

**The Acquisition of Vocabulary by Beginner English  
Language Learners in Saudi Arabia: The Role of  
Learner Autonomy**

**By:**

**Dr. Abduleelah Mohammed Hussain Mohammed**

Assistant Professor, Teaching English as a second language,  
Languages and Translation Department, Language Teaching  
Centre, College of Arts and Humanities, Taibah University,  
Madinah, Saudi Arabia

**Dr. Abdulrahman Mustafa Ali Olwi**

Associate Professor of English Curriculum and Instruction,  
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Educational

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## The Acquisition of Vocabulary by Beginner English Language Learners in Saudi Arabia: The Role of Learner Autonomy

**Dr. Abduleelah Mohammed Hussain Mohammed\***

**Dr. Abdulrahman Mustafa Ali Olwi\*\***

### Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of learner autonomy strategies in promoting vocabulary acquisition among beginner English language learners (BELLs) in Saudi Arabia. An experimental design was employed to compare the vocabulary acquisition of BELLs who participated in a program promoting learner autonomy strategies with the acquisition of those who did not. The results indicated that while learner autonomy can be a valuable tool, it may require ongoing support and reinforcement to ensure long-term effectiveness. The study found that the experimental group, which received the autonomy intervention, consistently outperformed the control group, demonstrating significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition. However, the positive effects of autonomy were not sustained after the intervention ended. These findings suggest that while autonomy can lead to initial gains, it may not be sufficient on its own to maintain long-term improvements. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate continuous support mechanisms to maximize the benefits of learner autonomy strategies in vocabulary learning.

**Keywords:** Learner Autonomy; Vocabulary Acquisition; English Language Learning; Second Language Acquisition.

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\* **Dr. Abduleelah Mohammed Hussain Mohammed:** Assistant Professor, Teaching English as a second language, Languages and Translation Department, Language Teaching Centre, College of Arts and Humanities, Taibah University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia

\*\***Dr. Abdulrahman Mustafa Ali Olwi:** Associate Professor of English Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Educational Technology, College of Education, Taibah University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia.

## **Introduction**

The ability to acquire and utilize vocabulary effectively is a fundamental aspect of language learning, particularly for English language learners (ELLs) navigating a new linguistic environment. For beginner English language learners (BELLs), this challenge is even more pronounced as they develop the foundational skills necessary for effective communication and comprehension. In Saudi Arabia, where English language proficiency is increasingly valued as conferring educational and professional opportunities, supporting BELLs in their vocabulary acquisition journey is of great importance.

Traditional classroom instruction plays a key role in language learning, but research suggests that fostering learner autonomy and the ability for students to take ownership of their learning process can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition (Oxford, 2011). Learner autonomy empowers BELLs to become more self-directed learners, actively seeking out and utilizing strategies to expand their vocabulary beyond the confines of the classroom. This research investigated the potential for learner autonomy strategies to promote vocabulary acquisition among BELLs enrolled in an intensive English language course at a Saudi Arabian university.

## **The Importance of Vocabulary Acquisition for BELLs**

Vocabulary knowledge is a cornerstone of language proficiency. Without a robust grasp of words and their meanings, BELLs face significant challenges in understanding spoken and written English. This, in turn, hinders their ability to participate effectively in communication and limits their access to information and knowledge. Laufer and Nation (1995) underscored the substantial correlation between vocabulary size and overall language proficiency. Their study revealed that learners with a larger vocabulary performed better on various language tasks, emphasizing the importance of vocabulary development in the early stages of language learning. More recent research by Webb (2009) further reinforced this, suggesting that a strong vocabulary foundation is essential for successful second language acquisition (SLA).

## **The Saudi Arabian Context and the Need for Learner Autonomy**

The increasing demand for English language proficiency in various sectors in Saudi Arabia necessitates effective English language instruction for BELLs. Universities play a pivotal role in equipping students with the necessary linguistic skills, often through intensive English language courses. These courses typically employ a structured curriculum focused on developing core language skills. Fostering learner autonomy can complement this traditional classroom instruction by empowering BELLs to take control of their vocabulary learning beyond the set curriculum. As Al-Seghayer (2014) noted, a learner-centered approach that promotes autonomy can also enhance student engagement and motivation in language learning environments.

### **Learner Autonomy Strategies and Vocabulary Acquisition**

Learner autonomy strategies encompass a diverse range of techniques that empower learners to become more self-directed in their language acquisition efforts. Several studies have explored the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting vocabulary acquisition. For example, Waring (2007) found that utilizing flashcards and self-study plans significantly improved vocabulary knowledge among adult language learners. Similarly, Schmitt (2000) highlighted the benefits of vocabulary learning apps and technology-aided strategies for independent vocabulary development. Benson and McCarthy (2008) also argued the importance of learner training for vocabulary learning strategies to be effective, suggesting that explicit instruction on using these strategies can enhance vocabulary acquisition outcomes.

### **The Research Gap and the Present Study**

While research has highlighted the potential of learner autonomy strategies to enhance vocabulary acquisition, there is a dearth of studies investigating their efficacy within the specific context of BELLs enrolled in intensive English language courses in Saudi Arabia. A recent review by Al-Harbi et al. (2022) identified a limited number of studies exploring learner autonomy in Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, pointing to the need for further research in this area.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of learner autonomy strategies in promoting vocabulary acquisition among first-year Saudi university students who were BELLS enrolled in an intensive English language course. It aimed to compare the vocabulary acquisition of BELLS who participated in a program promoting learner autonomy strategies with the acquisition of those who did not participate in such a program, and to explore the relationship between the frequency of use of learner autonomy strategies and vocabulary improvement among the BELLS who participated in the program.

### ***Research Questions***

The study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. Do beginner English language learners (BELLS) at a Saudi university who use learner autonomy strategies (learning on their own) demonstrate greater improvement on a vocabulary test compared to those who do not use these strategies?
2. For beginner English language learners (BELLS) at a Saudi university who use learner autonomy strategies, is there a correlation between the frequency of their strategy use and their vocabulary improvement?

### ***Significance of the Study***

By investigating these research questions, this study attempted to contribute to a deeper understanding of how learner autonomy strategies can enhance vocabulary acquisition among BELLS in the Saudi Arabian context. The findings can inform the development of language learning programs that promote learner autonomy and empower BELLS to become more self-directed and successful language learners.

### ***Literature Review***

Language, often likened to a living organism (Eisenclas & Shoecraft, 2024), has an intricate autonomy (Williamson, 2023) that warrants meticulous investigation. Understanding the fundamental structure of language and the intricate interplay of its components significantly influences how learners communicate and connect with

others (Shoecraft, Massa, & Kenway, 2024). At the core of language autonomy are phonetics (Parolari, 2023), phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Zein, 2024). Phonetics deals with speech units, while phonology clarifies the techniques that specify the use of language phonemes (Khan, 2024). Morphology examines word structure, syntax governs sentence structure (Aslan & Altinkaya, 2024), semantics concerns sentence meaning, and pragmatics encompasses the entire language context (Montakantiwong, 2024).

The term “autonomy” refers to the intricate structure and components that constitute language (Papi & Hiver, 2020). The autonomy concept exemplifies the linguistic components that generate effective communication (Csizér, et al., 2021). Language autonomy is a complex web of interconnected elements, each contributing to the communication process ((Mansouri, et al. 2021). These components work together consistently to transfer meaning and facilitate understanding (Vajirakachorn, et al., 2023). Examining the autonomy of language involves breaking it down into its fundamental parts, such as grammar rules, vocabulary, syntax, and sentence structure (Jindapitak et al., 2022). In addition, autonomy reveals the inner workings that characterize the physical form of language, detailing the mechanisms that underpin human communication functions (Mynard, & Shelton-Strong, 2022). Comprehending language autonomy is paramount for effective teaching and learning (Liu et al., 2023). By analyzing language components, educators can provide students with a solid foundation for language acquisition (Horwitz, 2020). This includes grasping the basic rules governing language aspects, recognizing patterns, and separating the different elements that interact to convey thoughts and ideas cohesively and precisely (Ulaywi, 2021).

Grammar rules serve as a vital pillar organizing language autonomy (Alqahtani, 2022). They dictate the systematic methodologies that initiate and combine words to form meaningful expressions (Terzi 2022). By understanding grammatical concepts, learners can communicate clearly and accurately, eliminating ambiguity and ensuring effective message transmission (Amaliah, 2024). Vocabulary provides the building blocks that shape language autonomy (Moafa 2024). It comprises the words and

phrases learners employ to express their thoughts and emotions (Maksymova, 2024). Expanding language fluency and eloquence empowers learners to express themselves more precisely and vividly, enhancing their communication skills and overall language proficiency (Bang et al., 2024). Syntax, the arrangement of phrases and sentences, is crucial in structuring language (Jensen, 2024). Syntax ensures that sentences are structured logically to convey intended meanings (Donley, 2022).

Language autonomy is multi-dimensional, encompassing various aspects, such as phonetics, semantics, and pragmatics (Qizi, 2024). Embracing these diverse facets enriches learners' awareness and fosters effective communication skills (Genova, 2024). By applying the intricacies of language autonomy, educators can gain valuable insights into the emotional aspects of language and social interactions (Printer, 2023). Language goes beyond merely communicating words; it is a window into the learners' collective consciousness, reflecting the diversity and richness of human experience (Godwin-Jones, 2020). Language autonomy is an inherently fascinating realm that invites learners to scrutinize its inner workings, distinguish human existence, and discover the possibilities and profound insights that elevate conversation and cultivate spoken words (Franke, 2020).

When teaching English as a second language, appreciating the notion of autonomy can provide learners with a comprehensive vision that enhances proficiency (Kho & Ting, 2024). Dissecting language into its various components allows for structured teaching strategies that address all terminological aspects (Jakubiak 2023). This ensures learners are equipped with the necessary tools to learn and use the language proficiently (Siemund & Lorenz, 2024). Language involves different components that explain word units, phrase design, and contextual operationalization (Toyoshima 2024). By addressing these dominant components in depth, educators can create a well-rounded language learning experience (Syrotina 2023).

Incorporating the autonomy concept into teaching strategies ensures that all language components are adequately covered (Syed et al., 2024).



For example, handling phonology allows the development of proper pronunciation skills, while emphasizing syntax aids in constructing grammatically correct sentences (George, 2023). Teaching semantics enables learners to grasp the meanings of words and phrases, while highlighting pragmatics encourages the use of language in different contexts (Ishihara & Cohen, 2021). Deconstructing language into its basic elements provides learners with the skills needed to use the language proficiently (Ndlangamandla, 2024). Integrating the autonomy concept into language teaching empowers learners to become accomplished language users while studying their academic curricula and navigating real-world situations (Peart et al., 2020).

By carefully particularizing language autonomy, educators can improve the articulation of the communication framework, including grammar rules, syntax, vocabulary, and phonetics segments (Kumar & Prakash, 2023). Dissecting the autonomy features of autonomy allows teachers to provide a systematically structured approach to language learning, enabling learners to apprehend the nuances and complexities of speech. This paves the way for a comprehensive understanding, leading to enhanced communication skills (Tiwari, 2024). Language autonomy serves as a roadmap for educators, guiding them through the labyrinth of linguistic intricacies (Kem, 2022). Just as a surgeon examines the human body, language educators dissect language to discover its inner workings and meticulously analyze sentence meanings, tailoring teaching methods to meet learners' unique needs (Haidar, 2024).

A study conducted by Baracheta (2024) demonstrated the remarkable consequences of understanding language autonomy. Reviewing the language autonomy concept enables learners to navigate the linguistic landscape with confidence and proficiency, expressing themselves eloquently and accurately. Understanding autonomy provides educators with a solid foundation for effective teaching strategies, akin to an innovative builder grasping a structure's inner workings before establishing a framework. Language autonomy enhances classroom engagement by relating complex concepts to speech functions, sparking learners' curiosity and passion for the subject matter. Anatomical understanding encourages the application and development of critical

thinking competencies, prompting learners to think analytically and draw connections between different areas of study. Educators who appropriately incorporate autonomy into their teaching strategies cultivate lifelong learners, inspiring students to continue exploring and expanding their knowledge.

Another study undertaken by Slakk (2024) reported primary evidence on the importance of vocabulary techniques, pronunciation skills, syntactical understanding, grammatical mastery, and semantic comprehension within classroom settings. These elements collectively contribute to effective communication and the ability to express thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Hayasaki (2024) found that vocabulary techniques form the building blocks of language, providing learners with a sufficient set of words to express thoughts and ideas. English boasts a vast and diverse vocabulary, encompassing words from multiple sources. Expanding vocabulary enhances communicative effectiveness and helps articulate thoughts and feelings.

The study revealed that pronunciation is often a stumbling block for language learners due to inconsistencies in spelling rules. Mastering pronunciation is essential for clear and effective communication. Learners should pay attention to stress patterns and phonetic sounds to improve their pronunciation skills and develop the ability to speak confidently. Hayasaki (2024) described syntax as the arrangement of words and the rules governing sentence structure and lexical relationships. English syntax is both flexible and rigid, allowing for creativity while adhering to established conventions. Understanding syntactic principles enables learners to construct well-structured sentences that clearly and concisely convey their intended meanings.

The study also underscored the importance of grammar as the backbone of language, providing structure and rules that generate effective communication. By understanding grammar, learners can convey their thoughts and ideas accurately. Semantics concerns the meanings behind words and determines the practical procedures that explicate messages. Grasping semantics enables learners to navigate the nuances of language and express their ideas with subtle precision.

Language is a multifaceted construct, comprising elements such as grammar, vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, and semantics (Maqsood et al., 2024). Each component contributes to effective communication, allowing the presentation and broadcasting of intentions and connotations (Li & Shen, 2024). By identifying the intricacies of language autonomy, learners gain a deeper appreciation for the power of words and become able to connect with others competently and reasonably (Teng & Zhang, 2024).

As noted by Linzbach et al. (2023), language components interact and produce meaningful communication, forming a coherent linguistic tapestry. They identified expressions and idioms as the cornerstone of language, conveying meaning, emotions, and ideas. Idioms are both simple and intricate, and their arrangement and combinations represent diverse expressions used in everyday conversations. Their study demonstrated that sentence and phrase structure affect language autonomy, which dictates the rules governing word alignment and sequence. Adhering to syntactic principles guarantees clear and comprehensible messaging. Linzbach et al. (2023) established that phonology, morphology, phonetics, semantics, and pragmatics act as the framework that holds language components together. These systematized categories organize rules related to sentence structure, tense, agreement, and syntax. Following grammatical conventions ensures coherent and consistent communication.

Their study identified oral, written, and signed messages as the verbal and nonverbal tools that learners employ to express themselves. Expanding their word groups empowers learners to paint vivid pictures, utilizing their lexical knowledge and repertoires to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively. Phonetics generates vocal channels that produce speech and includes vowels, consonants, and intonation patterns that contribute to overall cadence and rhythm. Mastering these segments allows for clear pronunciation, facilitating accurate interpretation and explanation. The study emphasized the significance of pragmatics, which addresses contextual influences and implications. Understanding pragmatics is essential for navigating social interactions and transmitting meanings.

Deciphering the relationship between language components is fundamental as the interaction combining these parts is akin to an orderly utterance-based collaboration, in which each element contributes to the cohesion of the entire communication (Hwang et al., 2024). Hence, language resembles an interesting puzzle, with each component fitting seamlessly into place to form a coherent picture (Weissweiler et al., 2023). Words act as puzzle pieces, syntax provides the structure, grammar sets the rules, vocabulary adds color, phonetics brings sound, and pragmatics establishes the context (Gao et al., 2022). When all these pieces align, meaningful communication emerges (Wang & Li, 2022). Learners nurture their language skills to cultivate clear and expressive communication (Sharma & Singh, 2023).

Nunan (2022) recommends embracing the complexity of language autonomy, as it provides the required appreciation for the artistry and precision involved in effective communication. Understanding the internal methods through which language components interact and complement each other allows learners to navigate the language landscape, enjoying their conversational capabilities and writing competences (Paesani & Menke, 2023). The art of language communication accentuates that language autonomy serves as the blueprint for meaningful communication (Shain et al., 2024). Recognizing the connections that bring together words, syntax, grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, and pragmatics enhances linguistic proficiency and engages learners in richer interactions (Liu et al., 2023).

To comprehend the central mechanisms that drive grammar, vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, and semantics, learners must realize that effective communication relies heavily on grammatical rules and that proper sentence structure, tense usage, and subject-verb agreement are core elements in conveying expressive messages (Unsworth, 2023).

According to Mueller et al. (2023), learners should become proficient speakers before experiencing real contexts. Flores (2023) demonstrated that mastering language components precedes actual practice, as having a sound grasp of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics has significant implications for real-life

applications. Flores (2023) found that having a diverse vocabulary allows for vivid and precise expression of ideas and emotions. Choosing the right words enhances communication and conveys nuanced meanings. The study showed that an understanding of syntax, which dictates word arrangement, enables the construction of coherent and meaningful sentences, facilitating effective communication. Flores (2023) identified clear pronunciation as essential for ensuring messages are accurately understood and transmitted. Proper enunciation and emphasis convey intended meanings and prevent misunderstandings, making oral and written information evident and transparent.

Flores (2023) study underscored the importance of semantics, which pertains to word meaning and contextual interpretation. Studying semantics is crucial for conveying messages and avoiding ambiguity, particularly in thorny situations. Familiarity with language elements helps articulate thoughts effectively and make relevant contributions to conversations. Pragmatics goes beyond literal meaning (Grundy, 2022). It examines contextual tone and social cues that influence communication (Karabanova, 2023). Pragmatics looks at language usage to achieve specific goals, including revealing underlying messages, understanding implied humor, and exploring the intricacies of human interaction (Nurhidayah et al., 2024). Pragmatics and semantics are interconnected (Eliza, 2024). Syntax is an integral element that provides the structure for expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas (Kanik, 2023). Grammar shapes meanings and connotations (Scott, 2022). It involves tenses, parts of speech, and punctuation marks (Dey, 2023).

The intricate features that denote grammar, vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, and semantics are the foundation for successful communication (House, 2022). By grasping language components and their variations, learners can improve their language skills and express themselves eloquently and fluently (McMeekin, 2022). In the grand tapestry of language, the basic components, including syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, serve as the fundamental threads that weave together words and thoughts (Maulana & Oktavia, 2023). Understanding these elements and nuances enhances learners' abilities to communicate

effectively and connect with others in different situations and circumstances (Thao et al., 2023).

Engaging with the complexities of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics allows learners to embark on a journey of discovery of linguistic determinants and conversational units, broadening their understanding and awareness (Pang, 2023). The foundations of language lie in grammatical systems, the complex organism governing sentence structure and word arrangement (Yu, 2022). Grasping and assessing such rules is essential for clear communication and effective writing (Alshamrani, 2023). From subject-verb agreement to phrase construction, each aspect contributes to conveying meaning (Kim et al., 2023).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the realm of language autonomy, the integration of elements of communication, including syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology, is paramount (Ambubuyog et al., 2023). Language autonomy has garnered attention as it entails the development of the conventional spoken and written symbols that constitute intended meanings (Tram et al., 2022). It explores the capabilities and potential applications of linguistic components, supporting understanding of contextualized content, raising rhetorical capacities, and fostering the acceptance cultures at all levels (Liu et al., 2023).

Language autonomy is broadly defined as an advanced language model that utilizes uttered and signed words to generate human interactions in real-life settings (Ayieko, 2022). Its ability to aid comprehension and enhance speech abilities has made it a valuable concept, particularly within educational domains (Al Maharma & Abusa'aleek, 2022). Conventional language teaching methods and techniques often rely on textbooks and lectures, which may cater to narrow learning styles (Takahashi, 2022). Language autonomy can play a transformative role here.

Through engaging students in interactive conversations and providing immediate feedback, language autonomy has shown promise for enhancing the learning experience and simplifying complex concepts (Oda-Sheehan, 2022). It offers diverse paradigms for implementing

language curricula and analyzing data (Yan, 2022). Educators can exploit these opportunities and leverage autonomy the affordances of autonomy to introduce grammatical rules, investigate pragmatics, and collaborate with learners to instill preferred competences and practices (Bier, 2022). Its seamless integration can accelerate the pace of language acquisition and open advanced avenues for exploration. As educators look towards the future application of language autonomy, syntax and semantics stand out as powerful allies in exploring speech possibilities (Gromann, 2024). By harnessing the capabilities of vocabulary and meanings, educators can examine the elements of language in depth and propel innovation, enabling learners to gain knowledge and experience more rapidly and effectively (Anita et al., 2024).

To attain the aims outlined in this research paper, the theoretical framework draws heavily on interactionist theory. This considers that language acquisition is greatly influenced by varied social interaction and communication (Alharbi, 2023). By engaging in meaningful conversations and real-life scenarios, educators can facilitate language learning and enhance their learners' communication skills (Vorster, 2022). Applying interactionist theory in language teaching can positively impact how educators approach their instruction (Miyamoto, 2023). Establishing an interactive communicative learning setting encourages learners to participate actively and immerse themselves in language practice (Kumar et al., 2024). This approach fosters language acquisition and boosts confidence in using English as a second language.

The theory addresses pedagogical methods, which configure learning experiences and promote the educational process. Effective pedagogy can cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, ultimately leading to improved communication skills. By incorporating interactive activities, group discussions, and role-playing exercises in teaching, educators can create a dynamically engaging classroom context conducive to language acquisition.

In summary, the theoretical framework applied in this study exemplifies the significance of integrating pedagogical strategies into language teaching. By prioritizing social interaction and communication and improving aspects of language instruction, educators can empower

their learners to develop their language skills and thrive in multilingual settings. The following section discusses the study methodology, including the data collection process and data analysis.

### **Methodology**

This research investigated the effectiveness of learner autonomy strategies in promoting vocabulary acquisition among first-year university students who were BELLS in Saudi Arabia. An experimental design was employed due to resource constraints and the desire to minimize disruption to existing curricula (McCambridge, 2021). This section details the participants, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

The target population for this study comprised first-year university students enrolled in an introductory English language learning course at a university in Saudi Arabia. Convenience sampling was used to recruit readily available participants. The inclusion criteria required participants to be first-year university students, self-identified as beginner level in English proficiency (BELLS), and willing to participate in the study and provide informed consent. Students with prior experience of intensive English language programs or with diagnosed learning disabilities that might significantly impact vocabulary acquisition were excluded from the study.

A sample size of approximately 70 participants was targeted, with 21 students assigned to an experimental group and 49 to a control group. This sample size allowed statistical analysis while remaining manageable within the research timeframe (Cohen et al., 2013). Efforts were made to ensure similar levels of English language proficiency between the two groups, as measured by a placement test administered at the beginning of the course.

### ***Instruments***

This study utilized a single primary research instrument: a course test. To assess vocabulary acquisition objectively, a pre-test (Test 1), in-test (Test 2), and post-test (Test 3) were administered using a vocabulary test specifically designed for the introductory English language learning course curriculum. This test measured receptive vocabulary knowledge,



focusing on understanding the meaning of words presented in context. The test was developed in collaboration with the course instructor to ensure it aligned with the course content and learning objectives (Gronlund, 2006).

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

All the participants completed the vocabulary pre-test during their regular class time. Following the pre-test, they were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group using a computer-generated randomization tool. The experimental group received a training session on learner autonomy strategies for vocabulary acquisition. This session introduced students to various self-directed learning tools and techniques. The students were encouraged to implement these strategies independently for a set period outside regular class time. The researcher provided guidance and support resources but did not directly instruct students on vocabulary acquisition during this period. Both groups completed the vocabulary post-test under the same conditions as the pre-test to assess vocabulary acquisition gains.

### ***Data analysis***

In the data analysis, quantitative score data from the vocabulary pre- and post-tests were the primary focus. Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were calculated to summarize the data. To compare the vocabulary acquisition of the experimental and control groups, independent samples *t*-tests were employed. These statistical tests were used to determine if there were any significant differences in the post-test scores between the two groups. To explore the relationship between the frequency of use of learner autonomy strategies and improvement in vocabulary among the participants in the experimental group, correlation analysis was conducted. This statistical technique was used to identify any associations between the two variables.

### ***Findings and Discussion***

This section presents the statistical analysis of the English test scores for the two groups of students: the experimental group exposed to autonomy in learning and the control group who followed traditional learning methods. The analysis aimed to determine the impact of autonomy on vocabulary acquisition by comparing the test scores before,

during, and after the autonomy intervention. A comparison of mean English test scores, experimental vs. control, was conducted, as shown in Figure 1.

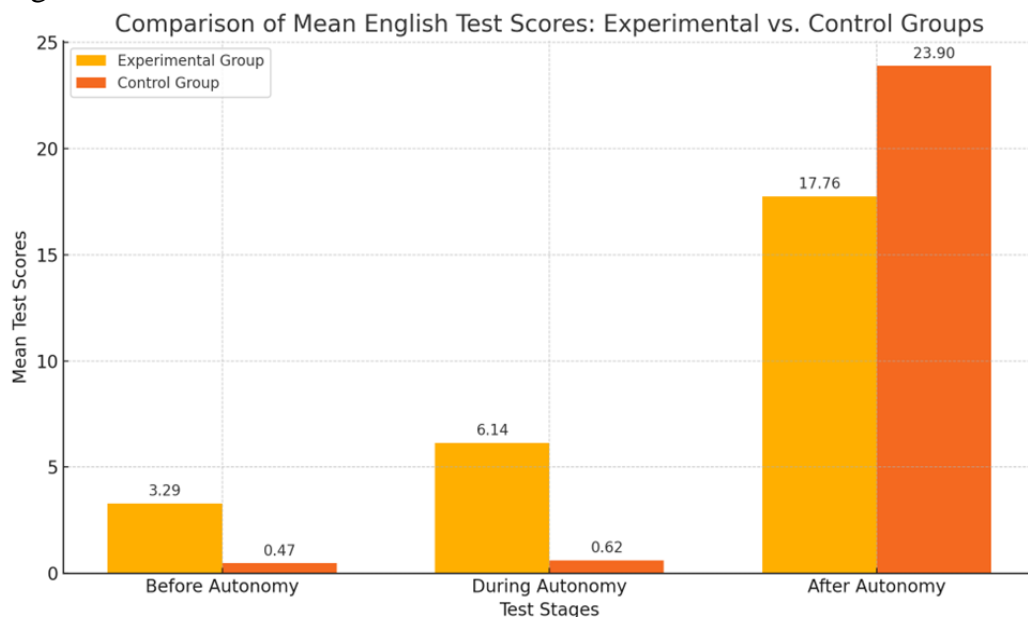


Figure 1. Comparison of Mean Vocabulary Test Scores: Experimental vs. Control

As can be seen from Figure 1, the test scores were measured at three stages: before, during, and after the autonomy intervention. The chart clearly illustrates the differences in performance between the two groups at each stage. The taller bars for the experimental group in the “During Autonomy” stage visually depict the significant improvement achieved through the autonomy intervention. The narrowing gap between the two groups after the intervention points to the potential for the positive effects of autonomy to diminish over time. The line graph in Figure 2 illustrates the test score trends of the experimental vs. control groups.

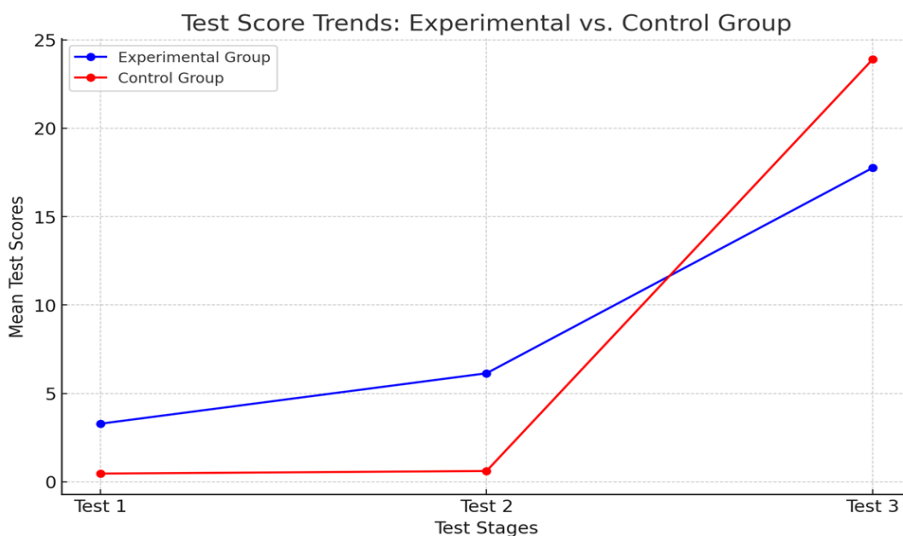


Figure 2. Test Score Trends: Experimental vs. Control

The line graph compared the mean test scores of the two groups, experimental and control. The test scores were measured at three points: Test 1 (pre-test, before autonomy), Test 2 (in-test, during autonomy), and Test 3 (post-test, after autonomy). The graph clearly illustrates the differences in performance between the two groups. The upward-sloping blue line for the experimental group demonstrates consistent improvement, with a noticeable increase in test scores from Test 1 to Test 3. In contrast, the relatively flat red line for the control group indicates a lack of significant change, with a modest increase in scores from Test 1 to Test 2. However, there is then a sharp increase for this group in Test 3. This trend suggests that while both groups improved over time, the control group's scores increased significantly by the end of the study period, indeed indicating they surpassed the experimental group in Test 3.

### ***Analysis of English Test Scores Before the Autonomy Intervention (Test 1)***

To establish a baseline, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the English vocabulary test scores before the autonomy intervention. This analysis was intended to verify whether there were any

pre-existing differences in English proficiency between the experimental and control groups (see Table 1).

*Table 1. ANOVA Results for Test 1.*

<i>p</i> -value	<i>F</i> (20, 0.002)	Sum of squares	Control		Experimental		
			<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	
0.002	10.165	3.1883	0.42	0.47	6.22	3.29	Test 1

The ANOVA results and *p*-value well below the .05 significance threshold indicate a statistically significant difference in mean English vocabulary test scores between the experimental and control groups in the pre-intervention stage. This suggests that the two groups were not identical in terms of English proficiency, with higher results for the experimental group, before the introduction of the autonomy intervention. Given the significance of this difference, it is important to consider this baseline when interpreting the subsequent results.

***Analysis of English Test Scores During Autonomy (Test 2)***

The next phase of the analysis focused on evaluating the impact of the autonomy intervention on English vocabulary acquisition by analyzing test scores during the intervention phase (see Table 2).

*Table 2. ANOVA Results for Test 2.*

	Experimental		Control		Sum of squares	<i>F</i> (48, 0.000364)	<i>p</i> -value
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Test 2	6.14	10.391	0.62	0.40	3.753	14.087	0.000

During the intervention, the ANOVA results again show a statistically significant difference in mean English vocabulary test scores ( $p < .05$ ) between the two groups. This finding suggests that the autonomy intervention had a substantial effect on the experimental group's performance, leading to an improvement in English vocabulary understanding that was not observed in the control group. This result highlights the potential effectiveness of autonomy in learning as a strategy for enhancing student performance in vocabulary acquisition. It suggests that students who are given more control over their learning processes may engage more deeply with the material, leading to better outcomes.

### *Analysis of English Test Scores After the Autonomy Intervention (Test 3)*

Finally, the analysis examined the sustainability of the observed effects by comparing the test scores after the autonomy intervention phase ended (see Table 3).

*Table 3. ANOVA Results for Test 3.*

	Experimental		Control		Sum of squares	F(68, 0.11)	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD			
Test 3	17.76	11.84	23.90	15.66	-1.607	2.583	0.113

*Note:* The negative value for the sum of squares is likely an anomaly, as it should be non-negative, indicating a possible calculation or data entry error.

The ANOVA results for the post-intervention stage show higher mean values for the control group, but the results are not statistically significant. This lack of significance suggests that the positive effects of autonomy observed during the intervention were not maintained once the intervention was removed. Thus, while autonomy may boost performance temporarily, the benefits may diminish over time without continued support or reinforcement. The negative sum of squares value, however, raises concerns about data accuracy and should be revisited to ensure the reliability of these findings.

The findings clearly illustrate the differences in performance between the experimental and control groups, demonstrating the impact of the experimental intervention. Before the autonomy intervention, there were significant differences in the test scores between the experimental and control groups, suggesting that the two groups were not equivalent at baseline. This initial disparity must be considered when interpreting the impact of the autonomy intervention. There was a significant improvement in the experimental group's performance during the autonomy phase, suggesting that autonomy in learning positively influences English proficiency. This aligns with educational theories that emphasize the benefits of self-directed learning, especially that students are more motivated and engaged when they have control over their learning processes. Following the intervention, the absence of significant differences in test scores indicate that the positive effects of the

autonomy intervention were not sustained. This could imply that the autonomy intervention alone was not sufficient to create lasting improvements in English proficiency. It suggests that continued or reinforced autonomy, along with additional instructional support, may be necessary to maintain the benefits over the long term.

The findings suggest that educational strategies incorporating learner autonomy could enhance learning outcomes, particularly in terms of vocabulary understanding. However, to sustain these benefits, educators might consider integrating autonomy as a continuous part of the curriculum, rather than as a temporary intervention. This could involve ongoing opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning, along with regular feedback and support from instructors.

One of the key findings of the study was that the experimental group, which received the autonomy intervention, demonstrated a significant improvement in English test scores, particularly in the “during autonomy” stage. This suggests that the autonomy strategies were effective in enhancing their English vocabulary understanding. However, while the experimental group showed initial gains, the positive effects of autonomy appeared to diminish after the intervention ended. This indicates that the benefits of introducing autonomy strategies may not be sustained without ongoing support or reinforcement.

In contrast, the control group, which followed traditional learning methods, improved beyond reasonable expectations on Test 3. This provided a baseline for comparison and highlights the effectiveness of the autonomy intervention in improving English test scores.

### **Conclusions**

This study investigated the effectiveness of learner autonomy strategies in promoting vocabulary acquisition among beginner English language learners (BELLs) in Saudi Arabia. The study found that the experimental group, which received the autonomy intervention, outperformed the control group before and during the intervention. However, the positive effects of autonomy were not sustained after the intervention ended. This suggested that additional support may be necessary to maintain long-term improvements. These findings

contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of student autonomy in education. They underscore the need for strategies that not only promote autonomy but also provide the necessary support and guidance to ensure that its benefits are sustained over time.

The limitations of this study include the use of a convenience sample, the ANOVA design, and reliance on test scores data. Future research could explore strategies for maintaining the gains achieved through learner autonomy-based learning approaches and address these limitations. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the role of learner autonomy in promoting vocabulary acquisition among BELLS. While the findings suggest its effectiveness, additional support may be necessary to ensure long-term benefits.

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