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THAI STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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Abstract
English is the most learned language by EFL learners in multilingual countries, including Thailand. To communicate with others in English fluently, students have to learn English vocabulary. Since learning English vocabulary is difficult, it can be overcome with suitable learning strategies. One research question to be answered in this research is "What are the learning strategies undertaken by Thai students to learn English vocabulary?" This mixed-method research employed a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to 18 Thai students, and the FGD interview was conducted via Zoom with 3 Thai students. The questionnaire contained 21 items of Likert-scale statements and two open-ended questions. The findings showed that the strategy they frequently use is the metacognitive strategy, while the strategy they rarely use is the memory strategy. It is recommended that future researcher interested in expanding this topic do extensive research to determine its trustworthiness and provide further information about the topic.

Keywords: English vocabulary, learning strategies, Thai students, vocabulary strategy

Introduction
The most used language in the world is English, and people's demand for learning is increasing. English contains four critical skills: speaking skills, listening skills, writing skills, and reading skills. To master those four critical skills, learners must learn vocabulary so they can communicate with one another fluently. Vocabulary is important in learning a foreign language (Ghalebi, Sadighi, & Bagheri, 2021). Learning vocabulary is useful for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL). It is shown that vocabulary is an important aspect to be studied in a second language or foreign language learning. This statement is supported by Barcroft (2015), who stated that vocabulary is the center of knowledge in language and communication toward each other. Ghalebi et al. (2021) mentioned that students could understand more skillful expressions through vocabulary. EFL or ESL students must know that learning vocabulary is vital for their future endeavors in the academic context. On the contrary, several learners are still not aware of the prominence of learning English vocabulary. The students who are not aware of the prominence of learning English vocabulary may be unenthusiastic in learning it (Syamsidar, Silalahi, Rusmardiana,

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Febriningsih, Taha, & Erniwati, 2023). It means that students may lose interest in learning English vocabulary.

In learning English vocabulary, it is crucial to have effective learning strategies (Tseng & Schmitt, 2008). By acknowledging the effective learning strategies for learning English vocabulary, the students can be more motivated and can easily understand English vocabulary so they can communicate with others and be successful in their academic achievement. In addition, effective learning strategies have a strong relationship to EFL or ESL students' performance (Ghalebi et al., 2021; Nugroho, 2016). Some strategies in learning vocabulary have been applied by the students, such as using a bilingual dictionary, studying the spelling, and asking their friends or teachers the meaning of some words they do not know (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997). By employing these strategies, EFL or ESL students can be more interested in learning vocabulary. Thai students also need the motivation to retain their interest in learning English vocabulary (Sek, Katenga, & Mushunje, 2021). Having a strong motivation to learn English vocabulary will also help the students learn the vocabulary rapidly and be more eager to learn it (Fontecha & Gallego, 2012; Laoli, 2021; Mahardika & Kuswandono, 2022).

As mentioned by Tayyebi (2021), English is the most used language by everyone around the world, and the number of users is increasing rapidly. Vocabulary becomes the core of language (Sasum & Weeks, 2018). To communicate with others successfully, we have to learn vocabulary. It is supported by Sari and Aminatun (2021), who stated that learning vocabulary is crucial in studying a foreign language. EFL or ESL learners must seriously learn English vocabulary (Wahyudin, Pustika, & Simamora, 2021). As in multilingual countries, English is the most used language by people in some aspects, especially in foreign language education. Therefore, learning vocabulary to communicate in a target language is essential.

Vocabulary learning is studying a group of words in a target language (Siriwan, 2007). Sari and Aminatun (2021) claimed that students who lack vocabulary would have difficulty communicating their understanding to others. Syamsidar et al. (2023) also agreed that learning vocabulary is critical for EFL or ESL learners, especially English learners. To be successful in learning vocabulary requires students' determination in the process of learning (Nugroho, 2016).

Finding students' strategies for learning English vocabulary is important because students can be more driven to follow the lesson and be more motivated to learn English vocabulary. Learning strategy means the students employ the plans and actions to assist them in expanding their language skills to master the target language (Pawlak, 2021). It is essential to acquire suitable learning strategies in learning a second language because these strategies come with an understanding of the structure and use of the target language (Wahyudin et al., 2021).

According to Oxford (1990), there are two types of learning strategies namely direct and indirect. Direct strategies contain memory and cognitive strategies. Meanwhile, indirect strategies consist of metacognitive and social strategies (Sihotang et al., 2017). Direct strategies are used to connect students' performances in the target language. It includes memory strategy and cognitive strategy. Memory strategy is used to help the students look back on and think back on the vocabulary of the target language (Ali, 2019). The students connect their learning process of new words by relating the students' previous knowledge about the words that they

never knew before. The students are asked to group the words to develop a meaningful process and explain the new words to empower the students' memories. A cognitive strategy is employed when the students are showing signs of progress in the language being learned. They are expected to reprise every new word by using it in their daily communication with others. They are also applying an effective method, such as asking someone to guide them if they find difficult words, or the students can use the dictionary to find similar words to the new words. They can also translate the new words from the target language into their native languages so they can understand them easily. Moreover, they can underline the important words when they read a text and note the meaning of the important words they find.

Indirect strategies are used to help the students engage in vocabulary development. The strategies consist of metacognitive strategy and social strategy. The students employ metacognitive strategies to assist them in regulating their performances in the target language. They must recall their background knowledge of the words they have learned. They also have to organize their vocabulary learning. The students must monitor themselves by analyzing their learning process of the target language. In addition, they have to evaluate their vocabulary learning process. Social strategy is applied to expand students' confidence and determination to actively practice their vocabulary learning process. They also have to interact with others in their circle (Silalahi & Widianingtyas, 2022).

Several researcher have already undertaken three previous studies about Thai students' strategies for learning English vocabulary (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Ghalebi et al., 2021; Sihotang et al., 2017). Ali, Bayad Jamal, and Anwar (2021) found their students' improvement at a private university in Kurdistan. They investigated the vocabulary learning strategies among students, and the results are that the strategies had an impactful connection with self-regulatory capacities in vocabulary learning. Ghalebi (2021) explored the differences between high and low-English vocabulary learning strategies among Iranian learners. The results explained that there was no difference in social strategies. However, this research explained the difference between high and low-English vocabulary learners in terms of the usage of determination, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Sihotang et al. (2017) explored learning strategies by Bengkulu University English Education Study Program students. The findings mentioned six strategies: determination strategy, metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, memory strategy, social (discovery) strategy, and social (consolidation) strategy.

Learning strategy is the most discussed topic in the previous studies. However, there has been limited research on Thai students' learning strategies, especially in learning English vocabulary, e.g., Suppasetseree, Suksan, and Saitakham (2008) and Ghalebi et al. (2021). Therefore, to fill the gap and offer further research on Thai students' strategies in learning English vocabulary, the current researcher attempted to answer one research question, "What are the learning strategies undertaken by Thai students to learn English vocabulary?" by analyzing the learning strategies that Thai students use to learn English vocabulary. Teachers are expected to help their students find suitable strategies for learning English vocabulary. This research provides implications for students, advisors, and future researcher interested in elaborating on this topic.

Method

This mixed-method research investigated Thai students' strategies to learn English vocabulary. A mixed method was used by combining qualitative and quantitative data and connecting the understanding of the phenomenon (Ary et al., 2009). To gain the data, a Likert-scale and open-ended questionnaire and an in-depth interview were used in this research. A Likert-scale questionnaire was adapted from Schmitt and McCarthy (1997). According to Dörnyei (2003), the Likert scale contains some statements that are connected to the participants and the participants are demanded to choose the best answer. This research also employed an open-ended question to give further information about the topic. There were 21 items of Likert-scale statements and two questions in the questionnaire.

Eighteen participants took part in this research by filling out the questionnaire, while three participants took part in the interview session. The three participants were chosen using purposive sampling by indicating from a particular community using a specific indicator (Ary et al., 2009).

The questionnaire was given to the participants with the help of their teacher and after the participants filled out the consent form and before answering the questionnaire. After the ss had finished analyzing the questionnaire data, an in-depth interview was conducted. Their teacher chose the three participants who participated in the interview session. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using English was employed in the interview session with the chosen participants.

The interview employed a semi-structured method using three stages (Aung et al., 2021). First, in the pre-interview stage, the researcher gave the Zoom link to the three participants through their teacher. Next, the researcher tried constructing their background knowledge by asking related questions. Second, during the interview stage, the researcher asked several questions to the participants by applying interview guidelines to help the researcher scan their answers. Third, in the post-interview stage, the researcher summarized their answers and analyzed them. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' privacy. The researcher recorded the interview, and the interview results were turned into transcription which helped the researcher analyze the data based on suitable theories.

Findings and Discussion

The results and discussion section will be divided into two main sections. The results section will cover data analysis that the researcher have gathered from the questionnaire and the interview with the participants.

Findings

The researcher attempted to answer one research question: what are Thai students' learning strategies to learn English vocabulary?

The data were obtained and discussed in the results and discussion section. The results of the Likert-scale questionnaire will also be presented in this section. The questionnaire shows the strategies undertaken by Thai students in learning English vocabulary. Both boys and girls took part in this research from a private Thai university. Eighteen participants filled out the questionnaire, and three joined the FGD session with the researcher.

Table 1. Interviewees' demographic information

Name	Gender	Age	Length of learning English until now
P1	Male	23	More than 6 years
P2	Male	23	More than 6 years
P3	Female	22	5 – 6 years

Table 1 shows the three confidential participants' demographic information. Three participants have different lengths of learning English until now which can affect their strategies in learning English vocabulary.

The questionnaire showed there were two learning strategies namely direct strategies and indirect strategies. Each strategy contains two strategies. Direct strategies include social and memory strategies, while indirect strategies include cognitive and metacognitive strategies. There are five scales in the questionnaire namely Never (N), Seldom (Se), Sometimes (So), Often (O), and Very Often (VO) in the questionnaire. The participants were asked to choose between the five scales that showed the best strategies for learning English vocabulary.

Table 2. Social strategy

Statements	N	Se	So	O	VO
Study the word with your classmates	0%	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	0%
Ask the teacher to check your definition	5.6%	16.7%	61.1%	11.1%	5.6%
Talk with native speakers	0%	11.1%	66.7%	16.7%	5.6%

Based on the questionnaire result, the participants tended to talk with native speakers to enhance their English vocabulary. Based on the interview session, P1 claimed that he talked to his friends in English, and if they did not understand how to explain things in English, they tended to switch to Thai because it was convenient and comfortable when talking to them in the mother tongue. In this case, they tend to code-switch to explain things they do not know in English in their mother tongue, Thai.

> *"It helps us to continue explaining things in English. I sometimes also ask my teachers if I find difficulties with the English vocabulary task that is given by the teachers. However, most of the time, I have to memorize a list of vocabulary by myself."* (P1)
>
> *"Sometimes, I share some of my English vocabulary with my friends. We exchange information about new words that we have, and we try to use new words that we just got in our daily conversation. It is interesting because we can get many new words from talking with my friends in English."* (P3)

Moreover, all three participants mentioned that they also talked to native speakers during their first year in college to increase their vocabulary. By talking to native speakers, they could gain new words and try to apply new words in their daily conversations. Moreover, they also mentioned that talking to native speakers helps them to boost their confidence in talking in English.

> *"During our first year in the university, we had some volunteers, mostly from Australia. We had, almost a year, a chance to speak to them and*

increase our vocabulary. Moreover, we also have Pastors from the US, so we can say that we have a good chance to speak with native speakers and we did it." (P1)

In the questionnaire, the researcher asked the eighteen participants about their strategies for learning English vocabulary. Two participants answered that they learned English vocabulary by talking to native speakers so they could improve their vocabulary.

Table 3. Memory strategy

Statements	N	Se	So	O	VO
Make a mental image of the word's meaning	22.2%	16.7%	38.9%	16.7%	5.6%
Connect the word to a personal experience	5.6%	11.1%	38.9%	27.8%	16.7%
Connect the word to other words with similar or opposite meanings	0%	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	0%
Group words together to study them	5.6%	22.2%	61.1%	11.1%	0%
Use new words in sentences	5.6%	11.1%	44.4%	38.9%	0%
Write paragraphs using several new words	5.6%	27.8%	38.9%	27.8%	0%
Study the sound of a word	5.6%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	5.6%
Say the new words aloud when you first meet them	11.1%	22.2%	33.3%	27.8%	5.6%

Based on the questionnaire result, the participants tended to use the memory strategy as their learning strategy to learn English vocabulary. It can be seen that most of the participants sometimes chose, indicating that most of the participants used this strategy.

In the interview session, all three participants also used this strategy. P3 mentioned that she connected new words to her personal experience during conversations with others and her writing assignments. P3 added that she usually created a fake scenario in her head and tried to use the new words in her scenario to connect the word with her personal experience. Like P3, P1 tried to use the new words in his daily life by finding similar situations and using the new words as often as possible.

"I also use new words that I just got in my writing assignments. Moreover, I also try to find the second form of them, in case I want to use them to tell the experience. Sometimes, when I find a new word, I try to find an explanation for it in the Cambridge dictionary. The dictionary usually provides more sentences that use the word so I try to imitate that." (P1)

In line with that, P2 mentioned that he usually tried to connect the new words to his personal experience by applying those words in his daily conversation and assignments, especially writing assignments as P1 and P3 did. He also tried to find the opposite meaning of a word.

Table 4. Cognitive strategy

Statements	N	Se	So	O	VO
Repeat the words aloud many times	0%	11.1%	61.1%	11.1%	16.7%
Write the words many times	0%	16.7%	50%	22.2%	11.1%
Make lists of new words	5.6%	22.2%	44.4%	27.8%	0%
Use flashcards to record new words	5.6%	22.2%	61.1%	11.1%	0%
Take notes or highlight new words in class	5.6%	11.1%	44.4%	38.9%	0%
Put English labels on physical objects	5.6%	27.8%	38.9%	27.8%	0%
Keep a vocabulary notebook	5.6%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	5.6%

Table 4 shows that most participants tended to use this strategy to learn English vocabulary. Most participants tended to repeat the words aloud many times, use flashcards to record new words, and keep a vocabulary book. This data was supported by the participants' answers in the interview session. The three participants mentioned that they sometimes repeated new words they got so they would get used to them.

> *"I have many ways to remember vocabulary and every time I get new words, I try to say them over and over again until I get familiar with them so I can use them in my daily life. For example, if I got the word 'increase', I will look up in the dictionary how to pronounce the word, I also find the meaning of it and the antonym of it."* (P1)

Moreover, the questionnaire result also shows that most participants tended to keep a vocabulary book. It is supported by P3's answer in the interview session. P3 added that she preferred writing the new words she had just found in a particular book. It helps her to remember the words better. She claimed that by doing that, every time she forgot those words, she would open the book and find the word.

> *"If I find new words, I usually write them in my book and try to find the meaning of those words so I use them to make sentences in my daily conversation and my assignments, especially writing assignments. It is beneficial for me in improving my English vocabulary."* (P3)

Although the questionnaire result showed that most participants tend to take notes or highlight new words in class, P1 and P2 showed their disagreements in the interview session.

> *"I sometimes read books, but I do not like to take notes, so whenever I find new words, I try to say the words aloud and use them in my daily conversation. In my opinion, it is easier and it is an effective way to learn English vocabulary."* (P1)
> *"Rather than writing new words that I find in a special book, I prefer to say the words aloud. I think it is quite beneficial for me because I can also learn to remember those words in my head."* (P2)

Some participants' responses to the open-ended questions also mentioned that they preferred to repeat the words aloud. However, other participants stated that they preferred to make lists of new words because it was easier to remember, using a method of memorizing ten words a day by writing those words in a book and applying them in daily conversation with friends. They also learned by repeating the words in the writing assignments and making sentences using those words.

Table 5. Metacognitive strategy

Statements	N	Se	So	O	VO
Use English language media (songs, movies, the internet)	0%	0%	16.7%	38.9%	44.4%
Test yourself with word tests	11.1%	5.6%	61.1%	22.2%	0%
Study new words many times	5.6%	11.1%	38.9%	22.2%	22.2%

Table 5 shows that all the participants agreed that English language media such as songs, movies, and the Internet helped them learn English vocabulary. Based on the interview session, the three participants also claimed they used English language media to learn English vocabulary.

> *"I use various sources to learn English vocabulary. I learned English from YouTube and TV series. There is also a good channel on YouTube that helps me learn English, especially in improving my vocabulary. When I watch that channel, I not only watch that for fun, but I also learn from that channel enjoyably. I also learned to speak from that channel. The host on that channel is a native speaker so he has clear pronunciation, and he speaks very well. Moreover, I also learn from TV series. I downloaded an application called Disney+ Hotstar that I have to pay for every month. It provides English subtitles and I use it to learn vocabulary."* (P1)
>
> *"I use a website called Cake. It is a website where you can learn English in a fun way. It provides several interesting sections such as quizzes, audio content, and lessons by the website. I can practice my reading skills, writing skills, listening skills, and speaking skills by following the instructions. I watch short videos carefully and as the video ends, I try to say the words again. It helps me to improve my vocabulary."* (P2)
>
> *"I use songs to improve my vocabulary; moreover, I love to sing so I think it is a win-win solution. I get to sing my favorite songs while learning vocabulary. It is easier to catch new words and it is easy to understand when I listen to a song."* (P3)

All the participants mentioned that they applied metacognitive strategies to improve their English vocabulary. They also mentioned several sources that could be used to improve English vocabulary. Moreover, in the questionnaire, several participants mentioned that songs and movies are the most effective ways to learn English vocabulary. They claimed that using English subtitles while watching movies was important.

Discussion

The researcher attempted to answer one research question: what are Thai students' learning strategies to learn English vocabulary?

The results of the questionnaire and the interview with the participants show that suitable learning strategies were crucial for EFL or ESL learners to learn English vocabulary. There were two types of learning strategies, namely direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies include memory and cognitive strategies, and indirect strategies include metacognitive and social strategies (Sihotang et al., 2017). Thai students used several language learning strategies to enhance their English vocabulary (Hadi et al., 2017).

The questionnaire and the interview results demonstrated that the participants tended to apply the metacognitive strategy. The metacognitive strategy includes planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process (Flora & Raja, 2019). In the metacognitive strategy, students also used English language media such as songs, movies, TV series, applications, websites, and any media to learn English vocabulary. The usage of English language media belongs to the metacognitive strategy. This is understandable since, nowadays, young learners are experiencing online learning (Visaltanachoti, C.; Viriyavejakul, C; Ratanaolarn, 2021). Mammadova (2019) investigates how English language media has influenced English vocabulary learning. Students found learning English vocabulary through English language media was easier than learning with their classmates or asking their teachers. They mentioned that they could also sharpen four English skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The social strategy was one of the strategies the students applied to learning English vocabulary. Flora and Raja (2019) explain that during the process of learning English vocabulary, students do not commonly learn by talking to their classmates or asking their teachers. The data revealed that since they could find everything online, they preferred to learn from the Internet. They mentioned that they sometimes spoke with native speakers since there were some volunteers from Australia and some Priests from the US.

Although they rarely use memory strategy nowadays, it is quite useful and effective in learning English vocabulary. This strategy helps the students learn new words by linking their previous information about the words (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997; Tseng & Schmitt, 2008). Since the current study participants were now in the second year of the English Language Program, they rarely applied this memory strategy. Memory strategy is suitable for the beginner (Sihotang et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, the participants mentioned that they rarely used cognitive strategies to learn English vocabulary. This strategy motivated students to study and practice their vocabulary. In learning English vocabulary, the students used flashcards or vocabulary notebooks. However, since they were now in the digital era, they rarely applied cognitive strategies to learn English vocabulary. The students tended to find more interesting and easy sources to learn English rather than take notes or use flashcards to remember the English vocabulary (see Sihotang et al., 2017).

Conclusion

This research investigated Thai students' strategies for learning English vocabulary. This research reveals how suitable learning strategies can encourage

Thai students to learn English vocabulary. This research mentioned that EFL or ESL learners must choose the best learning strategies to learn English vocabulary. Students rarely learn English vocabulary with their friends or ask their teachers. They tend to learn English vocabulary by reading English books, watching English movies or TV series, and using English language websites or applications. However, they mentioned that talking to native speakers could help them improve their English vocabulary. The finding suggests that social strategy could enhance their English vocabulary. Therefore, Thai show their interest in learning English vocabulary using indirect metacognitive and social strategies. They tend to use interesting learning strategies to increase their motivation to learn English vocabulary.

Learning English vocabulary should focus on improving students' list of English words. Therefore, students must have the right learning strategies. However, it is also necessary that teachers should also be able to choose the best learning strategies for their students. Classifying students' abilities helps teachers to understand what their students need so that they can help the students choose the right learning strategies. Teachers can help the students select suitable learning strategies by creating proper learning activities and materials, which can also lead the students to enhance their English vocabulary. Moreover, teachers should also actively ask what difficulties students face during the learning process. This research involved limited participants, so the results cannot be generalized to the general population of learners, including those in Indonesia. Therefore, future researcher interested in investigating a similar topic should use many participants so the results can be generalized and used in broader educational contexts.

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