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CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY LEARNING AND MEMORY STRATEGY AS A CONSOLIDATING SOLUTION FOR VIETNAMESE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH MAJOR AT NGUYEN TAT THANH UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

This paper investigates the challenges faced by one class of second-year English major students at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, in learning English vocabulary, their consolidating strategy solutions, limitations and thereby puts forwards some possible solutions. The qualitative approach has been used to ensure the validity of the research. 37 Vietnamese subjects from the class participated in the research, answering 37 questionnaires with 23 close questions on their attitudes, difficulties in learning vocabulary, the consolidating strategies they have used and 1 open question for further information. The result reveals that only nearly half of the students have used Memory Strategy with various sub-types developed by Schmitt (1997) to consolidate their English vocabulary when facing difficulties in learning it as they may think that they could utilize other strategies such as cognitive, metacognitive, social strategy beside this strategy. Besides, a lot of Memory Strategy's sub-types have not been frequently, even rarely used, unascertained or even never used by about half of the students in this study. This may be due to the lecturer's teaching method, the students' English capability, their attitude, motivation in learning English vocabulary and the lack of some necessary academic activities from the University to stimulate them.

Keywords: Challenges, English vocabulary learning, consolidating strategy solution, Vietnamese students of major English, Nguyen Tat Thanh University

Abbreviation: TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), n. (noun), v. (verb), adj. (adjective), adv. (adverb)

1. INTRODUCTION

English vocabulary is the essential element that helps learners of English in general and the Vietnamese learners of English in particular develop the communicative ability, expand their career chance and get access to the global knowledge. Truly, English vocabulary helps learners listen, speak, read and write in English better. The rich repertoire of English vocabulary could assist learners to improve their English perceptive and productive skill. In addition, learners could easily work at large foreign companies where they could communicate with foreigners in English and get highly paid salary. Moreover, they could read international books, newspapers, watching English films to acquire new knowledge

from all over the world. Nonetheless, learners may encounter difficulties in learning and consolidating English vocabulary due to the difference in English vocabulary features compared to those of their mother tongue and the Vietnamese subjects in this study are not an exception. Although there have been many researches done by various researchers all over the world on the challenges faced by learners of English in learning English vocabulary and the English vocabulary consolidating strategies used by them, there still remain their limitations. This paper is to fill the gaps of the previous studies on this problem.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. *Related Studies in Vietnam*

Trần (2012) investigates the use of English vocabulary learning strategies to enrich the vocabulary knowledge and improve English, with the participation of 100 Vietnamese students of English major at The University of Foreign Language and Studies - The University of Danang. Although the study has recommended some solutions for lecturers and students, the research method is not clear enough in which the subjects have not been described in details in terms of academic level at which year of the University and whether they learn in the same or different classes, which could have a considerable effect on the students' strategies to learn vocabulary.

Đoàn (2022) researches the English vocabulary learning strategies most commonly used by 100 first-year students including 81 females and 19 males, studying at the English Department, Hue University, Vietnam. This study detects the vocabulary consolidating strategies of the learners of English based on the Schmitt (1997)'s framework. The findings show that the strategies in the Metacognitive group are the most favored by these students. Nonetheless, the the strategies they use in relation to the unevenness in the number of males and females have not been interpreted, which makes the study lopsided.

Nguyễn (2023) examines through the questionnaire the English vocabulary learning strategies utilized by 340 first-year and second-year students of English major at The University of Foreign Languages - Hanoi National University. The result shows that the second-year students are more aware of the importance of using the English vocabulary learning strategies than the first ones, among which the Cognitive Strategy is utilized the most while the Metacognitive Strategy the least. Yet, the number the subjects in each studied group have not been specified and the number and frequency of strategies or sub-strategies used by each group of students have not been indicated and compared, which makes the result not persuading enough.

Đặng (2024) makes an investigation into online English vocabulary self-learning techniques utilized by 55 first-year English major students studying at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. Questionnaires have been used to collect data with 20 questions and the interview has been designed for 6 representative students including 3 males and 3 females out of the above 55 students. The subjects are interviewed with the same question in the same order. The study follows the data saturation approach developed by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006); Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, ... Jinks (2018) in order to thoroughly interview the subjects until no new information is elicited. This study identifies the English vocabulary self-learning techniques by the subjects through websites and the factors which influence their use of English to enhance their learning via the utility of hi-tech to promote their critical ability and learn English vocabulary actively. Still, the study focuses mainly on the first-year rather than the

second-year English major students of Nguyen Tat Thanh University in order to know the challenges and the vocabulary learning strategies that the subjects use.

Đinh (2024) investigates the English vocabulary learning strategies used by 248 students from Tourism Department, The Open University in Hanoi. The findings reveal that most students are aware of the importance of English vocabulary learning strategies and they have utilized them at the average frequency. Also, the strategies of the Cognitive and Memory groups are preferred and used the most out of 5 strategies developed by Schmitt (1997) whereas the Social Strategy was the least frequently used. This study introduces and describes some activities relating to suitable English vocabulary learning strategies to help these students enrich their vocabulary repertoire to develop their English communicative skill and thereby help them use English vocabulary more confidently in class and in real situations in the field of tourism. Nevertheless, this research is restricted to the investigation of Tourism Department students other than those of English major.

Đoàn, N. A. T. and Đoàn, N. A. P. (2025) study English Vocabulary learning strategies used by 100 first-year English major students (81 females and 19 males) ranging from 18 to 19 years old, from a university in central Vietnam. They all have learnt English from 9 to 13 years. Questionnaires and interviews in groups have been used to collect the data. The questionnaire is designed basing on the format developed by Schmitt (1997), including 45 questions on the subjects' awareness on the importance of the vocabulary learning strategies and 40 questions on the level of usage of such strategies as Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive and Metacognitive. The group interview is used to gather the qualitative data to seek for deeper information on the subjects' difficulty when utilizing these strategies to learn vocabulary and their recommendations to overcome the problem. This style of interview creates the comfortable environment for the interviewee to discuss each other. Nevertheless, this study has not clarified whether the participants learn in the same or in different classes. In this way, it is hard to compare the challenges and the strategies they have used to learn vocabulary if they are not in the same class. In addition, the research is done on the first-year other than the second-year students who have had the knowledge of English vocabulary, grammar to be able to utilize the strategies more effectively.

Nguyễn, T. L., Nguyễn, T. N. and Nguyễn, T. K. U. (2025)'s research on 218 first-year, second-year, third-year Vietnamese learners of English as a foreign language at the Economic – Industry Technology University, Hanoi, to identify whether there is any possible gap in English vocabulary acquiring strategy from these students at different levels. The findings show that there is a significant difference in the acquiring strategy used by these subjects. This has revealed the dissimilarity in the vocabulary acquisition of each individual which stimulates the English program designer and the teacher of English to produce the materials and exercises to help learners enrich their English vocabulary repertoire. However, the comparison of the English vocabulary learning and strategies used by students at different

levels of the university could lead to the unevenness in the academic knowledge. As a result, the consensus of the subjects in the study is not assured.

2.1.2. *Related Studies Abroad*

Vocabulary is the whole vocabulary units of a language which the users could receive, memorize and utilize in the communicative process (Alfaki, 2015). This definition emphasizes the role of vocabulary not only in the perceptive but also the productive aspect. In traditional approach, vocabulary is understood as the system of single words. Nonetheless, for the modern linguistic studies, vocabulary definition has been expanded to include the fixed word group, phrases and lexical chunks with a complete meaning. The English simple words such as *student*, *read* or *interesting* are the basic linguistic units which could stand alone and have a stable meaning. Besides, such fixed word groups as *take notes*, *look forward to* or *as a result* could be used as a unique semantic unit and often appear in real communication. This approach reveals that learning vocabulary is not only related to memorizing the meaning of each single word but also to the acquisition and realize the norm linguistic units. The master of single words and fixed word groups helps language learners communicate naturally, smoothly to be suitable to the real communication contexts.

Lee (2007) studies English vocabulary learning strategies used by 466 students from Hanyang University, Korea, in relation to genders and their vocabulary knowledge, according to Schmitt (1997's framework and their level test developed by Schmitt (2000). The findings show that the subjects prefer using the less cognition demanding strategies namely Using Bilingual Dictionary, Reading a Word Aloud When Studying, Study the Sound of a Word while the least frequently used are Using Flash Card, Pictorial Representation, Study and Practice Word Meaning in a Group. The research also indicates that the subjects with richer vocabulary use the vocabulary learning strategies more frequently than those with poor vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, gender has no influence on the strategy used and its frequency. Nonetheless, the subjects' level of English has not clearly mentioned, which could have possible impacts on the research's validity.

Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013) investigate the more or less common strategies to learn English (as a foreign language) vocabulary utilized by 74 students in the age of 19 -34 [including 18 graduating males specialized in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and 56 undergraduate females majoring in English Literature] at the University of Hakim Sabzevari in Iran. The data collection instrument is the questionnaire designed from the vocabulary learning strategies of Schmitt (1997) combined with semi-structured interviews for 10 students who have completed the questionnaire. The result shows that Guessing Strategy and Using Dictionary are the two most common. Still, this research is lacking the high homogeneity in terms of English level and the age of the subjects.

Rabadi (2016) makes an investigation into various English vocabulary learning strategies of 110 students specialized in

English and English Literature from 8 Universities in Jordan. Questionnaires with 40 strategies developed by Schmitt's (1997) have been delivered to the subjects to identify the most popular, the least popular and the averagely used strategy. The research result reveals that Memory Strategy is used the most whereas Metacognitive Strategy the least preferred. Yet, the research has not described the subjects' English proficiency, which could influence their strategies used to learn English vocabulary.

Sihotang, Afriazi and Imranuddin (2017) investigate English vocabulary learning strategies used by 86 students chosen randomly from 343 ones, who learn English Pedagogy at Bengkulu University, Indonesia. Similar to those studies by Lee (2007), Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013), Rabadi (2016), this study uses the questionnaire to collect the data. The findings reveal that Determination Strategy is the most commonly used by the participants, followed by Metacognitive Strategy, Cognitive Strategy, Memory Strategy, Social Discovery Strategy and the Social Consolidation. Nonetheless, the research has not mentioned how many classes are under investigation – which could affect the difference in the choice of strategies used by students in different classes.

Al-Bidawi (2018) examines the English vocabulary learning strategies (developed by Schmitt, 1997), which have been utilized by 94 students in Saudi learning English as a foreign language in the first, second and third semester, at the English Department, Al Jouf University, Arab. The questionnaires with a lot of questions with 5 scales developed by Likert (1932) are distributed online to the participants to answer within two weeks. The results indicate that the subjects like using Social Strategy the most whereas just some like Memory Strategy to learn English vocabulary. However, this study does not focus on the homogeneous subjects in terms of English level and their gender – the element that could influence the strategies used (Putri, Wulyani & Tresnadewi, 2023).

Goundar (2019) investigates the English (as a foreign language) vocabulary learning strategies employed by 25 learners of English in Nadi Fiji project from the elementary to business English level and 28 students who have finished their English courses at the University. The findings show that Guessing Strategy is the most favored by these subjects. Nevertheless, their English proficiency is not even and this makes it hard to evaluate their power to use their vocabulary learning strategies.

Zhang and Liang (2024) studies three strategies namely Using Keywords, Pictorial Association and Mind-mapping to assist learners of English in memorizing vocabulary effectively. Nevertheless, the research has not described in detail the subjects and the data collection instrument but the general comments on the functions of these strategies.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the Literature Review; it could be seen that although all the previous related studies on the vocabulary learning strategies of English as a foreign language investigate several strategies based on the framework developed by Schmitt (1997), they have not

described and compared in detail the strategies used by the second-year English major students in the same class when facing difficulties in consolidating their English vocabulary. Instead, they focus on either English major or none-major students in the first-year rather than the second-year, learning at Nguyen Tat Thanh University or in some other universities in Vietnam or abroad. In addition, the subjects in the above studies are not equal in their English level, which could more or less impact their used strategies.

Noticeably, the learning strategies of vocabulary in general and English vocabulary in particular is to serve the benefit of the learners. As a result, the researcher needs to pay attention to their perception of these strategies (Horwitz, 1988; Wenden, 1987) and the strategies they are employing (Hosenfeld, 1976: 128). Hereby, the research entitled *“Challenges in English vocabulary learning and Memory Strategy as a Consolidating Solution for Vietnamese Students of Major English at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in Vietnam”* is carried out to probe the difficulties which the subjects have faced in learning English vocabulary, their used strategies, their limitations and solutions in order to help learners of English including the Vietnamese students grasp and utilize the strategies more effectively so that they could learn English more confidently and successfully.

4. OBJECT AND SCOPE OF STUDY

4.1. Object of the Study

This research examines the challenges faced by English major students of Nguyen Tat Thanh University (in Ho Chi Minh city, in Vietnam) in learning English vocabulary and the Memory Strategy with various sub-types as a consolidating solution.

4.2. Scope of the Study

The research focuses on the challenges in learning English vocabulary, faced by one second-year English major student class learning at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University (Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam), the Memory Strategy used by them, their limitations and solutions.

5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

5.1. Aims of the Study

The study investigates the difficulties in learning English vocabulary, the Memory Strategy used as a consolidating strategy by one second-year Vietnamese class of English major students learning at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, their limitations and puts forwards the possible solutions to deal with the problem.

5.2. Objectives of the Study

Aligning with the above aims are the following objectives:

- Describing the challenges in English vocabulary learning faced by the second-year Vietnamese class majoring in English, studying at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam.
- Describing the Memory Strategy as a consolidating

strategy employed by the class and their limitations.

- Suggesting the strategy solutions to tackle the limitations.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order for the above objectives to be achieved, the following research questions could be posed:

1. What are the challenges faced by the second-year English major class of Vietnamese students, learning at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, in learning English vocabulary?
2. What are the Memory Strategies used by these subjects to consolidate English vocabulary and their limitations?
3. What are some possible strategy solutions to solve the problems?

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Schmitts (1997: 205 – 210), vocabulary consolidation strategies are techniques used by learners to move words from short-term memory to long-term understanding, enabling them to recall and use them naturally. These strategies include memory-based, cognitive, metacognitive, and social methods to deepen retention and prevent forgetting. However, this research focuses on the Memory Strategy with several sub-strategies as one of the vocabulary consolidation strategies.

7.1. Memory Strategy

Nearly all the Memory Strategies or Mnemonics are related to the memory of vocabulary based on the previously acquired knowledge via imagery or grouping.

Besides, this combination is also related to the dealing with vocabulary acutely as Craik, Lockhart (1972), Craik, Tulving (1975) and Ellis (1989) consider necessary to help learners memorize vocabulary for a long time. A new word could be integrated into various available knowledge (for instance, the former experience or the known words) or the created images to assist learners in memorizing it (for instance the form image or the semantic features of a word).

7.1.1. Pictures / Imagery

A new word could be memorized through an image which indicates the meaning rather than a definition. When learning a foreign language or a second language, the combination of words and images is considered to be better thanks to the association with the equivalent element in the native language of learners of Russian (Kopstein & Roshal, 1954) and Indonesian (Webber, 1978). Learners could create the imageries referring to a word's sense. The image has shown the higher effectiveness in learning a new word instead of reading again and again the passages in which the new word appears (Steingart & Glock, 1979) and the sentence with the new word (Saltz & Donnenwerth-Nolan, 1981).

7.1.2. Related Words

Learners could learn a new word in a foreign language in general and in English in particular by relating the word with the previously known words. This is often linked to a particular kind of

sense relation; for example, *coordination* (showing the relation of the word *apples* with such other types of fruit as *pears*, *cherries*, or *peaches*). Truly, the research on word relation indicates that the coordinators have a very close link (Aitchison, 1987). These coordinators and other sense relations (*hyponymy* - *hypernymy*) could be illustrated via the semantic maps, which could help consolidate the vocabulary of language learners (Oxford, 1990).

7.1.3. Word Grouping

Word Grouping is one of the strategies which could assist retaining words and the language learner could arrange words into groups naturally without suggestion. Bousfield (1953) assumes words belonging to a sense class are often memorized together; for instance, learners could group words denoting animals, and then group words referring to their names, ...

7.1.4. Orthographical or Phonological Form

Another memory strategy to consolidate words is related to the its orthography, the phonology or phonetics. Learners could imagine the orthography or the sound of a word, reading a new word to remember it, especially the rhyming words. The first letter of a word is the noticeable feature which could help learners identify a word out of its form (Marchbanks & Levin, 1965; Timko, 1970).

7.1.5. Phonological and Meaning

The phonological in combination with the semantic feature of a word in learners' mother tongue and in a foreign language is also common in consolidating a word when they are learning a foreign language. The Keyword Method helps learners find out a word in their native language which has the same sound with the one in the foreign language but their meanings may be different or not. Hence, this method could assist learners in retaining words more easily.

7.1.6. Word Structure, Word Class and Meaning

A word structure analysis could help learners determine the word's meaning. Learning the word's affixes, roots and word class is one of the ways to consolidate the word's meaning for it aids learners in retaining words through their effort to systematically recreate its meaning.

7.1.7. Phrases, Idioms, Proverbs

Some words that learners know have been learnt as a component or a component word of the phrases, idioms, or proverbs (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Peters, 1983).

7.1.8. Semantic Feature Grids

Semantic mapping is another way used to memorize words. This strategy helps learners systematically link the image, word and the meaning of the closely related words and therefore it is memorable (Channell, 1981; Gairns & Redman, 1986; McCarthy, 1990).

7.2. Motivation, its Importance in Learning English Vocabulary as a Foreign Language and its Influencing Factors

Motivation for learning English in general and its vocabulary in particular is related to the learner's goals such as communicating with the native speakers, getting a job, improving the academic level, ... Motivation is the crucial element which decides the

learner's success or failure in learning English vocabulary. It turns the boring memory into the self-demand, which helps preserve the perseverance to use effective methods to learn and apply vocabulary to the reality.

Spolsky (1990) assumes that students with motivation learn faster for they pay attention to their learning, doing their exercise and participating in academic activities more actively. This is in line with Woolfolk and Margetts (2007)'s viewpoint that motivation provokes learners' positive learning result. According to Harmer (1991), there are four factors which could influence the learners of a language in general and English in particular. The first is the instructor's personality, rapport with students, ability to show empathy, and subject-matter knowledge, which are the most powerful variables in building or breaking student motivation. The second is the method of teaching. Truly, how material is presented matters. If students lose trust or interest in the teacher's methods - such as over-relying on rote memorization or improper error correction, their motivation quickly declines. In addition, the atmosphere (classroom environment) is another influencing factor. Indeed, the physical conditions of the classroom; for instance, lighting, room temperature, overcrowding and the overall peer dynamic significantly influence a student's desire to participate. Last but not least is success. Students need to feel they are progressing. Nothing motivates like success while continual failure and overly challenging tasks can severely demotivate learners.

8. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

8.1. Research Approach

From the challenges faced in learning vocabulary of English as a foreign language without learning Lexicology course by the second-year English major students, at the Foreign Language Department, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam; the research bases on Schmitt (1997)'s theoretical framework described in section 7.1 to analyze more deeply the Memory Strategy with various sub-strategies as one of the English vocabulary consolidating Strategy used by the subjects to find out their likely limitations. Some consolidating strategy solutions could then be put forward.

8.2. Research Method

The data collection instrument is 37 survey questionnaires completed by one class of 37 second-year Vietnamese students of English major, in the 2025-2026 school-year at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. The descriptive and comparative method have been used to describe and compare the Memory Strategy with several sub-types as a consolidating strategy employed by these subjects expressed through the 5-level Likert scale from quite disagreement to quite agreement as indicated in Table 9.2 (p. 12), then find out the likely limitations and offer the likely solutions.

9. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

9.1. English Vocabulary Learning Challenges Faced by Subjects

Table 9.1 (p. 8) shows that most of the students in class A (Na = 26 # Fa = 70.26%) like learning English vocabulary. However, nearly half of them in this class (Na = 17 # Fa = 46 % # 50%) find it hard to retain it. One of the reasons which has caused this problem is the difference between English and Vietnamese vocabulary (Na = 27 # Fa = 72.97 % # 73%). Truly, many students in this class admit that English words have a more complicated structure than the Vietnamese ones (Na = 22% # Fa = 59.5%, especially for the complex and compound words. This is because English is an inflectional language with affixes including prefixes, infixes and suffixes whereas Vietnamese is an isolated language which has no affixes but root words. This structural feature of English vocabulary is linked to the hard-to-remember irregular semantic shift for learners of English in general and those Vietnamese in particular even the English major ones.

Table 9.1. Challenges Faced by Students in Learning English Vocabulary

Students' Attitude and Challenges in Learning English Vocabulary	Class A (37 students)									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	F (%)	N	F (%)	N	F (%)	N	F (%)	N	F (%)
1. I like learning English vocabulary.	0	0	0	0	11	29.73	13	35.13	13	35.13
2. I find it difficult to retain English vocabulary.	0	0	3	8.11	17	45.94	10	27.03	7	18.92
3. English words are dissimilar from Vietnamese words.	0	0	4	10.81	6	16.22	18	48.65	9	24.32
4. English words have complicated structure.	1	2.70	3	8.11	11	29.73	16	43.24	6	16.22
5. English words are hard to pronounce.	2	5.40	3	8.11	12	32.43	12	32.43	8	21.62

9.2. Memory Strategy as an English Vocabulary Consolidating Strategy Used by the Students and their Limitations

To overcome the challenges stated in section 9.1, the students have utilized several English vocabulary consolidating strategies of the Memory Strategy developed by Schmitt (1997) as shown in Table 9.2 (p. 12). These include *Pictures / Imagery; Related Word; Word Grouping; Orthographical or Phonological Form; Phonological and Meaning; Word Structure, Word Class and Meaning; Phrases, Idioms, Proverbs; Semantic Feature Grids*.

Memory Strategy with various subtypes is commonly used by the subjects in this class to consolidate their English vocabulary. This may originate from the fact that it could help them retain English vocabulary more quickly for they could integrate new vocabulary into the available vocabulary units that they have acquired. All these strategies utilized by the students are described and analyzed below through the illustrating examples from the writer of the paper as a

Besides, just over half of the students in class A (Na = 20 # Fa = 54.05%) assume that it is hard to pronounce English words. This may be due to the fact that English words are multi-

-syllabic with the number of syllables aligning with that of vowels as the syllabic nucleus (p. 51, *Phonetics and Phonology*, University of Foreign Languages, University of Danang) while

Vietnamese words are single-syllabic with one vowel or diphthong.

Moreover; in order to pronounce exactly English words, students have to grasp the word's stress rules encompassing the main stress, subsidiary stress, which is regulated by the word's syllable structure, word structure and its part of speech. Nevertheless, Vietnamese language words have no stress but tone to express their various word meanings.

researcher.

It could be seen from Table 9.2 that most subjects in class A (Na= 20 + 9 = 29 # Fa = 54.06 % + 24.32 % = 78.4 %) consolidate English vocabulary by associating it with their own vivid and interesting experience (Self-Reference Effect). For example, they could link the word *snow* or *rain* with the entertaining activity under the falling snow or rain when they were children. This could help them entertain and retain English vocabulary lively.

The second most common strategy is using Orthographical or Phonological Form especially the rhyming words (Na= 21 + 7 = 28 # Fa = 56.76% + 18.92 % = 75.7%). Indeed, the students could consolidate the English new words by making simple sentences with the rhyming words: The *brake breaks*, this *hare* has no *hair*.

Some strategies which have been used rather popularly by the students of this class to consolidate their English vocabulary are via:

Pictures / Imagery (Na = 17 + 10 = 27 # Fa = 45.94 % + 27.03% = 73%); for instance, the subjects could learn the meaning of the adjective *stuck* via the imagery of a dog stuck in a hole.



Related Words (Na = 19 + 8 = 27 # Fa = 51.35 % + 21.62 % = 73%). For example; the synonymy between the adjectives: *irritated*, *annoyed* or the antonymy between *dead*, *alive*.

- Words in a story (Na = 17 + 10 = 27 # Fa = 45.94 % + 27.03% = 73%). This is one of the rather effective method to remember words for a long time and understand the situational contexts. Let us take a case of the following story with the title *The Unexpected Journey*:

The Unexpected Journey

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Tom. He felt incredibly exhausted after working a long shift at the factory. He wanted to retire early, but the city was just too noisy with cars honking everywhere. Looking for a quiet place, Tom decided to wander into a nearby forest. As he walked, he noticed a mysterious glowing light behind the bushes. He decided to approach the light slowly. To his surprise, he found a hidden garden that was completely peaceful. He sat down and realized this was exactly what he needed to restore his energy.

Through this story, the students could learn via the linkage of the plots in it the new bold words that they need to such as *exhausted* (adj.): *very tired*, *retire* (v.): *take a rest*, *noisy* (adj.): *not quiet*, *wander* (v.): *go to*, *mysterious* (adj.): *hard to understand* = *hidden*, *approach* (v.): *come near*, *peaceful* (adj.): *quiet*, *restore* (v.): *regain*. In this way, students could understand how words of different parts of speech are linked to make sentences and develop the ability to guess the meaning of the new vocabulary through the context without depending too much on the dictionary.

- Sound of a word (Na = 21 + 6 = 27 # Fa = 56.76 % + 16.22% = 73%). This is one of the best ways helping students pronouncing exactly and remember words more deeply through the International Phonetic Alphabet, stress rules, and phonics. The students may have used the following steps to realize this strategy:

+ Grasping 44 international phonetic sounds (including 20 vowels and 24 consonants), which aids the students to pronounce accurately any new words in a dictionary.

+ Learning new words by syllables other than spelling phones in a

word separately, for instance, the adjective *international* could be pronounced by 5 syllables → *in.ter.na.tion.al*

+ Performing the right stress makes the words resonate and engrave them on the students' memory more easily.

+ Linking words' sounds and meaning (Mnemonic), through which students could associate the sounds of a new word in English with a word in Vietnamese having the same sound to retain words quickly; for example, the word *cam quýt* in Vietnamese with the word *kumquat*, which has the same sound and sense.

Less frequently used by these students is learning English words via idioms, proverbs (Na = 16 + 9 = 25 # Fa = 43.24 % + 24.32 % = 68 %). This strategy helps the students speak English naturally like those native speakers of English and retain words longer. Let us take the case of such idiom as *make or break*, or proverbs like *out of sight*, *out of mind*, *diamond cuts diamond*. Nevertheless, this low number and frequency show that the strategy is not simple and requires the learners' profound understanding of the structure, denotation, connotation and cultural features of a new word in English idioms, proverbs.

- Visualization of a word's meaning (Na = 14 + 11 = 25 # Fa = 37.84 % + 29.73 % = 67.6%), which is also a less popular strategy for these students. When learning a new word in English, the students could link it to a visuality. In fact, the students could close their eyes and visualize certain lifelike picture about the word in their mind. For example; to learn the word *gigantic*, the students could imagine a very big dinosaur demolishing large buildings. This strategy is not preferred by many students as it demands the students' high imagination.

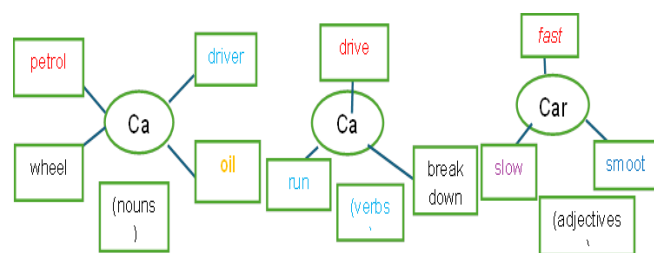
- Also, less favored by these subjects is reading a word to memorize it. (Na = 15 + 9 = 24 # Fa = 40.54 % + 24.32 %) = 65 %). This strategy helps brain connect the pronunciation with the orthography of a word and the students could hear themselves, which could help them react more quickly and apply words effectively to real conversations. Nonetheless, the frequency of using this strategy by the subjects is still restricted because they may be afraid to read aloud a word when learning a new word in English.

- Even less preferred by these students to consolidate English words is using related words including synonyms, antonyms ... (Na = 11 + 12 = 23 # Fa = 29.73 % + 32.43 % = 62.2%). This strategy could aid the students to deeply understand various levels of meaning nuance of a word in a situational context. Let us take the case of the two synonymous verbs of different nuances *die* (used with a neutral meaning), *pass away* (used to avoid unpleasant emotions), and the case of the two antonymous adjectives *hot*, *cold*, which are not the binary but the gradable antonyms because between them exist many other adjectives as indicated follows: *hot*, *warm*, *lukewarm*, *cool*, *tepid*, *cold*. The students could link the synonym and antonym in a sentence to retain the new words for a long term: "*I was happy/joyful to see my friends, but felt sad/miserable when they had to leave.*" Still, this strategy is not common for many students as it is rather sophisticated and

demands the students' rich vocabulary knowledge.

- Not chosen either by several students to consolidate their English vocabulary is memorizing the word class (part of speech) of a word ($N_a = 13 + 10 = 23$ # $F_a = 35.13\% + 27.03\% = 62.2\%$). This sub-strategy could help the students grasp the position and functions of words in a sentence. For instance, in the sentence: He is a *successful* businessman; *successful* is an adjective modifying its following noun *businessman*. In addition, the students could learn a word in group (chunking) instead of singly. For instance, students could learn the verb phrase *achieve success* other than the separate noun *success* in order to be able to use the correct grammatical structure in English. Nonetheless, not many students in the research utilize this strategy for they could not remember the grammatical function and the meaning of the new word in different positions in a sentence.

Not many of the students use word grouping strategy to learn English vocabulary ($N_a = 16 + 6 = 22$ # $F_a = 43.24\% + 16.22\% = 59.5\%$). This method could help students' brain connect the new information with the previous knowledge on vocabulary. In this strategy, the students could create a mind map with a topic whose keyword is put in the middle of a paper page or laptop screen, and then develop the mind map with various suitable related categories. Let us take the case of the topic car as indicated below:



Nonetheless, this strategy is not common for the students because it is time consuming and complex to design, arrange various elements around the key word in the middle.

Under 50% of the subjects utilize such English vocabulary memory strategies as:

- Using Semantic Feature Grids ($N_a = 12 + 6 = 18$ # $F_a = 32.43\% + 16.22\% = 48.65\%$). In this strategy, the students could put the words of the same topic in the vertical axis and the features in the horizontal line and then they tick the appearance or absence of the feature to profoundly understand the word's meaning nuance and usage. This strategy could aid the students to distinguish the synonyms, remember the vocabulary for a long term, develop the word's repertoire systematically. Let us take the following example of the topic *Means of transport*.

Vehicle	With motor?	On road?	Transporting a lot of people?	Environmentally friendly?
Car	v	v	A few (4-7)	
Train	v	on rail	v	It depends.
Bicycle		v	Very few (1-2)	V
Bus	v	v	v	It depends.

In fact; due to the sophistication and time consumption, this strategy is not frequently used by the students without the encouragement from teachers.

- Performing Orthography Visualization/ Visual Word Association ($N_a = 10 + 8 = 18$ # $F_a = 27.03\% + 21.62\% = 48.65\%$). This strategy turns the boring letter of a word into the lively image, which makes the students easy to remember words. For example, the students could retain the word *Look* with the two letters *oo* like the two eyes widely open to watch, the word *tear* with the first letter *T*, which looks like the falling tear from the eye. Nevertheless, this strategy demands a high level of association, especially with the word form, which needs a good grammatical and lexical foundation.

- Less utilized by these students is underlining the first letter of a word (Orthographical or Phonological Form) ($N_a = 12 + 5 = 17$ # $F_a = 32.43\% + 13.51\% = 46\%$). This is an effective strategy of Visual Mnemonic, which could assist the students to link the first letter of a word with a new English word and its meaning, which in its turn quickly reminds the students of the new word (*marvellous* (adj.), *dazzle* (v.)). Despite this strong point, the strategy is not common because it is mechanical and lowly effective. Indeed, this

strategy mainly focuses on the orthography other than associating a word with the sentence context or real imagery. When the English vocabulary number increases, this strategy could cause confusion for learners among many different words with different meanings and hard for them to remember: "b": *bicycle*, *beam*, *buy*, ...).

- Less popularly used by the students is semantic mapping ($N_a = 7 + 5 = 12$ # $F_a = 18.92\% + 13.51\% = 32.43\%$). Unlike the word grouping strategy, this strategy is more systematic, visual and connective. Nevertheless, this strategy is time consuming to create the net of too many related words, which could cause eye-jumble and brain overload.

- The least commonly utilized by the students ($N_a = 6 + 4 = 10$ # $F_a = 16.22\% + 10.81\% = 27.03\%$) is associating words with homonyms (write / right), poly-semantic words (He scratched his head, *He's* the head of the company), hypernyms (fruit: cherries, pears, apples, ...), hyponyms (dogs, cats, deer, ...: animals), homographs [record (n.), re'cord (v.)], homo-morphs [fast (adj.): A fast car; fast (adv.): They drove fast]. In fact, this strategy is not common for the Vietnamese students of English in general and the Vietnamese students of English major, including those at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in particular because it requires a complex

analysis and could cause confusion. Instead, the students often learn collocations or communicative sentences in order to use them immediately.

It has been so far seen that merely roughly 50% of the subjects use the *Memory Strategy* including *Semantic Feature Grids*, *Pictures / Imagery*, *Orthographical or Phonological Form*, *Semantic Feature Grids*, *Related Words of homonyms*, *poly-*

semantic words, *hypernyms*, *hyponyms*, *homographs*, *homomorphs*. Even over 50% of the students feel reluctant and unsure or never use these strategies. This may result from their vocabulary learning motivation, or/and their teachers' teaching method of vocabulary through such skills as Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Literature, Translation, Interpretation ..., the learning environment and the academic activities from the University.

Table 9.2. Memory Strategy as an English Vocabulary Consolidating Solution Used by the Vietnamese Students of English Major at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in Vietnam

Memory Strategy Used by Vietnamese Students of English Major at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in Vietnam	Class A (37 students)									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	F (%)	N	F (%)	N	F (%)	N	F (%)	N	F (%)
1. I learn words through Pictures / Imagery.	2	5.40	0	0	8	21.62	17	45.94	10	27.03
2. I learn words by word grouping.	1	2.70	6	16.22	8	21.62	16	43.24	6	16.22
3. I associate words with personal experience via Pictures / Imagery	0	0	2	5.40	6	16.22	20	54.06	9	24.32
4. I associate words with related words.	0	0	2	5.40	8	21.62	19	51.35	8	21.62
5. I use Semantic map.	7	18.92	5	13.51	13	35.13	7	18.92	5	13.51
6. I associate words with synonyms, antonyms.	0	0	2	5.40	12	32.43	11	29.73	12	32.43
7. I link words with homonyms, poly-semantic words, hypernyms, hyponyms homographs, homomorphs.	3	8.11	5	13.51	19	51.35	6	16.22	4	10.81
8. I use semantic feature grids.	1	2.70	3	8.11	15	40.54	12	32.43	6	16.22
9. I use new words in a sentence.	0	0	3	8.11	6	16.22	21	56.76	7	18.92
10. I utilize words in a story.	0	0	3	8.11	7	18.92	17	45.94	10	27.03
11. I learn new words in an idiom.	0	0	3	8.11	9	24.32	16	43.24	9	24.32
12. I learn the orthography of a word.	0	0	3	8.11	5	13.51	15	40.54	14	37.84
13. I visualize the word form.	1	2.70	5	13.51	13	35.13	10	27.03	8	21.62
14. I learn to memorize the word's part of speech.	0	0	5	13.51	9	24.32	13	35.13	10	27.03
15. I visualize the meaning of a word.	0	0	3	8.11	9	24.32	14	37.84	11	29.73

16. I underline the initial letter of a word.	5	13.51	6	16.22	9	24.32	12	32.43	5	13.51
17. I learn the sound of words.	0	0	3	8.11	7	18.92	21	56.76	6	16.22
18. I read a word when learning it.	1	2.70	5	13.51	7	18.92	15	40.54	9	24.32

10. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

10.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, different from the previous related studies in which most of students use Memory Strategy to consolidate English vocabulary because they may think that this strategy could link a new word in English to the word that they have known previously; in this research, only nearly half of the students have used Memory Strategy with various sub-types developed by Schmitt (1997) to do it when facing difficulties in learning English vocabulary as they may think that they could utilize other strategies such as cognitive, metacognitive, social strategy beside this strategy.

However, like other researches, a lot of Memory Strategy's sub-types have not been frequently, even rarely used, unascertained or even never used by about half of the students in this study. This may radically result from the difference in the students' awareness of the importance of vocabulary in learning English, of the English vocabulary consolidating strategy, students' learning motivation and the teacher's vocabulary consolidating method for the students via such skills as Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Literature, Translation, Interpretation, ...and above all are the encouraging activities from the University.

10.2. Implications

From the above causes, the following implications could be put forward to address the problem to help these students learn and consolidate their English vocabulary better:

10.2.1. For the University

The University should stimulate the teachers to limit teaching vocabulary by single words but to teach it via collocations and sentences. This could help students understand the co-text of words and use them properly. In addition, The University could organize the workshops where the experts and alumni could share their experience in utilizing their academic English vocabulary in their jobs, which could help students understand the high application of vocabulary for their English career chance. This is the opportunity to spread English vocabulary learning spirit among students.

10.2.2. For Teachers

The teacher should not teach English vocabulary separately but integrate it into other skills namely Reading, Listening, Speaking, Lecturing, Essay Writing via linking the core vocabulary to the topic discussion, reading, listening, writing in which the key words are deleted. In this way, students could aware that without the rich vocabulary repertoire, they cannot perceive and produce the message they want. Moreover, the teacher could guide students to guess the meaning of the new English words basing on the root words, the affixes, the co-texts so that they do not have to spend too much time on looking up new words in the dictionaries when

reading and listening academic materials. In order to consolidate the English vocabulary for second-year English major students at the University, who have had the basic knowledge of English words, teachers could stimulate the students to learn English words in phrase (collocations) to use words naturally like the native speakers of English. More importantly, the teacher could diversify their testing method on the students' English vocabulary learning through semantic mapping by asking students to design a mind map linking the major vocabulary topic via a reading, a listening, a presentation or a writing about *environment, health, education, ...* to the related synonyms, antonyms, nouns, verbs, adjectives. The teacher could then assess by the students' utilization of the new vocabulary in their paragraph or essay writing skill, presenting or debate in class. Aside from this, the teacher could evaluate the student's English vocabulary consolidating by vocabulary diary. In this method, the teacher could require the students to maintain writing it weekly, including words with the transcription, word class, phrase, and to write at least two sentences they make instead of merely writing their meaning in Vietnamese.

1.0.2.3. For Students

Under the University and teachers' impact as the extrinsic motivation, the students could aware the importance of English vocabulary in learning English and its application to their real life, through which the students could motivate themselves to learn it better (intrinsic motivation). Indeed, the students with high motivation often actively seek for the new words, apply them to reality faster and retain them longer while those without motivation are normally passive, not wishing to consolidate vocabulary by several strategies and forgetful. The findings from the research are in line with the comments from some previous studies on the inevitable relation between the learner's learning motivation and learning English in general (Truong, Huynh & Ho, 2025; Mizad & Salleh, 2025) and learning English skills encompassing Speaking (Ihsan, 2016 & Colón, 2023), Listening and Speaking (Quinapallo, Mejia & Candela, 2024), especially English vocabulary learning (Tran, 2015) - an essential and indispensable component of English.

In fact, the students could utilize T-Flat application to search for and learn vocabulary visually. This implication aligns with Nguyễn (2025)'s remark on the high-tech application, specifically T-Flat dictionary in the students' learning and retaining process of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Electric – Electronic vocabulary. English major students could also optimize this application by looking up new English words' pronunciation in American or English accent, using bookmarks to divide English words into various topics, and review them daily with flashcards or available multiple vocabulary games.

10.2.4. Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research

Despite the positive points, the sample population in this study is restricted to one class of 37 second - year Vietnamese students of English major, learning at the Department of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. This may make it difficult to generalize the findings to wider contexts. As a result, the research could be expanded with larger number of subjects from different classes of the same level of English in the first year, second year, third year, fourth year at this Department, this University, this City or at some other universities in other cities of Vietnam.

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