

# Strategies for Learning English Vocabulary used by Students in Ho Chi Minh City

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## ABSTRACT

One of the three components of language, vocabulary is the foundational component of language. One of the most fundamental factors that influences vocabulary acquisition is the choice of vocabulary learning strategies. With so many words to learn, it's important to look into vocabulary learning techniques. This study aims to investigate a group of Ho Chi Minh City university students' employment of learning strategies in their vocabulary learning process. The author conducted a questionnaire survey including 16 questions on vocabulary learning methods along with the degree of efficacy of 135 good and poor language students from many universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The findings from the analysed quantitative data revealed that although Ho Chi Minh City students employ a variety of vocabulary learning techniques, they nevertheless face several challenges. Therefore, the goal of this study is to assist students in learning English vocabulary and to broaden their vocabulary by giving some recommendations.

**Keywords:** English vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategy, vocabulary acquisition techniques

## 1 Introduction

In today's globalized society, the trend of international integration is an inevitable trend in countries around the world. As a result, the importance of English, as an international language, is greater than ever. To enter the era of international economic integration, all people in all countries have been motivated to study English. In particular, in Vietnam, English has become one of the compulsory subjects in the undergraduate program. Learners need to master three aspects in order to use English as a second language: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. In this case, vocabulary is seen as the foundation for language learning and it directly affects a person's level of language proficiency. Thus, in fact, the ability of the learner to communicate effectively depends on a good knowledge of the vocabulary. (Zhi-liang, 2010).

However, learning vocabulary has never been easy. Understanding a word's definition as well as all of its grammatical components is crucial while building a vocabulary. There are seven degrees of knowing a word posited by Richards: knowledge of the frequency of the word in the language; knowledge of the register of the word; knowledge of collocation; knowledge of morphology; knowledge of semantics, knowledge of polysemy, knowledge of the equivalent word in the mother tongue. (Taylor, 1990, pp. 1-3). Furthermore, the lexical resources of the English language are one of the largest of all languages in the world. Therefore, there are numerous students having to face some difficulties in learning vocabulary.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, research on the issue of how to gain words received limited attention. In the past few years, as researchers, scientists, educators, and teachers have realized the importance of learning vocabulary when learning any language, studies on related topics have gotten a huge amount of attention. There were a few researchers' studies such as Zhihong Bai's (2018), LIU Zhi-liang's (2010), Zhang Yunhao (2011), Naeem Afzal's (2019), Ying He's (2010), and so on. All these studies were aimed at finding out how to learn new words as effectively as possible.



Thus, in order to succeed in learning, it is necessary to have the right learning strategies. The main purpose of the study is to find out why almost all students have difficulty learning vocabulary and then make some suggestions about many strategies that are considered effective that students can refer to.

The author found that there are a huge number of students generally facing difficulties communicating in English due to a lack of vocabulary items. Therefore, the strategies mentioned in this study could help students—especially students from many universities in Ho Chi Minh City—to recognize the difficulties they have to face in vocabulary acquisition and then choose appropriate methods to apply in their English learning. This may support them to collect new words more effectively, build their English skills, and become learners who are able to use English as a second language.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

#### **2.1.1 Importance of Learning Vocabulary**

There is no denying that vocabulary is one of the most crucial aspects to consider when learning a language. Language internationalization is essential in the globalization trend. The most key element will definitely be given by English. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar are the three components. Without a doubt, vocabulary is the most important and dynamic of the three parts. Vocabulary development enhances language acquisition, increases reading proficiency, and improves reading comprehension (Tozcu & Coady, 2004). Vocabulary knowledge is generally seen as a key tool for second language learners because a restricted vocabulary in a second or foreign language restricts successful communication (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 22). Schmitt emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language” (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2000, p. 55). In addition, Carthy pointed out: “No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meaning, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (McCarthy, 1990). In a word, vocabulary's foundational importance has been confirmed. It is also acknowledged that mastering vocabulary is a necessary component for people learning a second language. As a result, a student must acquire a broad vocabulary in order to become proficient in a second language. Furthermore, many people view second language acquisition as primarily a matter of learning vocabulary; therefore, they devote a significant amount of effort to memorizing lists of L2 terms and rely on their bilingual dictionary as a primary communicative resource. As a result, language teachers and educational researchers are highlighting the importance of vocabulary learning and developing novel techniques to encourage it. Some of this study focuses on the ways that students use to learn vocabulary, which is what the author is interested in.

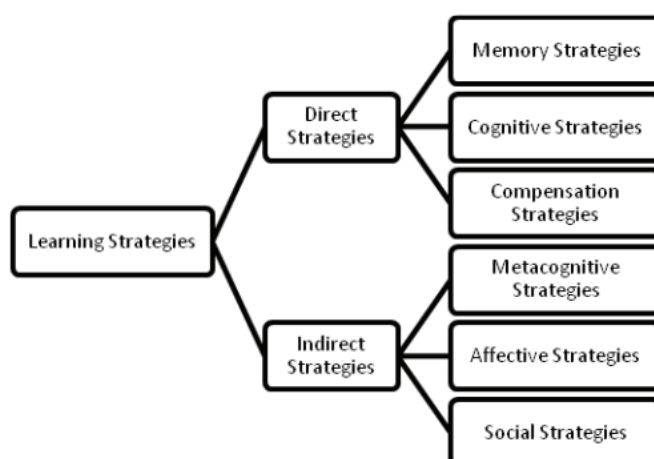
#### **2.1.2 Definition of Learning Strategies**

There have been different definitions of vocabulary learning strategies found in recent literature. Tarone (1981) defines learning techniques as attempts to improve the target language's linguistic competency. Learning strategies, on the other hand, are often used to describe broad patterns or overall facets of the approach taken by language learners. Learning techniques refer to specific sorts of observable learning learner's encoding process. (Stern, 1983). Oxford (1989) provides a frequently used definition of learning strategy: Learners use language learning strategies to make their language learning more successful, self-directed, and pleasurable. Ellis (1999) claims that a strategy is a mental or behavioural action associated with a certain stage in the language learning or usage process.

It can be shown that establishing a criterion to determine whether a definition is more perfect or comprehensive appears difficult, if not impossible. Ellis (1999) proposed that strategies be described as “production sets that exist as declarative knowledge and are employed to solve a learning problem.”

### 2.1.3 Classification of Learning Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are divided into two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. There are six subgroups in all for these groups. Approaches that require mental processing in the target language, such as memory, cognition, and compensating strategies, fall under the first category of techniques. The latter refers to techniques that enhance language learning indirectly by providing opportunities, reducing fear, increasing collaboration, and other means, such as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Figure 1 shows direct and indirect strategies with their subdivisions.



**Figure 1.** Classification of learning strategies (Oxford: 1990)

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) conducted a significant study to have a better understanding of learning processes. They studied learning processes based on cognitive psychology findings and classified them as cognitive skills. Within the information-processing model of learning, they distinguish three basic types of strategies (metacognitive, affective, social strategies) based on the level or type of processing involved. Metacognitive strategies are higher-order executive skills that help students manage, regulate, and self-direct their language acquisition. Advanced organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, delayed production, and self-evaluation are examples of metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are the mental processes that learners employ to acquire, categorize, remember, and apply knowledge, whereas metacognitive strategies deal with how learners manage their learning. They immediately alter the data that is received in order to improve student learning. Repetition, resourcing, directed physiological reaction, translation, grouping, note-taking, educational recombination, imagery, aural representation, key word, transfer, and guessing are a few examples of cognitive strategies. Social strategies are the means by which students collaborate or form relationships with others during the learning process. They entail asking for clarification as well as support from a teacher or peers. Finally, influencing tactics involve using willpower to suppress unfavorable feelings or thoughts so that you can keep learning. Two examples are self-talk and self-encouragement.

## 2.2 Previous Studies

As mentioned previously, many previous studies have repeatedly focused on the English vocabulary learning of students. This section summarizes the major characteristics of the studies in this field.

LIU Zhi-liang (2010) did a study on English Vocabulary Learning Strategies for Non-English Majors in Independent College. The information for this study was gathered through a survey of students at Beihang University's Beihai College. The findings demonstrate that non-English major learners in independent colleges employ a variety of learning techniques when they come across new words

in their English studies, either to understand the terms better or to remember them more thoroughly, but they do not establish efficient vocabulary learning techniques. The most commonly utilized methods are bilingual dictionaries, written repetition, and oral repetition; the least-used strategies are asking classmates for the meaning of a word, analyzing the part of speech, and the least-helpful strategies are analyzing affix and word root. Despite the fact that the study sheds some light on vocabulary acquisition processes, it is constrained in various ways. To assess the related efficacy and significance of each distinct strategy in a more practical, regulated, and systematic way, additional research is needed on this topic.

Ying He (2010) investigates learners' attitudes and assessments of various L2 vocabulary learning strategies, such as learning words from word cards, learning words from context, learning words from the same category together, learning words through word formation, learning words through listening, and learning words through word transitions. This study's methodology is divided into two parts: a questionnaire and interviews. The participants are Chinese college sophomores. It addresses the impact that various tactics may have on the learning process of students. Based on the seven tactics outlined, this study gives some guidance to L2 vocabulary teachers. Teachers can educate students on learning methods and support them in using these tactics in their learning process based on their English abilities when teaching vocabulary. However, because the results of this essay are likely to be limited, further source material should be considered in order to reach a more certain conclusion.

Naeem Afzal's (2019) research utilizes the questionnaire to investigate vocabulary-learning problems confronted by PSAU English majors in pursuing their 4-year BA program at the Department of English. This study reveals that many students struggle with language learning, even at the university level. Difficulties with pronouncing new words, spelling new words, appropriately using new words, identifying the grammatical structure of words, guessing meanings from context, and other issues occurred. Due to a lack of vocabulary understanding, these vocabulary-learning issues cause pupils' reading comprehension, writing abilities, and communication abilities to deteriorate. It also proposes some solutions for resolving the issues associated with acquiring vocabulary from the teaching-learning perspective.

Many previous studies on student techniques and difficulties in learning vocabulary have been investigated by language researchers. The majority of this research, on the other hand, simply lists the conclusions based on raw questionnaire data. This study's objective is to present and discuss some findings related to a single principal research question: what are the strategies for learning English vocabulary used by students in Ho Chi Minh City and what difficulties do they often face when learning vocabularies?

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Design of The Study**

This paper aims to figure out strategies and difficulties in learning English vocabulary faced by students in Ho Chi Minh City, then, suggestions to solve the problems are given. The quantitative survey design of this study researched HCMC students' problems related to learning English vocabulary, which were measured with collected numbers and analysed statistics.

#### **3.2 Sample of The Study**

The sample of this study consisted of 135 English-majored and non-English-majored students who are learning at many universities in Ho Chi Minh City, such as HCMC University of Food Industry, University of Finance – Marketing, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, HCMC University of Technology, and many others. Their ages range from 18 to 22, and they major in different specialties. While ten students left questions unanswered and their feedback was deemed invalid, 125 students returned legitimate questionnaires. Ultimately, ten of the 125 surveys was removed to make analysis easier. A majority of them

are juniors (106/125 students), and they have been learning English for a range of time between 5 and 10 years. Participants' names, phone numbers, email addresses were not shown in this study in order to protect their privacy.

### 3.3 Research Instrument

Quantitative data was gathered by a survey questionnaire created utilizing the online Google Form in accordance with the research topic and the study's objectives. There were 16 questions on the survey. In order to maintain confidentiality, the first five questions were designed to gather personal data about the students, such as name and contact information (phone, email, etc.). With the intention of gathering information for this study, the following 11 items of the questionnaire were created to find out how they learn English vocabulary. In addition, the qualitative data was collected through an interview to shed more light on particular issues after the data gathering process was complete and the questionnaire findings had been analyzed. The interviews were specifically used to pinpoint why learners selected distinct techniques as well as what they thought the benefits and drawbacks of the various strategies were.

## 4 Results and Discussion

There were 135 participants in the survey, but 125 participants met the research criteria, most of them holding an above B1 English proficiency level. Below was the summary of the participants' levels.

*Table 1. The summary of the participants' levels*

Proficiency level	Number	Percent %
A1	9	7.2
A2	21	16.8
B1	51	40.8
B2	32	25.6
C1	9	7.2
C2	3	2.4
Total	125	100

According to the table above, there was the highest percentage of students at level B1 (40.8%) and the lowest percent of students at level C2 (2.4%) who attended the survey.

### 4.1 Vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation as the most influencing factors to English proficiency

According to the result, 48.1% of students find vocabulary had the most influence on their English, which was the highest percentage; while the figures for pronunciation and grammar were lower considerably, at 27.9% and 23.3%, respectively. However, the vast majority (93.5%) believed that vocabulary had a negative impact on their English learning process.

*Table 2: Factors impacting on students' English learning process*

Factor	Number	Percent %
Pronunciation	32	25.6
Grammar	29	23.2
Vocabulary	63	50.4
Listening	1	0.8
Total	125	100

Pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are three necessary elements in order to facilitate language acquisition. Learners who are studying a second language or foreign language and want to master that

language need to enhance three factors: pronunciation (knowing the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is pronounced), grammar (understanding and having the ability to use the rules in a language for changing the form of words and joining them into sentences); and vocabulary (the ability to use a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning). Each one has a significant effect on learners' English proficiency, but among three factors, students who were surveyed identified vocabulary as their greatest single source of difficulty in learning English.

Below were some opinions of students when they are asked: In your opinion, how does vocabulary have influence on your English?

The student 51 said: "The lack of vocabulary makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious whenever I speak English. I can't express my opinions to others because I don't know what the words I am going to use mean in English. Plus, when I listen to English-speaking people, sometimes I don't understand what they say because there are a lot of new words in their speech. It's very hard for those who have a limited vocabulary range like me".

The student 62 said: "The worst thing in learning a second language in general and English in particular is the lack of vocabulary. I don't know how to share my ideas with others without vocabs. It has hugely affected my English skills."

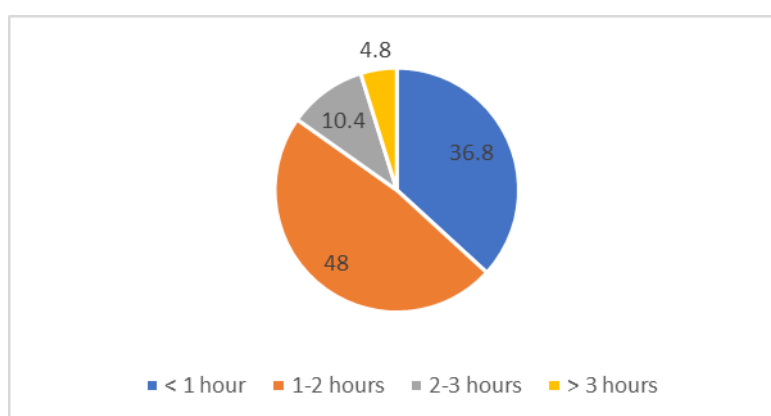
The student 94 shared his point of view: "Honestly, my grammar and pronunciation are good enough, but I find learning vocabulary is never enough. If my knowledge of vocabulary is not better, my English will never make some progress."

These partly demonstrate the importance of learning vocabulary in second language learning in general and English learning in particular. Vocabulary is the key to language learning. It is a fact that a learner's ability to think broadly and communicate effectively will be severely hindered if their vocabulary is small. Zhi-liang (2010) said "vocabulary will have an actual effect on one's language proficiency". Wilkins also claimed that "without grammar, little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." (1972, pp. 9-10).

One of the primary challenges for students trying to improve their receptive English skills is a lack of vocabulary. The major barrier to progress for a foreign language student who has mastered the fundamental grammatical structures and grasped the phonological coding of the target language is lexical ignorance. Therefore, anyone who aspires to master English has to do more than improve their pronunciation and learn English grammar; they have to continually expand their lexical resources. They must know that they will not succeed if they do not work hard. The most important thing that everyone should remember is that studying hard is the basis of success.

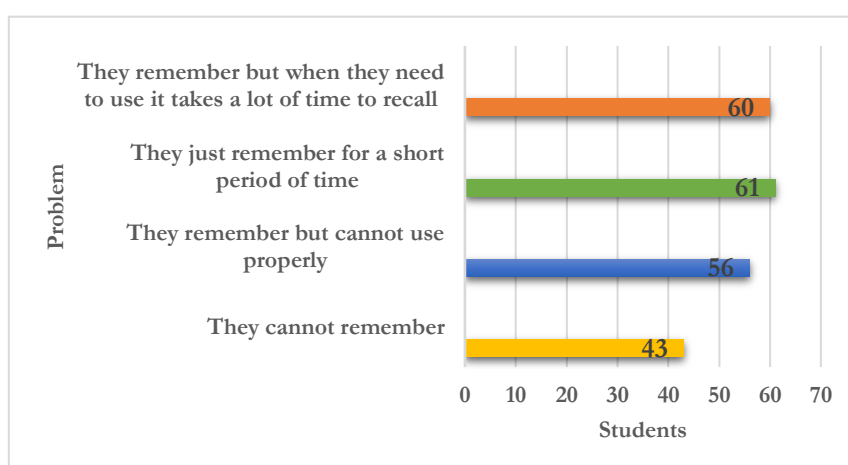
#### **4.2 Students have difficulties in memorizing when learning new words**

The ability to use vocabulary appropriately is also included in vocabulary learning, which is not limited to knowing a set amount of words or phrases. So it's crucial for students to use the right learning techniques for vocabulary. 48% of students spent 1-2 hours and 10.4% of students spent 2-3 hours every day learning English vocabulary by looking up all the new words they are trying to learn in the dictionary, listing them out in their notebook or other ways, but a majority of them self-evaluate their knowledge of vocabulary from 5 to 7 on a 10 point scale. This stated that their ability to use vocabulary resources may be limited for learners who have been exposed to English for a period of 5-10 years or even more than 10 years.



**Figure 2.** The number of hours which students spend on learning English vocabulary

Of course, there are also some other books or issues on vocabulary learning, especially vocabulary memorization. However, when students were asked about what difficulties they had to face when learning English vocabulary, a large percentage of students readily admitted that they experienced considerable difficulty with memorizing vocabulary. Below were some memorization-related problems.



**Figure 3.** The summary of memorization-related problems in learning English

For many students, learning vocabulary is considered as nothing more than memorizing a list of word forms with predetermined meanings. Word lists are used to teach vocabulary (usually rote learning of a word along with its Vietnamese equivalent). Word definitions are expected to be learned by heart by students. The traditional method of memorizing words has been a common way for students to learn vocabulary. The methods used by students to learn English vocabulary appear to be centred on memorizing lists of specific terms. This could be the cause of the above-mentioned students' difficulties with memorizing.

So what are the reasons that make them have some problems in learning vocabulary? A majority of participants believed that there are two main reasons:

Firstly, the English language has a huge number of words, which causes many difficulties for memorization. They frequently complain: 'There are so many words to learn, I just can't recall them; those tools for faster reading are full of vocabulary I don't know. I want to read them more quickly. The number of words in the English language is believed by many to be above a million. In fact, experts from Harvard University and Google projected in 2010 that there were 1,022,000 words in all digitized books and that figure would rise

by a few thousand words year for the course of the project. But it's vital to keep in mind that a large number like this also contains many spellings of the same word. Several more words that could be categorized as ancient are also used (they are not used in modern English). The Oxford English Dictionary estimates that there are now 171,146 words in use in the English language, in addition to 47,156 terms that are no longer in use. However, that still represents a large portion of the total number of words that English people really use. Let's look at a recent study by [testyourvocab.com](http://testyourvocab.com), who found that the majority of adult native English speakers had a vocabulary of between 20,000 and 35,000 words. These are obviously not the same words, and each person's vocabulary will differ depending on their profession, level of education, and interests. However, being able to memorize and use a large number of words like that is very hard for a second language learner. Correct vocabulary learning techniques are crucial for learners as they determine whether they will be successful in learning a new language.

Secondly, 66/125 students believed that the reason was because they had not found an appropriate learning method yet. In fact, learning a new language is challenging. Even in ideal circumstances, students may run across a number of difficulties during their learning process, including pronunciation challenges, cultural differences, a lack of useful feedback, waning desire, and others (Nghị, Phuc, & Thang, 2019).

The student 40 said that: "I have searched for some tips on the Internet, watched some videos on Tik Tok or You Tube, and I have tried all the ways I found, but I still cannot memorize English words. I feel very disappointed about that. "

The student 87 claimed that: "I often spend 2-3 hours every day collecting vocabulary. I list them out in my notebook and read them again and again, but I still can't remember them. I think I need other learning methods to help me."

The student 118 stated that: "I have tried a lot of ways, but none of them is effective for me. Actually, I don't know what I have to do to learn English vocabulary and improve my English skills. It's so hard for me".

Every form of vocabulary-learning strategy has great value and utility. Language learners should be aware of the benefits and drawbacks of these techniques and utilize them to their best potential depending on their personal circumstances and the demands of the various tasks. And they have to choose different strategies. Effective vocabulary learning is made possible for pupils by using the right strategies. Correct vocabulary acquisition techniques can help students acquire language efficiently at any time because vocabulary is continually changing and growing. A technique for learning English vocabulary can increase its effectiveness, but not all strategies are suitable for every learner like "choosing a course book and using it without careful selection seems to be ineffective." (Nghị & Son, 2019). Furthermore, while there are some tips for teachers on how to teach vocabulary, there is not much advice for students who want to know how to memorize words more effectively. In this poll, more than 90% of students said they wanted to switch from the way they now learn vocabulary. They are trying something fresh in the hopes that it will work. However, acquiring new words takes time, particularly when some of the terms are quickly forgotten. Hence, below are some suggestions about three memory strategies (word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic) whose effectiveness has been proven through the research conducted by Libia Maritza Pérez and Roberto Alvira (Pérez & Alvira, 2017). They may assist students in better memorizing and applying vocabulary.

To begin with, word cards are great instruments for promoting deliberate vocabulary learning and facilitating the learning of huge numbers of words in a short amount of time, as well as the capacity to recall them for a lengthy period of time (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998) and (Nation I. , 2008). Word cards have been shown to be helpful with children with and without impairments (DeWitt, 2010) and studies have provided useful guidance for developing and organizing this method (Nation I. S., 2001) & (Pressley, Levin,



& Delaney, 1982). Nation (2008) outlined five steps for teaching students how to use word cards, which include the following:

- (1) Choosing words or phrases and recording them on cards to see how they can be used
- (2) Going through the cards to show learners how to use them.
- (3) Repeatedly checking the words to provide frequent opportunities to come into contact with them
- (4) Motivating students to use the strategy frequently, for example by allowing them to work in pairs to test each other and reporting to the class on their success in using the strategy.

Second, according to (Arias, 2003), picture association is "very effective for visually oriented learners" (p. 118). This makes words more memorable and retrievable from long-term memory into working memory for visual learners, helping them to connect what they see or imagine with words. (Thornbury, 2004) This image-keyword strategy is extremely effective at helping students remember words and become more engaged in their learning because it is based on the powerful memory-improving effects that pictures have, especially when—as in this study—the students themselves are required to exert effort to select the images they draw to link to a word. "The more vividly you imagine... an event, the more efficiently it will stay in your mind for later recall," (Goll, 2004) observed (p. 309).

Finally, stories based on fables or real-life situations can be used to teach vocabulary (Arias, 2003). Students can utilize a topic to create an association network (Thornbury, 2004). According to (Oxford R. L., 1990, p. 62). "This method involves a number of memory tactics like grouping, using imagery, associating, and embellishing, which are important for boosting both memory and comprehension of the new phrase". Users can build their own associations and represent the word-connections in diagrams, resulting in a compelling visual depiction of the information.

These techniques help pupils broaden their vocabulary, increase their word retention and recall skills, and feel as though their reading skills have improved. These vocabulary-building techniques can also help pupils become more independent and in charge of their own education.

#### 4.3 Watching some videos on YouTube or Ted Talks frequently may be an effective way to expand the vocabulary range

According to the results, there were seven common ways used by students. And when they were asked, in their opinion, what the most effective way to learn vocabulary is; the answers were shown in the table below.

**Table 3.** The summary of students' agreement about the most effective way to learn vocabulary

Question: According to you, what is the most effective way to learn vocabulary?			
		Number	Percent %
1	Watch YouTube, Ted talks, etc.	45	36
2	Use many applications	9	7.2
3	Use flashcards	9	7.2
4	Read books, newspapers, magazines, etc.	29	23.2
5	Learn from teachers and friends	20	16
6	List new words in notebooks	11	8.8
7	Through communicate with others	2	1.6
Total		125	100

These days, it's much simpler to get authentic English content like music, radio shows, movies, and other media thanks to the Internet's growing popularity. These resources give the learners the chance to pick up new vocabulary outside of the classroom. These kinds of methods are probably used by students to learn

new language. This method may be nothing new to many learners. In fact, for those who do not have opportunities to have conversations directly with native speakers, they could improve their English skills by watching videos on the Internet.

It is a fact that many students encounter numerous challenges when communicating in English with native English speakers. They might not be aware of language conventions and effective ways to use their language skills in conversation (Nghì & Khuong, 2021). The reason may be partly due to the fact that they do not learn vocabulary in a specific context. As a result, although they know a lot of vocabulary, they cannot use them correctly. Therefore, learning vocabulary through conversations on YouTube or other social networks is considered a perfect learning method. By this way, they could learn vocabulary by paying attention to the examples of how a word is used in English through conversations and knowing how to use them in speaking or writing. Moreover, when they use their ears to listen to native speakers while using their eyes to watch, which leads to higher retention.

In addition, learning English in general and English vocabulary in particular by watching videos on the Internet will be more effective when learners use the shadowing technique. By having the learner repeat the text as soon as he or she hears it uttered by a speaker or via an audio recording, the shadowing approach helps language learners improve their speaking, listening, and maybe reading abilities all at once (Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011). In addition to improving L2 learners' subvocal rehearsal mechanisms in the phonological working memory for learning new words, formulas, and constructions (practice effect), simulating some speech production stages (output effect), and developing metacognitive monitoring and control by their executive working memory, shadowing is a method that has been theoretically and empirically well-researched (monitoring effect) (Kadota, 2019). Students could also learn English vocabulary effectively via music and songs. This is because songs frequently contain aspects like repetition, rhyme, and rhythm that make it simple for listeners to memorize and imitate the original text (Nghì & Son, 2019).

The author hopes the students can make reference to this technique and apply it to their English learning.

## **5 Conclusions and Implication**

The current study investigated the situation of using vocabulary learning strategies among Ho Chi Minh City good and poor university students through a questionnaire and an interview.

The result of the questionnaire clearly showed that there were a wide range of methods for collecting new words used by students. However, their studies seemed to have many difficulties. As previously stated, the author indicated 3 major key findings based on the survey results. To begin, the three most important factors influencing students' English proficiency were vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Among them, vocabulary was considered the most important element because it had an adverse impact on their English. Secondly, a majority of students claimed that the biggest problem in learning vocabulary was how to memorize effectively. Then, the author provided three memory strategies whose effectiveness had been proven in order to help them better their memory process. They were word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic. Finally, according to the results, the most popular vocabulary learning method used by students in the survey was watching YouTube or Ted Talks. It was also considered the most effective technique and the author recommended that its effectiveness can be higher if learners use the shadowing method to enhance their English skills.

Using data analysis, the author strongly proposes a conceptual framework for investigating whether the methods mentioned above are effective and how effective they are for Ho Chi Minh university students. In addition, it is necessary to find out how to overcome the difficulties when learning English vocabulary. This case study merely offered a brief overview of the vocabulary learning practices currently being used

by university students in Ho Chi Minh City. It is anticipated that future study will focus on this issue to varying degrees so that students can learn vocabulary using methods that are more useful and effective.

## 6 Declarations

### 6.1 Competing Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

### 6.2 Acknowledgements

First and foremost, without the consistent and helpful references I received from my supervisor, Dr. Tran Tin Nghi, the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, I would not have been able to complete this study. I am sincerely grateful for his wise counsel and enthusiastic encouragement as I wrote this study.

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### 6.3 Study Limitations

This research just lists the conclusions based on raw data, and the number of participants is limited, which might significantly affect the research outcome.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire:

#### Part 1: Participant's information

1. What is your name? :.....
2. What is your phone number? :.....
3. Currently, are you a student in Ho Chi Minh City?  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
4. Which university are you studying at? :.....
5. Which year are you in?  
☐ Freshman  
☐ Sophomore  
☐ Junior  
☐ Senior

#### Part 2: Strategies for learning English vocabulary used by students in HCM City

1. How long have you studied English?  
☐ < 5 years  
☐ 5 – 10 years  
☐ > 10 years
2. According to you, what is best to describe your English proficiency?  
☐ A1   ☐ A2   ☐ B1   ☐ B2   ☐ C1   ☐ C2
3. What factor has the most influence on your English?  
☐ Pronunciation  
☐ Grammar  
☐ Vocabulary
4. According to you, does vocabulary have a significant influence on your English?  
☐ Yes   ☐ No
5. What difficulties do you face when learning English vocabulary?  
☐ Cannot remember  
☐ Remember but cannot use properly  
☐ Only remember for a short period of time  
☐ Remember but when you need to use them, it takes you a lot of time to recall them  
☐ Nothing  
☐ Others: .....
6. Which are the reasons that make you have some problems in learning vocabulary?

- ☐ There are so many vocabularies
  - ☐ You haven't had a right method yet
  - ☐ You don't have lots of time to learn
  - ☐ You have no motivation to learn
  - ☐ Others: .....
7. How do you learn English vocabulary?
- ☐ Watch You Tube, Ted Talks, etc.
  - ☐ Use many applications
  - ☐ Use Flashcards
  - ☐ Read books, newspapers, magazines, etc.
  - ☐ Learn from your teachers or your friends
  - ☐ List all new words in your notebooks
  - ☐ Others: .....
8. According to you, what is the most effective way to learn vocabulary?
- ☐ Watch You Tube, Ted Talks, etc.
  - ☐ Use many applications
  - ☐ Use Flashcards
  - ☐ Read books, newspapers, magazines, etc.
  - ☐ Learn from your teachers or your friends
  - ☐ List all new words in your notebooks
  - ☐ Others: .....
9. How many hours do you learn vocabulary per day?
- ☐ < 1
  - ☐ 1 – 2 hours
  - ☐ 2 – 3 hours
  - ☐ > 3 hours
10. Self-evaluate your ability of using vocabulary
- ☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   ☐ 8   ☐ 9   ☐ 10
11. Do you think you should change your vocabulary learning method in the next time?
- ☐ Yes   ☐ No

**Interview: 2 questions**

1. In your opinion, how does vocabulary have influence on your English?
2. How do you feel about your current vocabulary learning methods?