

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**



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**A STUDY OF LEARNING ENGLISH
VOCABULARY OF PUPILS
AT QUOC HOC HIGH SCHOOL
IN QUI NHON**

**Field: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Code: 60.22.15**

**M.A. THESIS IN
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(A SUMMARY)**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE

Learning a second language involves the manipulation of four main skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. One crucial factor in all four skills that underlies the success of second language acquisition is the amount of vocabulary one possesses.

With regard to learning vocabulary, up to present, very few empirical research have been carried out exclusively to investigate what types of learning strategies pupils employ in order to deal with learning foreign language vocabulary.

To compensate for this, we need to develop an English Vocabulary Lists for high schools to raise students' awareness of how words are formed and related to each other, such as synonyms, antonyms, collocations and idiomatic uses of words. Nevertheless, teaching of vocabulary as a discrete topic or introducing the vocabulary learning strategies is still rare in Quoc Hoc High School. Therefore, it is high time to focus on learning English vocabulary of pupils at Quoc Hoc High School.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to investigate which Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies are most frequently used by the learners of English and their perceptions of the usefulness of the strategies. More importantly, the study enables the researcher to examine the features and behaviours of "good learners" by means of a think-aloud task and semi-structured interview. It was intended that the study would enhance teacher's understanding of the vocabulary acquisition among the learners so that adjustments could be made to vocabulary teaching as well as strategy training.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

One of the most difficulties pupils have in reading is about vocabulary. In addition, vocabulary has played an important role in their English language learning. The present investigation aims to fill this gap. The researcher decided to undertake a preliminary exploratory investigation which has been designed to examine types of strategies pupils report employing in order to deal with new vocabulary items based on questionnaires and oral interviews. For this reason, I choose to do research on the topic "*A Study of Learning English Vocabulary of Pupils at Quoc Hoc High School in Qui Nhon*".

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Aims

The study is expected to investigate the pupils' perceptions and their actual use of learning English vocabulary strategies and to increase their vocabulary size and enrich the words they already know.

1.4.2 Objectives

This study is intended:

- to investigate the opinions of the pupils at Quoc Hoc High School on learning English vocabulary and the actual vocabulary learning in Quoc Hoc High School.
- to see if there is a significant difference between the use of strategies by high achievers and other participants in the study.
- to suggest some implications for English teaching and learning.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Which discovery strategies and consolidation strategies do the tenth form pupils and the high achievers use most frequently?
2. Which discovery strategies and consolidation strategies do the tenth form pupils and the high achievers perceive as most useful?

3. Is there a significant difference between the use of strategies by high achievers and other participants in the study?
4. How do the high achievers in Quoc Hoc High School perceive vocabulary learning?

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study includes five chapters:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Chapter 3 Methodology

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Implications

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES

2.1.1 Gu and Johnson's research

Gu and Johnson aimed to establish the vocabulary learning strategies used by learners of English and the relationship between their strategies and outcomes in learning English. They asked 850 sophomore non-English majors at University to complete a vocabulary learning questionnaire in order to elicit students' beliefs about vocabulary learning and their self-reported vocabulary learning strategies.

2.1.2 Schmitt's research

Schmitt conducted a large-scale investigation on the relationships between strategy use and perceived usefulness of these strategies. He surveyed a sample of 600 Japanese students to access which vocabulary learning strategies the learners actually used and how helpful they believed them to be.

2.1.3 Fan's research

Recently, Fan launched the largest scale project ever conducted in Hong Kong concerning the learning of English vocabulary by Cantonese speakers. With the aim of examining the frequency of use of vocabulary learning strategies, learners' perceived usefulness of the strategies, and the actual usefulness of the strategies, Fan included 1,067 university entrants in her study who had recently been offered places by the seven local institutions of higher education.

Two more studies at Danang University such as Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong (2001) with "A study of common context clues for deducing word meanings in written discourse" and Pham Thi Thanh Thuy with "The use of contextual clues for inferring word meaning by students at Danang College of Technology" have been carried out, both of which prove that this approach draws much attention from many researchers.

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1 Background of language learning strategies

The term "strategy" is of military origin where it refers to carefully designed plans for military operations [33, p.7]. When applied to a non-military setting like school learning, the strategy concept has been taken on a new meaning and has been transformed into *learning strategies*. In 1985, Gagne first defined learning strategies as the control or executive processes that oversee the whole process of information processing [17, p.9].

2.2.2 Taxonomy of language learning strategies

The term "learning strategy", was defined by Wenden and Rubin in their valuable work in the late eighties. Table 2.1 shows chronologically how the term evolved in our field through the years.

Table 2.1 Defining language learning strategies [7, p.32]

Authors	What are LLS?	What are LLS for?
Rubin	techniques or devices	to acquire knowledge

[16, p.43]		
Bailystok [2, p.76]	methods/conscious enterprises	for exploiting available information to increase the proficiency of L2
Naiman et al. [10, p.2]	general, more or less deliberate approaches to learning	
Cohen [4, p.110]	mental operations	to accomplish learning tasks
Rubin [17, p.19]	set of operations, steps, plans, routines what learners do	to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, & use of information; to regulate learning
Wenden [22, p.6]	- learning behaviours - strategic knowledge - knowledge about learning	to learn and regulate the learning on an L2
O'Malley & Chamot [13, p.1]	special thoughts or behaviours	to help comprehend, learn, or retain new information
Oxford [14, p.8]	specific actions	to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations

2.2.2.1 *O'Malley and Chamot's classification of language learning strategies*

They divided learning strategies into three major types: namely metacognitive, cognitive and social / affective [32, p.43].

2.2.2.2 *Oxford's classification of language learning strategies*

Oxford summarized the features of language learning strategies in the following table.

Table 2.2: Features of language learning strategies [33, p.9]

Language learning strategies	
1.	Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
2.	Allow learners to become more self-directed.
3.	Expand the role of teachers.
4.	Are problem-oriented.
5.	Are specific actions taken by the learner.
6.	Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
7.	Support learning both directly and indirectly.
8.	Are not always observable.
9.	Are often conscious.
10.	Can be taught.
11.	Are flexible.
12.	Are influenced by a variety of factors.

2.2.2.3 *Schmitt's classification of vocabulary learning strategies*

Schmitt's taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies is organized in two groups: Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies.

2.2.3 The mental lexicon

2.2.3.1 *Form and meaning*

Words are not unconnected lists of discrete items in the mental lexicon. On the contrary, a vocabulary base contains subsets of words

which are linked together on either semantic or morphological grounds [2, p.34].

2.2.3.2 Phonological and semantic networks

The information of word forms and word meanings is phonologically and semantically arranged in networks for storage and retrieval [11, p.44]. The proportion of semantically or phonologically related words will probably depend on learners' proficiency. Advanced L2 learners are more likely to use semantic strategies in word association tasks, whereas beginners of L2 learning are more likely to make phonological or orthographic associations.

2.2.3.3 Schemata

In fact, word knowledge is not isolated but interrelated with topic knowledge and world knowledge to form association networks in our brains. In the mental lexicon, schema, the combination of topic knowledge and world knowledge could be considered kinds of mental models that help humans simplify and understand experiences [29, p.62].

2.2.3.4 L1 and L2 mental lexicon

Similar to the L1 learner, the L2 learner may also have more or less organized knowledge of paradigmatic relationships between words that share features of meaning and / or form, and of syntagmatic relationships between words that co-occur in language use [20, p.3].

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 SUBJECTS

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 Vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire

3.2.2 Think-aloud vocabulary task

3.2.3 Semi-structured interview

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 PUPILS' USE OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

Research Question 1

Which Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies do the tenth form pupils and the high achievers use most frequently?

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference between the use of strategies by high achievers and other participants in the study?

4.1.1 The most-used discovery strategies by the tenth form pupils

Table 4.1 Discovery strategies used by the tenth form pupils

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Guess its meaning from the context	168	84.0
2	Look up the word in a Vietnamese/English dictionary	163	81.5
3	Use an electronic or online dictionary	159	79.5
4	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning	155	77.5
5	Learn words from the mass media	147	73.5
6	Try to think of an English word that is similar	128	64.0
7	Look up the word in an English dictionary	126	63.0
8	Ask my teacher(s) for the meaning	118	59.0
9	Look at the parts of speech	108	54.0
10	Look for the clues in the word itself	92	46.0
11	Learn words from word lists or glossary	78	39.0

12	Ignore it	62	31.0
13	Learn words through ICQ or chat room communication	54	27.0
14	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET)	40	20.0

(Total number of respondents: 200)

4.1.2 The Most-used discovery strategies by the high achievers

Table 4.2 Discovery strategies used by the high achievers

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Guess its meaning from the context	18	90.0
2	Look for the clues in the word itself	15	75.0
3	Look up the word in an English dictionary	10	50.0
4	Learn words from the mass media	8	40.0
5	Look at the parts of speech	7	35.0
5	Look up the word in a Vietnamese/English dictionary	7	35.0
5	Learn words from word lists or glossary	7	35.0
8	Use an electronic or online dictionary	6	30.0
9	Ask my teacher(s) for the meaning	4	20.0
10	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET)	1	5.0
11	Try to think of an English word that is similar	0	0
11	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning	0	0
11	Ignore it	0	0

(Total number of respondents: 20)

4.1.3 The most-used consolidation strategies by the tenth form pupils

Table 4.3 Consolidation strategies used by the tenth form pupils

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Hear it spoken in English	139	70%
2	Divide the target word into syllables	137	69%
3	Study the spelling of the target word	134	67%
4	Use English words similar in sound	125	63%
5	Read it in a text	124	62%
6	Connect it to other English words on the same topic	101	51%
7	Put it in a sentence	89	45%
8	Study the word list	88	44%
9	Keep a vocabulary notebook	80	40%
9	Relate it to a visual image	80	40%
11	Use Vietnamese words similar in sound	73	37%
12	Study the word over time	70	35%

(Total number of respondents: 200)

4.1.4 The most-used consolidation strategies used by the high achievers

Table 4.4 Consolidation strategies used by the high achievers

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Connect it to other English words on the same topic	17	85%
2	Hear it spoken in English	15	75%

3	Divide the target word into syllables	14	70%
4	Study the spelling of the target word	13	65%
5	Relate it to a visual image	11	55%
6	Read it in a text	10	50%
7	Put it in a sentence	8	40%
8	Study the word list	4	20%
9	Use Vietnamese words similar in sound	3	15%
10	Use English words similar in sound	2	10%
10	Keep a vocabulary notebook	2	10%
11	Study the word over time	1	5%

(Total number of respondents: 20)

4.2 PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USEFULNESS OF THE STRATEGIES

Research question 2

Which Discovery Strategies and Consolidation Strategies do the tenth form pupils and the high achievers perceive most useful?

4.2.1 The most useful discovery strategies perceived by the tenth form pupils

Table 4.5 Perceived usefulness of the discovery strategies by the tenth form pupils

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Ask the teacher(s) for meaning	138	69.0
2	Look at the parts of speech	125	62.5
3	Look for the clues to meaning in the word itself	122	61.0
4	Look up the word in an English dictionary	119	59.5
4	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the	119	59.5

	NET)		
6	Use an electronic or online dictionary	115	57.5
7	Look up the word in a Vietnamese/English dictionary	113	56.5
8	Learn words from word lists or glossary	109	54.5
9	Learn words from the mass media	108	54.0
10	Guess its meaning from the context	104	52.0
11	Try to think of an English word that is similar	103	51.5
12	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning	89	44.5
13	Learn words through ICQ or chat room communication	74	37.0
14	Ignore it	49	24.5

(Total number of respondents: 200)

4.2.2 The most useful discovery strategies perceived by the high achievers

Table 4.6 Perceived usefulness of the discovery strategies by the high achievers

Ranking	Discovery Strategies	No.	%
1	Look up the word in an English dictionary	18	90
2	Ask the teacher(s) for meaning	16	80
3	Learn words from word lists or glossary	15	75
4	Guess its meaning from the context	12	60
5	Look for the clues to meaning in the word itself	10	50
6	Use an electronic or online dictionary	9	45
6	Look up the word in a Vietnamese/English	9	45

	dictionary		
6	Look at the parts of speech	9	45
9	Interact with native speakers (e.g. the NET)	6	30
10	Learn words from the mass media	4	20
11	Learn words through ICQ or chat room communication	3	15
12	Ask my classmates or peers for the meaning	1	5
13	Try to think of an English word that is similar	0	0
13	Ignore it	0	0

(Total number of respondents: 20)

4.2.3 The most useful Consolidation Strategies perceived by the tenth form pupils

Table 4.7 Perceived usefulness of the consolidation strategies by the tenth form pupils

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Keep a vocabulary notebook	129	64.9
2	Hear it spoken in English	128	64
3	Study the spelling of the target word	115	58
4	Divide the target word into syllables	111	56
5	Study the word list	105	52.5
6	Use English words similar in sound	103	52
6	Put it in a sentence	103	52
8	Connect it to other English words on the same topic	98	49
9	Study the word overtime	95	47.5
10	Read it in a text	92	46
11	Relate it to a visual image	85	43
12	Use Vietnamese words similar in	81	41

	sound		
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(Total number of respondents: 200)

4.2.4 The most useful consolidation strategies perceived by the high achievers

Table 4.8 Perceived usefulness of the consolidation strategies by the high achievers

Ranking	Consolidation Strategies	No.	%
1	Keep a vocabulary notebook	16	80
2	Study the word over time	13	65
3	Connect it to other English words on the same topic	12	60
4	Study the word list	11	55
5	Study the spelling of the target word	11	55
6	Divide the target word into syllables	10	50
6	Put it in a sentence	8	40
8	Use English words similar in sound	6	30
9	Hear it spoken in English	5	25
10	Read it in a text	3	15
11	Relate it to a visual image	1	5
12	Use Vietnamese words similar in sound	0	0

(Total number of respondents: 20)

4.3 THINK-ALOUD PROTOCOLS BY THE HIGH ACHIEVERS

4.3.1 Guessing from context

The following excerpt demonstrates how a high achiever made use of the linguistic and contextual clues to discover the target word meaning successfully.

Excerpt 1

Test word in context:

He was identified as John Ssabunnya, a boy who had disappeared three years earlier after his mother was murdered and his father went missing. John was only two years old when he vanished.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 10:

The first sentence describes the situation about the boy (John) and why he had disappeared. Because of his mother was killed and his father went missing. I think the word “vanish” means disappeared. Because it is mentioned in the first sentence. The second sentence repeats the first one.

Excerpt 2

Test word in context:

By the time the technician arrived, we had retrieved most of our lost data.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 13:

The word “retrieved” must be a verb because it is in past perfect tense. Usually “re-” means do again like “re-correction”. In this sentence, I think we have lost the data and we want to get back the data so we called the technician for help. I think “retrieved” means “get back”.

Excerpt 3

Test word in context:

Perhaps people tease you about your complexion – maybe you have freckles, or a few pimples.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 5:

I think “-ion” word ending represents a noun, for example, dictation, satisfaction... and after “your”...we should have a noun. Does it mean

something “complex” because I recognize the word “complex” or maybe there is something, a noun, there can make things complex.

Excerpt 4

Test word in context:

The theatre managed to boost its audiences by cutting ticket prices.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 19:

I have seen this word before, it means “increase” right? I think it’s a common sense if you cut price, the demand will increase. This is what we have learnt from the Econ lesson about Law of Demand, Demand and Supply.

Excerpt 5

Test word in context:

A feral child is a child who, from a young age, has lived with animals in the wild.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 2:

There is a pair of commas in this sentence. I think this is a non-defining relative clause because of the “who” and the commas. Actually, the part in the middle is not very important. And “fer-al” (feral) means somebody lived with animals in the wild.

Excerpt 6

Test word in context:

Although he sarled and bit the police, he was no match for them.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 13:

I think it is a verb, similar to “bite”. Does it mean “attack”?

Excerpt 7

Test word in context:

Although he **snarled** and bit the police, he was no match for them.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 8:

It may be related to the police. What is no match for them? Sorry, I don't know this word.

4.3.2 Use of dictionaries

Excerpt 8

Test word in context:

They never smiled or showed any interest in human **company**, and the only emotion that ever crossed their faces was fear.

Think-aloud protocol:

Pupil 1

"Company" is something to do with money and business, but it seems that ... it's not really business in this case. Can I check it in the dictionary?

Teacher

Sure! There are several dictionaries on the bookshelf.

Pupil 1

I see. Here... it means a group of people together... human company ... people...no, maybe this one is better. Being with somebody else and not alone? I enjoy Jo's company (the pupil is reading an example from the dictionary). I think this is better. "Company" means being with somebody and they do not like to stay with human. Am I correct?

4.4 HIGH ACHIEVERS' OPINIONS ABOUT VOCABULARY LEARNING

Research question 4

How do the high achievers in Quoc Hoc High School perceive vocabulary learning?

4.4.1 Importance of vocabulary learning

Excerpts 9 and 10 describe how the high achievers commented on vocabulary learning.

Excerpt 9

Pupil 1:

I think learning vocabulary is very important because I can have enough vocabulary to express myself. I sometimes find it difficult to express my ideas in writing compositions because I don't have a lot of vocabulary to use. I think the rating should be 8.

Excerpt 10

Pupil 5:

Of course, learning vocabulary is important for us but I think grammar is more important. I can use some simple words to express myself in composition but if I have poor grammar, others will not understand me. Can I say grammar and vocabulary are equally important? Vocabulary and grammar complement each other perfectly. I give them 7 out of 10.

4.4.2 What "knowing a word" means to the high achievers

4.4.2.1 Word meaning

Knowing a word means knowing the semantic value of a word and many of the different meanings associated with a word. The high achievers reported that remembering a corresponding Vietnamese equivalent was not effective and necessary as the equivalent in the first and second languages might not be identical. This claim is supported by the fact that most of the learners opted for monolingual dictionary when they faced with a new word or confirmed meaning.

4.4.2.2 Spelling and pronunciation

Excerpt 11

Semi-structured interview

Pupil 7

I think knowing a word means ... I know the meaning and the spelling of the word. For example, in the dictation, we need to know the spelling in order to get the marks. Sometimes, we need to know how to read the word but it can be quite difficult for me. I always find it hard to pronounce the last part of the word correctly, for example, shop-ped, want-ed. You told me the -ed ending can have different sounds depending on the part in front of it...

4.4.3 Lack of time spent on vocabulary learning

Excerpt 12

Semi-structured interview

Teacher: Do you think vocabulary learning is important?

Student 12: Yes, it is important because we need to know the word in order to understand things around us.

Teacher: Do you plan your vocabulary learning?

Student 12: No. In fact, I think I can learn the vocabulary naturally from the teachers, newspapers, TV... I don't need to plan it in order to learn it.

Teacher: How much time do you spend on learning vocabulary outside class?

Student 12: I'll say less than 1 hour. I am too busy and I won't spend time to revise English at home unless I have dictation or test.

To conclude, the interviewees thought that social VLS are more interesting but less practical than cognitive VLS. Although they preferred using social VLS, they still believed the cognitive VLS, which are more familiar to them, are more effective for their vocabulary learning.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I will first summarize major findings in the present study and present pedagogical implications of these findings. I will next spell out the areas in which this study has made contributions to existing knowledge on vocabulary learning strategies and the limitations of this study. I will finally offer suggestions as to the directions future research might take.

5.1 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

In response to the four research questions, the main findings are as follows:

1. Guessing followed by the use of the dictionary was the most commonly used Discovery Strategies for both the tenth form pupils and the high achievers.
2. To consolidate a word in memory, the tenth form pupils and the high achievers favoured strategies focusing on the spoken and written form of the word.
3. In general, the tenth form pupils believed that asking the teacher(s) for meaning was the most useful Discovery Strategy whereas the high achievers believed that using a monolingual dictionary was the most useful strategy to discover a new word meaning.
4. To enhance retention of a newly learnt word, all students unanimously agreed that keeping a vocabulary notebook was the most useful Consolidation Strategy.
5. In comparison with the use of strategies, it is found that there is no significant difference between the tenth form pupils and the high achievers. The only difference seems to be the high achievers would use more grouping strategy to consolidate new words.
6. There is convincing evidence that the high achievers recognized the importance of vocabulary and vocabulary learning. However, it is

disappointing to see that unlike the “good learners” in Ahmed’s study, the high achievers were not aware of their learning.

Although the findings might not be generalizable to all pupils at Quoc Hoc High School in Qui Nhon, possible pedagogical implications could be made for future reference.

5.2 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The first pedagogical implication is that more vocabulary learning strategies should be introduced to learners and strategy training is essential for learning. It may be beneficial for learners to choose their own learning strategies according to their characteristics such as proficiency and learning style.

Another pedagogical implication of this study is that learners and teachers should be mindful of the quality (or depth) of the vocabulary students learn in order to achieve basic success in EFL learning. Teachers and learners should reach a general consensus on the learning goal when designing the course or curriculum.

The results of the study shed light on the role of learners and learner responsibility. Recent research has demonstrated that learner initiative and independence are crucial factors to attain higher levels of achievement. In other words, the more learners are aware of how learning is best carried out, the better learning is likely to be. For example, learners should know what vocabulary to learn, learners should continue to increase their vocabulary size and enrich the words they already know. As a result, no matter what the teacher does or what the course book presents, ultimately it is the learner who does the learning. With this in mind, teachers should deal with vocabulary in systematic and principled ways to make sure that the learners get the most benefit from the time spent and provide a rich environment for them to learn vocabulary in and outside class time.

The conception of vocabulary as a dynamic complex of knowledge plus skill is especially important in the understanding of vocabulary learning strategies. If the task of vocabulary learning is multifaceted, different dimensions of the lexicon would demand different learning strategies, and strategies suitable for one dimension might not be suitable for another dimension.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This is an exploratory study of pupils’ learning English vocabulary. The data from the questionnaire, think-aloud tasks and the interviews were self-reported by the participants. Like any studies of a similar nature, there is always a question of how much self-reports reflect reality. Likewise, the protocols and interview data only provide insights into the possible strategic behaviour of the high achievers. Nevertheless, the anonymity of the questionnaire and the nature of the think-aloud tasks considerably reduced the possibility of false reports. Although the population size in the study was small, the findings of this study have highlighted preliminary indications of the vocabulary learning strategies used by the intermediate L2 learners and their perceptions of the usefulness of the strategies in the local context and enriched the research on vocabulary learning strategies. It would be beneficial to replicate this study on larger and different populations in order to examine the dynamic and complex nature of vocabulary acquisition among L2 learners.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

The current research investigated the most-used vocabulary learning strategies by the intermediate L2 learners and their perceptions of the usefulness of the strategies. More importantly, the study enabled the researcher to closely examine the use and perception of strategies by the high achievers. With a view to investigating whether language

proficiency is one of the crucial factors to vocabulary learning, it would be interesting if more research is carried out among the high achievers in other high schools.

In addition, vocabulary learning strategy research should also take cultural factors and pragmatic constraints into account and, rather than finding universal “good” strategies, aim to discover vocabulary strategies that suit different groups of learners with different backgrounds and ability. Methodologically, longitudinal designs are especially needed if vocabulary development as opposed to word list retention is of interest.

Furthermore, vocabulary acquisition research in the linguistics tradition has largely concentrated on vocabulary (target: what is to be learned; or product: what is learned) rather than acquisition (how is vocabulary learned, the learning / acquisition process). Most vocabulary acquisition research are experimental comparisons between some favoured strategies and various combinations of control techniques. In so doing, vocabulary researchers need a change of mentality, in that learners, especially experienced and successful ones, are capable of managing their own learning and choosing their own strategies. They should not be only on the receiving end. In other words, we need systematic studies of the natural processes of vocabulary learning in authentic foreign language learning situations with the aim of identifying the whole range of vocabulary learning strategies, finding out what works and what does not work, and what distinguishes the successful from the unsuccessful learners.

Obviously, there is still much to learn and explore in the field of vocabulary acquisition. It is important for the language learners and teachers to work collaboratively towards the same learning goal.