

## The Study of Effective English Vocabulary Teaching to Develop Autonomy for Korean College Students

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This study examines the English vocabulary teaching to enhance students' autonomy and vocabulary ability. It also highlights the importance of positive affective aspects in language study. Three instruments were employed to collect data from students: vocabulary tests, questionnaires and self-reports. Rather than working with an experimental group and a control group, this study took place with an intact group inside a real class situation. It was conducted over one semester with 23 volunteer Korean college students. In this research, these vocabulary exercises were designed to develop learners' autonomy for English and called VEA which means 'vocabulary exercises for autonomy'. VEA were distributed 10 times at the beginning of the class. A *t*-test was used to compare the difference of the vocabulary pre- and post-test and the pre- and post-questionnaires on the affective aspects. The results show that VEA and class activities had a positive influence on the volunteer Korean college students. In particular, the students in the lower group achieved greater vocabulary proficiency than those in the higher group. According to self-reports, the Korean college students who participated showed more interest, had a better attitude towards the class, and had more self-confidence in English.

[vocabulary learning/autonomy/vocabulary exercises for autonomy/  
affective aspects/어휘 학습/자율성/주도적 어휘 연습/정의적 영역]

### I. INTRODUCTION

As reported by Meara (1980), vocabulary acquisition is considered a part of the psychology of second language learning. In previous years this had received short shrift from applied linguistics, and vocabulary acquisition was very largely neglected in the

research. For instance, studies in the 1970s and early 1980s focused more on syntax and morphology since error patterns and developmental sequences revealed some information regarding universals in languages and the acquisition of language according to Lightbown and Spada (2006). Likewise, Zimmerman (1997) points out that the teaching and learning of vocabulary was previously undervalued in second language acquisition research and methodology. However, since the 1990s, researchers have indeed started to realize that vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in second language learning for communicative syllabus design and language teaching. In fact, more recently, Schmitt (2010) asserts that the acquisition of vocabulary has become one of the most active and attractive areas in second language research (J. E. Kim & K. J. Lee, 2013; H. J. Nam, 2015; Nation & Coxhead, 2014; Nation & Webb, 2011).

Reflecting on the current state of research studies about vocabulary, it is not by chance that Korean researchers and instructors now pay attention to this field. However, the contexts of vocabulary studies and research in Korea are different from ESL situations where vocabulary learning occurs in a natural way. In Korea, EFL learners in Korea are dependent on classroom instruction. Naturally, it is impossible for a language teacher to teach every new word during the class. It is little wonder that Korean learners at the college level have difficulty in learning adequate English vocabulary.

Accordingly, this study investigates how to teach English vocabulary effectively and to develop autonomy for Korean college students. To do this research, a qualitative approach was taken with an intact group using self-reports and questionnaires. Additionally, statistics were used to measure the relationship between the pre and post vocabulary tests. Thus, this study included both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study addresses some of the lexical problems faced by Korean college level students. It aims for a better understanding of the learners' affective aspects of language learning and vocabulary proficiency, and underscores the value of autonomous self-study. This research may provide Korean EFL teachers and instructors with some useful effective pedagogic insights in order to develop autonomy and prepare English courses for more efficient and effective teaching and learning of vocabulary in an EFL context. It has also important significance in that it is rare in both vocabulary and autonomy studies.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Definition of Autonomy**

Autonomy has become one of the more prominent subjects in the recent theory and practice of language learning and teaching (Benson, 2001, 2013; Cotterall, 2008; Gao &

Lamb, 2011; Nation, 2013). According to Benson (2001), autonomy can be characterized as “the capacity to take control over one’s own learning” (Benson, 2001, p. 2) and defined “as a natural product of the practice of self-directed learning, or learning in which the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves” (Benson, 2013, p. 10). To put it more concretely, Benson (2001) explains:

The idea of autonomy currently appears to be in harmony with the need for skilled language learners within a global economy, it does not arise from these needs, nor is it dependent upon them. Autonomy is fundamentally concerned with the interest of learners, rather than the interests of those who require their skills. (p. 21)

In addition, Nation (2013) suggests the following three factors of autonomy: attitude, awareness and capability. These factors could be essential for autonomous vocabulary learners.

- 1) Attitude refers to the need for the learner to want to take control and responsibility for learning. This is one of the hardest aspects of autonomy to develop and yet it is the most crucial.
- 2) Awareness is the need for the learner to be conscious of what approaches are being taken, to reflect on their effects and to consider other approaches. Some writers on autonomy consider that all autonomous learning must involve metacognitive awareness.
- 3) Capability refers to the need for the learner to possess the skills and knowledge to be autonomous in a particular area of study. (pp. 583-584)

To explain autonomy in detail, Cotterall (2008) introduces several aspects of autonomy in current research. One aspect centers on measuring “the effectiveness of efforts to foster autonomous behavior” (Cotterall, 2008, p. 112). Furthermore, Gao and Lamb (2011) report that identity, motivation and autonomy are interrelated in language learning. These authors introduce fresh studies in a variety of contexts. Hence, a high priority is being placed on autonomy in language teaching and learning. There is still room for more research related to both autonomy and vocabulary.

## 2. Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

Vocabulary teaching means more than just introducing new words. One must also consider the context of the language learning. In addition, it is necessary to decide what

vocabulary will be selected for teaching and how it will be sequenced and presented. As Schmitt (2000) states, there is not just one good way to teach vocabulary because teaching vocabulary will rely on the type of student, the target words, the school programs and curriculum, and various other factors.

As is well known, instructors and researchers are constantly trying to find out better methodology for teaching vocabulary in the classroom. One of them, Friedman (2008) describes the effect of learner-centered reading and vocabulary tasks using authentic texts and the web as corpus. This study discusses the outcomes of an assignment in which Japanese university EFL learners used the Web as a living corpus to examine contexts and collocation of lexis. Using an online database, students in second and third year university with an English proficiency level ranging from intermediate to high intermediate, made a communal dictionary consisting of lexis and example sentences. They were culled from web sources, along with examples of their own devising. The author writes the following: “The language database was then used to facilitate peer teaching of lexis” (Friedman, 2008, p.126). The fact that it was task produced indicates that students concentrated on lexical form, function and meaning as they were compiling the dictionary. Despite these findings, there remain two basic limitations inherent in this approach. First of all, there was no long-term retention either of the vocabulary or of the study skills used during the tasks. More affective feedback and student statistics are needed. Another problem is that this method could be difficult to apply to low English proficiency students. It could be too many steps for them to follow.

In a further approach to teaching vocabulary, Herman’s study (2003) investigates the effects of reading and paired-associate studying on vocabulary in ESL university students. Using the novel *Animal Farm*, learners had many opportunities to read and to study literature during the semester, and at the same time, this method introduced them to the general pleasures of reading good literature. The results show that reading literature is more preferable than paired-associate learning for encouraging long-term lexical retention in contrast to rote memorization for developing a short-term word stock. The methodology in this study was designed for intermediate English students. It is not that effective for lower level English learners. This is a common weak point with Friedman’s (2008) study. Both Herman and Friedman devised an effective and efficient way to increase vocabulary proficiency. On the other hand, a major difference is that Herman focused on using the novel to develop learners’ vocabulary capability and Friedman utilized the web as a living corpus to investigate the specific contexts and collocation of lexis.

Furthermore, Nation (2008) introduces various ways to teach and learn vocabulary. The first way is to illustrate the meanings of words, using an L1 translation, showing an object or picture, drawing a simple picture or diagram. Next, he recommends using dictionaries to help learners to understand words that they need for reading and listening. Dictionaries can

also, of course, help students to find words for speaking and writing. Good vocabulary exercises are required for students and teachers to prepare class activities. They need to be carefully made in advance and may be part of a course book. Nation explains that a good vocabulary exercise has done the following:

- 1) It focuses on useful words, preferably high frequency words that have already been met before.
- 2) It focuses on a useful aspect of learning burdens. That is, it has a useful learning goal.
- 3) It gets learners to meet or use the word in ways that establish new mental connections for the word. It sets up useful learning conditions involving generative use.
- 4) It involves the learners in actively searching for and evaluating the target words in the exercise.
- 5) It does not bring related unknown or partly known words together. It avoids interference. (p. 103)

There has been a constant and increasing focus on vocabulary teaching and learning of second language acquisition in recent years. Teachers as well as learners have been encouraged to have a more systematic and principled approach to lexis (Decarrico, 2001). Consequently, many scholars and researchers (Carter, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; McCarthy, 1990; Nation & Coxhead, 2014; Nation & Webb, 2011) agree with the following statement: “Lexical competence is a central part of communicative competence, and teaching vocabulary a central part of teaching language” (Decarrico, 2001, p. 297). Additionally, there has been much research about vocabulary using corpora (Friedman, 2008; J. E. Kim & K. J. Lee, 2013; Nation & Coxhead, 2014; Nation & Webb, 2011; Schmitt, 2010). For example, there is a long history of corpus-based vocabulary at the Victoria University of Wellington (Nation & Coxhead, 2014).

In order to keep pace with this trend, sophisticated vocabulary studies in Korea are needed. Presently, there is a lack of research connected with both autonomy and vocabulary so this study could be meaningful and significant. Thus, the following chapter presents a method which can build Korean learners’ autonomy and advance their vocabulary proficiency. The researcher intended to help and improve students’ English proficiency without any strong pressure. In order to allow freedom and develop autonomy, several conditions were prepared where students could choose how much vocabulary they wished to study before, during and after every class. Vocabulary exercises were offered ten times in class during the semester. These vocabulary exercises were named “VEA” which means “vocabulary exercises for autonomy” in this research. Learners could make their own decisions how to preview, study and review their VEA by themselves. In an attempt to

understand the effect of VEA on vocabulary proficiency and to examine affective aspects of Korean college students, the following research questions were asked:

- 1) How did VEA work positively on English vocabulary proficiency? Are there any differences in students' improvement between the higher-level and the lower-level students in the class?
- 2) How did VEA impact the affective aspects of interest, motivation, class attitude and self-confidence in Korean college students?

### III. METHOD

#### 1. Subjects

In this research, an intact group was chosen. Rather than comparing an experimental group with a control group, this study describes a real class situation in a one-shot study. The group consisted of male and female college students who were enrolled in the spring program of 2010 named English Class at D College in Kyounggido, South Korea. This English college class was designed for basic English and TOEIC study. Moreover, this course was for beginners who planned to take the TOEIC test. Students with a score of over 600 in TOEIC did not need to attend this class. They were basically sophomore and junior year college students whose English proficiency level range was from novice to beginner. The course continued for 16 weeks and was two hours a week in the evening.

Even though 35 college students enrolled in this English class, only 23 college students took part in this study. Twelve students were exempt from this research for several reasons. First of all, two students gave up the course for jobs near the end of the semester. Some of them could not take the pre or post-test. All students were in the department of Horology and Jewelry. There were sixteen sophomores and seven juniors. By gender, there were six male and seventeen female students.

#### 2. Procedures

The English class was an obligatory one during its 2010 spring term. The purpose of this English class was to help students to get a better score in the TOEIC test. The textbook was a preparation book for the TOEIC test on the market written by English teachers in Korea. This focused on the reading comprehension section in part five where students state the correct words in 40 incomplete sentences. In every class, VEA were provided according to the lecture's content. During one semester, VEA (see Appendix 1) were given 10 times at

the beginning of the class. Time in each step was flexible depending on the situation. This class had a unified and systematic linear order of vocabulary instructions as follows (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
Classroom Procedure

Step	Time		Guideline	Agent
1	5-10 min	VEA	Vocabulary exercise	Students
2	10-15min		Checking answers	Students
3	10-15min		Vocabulary lesson	Teacher
4	Class time after VEA	Class lesson (TOEIC)		Teacher

The class procedure had four steps. First, a vocabulary exercise was taken for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of every class throughout the semester. There was no fixed time in every step. It could be changed according to the class lessons or lesson plans. Students could read VEA and write their answers. For step 2, after the vocabulary exercise, volunteer students were given the opportunity to present their answers while the others checked their answer sheets for 10-15 minutes. Students were given a choice on what they would share with their peers. The important and significant part of this procedure is that it included a way for students to select and work on tasks on their own during step 2. This focus on autonomy presents a unique aspect compared with previous studies (Benson, 2001, 2013; Cotterall, 2008). Through this step 2, students had the opportunity to take charge of their learning with the vocabulary tests. Furthermore, these volunteer students had the opportunity to earn extra points in the course. The extra points provided an extrinsic motivation to elicit voluntary participation from students (Brown, 2000) where learners could speak English words and sentences. Obviously, motivation is a major factor in SLA and language learning. Motivation and autonomy are interrelated in Gao and Lamb's (2011) arguments. Therefore, this process could stimulate learners to participate more than before and to cultivate their autonomy. The other students did not lose any points due to the presentation, and the volunteer students had freedom to do what they wanted in class. VEA results were specifically not recorded in order to build student autonomy; students could enjoy and manage their study regardless of any correct or incorrect answers. The purpose of VEA was not to evaluate vocabulary proficiency but to give the learners more opportunities to learn the vocabulary.

In detail, VEA (see Appendix 1) consisted of two types; one in which they were to translate the meanings from their native language into the English words, and the other was to fill in the blanks of the sentences with appropriate words. The format of VEA was adapted from Nation (2008) and J. Son (2008). All VEA were taken from main textbooks

and in the TOEIC test. The main textbook offers students one thousand basic words to prepare for the TOEIC test. They are the high-frequency words in the TOEIC test. The goal of this course is to cover all one thousand vocabulary words and learners may study one hundred words per week. But learners can decide how to study and how much to study freely. To support students' learning, VEA was offered. For ten sessions, VEA were adopted from the one hundred words that they memorized per week. As reported by Benson (2001, 2013), this methodology is one application of resourced-based approaches to cultivate learners' autonomy in their learning. In resource-based learning, the focus of autonomy is placed upon the learner and their independent interaction with the various learning materials. Learners have the opportunity to control over their learning plans, the types of resources they wish to select, and the kinds of evaluation they would like to use. Through a process of experimentation, learners can be expected to develop the skills they need. Freedom of choice is a crucial feature in this learning process.

In step 3, after learners checked their own answers, the teacher gave correct answers and explained any important synonyms, antonyms, roots and suffixes for 10-15 minutes. It was called VEA from step 1 to step 3. Finally, step 4 concluded with a TOEIC lesson and the teacher taught learners for the rest of time.

To sum up, the process of this class was organized as follows:

- Step 1: Students read vocabulary exercises and wrote answers for 5-10 minutes.
- Step 2: Students checked their own answer sheets and talked about their answers in class.
- Step 3: The teacher gave learners instructions about the vocabulary exercise.
- Step 4: The teacher started the main lesson (TOEIC) in class.

### 3. Data Collection and Analysis

#### 1) Vocabulary Proficiency Evaluation

To examine the development of learners' vocabulary proficiency, the students were asked to take pre- and post-tests, modified and supplemented from a vocabulary levels test by Nation (2008) and J. Son (2008). The format of the vocabulary pre-test and post-test assessment is to translate the Korean words into English. It is the same type of format used in vocabulary achievement evaluations (see Appendix 2). This test lasts for approximately 10-15 minutes and has 10 questions in the pre-test and post-test, respectively. These ten questions were chosen from TOEIC tests and the main textbook. In this paper, vocabulary proficiency was based on how many English words the learners could translate. Based on the pre-test results, all participants in this class were divided into two levels of English

vocabulary proficiency, a lower and a higher group. Twelve students were assigned to the higher level because they scored over an average of 4.478 (see Table 2). In the higher group, only one was male and eleven were female. This group consisted mainly of sophomores with two juniors. The lower level group scoring below average consisted of five males and six females. They were six sophomores and five juniors.

## 2) Vocabulary Achievement Evaluation

The vocabulary achievement evaluation (see Appendix 2) consisting of 50 questions was given to the college students to check their vocabulary in the middle of the semester. This vocabulary achievement evaluation was modified and supplemented by the work of Nation (2008) and J. Son (2008). The form of a vocabulary achievement evaluation was the same as that of the vocabulary proficiency evaluation. It took 30 minutes for students to complete, and the type of question was to translate words from their native language into English. The main purpose of this vocabulary achievement evaluation was to help the students to keep on studying vocabulary rather than to evaluate their vocabulary proficiency.

## 3) Questionnaires and Self-Report

The questionnaire was adapted and edited from S. Ahn (2002) and J. Son (2008), and employed in order to examine the affective aspects of learning vocabulary. This included interests, motivation, class attitude and self-confidence about learning English. All number of questions and contents were exactly identical in the pre- and post-questionnaires. They had 11 questions referred to as the 4 Likert scale but eight closed questions are presented because three inappropriate questions are deleted.

The researcher administered self-reports to the learners to determine the participants' perspectives towards VEA in the course. Self-reports were made out on paper for 5-10 minutes at the end of the class. In retrospective studies, self-reports that look backwards in time can be a valuable tool for measuring relevant areas of importance such as attitude and cognitive process (Brown & Roger, 2002). Furthermore, Mclaughlin (1999) explains that a self-report, the mode of measurement most commonly used, represents information from the subject's memory. In other words, it would be a useful survey that includes affective aspects such as attitude, belief, personal opinion and preference; it demonstrates the strength of self-reports as an instrument.

## 4) Data Analysis

A matched *t*-test from the SPSS program was used to find out whether there was a change in the scores of the participants. It was done to compare the difference of the pre- and post-tests on vocabulary evaluation and a pre- and post-questionnaires on the affective aspects.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

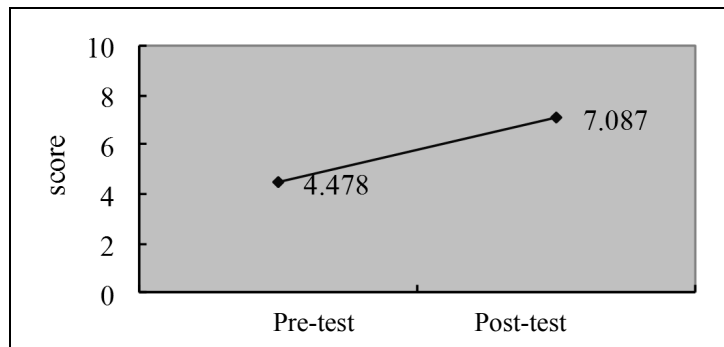
### 1. The Result of Vocabulary Proficiency Evaluation

Paired or matched *t*-test samples were used to evaluate the results of the pre- and post-tests. The raw data of the vocabulary proficiency assessment (see Table 2) indicates that there was an improvement from pre- and post-tests (from 4.478 to 7.097 in vocabulary proficiency).

**TABLE 2**  
Improvement in Vocabulary Proficiency

N	Pre-test		Post-test		Paired-Difference		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
23	4.478	2.520	7.087	1.755	-2.608	2.658	-4.706	.000*

\**p* < 0.05



**FIGURE 1** Vocabulary Proficiency Test

The result of the *t*-test indicates that learners who took the class increased their vocabulary proficiency throughout the course. This has statistical significance ( $t = -4.706$ ,  $p < 0.05$  in vocabulary proficiency; see Table 2). However, a significant statistical finding does not indicate that the activity or task is interesting or meaningful. The following part

will answer the research questions as to whether VEA influence English vocabulary proficiency or not. Figure 1 illustrated the comparative increases between pre- and post-vocabulary tests.

## 2. The Results of VEA and Vocabulary Achievement Evaluation

Students graded their test papers by themselves and were given the opportunity to share their opinions and questions with their peers and teachers. In class, many students wanted to volunteer their answers for VEA. The teacher tried to give every student the chance to be a volunteer. When volunteers shared their answers, the peers sometimes teased them about their English pronunciation. But the atmosphere was friendly, and it was like an ice breaker, and the teacher had time to teach pronunciation. Learners seemed to enjoy that. In contrast, there were few volunteers for the second type of VEA and so the teacher explained the answers directly. It could be that students had difficulty filling in the blanks and hesitated to tell their answers because of their low English proficiency. As already mentioned, their English proficiency level ranged from novice to beginner. The results of VEA were not recorded. The goal of VEA was to check whether students studied vocabulary or not and to encourage learners to study regularly.

However, the results of the vocabulary achievement evaluation were recorded for credits. The vocabulary achievement evaluation consisted of 50 questions. The results of the vocabulary achievement evaluation showed that 23 students achieved an average score, 45. This means they answered 45% correctly. This was a little improvement when compared to the average scores of the pre-test, 4.478 (see Table 2). In terms of percentage, the score of 4.478 would be 44%.

## 3. Analysis of Questionnaires

Table 3 presents the results of the pre and post questionnaires. The purpose of the self-assessment questionnaires was to evaluate students' interest (Q1-Q2), motivation (Q3-Q4), attitude toward the class (Q5-Q6) and self-confidence (Q7-Q8). Eight closed questions were used. The questions on motivation showed no significant difference. It suggests that VEA may not have had an influence on learners' motivation (see Table 3). However, the mean of the pre and post interest, motivation, attitudes and self-confidence implied that the subjects were more positive than before. There were statistically significant differences in interest, attitude toward the class and in self-confidence. Questions, 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8, had a significant difference in the acceptable degree of probability at  $p < 0.05$  (see Table 3). The questions which had a significant difference are as follows:

Question 1: Studying English is interesting.

Question 2: Studying English vocabulary is fun.

Question 5: English class is enjoyable.

Question 6: I want to participate in English class actively.

Question 7: I have the confidence to study English.

Question 8: I have the confidence to study English vocabulary.

**TABLE 3**

The Results of Interest, Motivation, Attitudes Toward the Class and Self-Confidence

		Pre Q			Post Q		Paired Differences		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Interest	Q1	23	2.521	.790	2.913	.7331	-.391	.499	-3.761	.001*
	Q2	23	2.217	.671	2.521	.845	-.304	.634	-2.299	.031*
Motivation	Q3	23	2.304	.764	2.130	.694	.173	.576	1.447	.162
	Q4	23	2.782	.850	2.826	.834	-.043	.562	-.371	.714
Attitudes	Q5	23	2.478	.665	2.913	.733	-.434	.662	-3.148	.005*
	Q6	23	3.134	.457	3.391	.583	-.260	.540	-2.313	.030*
Self-confidence	Q7	23	2.173	.650	2.521	.790	-.347	.775	-2.152	.043*
	Q8	23	2.260	.688	2.608	.940	-.347	.775	-2.152	.043*

\* $p < 0.05$

Judging from the above results, learners showed an increased interest in studying English and English vocabulary through the class. In addition, they enjoyed the class and wanted to participate in the class more actively than before. They became more confident in their study of English, and in particular, in the area of English vocabulary. In other words, this means that the process of incorporating additional VEA facilitated an interest, good attitudes toward the class and self-confidence in English and at the same time, promoted their vocabulary skills.

#### 4. Analysis of Self-Reports

The students' self-reports coincided with the contents of the questionnaires, and conveyed more explicit and concrete comments about VEA. Through 23 self-reports, the following two characteristics were found. Above all things, students confessed that VEA helped them to study English. The second, this class and VEA generated interests and self-confidence in English.

##### 1) VEA Help Learners Study and Memorize Vocabulary Better

Through four extracts, students explain that VEA are a good method to explore and be involved with English. They can spend more time studying English through the class and

VEA. In their words, VEA were a good way to memorize words without it becoming a burden. The detailed opinions from students are as follows (see their Korean version in Appendix 3):

Extract 1) 0S0-1

Above all, VEA in every class are the good method to study vocabulary continually. Even though the most difficult part for me was to memorize vocabulary in English learning, I did my best. Because I know how important vocabulary is...

Extract 2) 0S0-2

It is all right to check answers by ourselves. There is autonomy in VEA. Without burdens, I feel good to do it for myself.

Extract 3) 0H0

That is the most helpful to take a vocabulary test in every class. I have sometimes read vocabulary on the way to school or to use public transportation.

Extract 4) 0T0

I start to study English step by step through the class, voluntarily and involuntarily. Especially, I was able to memorize a lot of words during this semester.

Extracts 1, 3 and 4 show that VEA helped students to study vocabulary. They reported personal facts and opinions. Extract 2 points out that it was good for her to evaluate her own answer sheet in VEA. This extract supports the notion that freedom to choose learning materials facilitates more effective study according to Benson (2001). This is the main characteristic of autonomy. Autonomy could be broadly included “the opportunity to exercise control over learning” (Benson, 2001, p. 2).

The above analysis indicated that students who were seeking ways to improve vocabulary fluency tended to make good use of VEA. According to the students’ extracts, VEA gave further opportunities to study vocabulary and to memorize vocabulary.

## 2) The Class and VEA Constituting Self-confidence and Interest

The following (Extracts 5-8) are four extracts where students revealed their feelings and opinions about learning English. These extracts indicate that this class and VEA helped to build self-confidence and interest.

## Extract 5) 0W

As I focus on the class and study, I get confidence a little and have been interested in the lessons.

## Extract 6) 0N0

I try to memorize vocabulary again and again. Therefore, I can learn more words and got more interests in English.

## Extract 7) 0T0-2

Especially, it is the time for me to memorize words a lot during the semester. Besides, I can understand easily grammar and patterns of TOEIC and vocabulary. Consequently, I got confidence in English more than before.

## Extract 8) 0SN

Through one semester, it is good to listen the lecture joyfully.

As observed above, learners who maintained VEA gained interest and self-confidence. This outcome is virtually identical to the results of the questionnaire. Extracts 5-6 indicate that they became more interested in English lessons. In addition, in Extract 8, 0SN told she could participate in the lecture happily. These extracts could signify that it is reasonable to assume that this interest also stimulated learners to achieve more autonomy. Benson (2001) asserts that autonomy fundamentally takes the interest of learners into account. Furthermore, the student in the sixth extract, 0N0 became conscious of acquiring interest because of studying vocabulary. Through these extracts, it is obvious that VEA heightened the learners' interest in language learning. The words of the seventh extract, 0T0-2, agree with those of J. Son (2008), performing vocabulary exercises during the semester reduces vocabulary apprehension and generates self-confidence. If VEA will be used over a long period of time, a learner's self-confidence would be clearly strengthened. All eight extracts were selected based on two characteristics and came from three learners each from the higher group (0S0, 0H0, 0N0) and the lower group (0T0, 0W, 0SN). These extracts came from two male and four female students.

Because they could write in Korean, the students were able to express themselves more openly and give their opinions through the self-reports. Most students felt that the VEA developed their English and vocabulary abilities better. They said that the VEA increased their interest in learning English and boosted their self-confidence.

## 5. Analysis of the Higher and the Lower Group

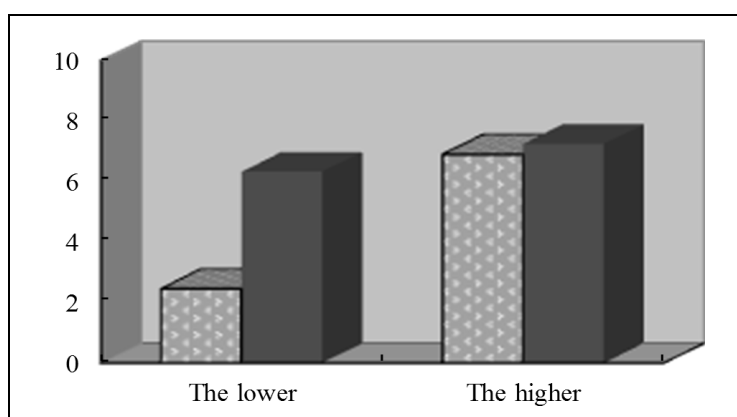
Twenty-three participants in an intact group were divided into higher and lower proficiency levels. Their levels were determined by the pre-test in order to see whether there was a distinctive difference in their performance on the vocabulary proficiency post-test.

A paired *t*-test was conducted to compare the results of both the pre- and the post-tests of each group. The raw data of the vocabulary proficiency assessment (see Table 4) points out that there was some change from the pre- and post-test in both the lower and the higher group. As can be seen in Table 4 and Figure 2, the mean scores of the lower group got higher from 2.454 to 6.909 and the higher group increased from 6.333 to 7.250. But the result of the *t*-test demonstrates that only students in the lower group ( $t = -10.79, p < 0.05$ ; see Table 4) improved their vocabulary proficiency throughout the course. This has statistically significant difference. Furthermore, it is illustrated to show difference from the pre- and post-test in both the lower and the higher groups in Figure 2.

**TABLE 4**  
Results of the Lower and Higher Groups

Level	<i>n</i>	Pre-test		Post-test		Paired-Difference		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
The lower	11	2.454	1.368	6.909	1.972	-4.454	1.368	-10.79	.000*
The higher	12	6.333	1.775	7.250	1.602	-.916	2.429	-1.307	.218

\* $p < 0.05$



**FIGURE 2** Results of the Lower and Higher Groups

The main reason that only the lower group increased their vocabulary proficiency throughout the course could be that the questions of VEA in the course were mainly made up of writing meanings and filling English words in the blanks. This result supports Carter's (2001) comment that for novices or beginners, strategies of rote memorization,

such as learning sight words, using phonetics, glossing and bilingual translation can be useful techniques for vocabulary learning. On the other hand, learners at advanced levels can be taught and motivated incidentally while their attention is on the meaning of the discourse (Schmitt, 2000). Consequently, it is reasonable to suppose that VEA in this study were more valuable to the lower vocabulary group than the higher.

All results in this study need to be measured to understand fully the effect of VEA on vocabulary proficiency and affective aspects of 23 Korean college students. Ellis (2004) asserts that it is required to validate whether the tasks really contributed to the students' language ability. That is, it is required to examine the correlation among three task evaluations called for and the different types of information data. The first is called student-based evaluation which uses questionnaires. The next data, response-based evaluation demands a close examination of the spoken and written outcomes of the task. The last learning-based evaluation requires the use of target language tests or the analysis of student transcripts based on the interactions after the task is performed.

Proceeding from what has been said above, the effect of VEA must be discussed. Various evaluations were used to understand the effect of VEA on Korean college students in this research. For example, pre and post vocabulary tests were a type of response-based evaluation. VEA and vocabulary achievement evaluation could be termed learning-based evaluation, and questionnaires and learners' self-reports are generally known as student-based evaluation. First, to be precise, the scores of pre and post vocabulary tests has statistically significant difference. Second, the analysis of the vocabulary achievement evaluation showed that students achieved higher scores when compared with the pre-test. Finally, it was clear from the questionnaires and self-reports that students developed more interest, self-confidence and vocabulary proficiency through the regular use of VEA. Every evaluation and result are connected and interrelated with the others. As a consequence, all data supports the notion that VEA have a positive effect on English vocabulary proficiency. Furthermore, the lower group of learners significantly increased their vocabulary proficiency throughout the course. Finally, VEA helped to increase interest and self-confidence in Korean college students.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study explored the effect of VEA on vocabulary proficiency and affective aspects of Korean college students. To achieve validity of the results, the instrument of the study was designed deliberately to examine three different kinds of data. The first one was the pre and post vocabulary tests that were response-based evaluations. In addition, the second was analysis of VEA and vocabulary achievement evaluation used for learning-based

evaluations. The last data included questionnaires and self-reports for student-based evaluations that learner wrote and answered.

The overall findings of this study explained the effect of VEA on Korean college students. Pre and post vocabulary tests, and the analysis of VEA and vocabulary achievement evaluation showed that students developed English vocabulary proficiency. Moreover, using VEA in Korean college students' class enabled learners to increase their vocabulary ability, especially in the lower group. Finally, according to the questionnaires and self-reports, the use of VEA gave Korean college students more interest, and generated more self-confidence in English language learning. Consequently, all data reinforces the fact that these tasks worked positively towards vocabulary proficiency, interest and self-confidence because every process and result are mutually supported and interrelated in this study. Therefore, the results of this study provide useful grounds to verify the previous claims regarding the benefits of using vocabulary exercises to facilitate vocabulary proficiency (Herman, 2003; J. I. Jeon, 2007; McCarthy, 1990; Nation, 2008). A significant difference of this study from the previous studies would be the process of the class for autonomy. Students did not to memorize words simply to do the obligatory coursework for scores, but learners were given a choice on how to study, and opportunities to discuss their answers. This process focused on the learners' autonomy and it boosted their vocabulary proficiency, interest and self-confidence.

It would seem that further research and studies relating to vocabulary in diverse settings would lead to building the theory and practice of teaching and learning English. In the words of Herman (2003), reading literature can indeed be an effective means of helping adult L2 learners acquire new vocabulary. Additionally, Hunston (2008) asserts that integration of corpora into class lessons provides students with faster searching tools and better contexts than simply using traditional dictionaries. Recently, there has been a lot of research about vocabulary using the corpus (Friedman, 2009; J. E. Kim & K. J. Lee, 2013; Nation & Coxhead, 2014; Nation & Webb, 2011; Schmitt, 2010). Lastly, it is recommended that more empirical research on vocabulary could be done, connected with autonomy, as in the case studies of Benson (2001, 2013) and Gao and Lamb (2011). This paper will reinforce the recent trend in learning and teaching vocabulary and also has meaningful significance in autonomy research because there is a lack of research on autonomy in Korea. However, this study has three restrictions. First, the number of participants was too small to represent all Korean college students. Second, there was no control and experimental group to notice a significant change. Instead, this research was done with a single, intact group. Finally, the research results are based solely on a short-term study of a single semester. These vulnerable points have to be considered in future research.

To sum up, Nunan (2000) points out that good language teaching methods have been

devised for learners continuously, but this just takes time. Clearly, it is no doubt that there is a great deal of the room for developing a good teaching method for both ESL and EFL learners. This paper provides one account of teaching vocabulary to Koreans in English. It is expected that the outcome of this study could be a step toward a better and more inclusive understanding of teaching and studying English in Korea.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Vocabulary Exercise

\* 다음 단어의 알맞은 뜻을 쓰시오.

- |            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1. balance | 6. collect         |
| 2. budget  | 7. complete        |
| 3. call    | 8. concern         |
| 4. care    | 9. confirm/conform |
| 5. clear   | 10. connect        |

\* 위의 단어를 사용하여 문장의 빈칸에 알맞은 형태로 쓰시오.

1. *You can decorate the house within \_\_\_\_\_.*
2. *Let's wait a few more minutes. If he doesn't come, then we'll \_\_\_\_\_ him.*
3. *I \_\_\_\_\_ fallen leaves every autumn.*
4. *It came as a \_\_\_\_\_ surprise.*
5. *First \_\_\_\_\_ the printer to the computer.*

## APPENDIX 2

### Words List/Vocabulary Achievement Evaluation

- |                |               |                 |                |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. accomplish  | 2. account    | 3. advertise    | 4. application |
| 5. argument    | 6. award      | 7. budget       | 8. charge      |
| 9. collect     | 10. complete  | 11. consider    | 12. consult    |
| 13. debate     | 14. dedicate  | 15. depress     | 16. diverse    |
| 17. emergency  | 18. evidence  | 19. excess      | 20. experience |
| 21. freeze     | 22. hesitate  | 23. impression  | 24. increase   |
| 25. industrial | 26. inspire   | 27. instruct    | 28. interpret  |
| 29. invoice    | 30. maintain  | 31. mature      | 32. necessary  |
| 33. notice     | 34. occasion  | 35. overcome    | 36. passenger  |
| 37. penalty    | 38. permit    | 39. perspective | 40. positive   |
| 41. prefer     | 42. process   | 43. produce     | 44. prosper    |
| 45. rational   | 46. recognize | 47. remarkable  | 48. request    |
| 49. require    | 50. reward    |                 |                |

## APPENDIX 3

## Self-Reports/Korean Version

## 1) VEA help learners study and memorize vocabulary better

## Extract 1) OS0-1

우선 매시간 단어시험은 꾸준히 단어공부를 하게 해주기 때문에 좋은 방법이다. 단어 외우는 것이 가장 어려웠던 저로써는 힘들었지만 필요성을 알기에 열심히 했다

## Extract 2) OS0-2

매일 보는 단어시험에 자율성, 즉 자가체크라는 점도 괜찮은 거 같다. 부담 없이 스스로를 위해 한다는 기분이 들어서 억압되지 않은 것이 좋았다

## Extract 3) OH0

매시간 단어 시험을 봤던 것이 가장 큰 도움이 되었습니다...학교까지 오는 길이나 평소 대중 교통을 이용할 때 간간히 단어를 보게 되더라고요

## Extract 4) OT0

수업을 통해 자의든, 타의든 공부를 조금씩 하게 되었고, 특히 단어를 많이 외울 수 있었던 기간이었던 거 같습니다

## 2) The class and VEA constituting self-confidence and interest

## Extract 5) OW

수업시간에 집중하고 공부를 하니깐 조금 자신감도 생기고 재미도 있었습니다

## Extract 6) ON0

단어도 계속 외우다 보니 많이 늘게 되었고, 영어에 대한 흥미도 더욱 늘어났습니다

## Extract 7) OT0-2

또한 책을 통해 수업하면서 토익에 자주 나오는 문법, 문제 유형, 단어들을 쉽게 설명해 주셔서 이해하기 쉬웠고 이전보다 자신감도 많은 붙은 거 같습니다

## Extract 8) OSN

한 학기 동안 즐겁게 영어 수업을 들어서 좋았습니다

**Examples in: English****Applicable Languages: English****Applicable Levels: Secondary/Tertiary**

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