and analytically. Results indicate that explicit instruction of memory and cognitive strategies significantly enhance vocabulary learning compared to implicit instruction.

Al-Ghazo and Ta'amneh (2022) came up with a similar finding in research examining the effect of implementing the contextual guessing strategies on improving the vocabulary competence and reading comprehension of sixty EFL learners enrolled in two classes of English courses, advanced reading, and summarizing. They were divided into two groups, 30 in the control group and 30 in the experimental group. The instruments were a 50-item vocabulary level test, which was used as a pre- and post-test for both groups, and a reading comprehension test. The experiment group was instructed with the procedures and ways of contextual guessing strategies: definition, similarity, restatement, surrounding

words, and punctuation marks. The study results showed a significant difference in learners' vocabulary competence and reading comprehension achievements between the control and experimental groups due to the treatment.

Choo and Ng (2024) examined the effects of online diversities on VLSs and vocabulary usage in writing via an open online course (MOOC) and video conferencing platforms. 94 undergraduate ESL learners majoring in sciences and arts and humanities were divided into two groups: MOOC group (50) and video conference group (44). 50 learners completed a five-week VLSs course on a MOOC, while 44 students learned from the instructor using Microsoft Teams. Data were analyzed through questionnaires and learners' compositions. The results from Lextutor's version of lexical frequency profiling and descriptive and inferential statistics showed a significant increase in usage in all categories of the VLSs (context clues, word formation, dictionary skills, mnemonics, and meta cognitive strategies) after the course for both groups. Furthermore, the effects of VLSs instruction on vocabulary usage could be reflected in both groups' writing.

Conclusions and Discussion

Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) have been a key area of research in second language acquisition, with various scholars proposing different classifications. These classifications include strategies such as metacognitive strategies (planning and self-assessment), cognitive strategies (memory techniques and note-taking), social strategies (interaction with others), discovery strategies (guessing meanings and using a dictionary), consolidation strategies (consolidating form and meaning), determination strategies (figuring out word meaning independently), activation strategies (applying new words in context), comprehension strategies (understanding new words), and learning/acquisition strategies (consolidating and retaining words). Each classification offers insights into the different approaches learners use to acquire and retain vocabulary effectively.

A review of empirical studies shows that recent research on VLSs has mainly focused on three key areas: the frequency or preference of use, the connection between VLSs and vocabulary proficiency, and the factors influencing VLS use, for example motivation, gender differences, proficiency level, critical thinking skills, and explicit vocabulary instruction. These topics are essential to current research and are likely to remain important in future studies. Considering these findings, future studies should examine underexplored learner-based variables, such as learning styles, self-regulation, language awareness, or digital literacy, and how these factors influence VLS usage and effectiveness. Further research should also investigate how learners respond to explicit instruction in VLSs, including whether this enhances long-term vocabulary retention and reading comprehension.

In the context of Thailand, English is considered a foreign language and holds a fundamental role as a core subject at all educational levels. According to Cheiw and Ismail (2021), achieving academic success requires learners to know and use appropriate vocabulary. In contrast, a lack of vocabulary recognition or expansion can slow down the learning process in a second language (L2), making it harder to understand the language flow. Building on this, explicit instruction in VLSs has been shown to be more effective than implicit approaches in enhancing both vocabulary competence and reading proficiency among EFL learners. In the context of VLSs, cognitive strategies focused on word form and associative learning, as well as metacognitive strategies, were identified by Japanese university students as particularly valuable. Furthermore, among the six categories of VLSs employed by Indonesian learners, metacognitive strategies emerged as the strongest predictor of vocabulary mastery (Al-Ghazo & Ta'amneh, 2022; Choo & Ng, 2024; Nshiwi, 2020; Ueno & Takeuchi, 2023; Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023). Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process for EFL learners, it is recommended that Thai teachers explicitly introduce various effective VLSs, such as cognitive and metacognitive strategies, in classrooms to help students become familiar with and confidently use these strategies.

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