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The Mediating Roles of Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies in the Relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and Language Proficiency among Secondary School Students in Guangdong Province, China

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ABSTRACT: The study sought to establish the mediating effects of Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies on the relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and Language Proficiency among secondary school students in Guangdong Province, China. The suggested methodology entailed a quantitative, cross-sectional study that aimed at examining the direct and indirect relations between the four variables. The research framework was centred on 650 students attending Grades 7-9 in public junior secondary schools. A set of structured questionnaires were suggested for the evaluation of variables associated with vocabulary instruction and a performance-based English proficiency test was proposed to measure Language Proficiency. The proposed analytical framework included a set of statistical procedures (descriptive statistics, reliability testing, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and parallel mediation analysis by means of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and 5,000 bootstrap resamples. It was hypothesised that both Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies might act as mediating constructs in the relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and English language proficiency. The framework highlighted the potential significance of systematic vocabulary teaching and learning, contextual approach, communicative activities, and independent vocabulary learning techniques in secondary education. Thus, through the analysis of both mediating constructs in a single framework, an attempt would be made to provide an in-depth overview of the vocabulary instruction process and its relationship with language proficiency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Importance of vocabulary is significant for language acquisition since words serve as a basis for message comprehension and expression. The importance of vocabulary instruction is associated with language proficiency as students require sufficient level of vocabulary knowledge to attain proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Students acquire knowledge about vocabulary not only by memorising definitions but also by learning forms of words, understanding their interrelationships, and applying corresponding expressions according to specific contexts (Morsi & Sivakami, 2025). Thus, the importance of vocabulary instruction is connected to the position of vocabulary learning in terms of a whole language development process. Vocabulary instruction methods imply various means of introduction and explanation of new vocabulary

and include direct methods of teaching, contextual methods, reading techniques, and communicative techniques. Vocabulary instruction strategies provide learners with help to comprehend, remember and apply vocabulary via guessing words from context, word association, rehearsal, and vocabulary organisation. Thus, these processes establish conceptual relationship between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency. Vocabulary instruction acquires meaning as teaching approaches and learning strategies facilitate students' vocabulary development (Egamova & Sharofova, 2022). The concept of vocabulary instruction in regard to vocabulary knowledge and word-solving skills that reveal importance of instructional approaches to vocabulary development. Such approach allows establishing vocabulary instruction as an organised part of language education rather than separate class activity. Within the framework of secondary school education in Guangdong province of China, the importance of vocabulary instruction, vocabulary instruction methods, vocabulary instruction strategies and language proficiency become interconnected aspects of English language learning. Understanding of these aspects reveals important grounds for exploration of the relationship between vocabulary instruction and students' language proficiency in English (Cervetti et al., 2023).

The correlation between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency concerns not only the quality of vocabulary but also the quality of classroom teaching and the involvement of learners in vocabulary acquisition. In their turn, vocabulary instruction methods influence the learning process via choosing the methods according to which words are taught. In this case, explicit instruction provides an opportunity to provide an explicit explanation of unknown words while contextual teaching enables linking vocabulary to sentences, text and other communication tasks. Reading activities offer learners the chance to see the vocabulary words in meaningful context while speaking and writing activities give learners the opportunity to practice the language practically. Moreover, vocabulary instruction strategies support these vocabulary learning approaches by facilitating learners' processes in comprehending and memorising vocabulary. Such approaches as using contextual clues, forming semantic associations and practicing vocabulary revision and recalling allow students developing more control over the vocabulary knowledge (Eskandari et al., 2024). Therefore, vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies enable creating the correlation between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency due to organisation of the process of teaching as well as participation of learners in vocabulary learning. The issue of vocabulary learning strategies from the perspective of their connection to vocabulary knowledge and motivation in secondary school students pays attention to the correlation between the issue of vocabulary learning strategies and the language in classroom of high school English class. Both these perspectives make clear the relevance of classroom activities and strategies to vocabulary learning. Vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies are the different terms because the first term refers to the approach to the vocabulary teaching while the second one refers to the approach to the vocabulary learning and memorisation (Taga & Kalenderoglu, 2022).

Language proficiency entails being able to comprehend language both spoken and in writing, express one's thoughts clearly as well as choose the right words in order to achieve particular communication goals. The importance of vocabulary instruction is related to these skills since having the right vocabulary leads to comprehension, good expression and proper language usage. However, there are multiple processes involved in vocabulary instruction besides introducing particular words. vocabulary instruction methods are responsible for organising the learning activities while vocabulary instruction strategies are responsible for making the vocabulary engagement possible not only within classes but also in other conditions. Methods, such as explicit instruction, contextual instruction and communicative use can provide opportunities for using words appropriately and understanding them. Strategies, including word associations, contextual guessing, vocabulary revision and memorisation of vocabulary independently can facilitate learning and applying the knowledge about particular words. These mediating constructs thus connect the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency (Rashidova, 2023). Vocabulary learning is a complicated process requiring consideration of relationships between certain factors related to vocabulary instruction and learning. Hence, the relationship between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency can be understood via organising learning processes by means of vocabulary instruction methods and using vocabulary instruction strategies. This is especially true regarding secondary school education when the students are required to comprehend challenging texts and carry out particular communication tasks. In the context of Guangdong province, China, four constructs mentioned above form a consistent framework of vocabulary instruction as a part of English language learning (Ayana et al., 2024)

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The historical development of English language education in China is directly associated with the economic development, educational reforms, and international communication of China. Since the adoption of the reform and opening-up policy in

1978, English has been increasingly used in China as a result of the increasing number of international trade and scientific communication in this language. With the development of time, English became one of the most important subjects in schools, paying more attention to the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills (Zhang & Shi, 2023). Vocabulary was gradually recognised as an indispensable element in learning a language as the knowledge of words is necessary for comprehension of texts, expression of thoughts and effective communication. That is why vocabulary instruction has been one of the important elements of English language teaching in Chinese secondary schools. The development of English language education has influenced vocabulary teaching as well. The traditional approach in the classroom included word memorisation, translation and repetition, while later reforms emphasised the communicative aspect and language application. Effective vocabulary learning presupposes not only the knowledge of word meanings but also its usage in various linguistic situations (Ali, 2022). Thus, vocabulary instruction method and vocabulary instruction strategy become important factors in classroom teaching. As far as the development of English language education is concerned, there is the need to emphasise the significance of the development of language skills among secondary school students in Guangdong Province. Studying the correlation between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency with mediation of vocabulary instruction method and strategy may help to investigate vocabulary learning and English language education in Guangdong Province.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the study was to explore the associations between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency among secondary school learners in Guangdong province, China, especially to determine if vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies would mediate such association. In particular, the objective was to ascertain the extent to which vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies were able to mediate the association between the importance that the secondary learners attached to vocabulary instruction and their language proficiency. More particularly, the objective was to establish whether each of the two constructs was able to mediate independently of the other and determine if the two constructs were able to jointly mediate the specified association. Vocabulary instruction methods referred to the manner in which vocabulary is taught by explaining, introducing and practising vocabulary while vocabulary instruction strategies referred to the methods by which secondary learners acquire, retain and apply knowledge concerning vocabulary. By analysing the association between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency and also the associations between each of the two constructs as mediators and the aforementioned relationship, an empirical exploration was done concerning the relationship between all the four constructs in question. The study took place in the context of secondary English education in Guangdong province, China, and not vocabulary instruction in general. This research-based study provided an empirical ground for exploring the relationships in question.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- To what extent do vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies mediate the relationship between importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency among secondary school students in Guangdong province, China?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

"H_1: Vocabulary Instruction Methods significantly mediate the relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and Language Proficiency."

"H_2: Vocabulary Instruction Strategies significantly mediate the relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and Language Proficiency."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching of vocabulary has been assessed in terms of various angles, such as teaching approaches, vocabulary learning strategies and acquisition of language skills. Specifically, Wen and Naim (2023) assessed research designs, approaches and theories used in studying vocabulary. Both studies underlined the value of organised vocabulary instruction, although their varying focuses have revealed that determination of useful teaching practices does not necessarily mean understanding the links between instructional priorities and language achievements. The study "the importance of vocabulary instruction" is important for language proficiency as it highlights the importance of vocabulary in comprehension and interaction. at the same time, vocabulary instruction methods determine how new vocabulary is taught, explained and practised in class, while vocabulary instruction strategies refer to the process of learning words and acquiring the ability to remember them and retrieve (Wen & Naim, 2023). According to Jiang (2022) evaluated vocabulary learning strategies adopted by Chinese secondary school students,

whereas Chen and Zhao, (2022) studied the frequency and usefulness of those strategies among senior high school students. Both researches provided information about learning of vocabulary by students, although none of them has addressed the mediating effect of vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies in the relationship between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency. Furthermore, focusing on vocabulary strategy use does not entirely explain the contribution of instructional approaches to the development of language skills in students. The existing literature indicates the necessity of examining not only the practices of vocabulary teaching and learning but also the interplay between all four constructs. The identified gap is the lack of directly tested framework which allows for distinguishing the direct relationship between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency and the indirect relationships of these variables through vocabulary instruction methods and vocabulary instruction strategies in secondary schools in Guangdong province, China (Chen & Zhao, 2022)

Development of vocabulary skills may be studied with respect to digital learning and assessment of vocabulary. Specifically, Kovalenko (2024) provided a review of the application of Duolingo for the purposes of learning vocabulary and the results of vocabulary learning, engagement and the integration of digital tools into language education (Kovalenko, 2024). In turn, Wen and Naim (2023) examined the dynamic assessment of vocabulary skills and the part played by such type of assessment in revealing the development of learners. While the first article discusses a certain approach to digital learning, the second one concentrates on the evaluation of learners' vocabulary knowledge and potential. The discussed perspectives are important for vocabulary instruction and language proficiency as students need to acquire and utilise vocabulary knowledge, but vocabulary achievements in receptive form or during supported assessment do not necessarily indicate language proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Vocabulary instruction methods may involve digital exercises, explicit teaching, contextual explanations and supported assessment, while vocabulary instruction strategies may include repetition, contextual reasoning, retrieving and using feedback. Those constructs may provide explanation of the connection between instructional importance and development of language, but the selected researches did not examine their separate and combined mediating role in the process (Wen & Naim, 2023). According to Zeng et al. (2025) assessed the association between receptive and productive vocabulary breadth and speaking ability among Moroccan secondary-level English language learners, while Budiman et al. (2023) explored vocabulary teaching approaches among Chinese middle school students based on curriculum demands. The former article concentrated on certain aspect of language development, while the latter addressed instructional approaches within curriculum requirements. None of them helped to establish the required mediation framework. Thus, there exists a gap between investigation of certain instructional approaches or language skills on the one hand, and examination of relationships among the four constructs in the selected educational environment, on the other hand (Budiman et al., 2023).

Specifically, Rahmanu and Molnár (2024) explored teachers' strategies of improving vocabulary mastery, while Hossain (2024) examined approaches to vocabulary instruction in foreign language education. Both researches focused on instructional practices, but their varying focuses could not help to prove whether teaching approaches and learning strategies are able to explain the link between the importance of instruction and language proficiency of learners. Additionally, the researches by Zhang et al. (2025) provided information about learning of vocabulary in Chinese secondary education, although none of them helped to investigate the required mediation model. They provide complementary information without conclusive evidence of the whole model. Vocabulary instruction methods represent approaches used by teachers to instruct students to vocabulary, while vocabulary instruction strategies refer to processes used by students to learn, remember and employ words. Different roles of the constructs need to be studied separately since frequent use of learning strategies or teaching methods alone is unable to provide an indirect link with language proficiency. Another limitation is that the findings vary due to different settings, student samples and outcome measures used in the reviewed literature. Research results obtained in other areas or those focused on the study of single language skill cannot be applied to secondary school students of Guangdong province, China. The key research gap is the absence of contextually-specific framework tested directly. It will allow examining directly and indirectly the link between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency in the same research model (Zhang et al., 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design and Procedure

The research design was structured to use the quantitative research method, cross-section and explanatory approach in order to analyse the mediating effect of vocabulary instruction methods and strategies in the relationship between the importance of vocabulary instruction and language proficiency among secondary schools students in Guangdong province, China. The reason

for choosing quantitative method in the study is that this method allows assessing the direct and indirect relationships between the four concepts and testing the statistical significance of the mediation hypotheses.

The study used parallel mediation approach, where the importance of vocabulary instruction was considered an independent variable, language proficiency was considered a dependent variable, while vocabulary instruction methods and strategies were taken into account as parallel mediating variables.

7.2 Sampling

The target population involved students aged 13-15 attending public junior secondary schools within the Guangdong Province, China. The individual student was both the sampling unit and unit of analysis. The sampling frame involved the students qualified to be sampled as they were attending junior secondary schools and studying English as part of the school curriculum.

Multistage stratified cluster sampling design was suggested. Stage one involved selection of about 8-10 public junior secondary schools in the Guangdong Province. Stage two involved stratification of the sample into Grade 7, 8 and 9 groups. Lastly, the last stage involved selecting the classes and students in the participating schools.

The sample size involved 650 students in the junior secondary school, remaining consistent with the quantitative sample determined for the study. The students qualified to be sampled should be aged 13-15 and studying English as part of the school curriculum.

7.3 Data and Measurement

The primary sources of quantitative data were expected to be a questionnaire and an English proficiency test based on performance. The questionnaire would measure the independent and mediating variables, and the proficiency test would measure the dependent variable. All questions in the questionnaire were to be modified according to the language understanding capacity of the junior secondary school learners and validated through pilot testing.

7.3.1 Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

The operational definition of Importance of Vocabulary Instruction is that degree to which students felt the need for the systematic instruction and learning of vocabulary to understand English language and communicate in English.

The construct was measured by using a 12-item Importance of Vocabulary Instruction scale. The measure includes questions related to vocabulary importance for English language learning, systematic vocabulary teaching, understanding and communication, and English development in general.

Participants' responses to the scale items were captured using the five-point Likert Scale, which had 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

7.3.2 Vocabulary Instruction Methods

Vocabulary Instruction Methods denoted the methods that the respondents were exposed to while being taught vocabulary in class through explanations, context-based teaching, communication-based techniques, and vocabulary teaching using technology.

This construct was expected to be assessed using a modified 16-item scale for Vocabulary Instruction Methods, comprising four dimensions.

Dimension	Number of items
Explicit vocabulary instruction	4
Contextual vocabulary instruction	4
Communicative vocabulary instruction	4
Technology-supported vocabulary instruction	4
Total	**16**

7.3.3 Vocabulary Instruction Strategies

Vocabulary Instruction Strategies were operationally defined as the systematically taught vocabulary learning strategies in class instruction and those used by students to learn, remember, recall, and use English vocabulary.

A Vocabulary Instruction Strategies Scale consisting of 24 items and six dimensions was proposed.

Dimension	Number of items
Metacognitive vocabulary strategies	4
Contextual inferencing strategies	4
Dictionary and note-taking strategies	4
Rehearsal and retrieval strategies	4
Vocabulary encoding strategies	4
Vocabulary activation strategies	4
Total	**24**

7.3.4 Language Proficiency

The Language Proficiency variable reflected students' proficiency in understanding and using the English language in their listening, reading, writing, speaking, and language use.

Language Proficiency was assessed using the proposed school-level English proficiency test that covers five dimensions.

Component	Measurement focus
Listening	Spoken English comprehension
Reading	Written English comprehension
Writing	Written expression and accuracy
Speaking	Oral communication and fluency
Language use	Vocabulary and grammatical competence

7.4 Reliability and Measurement Validity

The measurement scales were tested for reliability and validity prior to testing the structural model.

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Alpha and CR coefficients with values of approximately .70 and above were deemed acceptable.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test the measurement model of the three constructs which were based on questionnaires. The standardised factor loadings were analysed in order to find out whether the observed variables represent the latent construct in an adequate way.

Convergent validity was tested by using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Coefficients with values of .50 and above were regarded as acceptable. Discriminant validity was tested by using Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). It would help to find out whether the constructs differ empirically.

The measurement model in general was tested using such indices as Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

It was not taken for granted that the adapted scales are valid due to the fact that they are based on established scales of measurement.

7.5 Data Screening and Descriptive Analysis

Prior to the mediation analysis, data cleaning was done with regard to checking the database for missing data, incomplete surveys, coding problems and potential outliers. The descriptive statistics used to characterise the participants and variables included frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

The variables' statistical characteristics were checked using skewness and kurtosis. Moreover, multicollinearity between the independent variables was tested prior to estimation of the structural model.

Since the sample of students came from different schools and classes, the clustering effect of the observations was taken into consideration while choosing the estimation methods.

7.6 Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was selected to examine the direct and indirect relationships among on Importance of Vocabulary Instruction (IVI), Vocabulary Instruction Methods (VIM), Vocabulary Instruction Strategies (VIS), and Language Proficiency (LP).

The structural relationships were expressed as:

$$VIM = a_1 IVI + \varepsilon_1$$

$$VIS = a_2 IVI + \varepsilon_2$$

$$LP = c' IVI + b_1 VIM + b_2 VIS + \varepsilon_3$$

Where α_1 and α_2 were the effects of IVI on the two mediators, b_1 and b_2 were the effects of the two mediators on LP, and c' was the direct effect of IVI on LP, taking account of the two mediators.

The residuals and ε_1, ε_2 and $\varepsilon_3$were the unexplained variances of their corresponding variables. Covariance among the two mediator residuals could be specified where theoretically justified.

The results were reported using standardised path coefficients (β), standard errors, significance levels and coefficients of determination (R^2) of the endogenous variables.

7.7 Mediation Analysis

Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies served as mediators for their respective paths, which were analysed through parallel mediation using 5,000 bootstrap samples.

The indirect effect through Vocabulary Instruction Methods was expressed as:

$H_1 = a_1 b_1$

The indirect effect through Vocabulary Instruction Strategies was expressed as:

$H_2 = a_2 b_2$

The total indirect effect was estimated as:

Total indirect effect = $a_1 b_{1+} a_2 b_2$

For mediation, 95% bootstrap confidence intervals were employed. A mediator effect was deemed to be significant if the bootstrap confidence interval was found not to contain zero.

In the analysis, the results on direct effects, specific indirect effects, and total effects were presented. The values made it possible to compare the relative impacts of both potential mediators within one model.

7.8 Statistical Software

IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 was recommended for the initial phase of data management, screening, descriptive statistics, and internal consistency measurement. IBM SPSS AMOS was recommended for Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling.

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RESULTS

8.1 Data Screening and Descriptive Statistics

The dataset used for analysis had 650 data points. There were no missing values in the four research variables during preliminary scanning. Descriptive analysis was performed on IVI, VIM, VIS, and LP.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Importance of Vocabulary Instruction	650	3.652	0.415
Vocabulary Instruction Methods	650	3.182	0.776
Vocabulary Instruction Strategies	650	3.305	0.767
Language Proficiency	650	72.041	8.768

The means reflected relatively favourable views regarding vocabulary teaching and moderate levels of involvement with vocabulary teaching techniques. Language Proficiency showed more variability among the observations.

8.2 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Reliability of the measurement scales was measured by means of Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Validity of the construct was tested through Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
IVI	12	0.849	0.849	0.320
VIM	16	0.952	0.952	0.551
VIS	24	0.967	0.967	0.549

However, all the three constructs had a good internal consistency, as the Cronbach's Alpha and CR exceeded 0.70. The convergent validity of both VIM and VIS were also good. In contrast, IVI had an AVE value below 0.50, making it necessary to further assess its convergent validity.

8.3 Factor Analysis and Measurement Validity

The KMO statistics and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used for evaluating sample adequacy.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Construct	KMO	Bartlett's χ^2	df	p
IVI	0.931	1831.505	66	< .001
VIM	0.973	6745.064	120	< .001
VIS	0.982	10898.794	276	< .001

All KMO values were above 0.90, which shows high sampling adequacy. All the constructs had a statistically significant Bartlett's test, and therefore, their item correlation matrices were appropriate for conducting factor analysis.

Table 4. Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Obtained Value
χ^2	74.902
df	74
χ^2/df	1.012
CFI	1.000
TLI	1.000
RMSEA	0.004
SRMR	0.018

The measurement model fit well in general. However, the low AVE for IVI indicated that although acceptable global fit for the model was attained, convergent validity was not necessarily established for all constructs.

Discriminant validity was tested using HTMT.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity Using HTMT

Construct	IVI	VIM	VIS
IVI	—		
VIM	0.604	—	
VIS	0.482	0.508	—

Values for all HTMTs were less than 0.85, meaning that discriminant validity was achieved.

8.4 Structural Model Assessment

The interaction between the four variables was analysed using standardised path analysis with composite scores.

Table 6. Structural Path Coefficients

Structural Relationship	Standardised β	p
IVI → VIM	0.544	< .001
IVI → VIS	0.436	< .001
VIM → LP	0.179	< .001
VIS → LP	0.230	< .001
IVI → LP	0.313	< .001

Positive and statistically significant associations were observed between the constructs. The importance of vocabulary instruction had a positive association with vocabulary instruction methods (β = .544) and vocabulary instruction strategies (β = .436). The two mediators had a positive association with language proficiency with VIS having a relatively higher association compared to VIM.

The model accounted for 29.6%, 19.0%, and 34.7% of the variance in VIM, VIS, and LP, respectively.

8.5 Path Analysis

The diagram depicts the direct effect of the Importance of Vocabulary Instruction on Language Proficiency and its indirect effects through Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Strategies.

8.6 Mediation Analysis

Parallel mediation analysis was performed by conducting a bootstrap analysis involving 5,000 replications. Indirect effect significance was determined through 95% bootstrap confidence intervals.

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Table 7. Direct, Indirect and Total Effects

Effect	Standardised estimate	95% Bootstrap CI	Interpretation
IVI → VIM → LP (H_1)	0.098	[0.053, 0.142]	Significant
IVI → VIS → LP (H_2)	0.100	[0.067, 0.137]	Significant
Total indirect effect	0.198	[0.152, 0.243]	Significant
Direct effect	0.313	[0.242, 0.386]	Significant
Total effect	0.511	[0.453, 0.564]	Significant

The indirect effect through VIM was found to be positive (β = .098) with a confidence interval that excluded zero. The same can be observed for Vocabulary Instruction Strategies which showed significant positive indirect effect (β = .100).

The total indirect effect was β = .198 whereas the direct effect was still significant (β = .313).

8.7 Hypothesis Testing

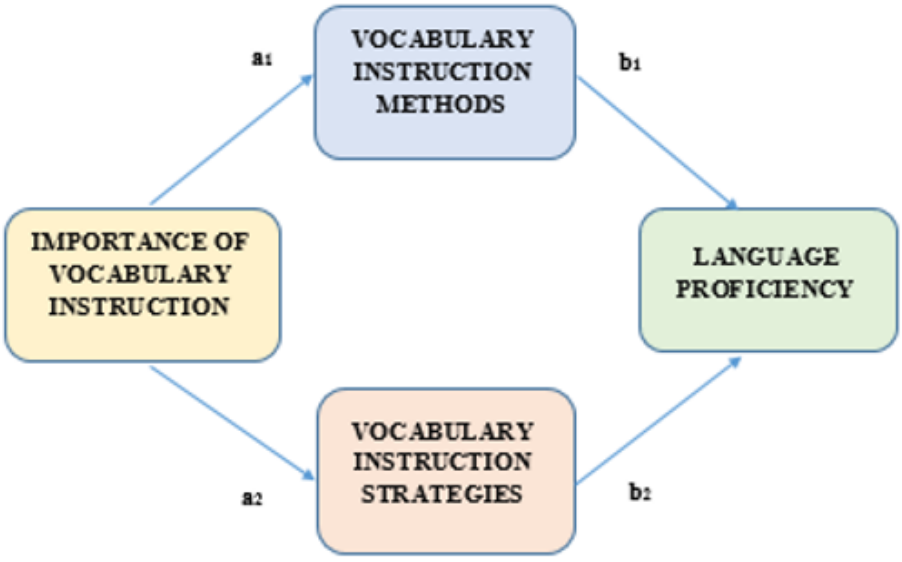
Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Indirect effect	95% Bootstrap CI	Decision
H_1: Mediating role of Vocabulary Instruction Methods	0.098	[0.053, 0.142]	Supported
H_2: Mediating role of Vocabulary Instruction Strategies	0.100	[0.067, 0.137]	Supported

The indirect relationships via Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies yielded significant results in the mediation analysis. The confidence intervals of both indirect relationships were outside zero, thus confirming hypotheses H_1 and H_2 in the model.

In general, the results of the analysis have shown that both mediating paths played an important role in the relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and Language Proficiency. The findings confirmed partial parallel mediation, however, the cross-sectional nature of the study could not reveal any causality.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



DISCUSSION

The results revealed that VIM and VIS were important mediators between IVI and LP for secondary school students in Guangdong province of China. The positive direct association between IVI and LP ($\beta = .313$, $p < .001$) showed that awareness of the importance of vocabulary instruction was positively correlated with language proficiency, even controlling for the mediators of the relationship. The presence of significant indirect effects via VIM ($\beta = .098$) and VIS ($\beta = .100$) underlined the importance of these mediating variables for explaining the relationship. The stronger mediating effect of VIS underlined the importance of students' usage of such learning strategies as contextual inferencing, vocabulary retrieval, and self-monitoring and meaningful vocabulary use for the development of language skills. At the same time, VIM showed the importance of the teaching practices including explanation of vocabulary, contextual approach to teaching, communicative tasks and technologically-based learning. The model explained 34.7% of the variance in LP showing that these vocabulary-related factors contributed to the difference in language proficiency levels considerably. Still, there may be other factors affecting language development of students, such as motivation, prior language knowledge and educational environment. From the pedagogical point of view, the results revealed the importance of combining vocabulary instruction in classrooms with learners' strategy use. Still, the cross-sectional design prevented any causal conclusions. Moreover, the rather low Average Variance Extracted value for IVI required the need for its more accurate measurement.

CONCLUSION

The current research explored the mediating effects of Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies on the relationship between Importance of Vocabulary Instruction and Language Proficiency among secondary school students in Guangdong Province, China. Applying the principles of parallel mediation allowed the researchers to examine interrelations between various components of vocabulary education within an integrated framework. The suggested conceptual model demonstrated the complementary effects of Vocabulary Instruction Methods and Vocabulary Instruction Strategies in the context of the relationship between the perceived importance of vocabulary instruction and Language Proficiency. The model reflected that the awareness of the importance of vocabulary instruction is not enough to understand language development without taking into account the methods used to teach vocabulary and the learner strategies to acquire and apply it. The major novelty of the study was the integration of vocabulary instruction methods and learner strategies into a single conceptual framework. Such an approach to the analysis made it possible to consider vocabulary education as a complex process that includes instruction through systematic learning in classroom as well as active learning through the use of various strategies. From the pedagogical perspective, the suggested conceptual model stressed the need to combine explicit instruction of vocabulary with contextual learning, communicative activities, and independent vocabulary strategies to achieve comprehensive English language proficiency. However, the cross-sectional research design of the study did not allow for the causal interpretation of the proposed relations. In addition, the geographical focus on Guangdong province did not increase the applicability of the proposed relationships.

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