

Developments in Foreign Language Teaching

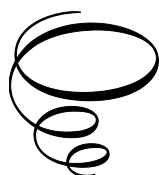
Developments in Foreign Language Teaching:

*Inspiring Teachers,
Transforming Learners*

Edited by

Stella Kourieos

**Cambridge
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Developments in Foreign Language Teaching:
Inspiring Teachers, Transforming Learners

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ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CONSTRADE	Content and Communication Strategies Development
DV	Dependent Variable
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes
FL	Foreign Language
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
IRE	Initiation-Response-Evaluation
IV	Independent Variable
L1	First language
L2	Second Language
LDT	Lexical Decision Task
MA	Master of Arts
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MOECSY	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth
RT	Reaction/Response times
SEAs4ALL	Successful Educational Actions for All
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TA	Thematic Analysis
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VLS	Vocabulary Learning Strategies

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I wish to express my sincere thanks to the contributors of this volume. I am truly grateful to their commitment and professionalism and for helping me bring out this edited volume in a timely manner. I would also like to extend my thanks to the CyTEA committee for working hard towards organising this year's conference and providing a platform for practitioners and researchers in the field of TESOL to offer insights into a diversity of research and non-research informed pedagogical practices, some of which appear in this volume.

INTRODUCTION

The field of teaching English as a foreign language to speakers of other languages (TESOL) is a rapidly evolving field constantly undergoing reassessment with new ideas emerging and old ones revisited and questioned. As such, it merits continuous investigation aiming at inspiring teachers to use pedagogical instructional practices which promote improved student learning. Advanced technology, changes in demographic nature of students in educational contexts worldwide due to globalisation, the inclusion of students with special learning difficulties in mainstream education and the emergence of English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) are some phenomena, amongst others, that have influenced our understanding of the nature of foreign language teaching and learning in the last few decades. This has not only brought about a number of changes in the way foreign languages are taught and learnt, but it also has significant implications for the curriculum of teacher education programmes.

This volume is a collection of adapted papers which were presented at the annual CyTEA conference in Cyprus, in November, 2019. It provides a source of readings based on research and non-research informed practices which aim at sensitising teachers, researchers, and teacher educators, to a diversity of important aspects of foreign language teaching following the aforementioned changes while at the same time it offers practical implications for the training of language teachers. The papers which appear in this volume have been selected on the basis of their content as they address a diversity of topics pertaining to the general theme of the book. More specifically, they feature a range of topics related to different aspects of language teaching and teacher education, as these have been explored and implemented by practitioners and researchers in various educational contexts and levels following the current trends in education.

The edited volume includes seven chapters which fall into three thematic categories and are presented in the following three sections: (a) Pedagogical approaches to foreign language teaching, (b) Intercultural awareness in primary schools, and (c) Language teacher education. This book provides practitioners, researchers, and teacher educators with guidance, recommendations, and suggestions, supported by evidence-based research or long experience, which they can use to prepare learners, be it student learners or teacher learners, for the on-going changes that take place

in today's globalised world and more specifically in the field of TESOL. The paragraphs which follow provide a summary of the chapters in the book.

The first category which comprises three chapters focuses on pedagogical approaches to language teaching. The first chapter authored by **Stella Kourieos** reports on a study which examines the effectiveness of explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) in assisting the acquisition of technical vocabulary in an ESAP psychology course. Specifically, this study, aims at raising students' awareness of important aspects of word knowledge found in monolingual dictionaries and encouraging autonomous learning by actively engaging students in the joint creation of an online dictionary which incorporates the use of various VLSs. The chapter concludes with suggestions for dealing with the limitations identified. In the second chapter, **Evangelia Vassilakou** addresses the usefulness of think-aloud strategy as an instruction approach and its effectiveness in developing foreign language learners' reading literacy as opposed to traditional reading instruction. This paper contributes to the EFL field by offering more practical suggestions on the development of the ability to use think alouds to improve reading performance and provides recommendations for future research. The third chapter authored by **Vasileios Koutroumpas** seeks to expound the importance of motivation and peripheral difficulties within English as a foreign language teaching and learning in conjunction with Dyslexia. The author suggests that the 'placebo effect' (i.e. a deceptive, yet cogent 'treatment') appears to be conducive towards learners' performance and attitudes, hence, he calls for the reconceptualisation of teaching methods and diagnostic tools used with dyslexic foreign language learners.

The next category shifts our attention to the issue of multiculturalism in state primary schools in Cyprus and Greece and teachers' efforts to respond to the challenges of migration and multiculturalism through appropriate teaching that will shape a school environment of mutual understanding and respect for all cultures and ethnicities. In chapter 4, **Maria Diakou** shares her experience of implementing technology in the context of multicultural Cypriot Primary Schools in an attempt to create a stimulating language learning environment which will help students develop a positive attitude towards different cultures. Informed by the aims of the European Project SEAs4ALL (Successful Educational Actions for All) of which she was an active member, the author proposes a number of activities/materials supported by technology which can be utilised by teachers in their effort to promote inclusion in the classroom and raise students' awareness of cultural differences. In the next chapter, **Isaak**

Papadopoulos examines Greek primary FL teachers' perspectives and practices in relation to developing interculturally competent students in an attempt to facilitate their smooth integration within the social context of the classroom, and encourage multicultural friendships and exchanges in the 21st century. Based on the findings drawn from this study, the author highlights the need for professional development on theoretical and pedagogical issues and practices related to the promotion of interculturalism in the primary classrooms.

The third category included in this volume comprises two chapters which make recommendations about the content and instructional practices used in teacher education programmes. Specifically, **Neophytos Mitsigkas** reports on a study which looks at the role of literature in English language teaching and learning. The author advocates the use of novels in particular, as an invaluable source of motivating and stimulating activities that can contribute to the increase of students' language and intercultural awareness. He concludes with significant pedagogical implications concerning the use of literature as an authentic teaching material in teacher education curricula. In the final chapter of this volume, **Sviatlana Karpava** investigates the effect of reflective practice and highlights the importance of integrating reflective journal writing in the training of both, pre-service and in-service teachers, as it contributes to teachers' growth and professional development.

The book offers valuable information to teachers and researchers working in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) which can be used for learning about the latest developments in the field and for getting some practical ideas that can help them further develop their teaching skills, optimise their students' learning and revisit their practices.

Dr Stella Kourieos
Editor

PART I:
**PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO FOREIGN
LANGUAGE TEACHING**

CHAPTER ONE

ASSISTING THE ACQUISITION OF TECHNICAL VOCABULARY THROUGH EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Functional language proficiency, which is a requirement in ESAP courses, requires mastery of a considerably large number of technical words which must be learnt in a relatively short period of time. Additionally, the acquisition of L2 vocabulary is a difficult process, as simply recognising the meaning of a word when found in a text does not ensure its solid retention in the mental lexicon and thus it does not become part of a learner's productive ability. Cognitive psychologists have suggested that learners' active involvement with the word's meaning leads to deeper word processing and aids retention, therefore, foreign language learners need to be introduced to a number of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) which will encourage them to work with the words in this way. This chapter describes the process of engaging two groups of psychology students in the development of an online ESAP dictionary which incorporates some of these strategies, and reports on students' perceived benefits and challenges of using these strategies for learning technical vocabulary. Based on the findings of this study, some suggestions for the improvement and more successful implementation of such vocabulary tasks in ESAP contexts are offered.

Key words: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, ESAP, dictionary skills, technology

1. Introduction

Changes which have been brought about by various aspects of globalisation, accelerated by technological advances, particularly the internet, have given English a prominent role in various fields, including science and academia. This spread of English as a dominant language of communication and means of instruction in many institutions of higher education has been particularly influential in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), especially in contexts where the English modules seem to serve a different purpose across disciplines. This has led to the emergence of ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) courses which focus on the development of language skills specific for academic study in a particular discipline (i.e. psychology, computer science, nursing, to name a few). More specifically, these courses aim at facilitating students to cope with input texts (i.e. listening & reading) and developing skills which will enable them to get the most out of lectures and written texts, and to produce academic pieces of writing on discipline-related topics while avoiding plagiarism.

Functional language proficiency, which is a requirement in ESAP courses, requires mastery of a considerably large number of technical words which must be learnt in a relatively short period of time. However, while a number of high frequency words can be learnt incidentally in an incremental way, this process is impossible to simulate with technical words, which are less intensive and varied (Groot 2000). Research has shown that the relationship between vocabulary knowledge, and more specifically, reading comprehension and fluency is symbiotic, which means that, as students' vocabulary is broadened, their reading, writing and listening ability, essential for academic success, is enhanced and vice versa (Laufer and Ravenhorst-Kalovski 2010; Willis and Ohashi 2012). In ESAP courses, students are exposed to discipline-related texts which can be both authentic or simplified for language learners, but whatever the case, they still include a large amount of technical words; these words, while uncommon in general use of the language, are critical to the comprehension of the text (oral or written) in which they occur, and therefore necessary to learn (Nation 2001). This poses an even greater challenge for students enrolled in such courses for a number of reasons, the most important being their relatively low frequency, which in turn, impedes their acquisition and solid embedding in the mental lexicon, as it is the case with L1 acquisition (Groot 2000). Inferencing of the meaning of technical words from context can also be problematic considering that less proficient learners have limited vocabulary because of lower language competence which makes it

impossible for them to understand the context itself in the first place. Another difficulty encountered when learning technical vocabulary relates to the fact that, the general meanings of certain everyday words are already established in the learners' lexicon, hence, the specific meanings and usage of these words in a particular discipline are difficult to learn (Coxhead 2013). Finally, some of the technical words may need specialist knowledge of the field (Nation 2001), which neither the students nor the language instructor may have, at least to the extent required (Chung and Nation 2003).

Apart from the challenges foreign language learners may have to deal with when learning technical vocabulary, the acquisition of L2 vocabulary is generally a difficult process as simply recognising the meaning of a word when found in a text does not ensure its solid retention in the mental lexicon and thus, it does not become part of a learner's productive ability. However, for the latter to happen, it is essential for the language instructor to equip learners with independent vocabulary learning strategies (VLS), which will allow continuous learning once the course is finished.

The purpose of the current research was to engage psychology students in the development of an online ESAP dictionary which incorporated some of these strategies, in an attempt to gain insights into their [students'] perceived benefits, and challenges encountered when using them for learning technical vocabulary. Therefore, measuring the vocabulary gains made by the students was beyond the scope of this research study.

The chapter begins with a review of the relevant literature concerning different types of vocabulary knowledge and the importance of exposing students to explicit vocabulary learning strategies essential for effective dictionary use which have proved to assist the acquisition of technical vocabulary. It then discusses the methodology and findings of the study followed by a discussion of the major issues involved. The chapter ends with conclusions and pedagogical implications.

2. Literature Review

Considering the time constraints and vocabulary complexities discussed in the introduction, it follows that efficient acquisition of technical vocabulary requires explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies and a conscious effort from the learner. This requires a careful analysis of *what* types of word knowledge should be learned and *how* they should be learned, these being the issues addressed in the subsections which follow.

2.1 Vocabulary Knowledge

In connection with word knowledge, a distinction is commonly made between *receptive* and *productive* vocabulary, each type focusing on specific aspects of language proficiency. Hedge (2014) for example, defines receptive (or passive) vocabulary as the learner's ability to recall and recognise multiple aspects of word knowledge when encountered in reading and listening, but which the learner cannot easily produce in speech or writing. On the other hand, he refers to productive (or active) vocabulary as the learner's ability to retrieve a word from memory and use it automatically in writing and speaking. In other words, the first dimension is related to the comprehension of a word's meaning essential for receptive skills while the second dimension is associated with the ability to access and use the appropriate spoken or written form of a word in the target language to express a meaning by speaking or writing (Nation 1990).

When discussing vocabulary, a distinction is also made between *breadth* of vocabulary, that is the number of words that a language learner knows (Nation 2001) and *depth* of vocabulary which is knowledge of various aspects of word knowledge (Read 2000), or knowledge of how these aspects interact with each other (Meara 2009), with the former generally considered much easier to acquire than the latter. It is therefore possible to assume that while vocabulary size is central to students' success in comprehending input texts, attention to different aspects of word knowledge plays a significant role in productive skills (Laufer 2013), especially writing, since "lexical items carry the basic information load of the meanings L2 writers wish to comprehend and express" (Read 2004, 146). According to Nassaji (2004, 112), researchers have indicated "the complexity and multi-dimensionality of word knowledge and have suggested that knowing a word well should mean more than knowing its individual meanings in particular contexts."

Nation (1990) perceives the construct of word knowledge as consisting of a comprehensive list of aspects, which need to be mastered by L2 learners in order to fully understand a word and its usage, and be able to use it effectively and productively in context. An awareness of the different aspects of vocabulary knowledge may help teachers to plan activities which focus on the development of students' receptive or/and productive vocabulary considering the time available and the goals of the course. Table 1-1 shows what is involved in gaining depth of word knowledge and which aspects are essential for developing receptive or productive vocabulary respectively.

Table 1-1 Description of vocabulary knowledge (Adapted from Nation 2001)

Form & Meaning(s)	R What does the word mean? Are there multiple meanings? P What word form can be used to express this meaning?
Written form	R What does the word look like? P How is the word spelled?
Spoken form	R What does the word sound like? P How is the word pronounced?
Grammatical functions	R In what patterns does this word occur? P In what patterns must we use this word?
Collocations	R What words or types of words occur with this one? P What words or types of words must we use with this one?
Associations	R What other words does this make us think of? P What other words could we use instead of this one?

Note. R = receptive knowledge, P = productive knowledge

Considering that all types of knowledge are essential for effectively understanding and using new vocabulary, it would be unreasonable to expect the teacher to explicitly teach all facets of vocabulary and an entire list of words to learners. If students are to reach an advanced level of lexical development, they need to learn most words outside the classroom instead, and should therefore raise their awareness of the knowledge involved in knowing the multifaceted nature of a lexical item and the process of learning it. As Webb and Nation (2013) advocate, teachers need to help students learn and use strategies to deal with low-frequency words effectively so that the potential for vocabulary learning outside of the classroom will be increased.

2.2 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

In recent years, in line with a more learner-focused view of education, the focus has shifted from a more teacher-oriented view of learning to language learners themselves and the way in which they approach the learning task with the aim of equipping them with the skills to work independently, both in and outside the classroom, allowing them more control over what is learnt, when and where that learning takes place (Moir and Nation 2002). To this end, there has been extensive research that supports the instruction of vocabulary learning strategies highlighting their importance in explicitly activating vocabulary (Grabe 2009), in encouraging autonomous and more self-directed learning (Akbari 2015), and in raising learner awareness of particular items which will facilitate subsequent learning and recall (Oxford 2003). In a similar vein, Schmitt (1997, 221) asserts that “learners can see value in strategies which they do not currently use and may be willing to try new strategies if they are introduced to and instructed in them”, an assertion which further supports the explicit instruction of VLSs.

The incorporation of new technologies into everyday life has also had an impact on the way vocabulary is taught and learnt and language teaching/learning is one of the many areas that has witnessed the positive effects afforded by technology. Dictionaries have long been recognised as a learning tool and a primary source of lexical information for most students, especially at tertiary level, to fulfill a variety of academic functions (Akbari 2015). With the widespread use of the internet, more and more online dictionaries, which can be accessed free of charge, continue to appear and evolve through the web, bringing new perspectives on the development of dictionary skills. These innovative and specialised dictionaries, which are easily accessible and readily available, provide learners with information such as easy-to-understand definitions, pronunciation, example sentences, collocations and important grammar tips, essential aspects for deeper word processing. An example taken from Macmillan online dictionary is provided in figure 1-1 below:

motivation - definition and synonyms ★★


 NOUN Pronunciation /,məʊtɪ'veɪʃ(ə)n/ Word Forms

Synonyms

Contribute to our Open Dictionary

- 1 [UNCOUNTABLE] a feeling of enthusiasm or interest that makes you determined to do something
You can do anything if you've got the motivation.
improve/increase/strengthen someone's motivation: *These methods can help to increase students' motivation and interest.*
lack/lose motivation: *She said she had lost her motivation.*

Synonyms and related words

Feelings of interest: *interest, motivation, involvement...*

[Explore Thesaurus](#)

Synonyms and related words

Determination and ambition: *determination, ambition, will...*

Figure 1-1 Example of a word entry taken from <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

However, lexicographical research shows that regardless of how good a dictionary is, many learners fail to fully exploit the full range of information in dictionaries because of lack of familiarity with formats and codes, and tend to overuse them for comprehension purposes (Ranalli 2003), showing preference to bilingual dictionaries, which they use mostly for referencing L1–L2 translation equivalents (Frankenberg Garcia 2005). As Scholfield (1982) interestingly postulated more than two decades ago, looking up a word in a dictionary is “far from performing a purely mechanical operation” (185), arguing that locating the unknown word in the alphabetic list seems to be the skill most dealt with in respect of training dictionary use, while other important facets involving effective dictionary use receive little attention. It is true that most students, when they encounter an unfamiliar word, are inclined to look for its translation in L1 and ignore other aspects related to understanding the new word (see Table 1-1) which will enable them to use it productively and effectively in a given context. Allied to this premise, Hall (cited in Akbari 2015, 3) maintains that students need to be encouraged and trained to record various aspects of information about a word, not just its meaning as these can be seen to feature prominently in today’s pedagogical dictionaries.

Given the importance of understanding the different aspects involved in word knowledge and mastery of the target language discussed in the introduction, the inclusion and explicit instruction of VLSs in educational programmes and syllabi have been given particular attention in recent years, with researchers in the field highlighting the usefulness of dictionaries as an educational and life-long learning tool which promotes independent vocabulary learning (Akbari 2015; Carduner 2003 ;Frankenberg-Garcia 2011; Ranalli 2013, Wingate 2004).

Schmitt (1997) makes the distinction between discovery strategies which are concerned with the discovery of a new word's meaning, and consolidation strategies which encompass four strategy types (metacognitive, social, cognitive and memory strategies) that facilitate the acquisition of a word after it has been introduced. This chapter will focus on memory strategies, commonly found in monolingual dictionaries, which allow for deeper processing, facilitating in this way long-term retention. According to Schmitt (1997), memory strategies entail the use of imagery, that is learning new words with pictures, word associations that link the new item with related words using a semantic network (i.e. collocations) or sense relationships such as synonymy or antonymy, and the use of aspects of word knowledge such as a word's part of speech as well as its phonological and orthographical form.

3. The Study

3.1 Aims of the Study and Research Questions

This study aims to raise students' awareness of important aspects of word knowledge found in dictionaries and encourage autonomous learning by actively engaging them in the joint creation of an online dictionary which incorporates the use of various VLSs. In line with this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

- To what extent do students feel they have benefitted from actively engaging in the development of an ESAP dictionary?
- Were there any factors which may have inhibited students to fully engage in the task?

3.2 Contextual Background

This study was carried out with two groups of psychology students enrolled in a BSc in Psychology programme of study in a private university in Cyprus where the language of instruction is Greek. In the 3rd year of their studies, students are enrolled in a compulsory credit-bearing ESAP course whose main aim is to help them enhance their technical vocabulary in order to understand articles recommended by their lecturers and to enable them to attend international conferences. Therefore, there is more emphasis on their receptive rather than their productive skills. To manage this situation, a component of explicit instruction on vocabulary learning strategies was added to the syllabus to enable the students to expand their vocabulary in an individualised way.

3.3 Participants

Two groups of psychology ESAP students participated in this study. All students were Greek native speakers. Both groups were involved in the same vocabulary task in two consecutive years. Out of seven students who completed the task during the spring semester in 2018 (Group 1), six (2 male and 4 female) agreed to take part in the study. Out of fifteen students who completed the task during the spring semester in 2019, nine (4 male and 5 female) agreed to take part in the study. Students were of varying levels of language proficiency ranging from A2+ to C1+ of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

3.4 Vocabulary Task

The task required them to work jointly on Google Docs to create an online psychology dictionary while using a number of vocabulary learning strategies assigned by the teacher. This would lead to their active and autonomous engagement in the development of their technical vocabulary and would also help them develop dictionary skills, an area that was also covered in the coursebook. The use of Google docs seemed suitable for the aims of this task for a number of reasons. This word processing application allows instant feedback and collaboration on student-generated text (Boyes 2016), it is user-friendly and provides a control edit setting which enables teachers to view, edit, and easily place comments in the comments box and in the margins, giving students the opportunity for immediate feedback on their writing. Additionally, changes are saved automatically and all versions of saved documents can be easily retrieved, allowing the teacher to monitor

each student's level of contribution. Finally, the online environment is always up-to-date, it is fast, and provides countless contexts for technical words, correlations, explanations, as well as links to more resources through a number of tools afforded by this app. It is also favoured by the learners because of the independence it offers.

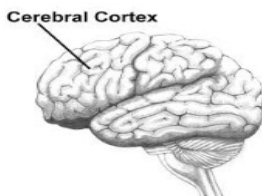
The students were first instructed to create Gmail accounts. A document on Google Docs was created by the instructor and the link was then sent to the students' Gmail with clear guidelines which they had to follow in order to develop an online dictionary based on the topics they studied in class that were taken from an ESAP textbook on Psychology. The link was also sent to two of their lecturers who taught psychology subjects and to a professional psychoanalyst who were asked to contribute with videos, articles or word information when/if they wished. Students were assigned 4 to 5 words weekly which they had to add alphabetically under each unit. They were required to use a number of Memory VLS like the grammatical features of each word, a definition as it is used in psychology, an example, the pronunciation of the word, the L1 translation, derivatives and synonyms where applicable, also stating the part of speech. They were also encouraged to provide possible collocations using semantic mapping, a link to an article or a video related to a topic relevant to a particular word, a picture and/or the meaning of the word as it is used in general English, though the use of these strategies was optional. The students were given feedback each week for their new entries in the dictionary which focused on incorrect definitions or word information, on the simplification of certain examples or synonyms, and/or on additional information not provided by the students. On the first page of the dictionary, students were given useful links they could use like a psychology glossary, a pdf APA psychology dictionary, and two links for collocations. Of course, they were encouraged to also use other sources if they wished. An example of a student's entry is presented in figure 1-2 below.

Cortex /n/ [C, pl. Cortices -believe it or not] (φλοιός)

Definition: the outer layer (or layers) of a structure, as distinguished from the central core. Usually refers to the anatomy of the brain, where it describes the outer layer of the cerebrum (the cerebral cortex), composed of folded grey matter and plays an important role in consciousness.

Example: A therapeutic intervention used for epilepsy in the past was the separation of the brain's two hemispheres by cutting the cerebral cortex in the middle.

Related words: cortical /adj./, cerebral cortex (the layer of gray matter that covers the outside of the brain and is associated with higher cognitive functions).

**Hippocampus** /n/ [C, pl. Hippocampi -again, believe it or not] (ιππόκαμπος)

Definition: a part of the forebrain, in the basal medial region of the temporal lobe, that is important for declarative memory and learning.

Example: Damage to the hippocampus can cause amnesia.

Related words: hippocampal /adj./, hippocampal formation (part of the brain related to long-term memory)

Figure 1-2 Screenshot of a student's entry in the online dictionary

3.5 Data Collection & Analysis

Semi-structured interviews, which aimed at capturing students' varying perceptions of their involvement in this vocabulary task, were employed for the aims of this study. Additionally, considering the small number of participants, it was felt that interviews would yield richer responses than a questionnaire for example. Participants were asked open-ended questions which aimed at investigating the extent to which they were engaged in the development of this dictionary, and more specifically, their perceived benefits of the various vocabulary learning strategies they were required to use as well as any limitations and/or difficulties encountered. The interviews were recorded after seeking the participants' permission. This allowed for the inclusion of actual quotes from the interviewees and provided credibility and reliability to the collected data (Kvale 2007). Relevant ethical issues such as confidentiality, anonymity and permission to withdraw from the study were fully considered during the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Following guidelines in Dörnyei (2007), the data were transcribed, analysed thematically, and organised under two major categories pertaining to the research questions. The two major categories were further subdivided into more focused thematic groups based on the participants' overlapping

responses/comments. The following section presents the findings under the two thematic areas and the emerging thematic groups.

4. Findings & Discussion

In the interviews, students were asked to reflect upon their experiences of jointly developing an online psychology dictionary while using a number of vocabulary learning strategies assigned to them, for the completion of the task and on the factors, which they felt, may have inhibited their full engagement in the task. Findings in relation to both research questions are presented in sections 4.1 and 4.2 respectively.

4.1 Students' Perceived Benefits of Engaging in the Development of the Dictionary

The responses that students gave in connection with the first research question are presented in this section which is further sub-divided in two categories. These categories relate to the development of their dictionary skills and the improvement of receptive vocabulary.

4.1.1 Development of Dictionary Skills

Students' comments regarding this area were unanimous. They all agreed on the effectiveness of using particular VLSs in raising their awareness of aspects of word knowledge they had not previously been familiar with and had therefore ignored when looking up the meaning of a word in a dictionary. As one student commented:

The truth is that I had never paid attention to any information found in a dictionary before, except the meaning of the word in L1 [first language]. However, I am now aware of other important aspects of a word, like its grammatical features, which I used to see as symbols and I couldn't understand their usefulness. [S3]

Specifically, a number of students indicated that they had learnt what conventional abbreviations which provide grammatical information about a word, stood for; this, was perceived particularly useful by eleven students for reasons such as improved ability to guess the meaning of a word from the context, more accurate use of words in writing, and better comprehension of the meaning of specific words whose spelling and pronunciation are the same in more than one part of speech. An example given by a student [S10] was the word "*conscious*" which can be both an adjective, mostly used in

general English, and a noun, which has a more specific meaning in psychology. What was interesting, however, was the fact that when students were asked whether they would pay attention to word aspects in the future when looking up unfamiliar words, five students felt that they would look for the meaning of these words in L1 and probably synonyms and examples but they would still ignore information about its grammatical behaviour. This finding is in line with previous research in the field which is indicative of students' tendency to ignore explicit usage information provided via symbols or codes, relying instead on dictionary examples for guidance (Chan 2012; Dziemianko 2006).

Eight students reported to have developed look-up strategies essential for researching an unfamiliar word from a more critical perspective. More specifically, they argued that during the process of dictionary development, they were required to provide different meanings for a word, where applicable, and examples of its usage. This, as they asserted, urged them to use different sources before deciding on the correct meaning of the word and on a suitable example that would help them understand how the word is used in a specific context. As one participant maintained:

When I started working on the dictionary, I would just choose one of the sources recommended by the teacher to find the information requested for the task, which I often added to the dictionary without really understanding it because of the complicated language used. I soon realised though, that, if I were to benefit from this task, I should cross-check and consult multiple sources in order to find a definition or an example that would be easier and clearer for me to understand. It's a lot of work but it really pays off at the end! [S1]

This finding is supported by Nation (2001) who asserts that higher proficiency in a language is needed when using a monolingual dictionary than a bilingual one, partly because definitions of words may sometimes contain infrequent words that less advanced students are likely to be unfamiliar with, as well as explanations of word usage which may require fairly sophisticated grammar skills.

4.1.2 Development of Receptive Vocabulary

Another common theme which stood out among the participants' comments in the interviews was the development of students' receptive vocabulary, which, as ten students asserted, was the result of their having worked with the words' meanings actively. They argued that the fact that they had to look for word information themselves and add it to the dictionary helped them

understand and remember the word better when they encountered it again in a related article as indicated in the following quotes:

The truth is that I felt I could only remember the words that had been assigned to me as I had to look for the information required myself before adding them to the dictionary. [S14]

Even though I revised the words added by my peers to the dictionary, I think I was more able to understand the ones I had added. [S9]

Despite the fact that the majority of the students reported a connection between this vocabulary task and a perceived increase in receptive vocabulary, their comments when they were asked which strategies they found more beneficial during the process of dictionary development varied, depending on factors such as personal interest and perceived language proficiency. For example, only eight out of fifteen students interviewed reported to have benefited from the articles which were added to the dictionary. Specifically, they argued that reading articles was a very useful strategy as it enabled them to see how certain words were used in context, which in turn, helped them gain a better understanding of these words and their usage. It is important to note, however, that different reasons were given by students regarding their willingness or reluctance to read some of these articles. For example, five of these students, claimed to have been interested in pursuing post-graduate studies in the field of Psychology in English-speaking universities, presenting in international conferences, and even publishing scientific articles so reading foreign literature, was an activity they had always engaged in because they found it personally rewarding. Therefore, for these students, personal interest in the topics of these articles seemed to have been the main reason for reading an article as shown in the following quotes:

If I found the topic of the article interesting, I would definitely read it, but if not, I did not bother reading it. There were also cases when I had already read other articles on a specific topic so I considered it a waste of time to read any of these articles simply because they had been added to the dictionary. [S14]

It was very useful that articles were added by peers, subject specialists, and a professional psychoanalyst as this gave me the option to choose and read the ones which were closer to my interests. [S8]

Two other students maintained that, while they found reading articles particularly beneficial for better understanding of the passages read in class,

their choice of articles depended on their familiarity with the topic, the length of the article as well as the complexity of the language used. They admitted that they had often been reluctant to read an article despite being interested in the topic, as the language used seemed too advanced for their language proficiency, which in turn, discouraged them from making an effort to read it.

A number of students (N: 9) also showed preference for learning the target lexical items through the use of images added by them or their peers to watching a video for example, as they found them helpful in terms of understanding and remembering words better. A similar finding was also reported in the study of Alamri and Rogers (2018) who found that by using visual cartoons to present target vocabulary, learners were able to use both the verbal and imagery codes in order to acquire the target item. According to the researchers, the use of images proved to have been particularly effective as it was combined with explicit vocabulary instruction. Yanguas (2009) also confirmed the positive effects for combined glosses (text and picture) with respect to vocabulary recognition and its positive effect on reading comprehension.

The use of synonyms was another strategy favoured by eight students who agreed that it had contributed to the enhancement of their reading comprehension skills. As indicated in their comments, they all felt that having to find synonyms for some of the words assigned to them, helped them to a great extent broaden their technical vocabulary, and consequently enhanced their understanding of discipline-related articles. As one student remarked:

Having worked with synonyms helped me deal with the passages we analysed in class. Even though reading specialised texts made me uneasy at first, I feel that I gradually became much more motivated and confident in my ability to understand and cope with such texts effectively. [S3]

Three students also said that learning synonyms helped them to engage in productive classroom tasks with more ease. For instance, they were often asked to identify the main ideas of a text or summarise it using their own words. This often urged them to refer to the dictionary and make use of synonyms that had been added there, giving them the opportunity for further practice and consolidation.

Interestingly, regardless of language proficiency or personal interest, there seemed to have been a consensus among all students that an L1 translation of the words to be learned was one of the most valued strategies they had used, as it was perceived sufficient in enabling them to understand the meaning of the target words better and to use them effectively in context