

# VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES BY FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIET NAM

*Phan Thi Minh Uyen, Tay Do University, Vietnam*

*Nguyen Thi Thuy Hang, Tay Do University, Vietnam*

*Pham Truc Hau, Tay Do University, Vietnam*

## ABSTRACT

*It is widely accepted that vocabulary is of the utmost importance in second language acquisition. To attain a defined level in the mastery of utilizing them in English learning, however, has never been an effortless task. On that account, the study entitled “Vocabulary learning strategies by first-year English-majored students at Tay Do University in Viet Nam” was conducted. It pursues the aim of studying the frequently – used vocabulary learning strategies by freshmen of English students at Tay Do University and effective strategies employed by these students. As a part of the study, ninety-five freshmen from the course of English 16 have been selected as the participants. The questionnaire and the interview were employed as two primary research instruments to analyze the data amassed. The outcomes of the study indicate the overall vocabulary learning strategies of students at Tay Do University are related to determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies, respectively, these are popular strategies and students are excited to use them.*

**Key words:** *vocabulary, English-majored students, university*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

It cannot be denied that the English language around the world has become increasingly important in our lives. English is an essential tool to broaden and illuminate our view of the world. English may not be the most popular language in the world, but it is the official language of 53 countries and is spoken by over 400 million people worldwide. In Vietnam, since the 1990s, the teaching and learning of English have become a topical issue that arouses the concerns of

professionals and researchers alike. It is well known that learning a foreign language mainly involves learning the sound system, grammar, and vocabulary of that language among which vocabulary learning plays a very important role.

“Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (Wilkins, 1972, p. 111). The saying seems very familiar to many people. However, the researchers nevertheless desires to repeat it all over again to verify the significance of vocabulary in any language. If a language may be thought of as a house, then its grammar could be considered as cement and its vocabulary could be figuratively compared to bricks. To build a complete house, not only cement but also bricks are needed. Without bricks, no house can be built, even once lots of high-quality cement is available. To become a good English communicator, one ought to accumulate an amazing understanding of English grammar and also have a rich English vocabulary. Vocabulary is a critical element of a language because it appears in all four language skills: Listening – Speaking – Reading – Writing. Vocabulary is not only essential for personal communication but also for academic study. In fact, many standardized tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc. require knowledge of words. For this reason, students should prioritize learning and developing their vocabulary knowledge.

For an extended time within the past, methodologists have been unceasingly unbroken seeking effective ways to teach English vocabulary. Teachers’ roles and teaching tools are paid a lot of attention. Fortunately, it is been witnessed that there has been an outstanding shift in the field of pedagogy and learning over a previous couple of decades with larger stress being placed on learners and learning instead of on lecturers and teaching. Several books on learning ways have been introduced by such specialists as Oxford (1990), O’Malley and Charnot (1990), Nunan (1991), Nation (1990) so on. Some books on vocabulary learning strategies have been written by such students as Nation (1990, 2001 and 2002), Rubin and Thompson (1994) and Taylor (1990), and so on.

As an English major student, I have encountered many questions about vocabulary learning that are raised by students. For example, what are effective ways to learn vocabulary? How do you keep a new word in mind? Personally, I found it necessary to provide them with effective learning strategies to learn English vocabulary. This is the main reason why this topic interests me.

### **1.2 Research aims**

The study is conducted with a view to studying vocabulary learning strategies of first-year students of English at Tay Do University. Specifically, this analysis aims to get two objectives. The primary objective is to identify frequently-used vocabulary learning strategies of English majors by first-year students at Tay Do University. The second is to spot what are the most effective strategies used by these students.

### **1.3 The significance of the study**

This study aims to survey vocabulary learning strategies of English major first-year students at Tay Do University and the most effective vocabulary learning strategies utilized by these students. It is believed that awareness of individual variations in learning will build all those individuals concerned in English as a far-off teaching profession and learning more sensitive to their roles, respectively. Furthermore, it is going to promote competitive teaching and learning as develop students’ potential life and assist students to become cognizant of the ways in which for more practical learning. It is going to also facilitate students to develop strategies, and ways to become a lot of driven and autonomous learners. Understanding students’ vocabulary learning strategy use can alter lecturers and researchers to style applicable materials and activities to assist students to enhance their lexical competence.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Learning strategies

#### 2.1.1 Definition

What are learning strategies? In my opinion, a learning strategy is an individual's approach to completing a task. Obviously, it is believed that learning strategies are a significant and essential area of development in a native language and in a second language, therefore, there have been several definitions of learning strategies.

Learning can be defined as the process by which the external and unfamiliar become internal, familiar, and usable. Learning is a lot of accurately pictured as a lively process to learn, and the learners can use a variety of specific means. The word "strategy" refers to those means. However, there's no agreement concerning the definition of the term "language learning strategies". (Hoang, 2019). Faerch and Kasper (1983:67) stress that a learning strategy is "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language".

Learning strategies, defined by Weinstein and Mayer (1986, p. 43) (in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) have learning facilitation as a goal and are intentional on the part of the learner. The goal of strategy use is to "affect the learner's motivational or affective state or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge".

Rubin (in Wenden and Rubin 1987:19) is even more explicit when he defines learning strategies as "any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information, that is, what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning".

Learning strategies are defined by O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) as "special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to comprehend, learn, or retain new information". Bialystock (1985) defined learning strategies as the ordinary processes of learning that occur whether or not the learner is attending to and deliberately manipulating them. Thus, learning strategies are the same as the learning process.

According to Nunan (1991:168), "Learning strategies are the mental processes which learners employ to learn and use the target language". Nunan's definition restricts learning strategies only to "mental processes". Richard et al (1992:209), offer a broader definition of learning strategies, that is, learning strategies are intentional behavior and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to better help them understand, learn and remember new information".

Ellis (1997:76) defines learning strategies as "the particular approaches or techniques that learner employs to try to learn a second language". He further explains that learning strategies can be behavioral or mental and are typically problem-oriented.

Oxford (1990) summarizes her view of language learning strategies by listing twelve key features. They are i) the contribution to the main goal, communicative competence; ii) learners' allowance to become more self-directed; iii) the expansion of the roles of teachers; iv) being problem-oriented; v) specific action taken by the learner; vi) the involvement of many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive; vii) direct and indirect learning support; viii) being

not always observable; ix) being often conscious; x) being taught; xi) being flexible; xii) being influenced by a variety of factors. These twelve features reflect almost fully the characteristics of language learning strategies.

Each researchers defines learning strategies from different perspectives. In this study, the researchers adopted the definition by Oxford on the account that it covers the essential aspects of language learning strategies.

### **2.1.2 The importance of learning strategies**

Side by aspect with the event of language skills in English thought of as content, it's also vital that learners "learn the way to learn". the primary profit to learners would be within the long term. Sensible learning ways would enable learners to travel on rising their English on their own in the long, advanced method of language learning.

"The main benefit gained from all learning strategies... is the fact that they enable learners to take note control of their own learning so that students can take more responsibility for their studies". (Nation, 2001)

The strategies, consequently, facilitate learners to produce their independence, autonomy, and self-reliance within the study. Once students are equipped with a spread of various learning ways, they'll decide upon however precisely they might wish to take care of difficulties. Sensible data of learning strategies and therefore the ability to use them in appropriate things might significantly modify the issues in the learning process.

## **2.2 Overview of vocabulary**

### **2.2.1 Definitions of vocabulary**

Vocabulary learning is taken into account as one of the vital skills in learning English. However, several students don't pay a lot of attention to the present word learning, which results in learners usually thinking that vocabulary learning is the most bored whereas they are learning a foreign language. However, vocabulary learning is actually important to be able to perceive what others are sayings, similarly to having the ability to speak well with others. Therefore, there has been a variety of definitions of vocabulary by different linguists.

According to Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary Sixth Edition (2000, p. 1707), vocabulary is "all the words a person knows or uses". In Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (Flexner, 2003, p. 1864), the word is "a unit of language, consisting of one or more spoken sounds or their written representation, that functions as a principal carrier of meaning".

Ur (1996) gave another definition, vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in a foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than just a single word. For example, post office and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. A useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary "item" rather than "word".

According to Zimmerman cited in Coady and Huckin (1997), vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to typical language learning. In addition, Burns (1972) defines vocabulary as the stock of words that is used by a person, class, or profession. Futhermore, Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) state that vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. Hornby (2000) defines vocabulary as "the total number of words in a language, vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings". Heibert and Kamil (1995:3) define vocabulary as the knowledge of the meanings of words. The term vocabulary has a range of meanings.

In conclusion, there are some ways to define vocabulary similarly as from the definition of vocabulary, we are able to see that vocabulary is all the words in a language that are acquainted and employed by an individual to speak with every other.

### **2.2.2 Importance of vocabulary**

Vocabulary learning is extremely important for those that learn English. Vocabulary is used not solely by students while finding out within the school but also in society. Vocabulary is essential so as to totally perceive what others want to mention and to be able to communicate well. Vocabulary learning is additionally important for students as a result vocabulary is used because of the beginning of learning English. According to Cambridge Dictionary, vocabulary means “all the words known and employed by a specific person”. However, vocabulary learning needs concentration to be able to basic cognitive processes during a long time and typically it brings bother to the learner as a result of they typically quickly forget the words they have learned. Moreover, if we do not have a good vocabulary, we are going to not be able to speak well. The key to learning a language is the perceived input of a language and in fact, vocabulary learning is the key to that door. Why is vocabulary necessary? Vocabulary is extremely important because it conveys your point of view and thoughts.

Richard (1976 as cited in Read, 2000) produced the list of seven characteristics related to word knowledge. Knowing a word means knowing i) the degree of probability of encountering that word in speech or print; ii) the limitations on the use of the word according to variations of function and situation; iii) the syntactic behavior associated with the word; iv) the knowledge of the underlying form of a word and the derivations that can be made from it; v) knowledge of the network of associations between that word and other words in the language; vi) the semantic value of a word; and vii) many of the different meanings associated with a word (Richard, 1976 as cited in Read, 2000). These characteristics have a deep relationship with the learning strategies students choose. Learners who catch these features can master the words.

The followings are the top four reasons why vocabulary is so important.

Firstly, vocabulary is really vital because it offers communication ideas. Successful communication or saying what you mean is dependent upon a good vocabulary base. Using the right words when talking makes you a more effective communicator.

Secondly, vocabulary helps us improve listening comprehension. One of the reasons students can't understand what others are saying is that they do not have a good vocabulary. When students have never known the vocabulary and its pronunciation, they cannot hear and understand the content. Sometimes listening skills depend not only on pronunciation but also depend on vocabulary.

Thirdly, vocabulary learning also helps students improve their writing skills. Writing skills are one of the most difficult skills in English. Writing skills require learners to have a large vocabulary. Therefore, having a good vocabulary can help students write more effectively. When writing, students need to use a more formal tone than conversational language, and in order to do that, they need a rich vocabulary.

Lastly, vocabulary also contributes to good writing ability. Research has shown that people need to know 98 percent of the words to understand what they are reading. Improving vocabulary and trying to learn vocabulary will increase your knowledge.



In short, learning vocabulary helps the student to understand and communicate with natives simply similarly as vocabulary knowledge helps to boost other skills. Therefore, vocabulary learning has a special role, and learning vocabulary is the key to improving language skills.

### **2.2.3 Factors affecting learners in learning English vocabulary**

There are two kinds of factors that influence the learners' vocabulary learning strategies. One is the factors of individual learners and the other is the social environmental factors ( Zhihong Bai, 2018).

#### **Individual Factors**

The differences between learners perform in several aspects which include concepts, attitudes, personal emotion, and so on. The first point that the learners should pay attention to is their views about vocabulary learning. If the learner focuses on the vocabulary, they will be more use of cognitive strategies and memory strategies. If they pay attention to the function of the vocabulary, they will use fewer strategies such as cognitive, and memory but more use communicative strategies. And the age, learning motivation, character and personality differences of students, and the differences in genders also can influence vocabulary learning strategies ( Zhihong Bai, 2018).

#### **The Factor of Age**

Age is an important factor in vocabulary learning strategies. Young learners tend to rely more on specific learning tasks to use strategies. However, adult learners can use strategies neatly. Adult learning strategies are more complex than children. They always use more learning strategies ( Zhihong Bai, 2018).

#### **The Learning Motivation**

Learners' learning motivation is extremely necessary for any variety of learning, as well as vocabulary learning. The motivation determines how much attention the learners would love to pay, how to complete a learning task, and how much sense of accomplishment it will take. The researchers found that learning motivation incorporates a shut relationship with the use and choice of learning strategies. The learners who have robust motivation for vocabulary learning use more strategies than the learners who have very little motivation, and different vocabulary learning motivations will affect learners opting for different learning strategies. In foreign vocabulary learning strategies teaching, if the learners ignore their learning motivation, then it will cause the failure of the methods in teaching. Therefore, within the strategies of teaching, teachers ought to perceive the learning motivation of the learners and encourage their enthusiasm to learn vocabulary. In turn, mistreatment of the corresponding learning strategies can improve the learners to finish initiatively the vocabulary learning tasks. Learning motivation suggests that one thing that may push students to learn directly is an interior power. Learning motivation may be an advanced psychological activity. As the simplest way to stimulate and guide students' learning, it plays a very important role in students' learning. it is important for learners to behave and act that it determines the enthusiasm, tendency, choice, and consciousness of individual activities (Zhihong Bai, 2018).

#### **The Personality Difference Among Students**

Every student is a personal having their own living and growth environment, that formed a unique personality and individual differences. It additionally changes the various people's interests and needs. research shows that almost all the teachers and learners believe the personality issue plays a vital role in foreign language learning. the various personality of students can have different degrees of influence on a people's vocabulary learning. The researchers also

found that some personality traits are concerning the learner's strategies choice. For example, Researchers wide believe that extroverted learners can use a lot of emotional and visual strategies. Some others assume that learners of an emotional kind use more vocabulary learning strategies than thinking types. Though this primary analysis conclusion has to be additional confirmed, the influence of learners' personality characteristics on their learning strategies and therefore the teaching can't be ignored ( Zhihong Bai, 2018).

### **The Differences in Gender**

Gender differences are brought to the attention of researchers increasingly in vocabulary learning. Research shows that gender differences will lead to male learners and female learners using different vocabulary learning strategies. They reported that Female learners use more social strategies more frequently than male learners. Oxford found that although a lot of women learners use learning strategies more frequently than men learners, after strategy training, the male learners will show considerable advantages in strategy usage. However, so far in the teaching and research of the strategies, the gender differences have been paid little attention. If researchers and teachers can consider gender factors in the teaching strategies, and distinguish males from females, then they can achieve a better teaching effect in the strategies (Zhihong Bai, 2018).

### **The Factors of Social Environmental**

As language is a social phenomenon in human communication, it is closely related to society, so the use of learning strategies in vocabulary learning is restricted by the social environment. Thus, the social environment, to a great extent, affects the learner's strategies. This will be bound to affect the learners' mentality and the use of learning strategies indirectly.

It is clear that a lot of factors will have influences learners in learning English in general and in learning English vocabulary in particular. These make a case for why some second language learners are a lot no-hit than others. However, learning strategy is thought about as one of the foremost decisive factors (Zhihong Bai, 2018).

## **2.3 Vocabulary learning strategies**

### **2.3.1 Definition of vocabulary learning strategies**

Vocabulary learning strategies will be thought of as a section of general learning strategies in second language acquisition. (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975). It ought to be noted that there are several definitions of language learning strategies. Meanwhile, there is no official definition for vocabulary learning strategies. Maybe it is as a result that vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies and part of learning strategies as well. Obviously, it is believed that vocabulary learning strategies may be a vital and essential area of development in a native language and in a second language, therefore, there have been various definitions of vocabulary learning strategies. (Pham, 2020).

Cameron (2001) defines vocabulary learning strategies as “the action that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary items”.

Catalan (2003) explains her working definition for vocabulary learning strategies as “knowledge about the mechanisms (processes and strategies) used in order to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students to find out the meaning of unknown words, to retain them in long-term memory, to recall them at will, and to use them in oral or written mode”.

Intaraprasert (2004) sees vocabulary learning strategies as “any set of techniques or learning behaviors, which language learners reported using in order to discover the meaning of a new word, to retain the knowledge of newly-learned words, and to expand their knowledge of vocabulary”.

Hamzah, Kafipour, and Abdullah (2009) view vocabulary learning strategies from three different angles. First, it can be any actions the learners take to aid the learning process of new vocabulary. Second, these actions must be able to improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning. Third, vocabulary learning strategies are conscious actions taken by the learner in order to study new words.

The working definition of vocabulary learning strategies in this research is adapted from Rubin (1987), cited in Schmitt (1997:203) that learning strategies are defined as “the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used” and “therefore vocabulary learning strategies could be any which affect this broadly-defined process”.

In brief, the definitions on top of vocabulary learning strategies are numerous to some extent and vocabulary learning strategies are a subset of learning strategies.

### **2.3.2 Classification of vocabulary learning strategies**

Vocabulary learning strategies have many classifications. Oxford categorizes learning strategies into two major groups: direct strategies and indirect strategies. The former refers to those strategies directly involved in the target language in the sense that they require mental processing of the language which consists of memory strategies and compensation strategies. The latter refers to the strategies that provide indirect support for language learning through opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation, and other ways including met cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Gu and Johnson (1996) developed a list of vocabulary learning strategies that comprise: beliefs about vocabulary learning, metacognitive, regulation, guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, memory strategies, and activation strategies. These strategies may be placed into two categories: Metacognitive (of planning, monitoring, and evaluating) and Cognitive strategies (of attention, rehearsal, and production). In contrast, O'Malley and Chamot (1990), classify learning strategies into three groups: Metacognitive, Cognitive, and Social/Affective strategies. Met cognitive strategies are higher-order executive skills and are used for learners to oversee, regulate, or self-direct their language learning. To be specific, cognitive strategies are further divided into advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, delayed production, and self-evaluation. While met cognitive strategies refer to learners' management of their learning, cognitive strategies refer to the mental processes they use to acquire, sort, remember, and use information. They operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning. Cognitive strategies include repetition, resourcing, directed physical response, translation, grouping, note-taking, education recombination, imagery, auditory representation, keyword, transfer, and guessing. Social strategies are the ways in which students cooperate or interact with other people in the learning process. They include asking for the help of the teacher or peers and asking for clarification. Finally, affecting strategies refer to controlling over emotions or negative thoughts in order to continue to study. The examples include self-talk and self-encouragement.

### **2.3.3 Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategies**

One of the foremost recent and comprehensive classifications of vocabulary learning strategies is Schmitt's taxonomy, which consists of fifty-eight strategies divided into 5 groups. Schmitt's taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies was based on Oxford's classification system and Mayer & Nation's Discovery/Consolidation distinction.



In research by Schmitt (1997), he distinguishes the strategies into two groups: The ones to determine the meaning of new words when encountered for the first time, and the ones to consolidate meaning when encountered again. The former contains determination and social strategies and the latter contains cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social strategies. Schmitt includes social strategies in both categories since they can be used for both purposes. This categorization is based, in part, on Oxford’s (1990) classification scheme. The details can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1:** Taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies

<b>Strategies for the discovery of a new word’s meaning</b>	
<b>Strategy group</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
<b>DETERMINATION STRATEGIES</b>	Analyse parts of speech
	Analyse affixes and roots
	Check for first language cognate
	Analyse any available pictures or gestures
	Guess the meaning from textual context
	Bilingual dictionary
	Word lists
	Flashcards
<b>SOCIAL STRATEGIES</b>	Ask a teacher for a first language translation
	Ask a teacher to paraphrase or synonym of a new word
	Ask a teacher for a sentence including the new word
	Ask classmates for meaning
	Discover new meaning through group work activities
<b>Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered</b>	
<b>SOCIAL STRATEGIES</b>	Study and practice meaning in a group
	Teacher checks students’ flashcards or word lists for accuracy
	Interact with a native speaker
<b>MEMORY STRATEGIES</b>	Study word with a pictorial presentation of its meaning
	Image word’s meaning
	Connect word to a personal experience
	Associate the word with its coordinates
	Associate the word with its synonyms and antonyms
	Use semantic maps
	Use ‘scales’ for gradable adjectives
	Peg method
	Loci method

	Group words together to study them
	Group words together spatially on a page
	Use the new word in sentences
	Group words together within a storyline
	Study the spelling of a word
	Study the sound of a word
	Say the new word aloud when studying
	Image word form
	Underline the initial letter of the word
	Configuration
	Use keyword method
	Affixes and roots (remembering)
	Part of speech (remembering)
	Paraphrase the word's meaning
	Use cognates in the study
	Learn the words of an idiom together
	Use physical action when learning a word
	Use semantic feature grids
<b>COGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>	Verbal repetition
	Written repetition
	Word lists
	Flashcards
	Take note in class
	Use the vocabulary section in your textbook
	Listen to the tape of word lists
	Put English labels on physical objects
	Keep a vocabulary notebook
<b>METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)
	Testing oneself with word tests
	Use spaced word practice
	Skip or pass the new word
	Continue to study words over time

In general, although the taxonomies cited above may slightly differ in terms of strategies they categorize, they all provide a list of widely applicable vocabulary learning strategies.

The vocabulary learning strategy classification system proposed by Schmitt (1997) will be used as the theoretical framework of the investigation in this thesis. Therefore, the clarification and exemplification of those vocabulary learning strategies that are used in the questionnaire will be presented below as a source of reference.

### **Determination strategies**

Determination strategies are used when students are faced with discovering a new word's meaning without resource to another person's expertise. They can have the meaning of a new word from the following techniques (Schmitt, 1997):

Guessing from their structural knowledge of the language, learners may be able to discern the new word's part of speech, which can help in the guessing process. Hints about meaning can be also obtained from its roots or affixes.

The strategy of using reference material is primary used dictionaries. Word lists and flashcards are those suggested to be useful for initial exposure to a new word.

### **Social strategies**

Guessing from a first language cognate can use as a social strategy. Cognates are words in different languages which descended from a common parent word. If the target language is closely related to the learner's first language, cognates can be an excellent resource for both guessing the meaning of and remembering new words (Schmitt, 1997)

Guessing an unknown word's meaning from context has been widely promoted in the last two decades as it has been seen to fit in more comfortably with the communicative approach than other, more discrete, Discovery Strategies. However, learners must have a certain level of language proficiency as well as adequate background knowledge of the subject and the strategic knowledge of how to effectively go through the inferencing process. (Schmitt, 1997).

Social strategies are used to both discover the meaning of a new word and consolidate a word once it has been encountered. They can be defined as those who are used to understanding a word by asking someone who knows it. Teachers are said to be often in this position. They can be expected to give help in several different ways such as giving first language translation, giving a synonym, giving a definition by paraphrase, using a new word in a sentence, checking learners' work for accuracy, or any combination of these. Learners can also get help from their classmates or benefit from interactions with others such as group work activities or interaction with native speakers. (Pham, 2020).

### **Memory strategies**

Memory strategies are approaches that relate new materials to existing knowledge using some form of imagery, or grouping. The strategies can be listed as follows (Schmitt, 1997):

The strategy of using pictures or imaginary means that students can learn new words by studying them with pictures of their meaning instead of their definition, by creating their own mental images of a word's meaning, or by associating new words with a particularly vivid personal experience of the underlying concept, for example, a learner mentally connecting the word snow to a memory of playing in the snow while a child (Schmitt, 1997).

Related words mean that new words can be linked to second language words which the student already knows. This usually involves some types of sense relationship such as coordination, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, or metonymy which can be illustrated with semantic maps-one way used often to consolidate vocabulary (Oxford 1990)).

Unrelated words are words that have no sense of relationship and can be linked together while they are learned (Schmitt, 1997).

Grouping is an important way to aid recall, and people seem to organize words into groups naturally without prompting. Words can be grouped mentally or in writing according to their topic, function, the story, and so on (Schmitt, 1997).

Another kind of mnemonic strategy involves focusing on the target word's orthographical or phonological form to facilitate recall. Words can be learned by explicitly studying their spelling and pronunciation, remembering their orthographical form, or making a mental representation of their sound (Schmitt, 1997).

Other memory strategies are also suggested in this group. Structural analysis of words can be useful for determining their meaning. Studying a word's affixes, root, and word class is potentially useful as a way of consolidating its meaning. Paraphrasing can be used to teach the meanings of new words (Scholfield, 1980), or it can be used as a strategy to compensate for a limited productive vocabulary, especially when a word is temporarily inaccessible (Baxter, 1980). Learning a new word in its chunk often as phrases, idioms, or proverbs is a mnemonic device for remembering the individual word meanings. Physical actions or semantic feature grids are two other suggested ways of vocabulary learning.

### **Cognitive strategies**

Cognitive strategies are those somewhat similar to memory strategies but the difference is that they are not focused so specifically on the manipulative mental process" (Schmitt, 1997:215). This group includes repetition and mechanical means of learning vocabulary as the following:

Written and verbal repetition, repeatedly writing or saying a word over and over again, are common strategies in many parts of the world (Schmitt, 1997).

Word lists and flashcards can be used for the initial exposure to a word, but most students continue to use them to review it afterward. One main advantage of flashcards is that they can be taken almost anywhere and studied when one has a free moment (Brown, 1980). Another is that they can be arranged to create logical groupings of the target words (Gairns and Redman, 1986; Cohen, 1990).

Another kind of cognitive strategy is using study aids. Words are learned through such study aids as note-taking in class, using vocabulary sections in textbooks, or taping second language labels onto their respective physical objects (Schmitt, 1997).

Vocabulary notebooks have been recommended by several writers (Allen, 1983: 50; Gairns and Redman, 1986: 95-100; and McCarthy, 1990: 127-29). Words can be learned by writing them down in a notebook.

### **Metacognitive strategies**

Metacognitive strategies are those used to control and evaluate their own learning by having a conscious overview of the learning process in general (Schmitt, 1997). Students can employ such strategies as below:

Using English-language media to get the aim of the efficient acquisition of a second language, it is important to maximize exposure to it. In case English is chosen as a second language, English - language media such as books, magazines, newspapers, movies, websites, etc... offers an almost endless resource (Pham, 2020).

Skipping or passing new words has been recommended as a strategy. In a language like English, even native speakers know only a fraction of the vast total of words (Goulden, Nation, and Read, 1990). Thus second language learners



need to realize that they will never learn all the words, and so need to concentrate their limited resources on learning the most useful ones. Part of this involves knowing when to skip or pass a word, especially low-frequency ones which they may not meet again for a very long time (Schmitt, 1997).

Continuing to study over time means apart from making full use of the above strategies, one can maximize the effectiveness of his practice time if it is scheduled and organized.

Testing oneself with tests and using spaced word practice can be considered as organized activities by students themselves.

#### **2.4 Related studies**

As far as the researchers are concerned, the concepts of vocabulary learning strategies are actually not novel to researchers in the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. The questions about how language learning strategies and how they affect each other have so far been worth-concerning. Apparently, a profound understanding of vocabulary learning strategies may partly help both teachers and students in second language teaching and learning effectively. Therefore, these questions have attracted a number of efforts from various researchers to investigate.

The first one that should be mentioned in the research is "*A Case Study of the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use of Twenty Chinese English as a Second Language Learners in Australia*" by Elizabeth Moon Yu Wong, 2014. The sample of twenty Chinese English as a Second Language learner was selected from different batches of English as a Second Language graduates from an Australian English Language Institute before they commenced their university studies in Australia. Data were collected using a combination of information-elicitation techniques: a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire, an interview, and a reading vocabulary task. The questionnaire survey and the interview were used to elicit information about their vocabulary learning strategy use and vocabulary learning experiences. To increase the validity and reliability of their face-to-face interview responses, the interview questions were emailed to the participants to answer online. This aim study to investigate the vocabulary learning strategy use of twenty Chinese English as a Second Language learners in Australia to examine what implications these have for English as a Second language vocabulary learning and teaching. This result study helped the researchers to focus on the in-depth, long-term interaction with the twenty young adult Chinese English as a Second Language participants, and learn more about their English vocabulary learning difficulties, their vocabulary learning strategies use to learn new English vocabulary, and how they use the vocabulary learning strategies to guess or deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary during the reading vocabulary task.

Moreover, in another study by Xu Gang, 2014 named "*A Study on English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Chinese College Students*". This article is a study on the learning strategies of English vocabulary used by Chinese College English learners. The study's aim is to draw on related theories as well as a case study to ascertain the strategies that are useful for Chinese college students in particular. Due to their large percentage of English as Second Language learners, the study will illuminate the strategies that may be conducive to learning English vocabulary in general. The participants in the study are 119 fourth-year students from Inner Mongolian University for nationalities, China. For data collection, the study applies a vocabulary test and a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire. And Analysis of Variance is employed for data analysis. The result of the study shows the effective vocabulary learning strategies of Chinese college students.

*“Vocabulary learning strategy use and vocabulary proficiency”* by Huh, Jin-Hee (2009). This study investigated vocabulary learning strategies used by English as a Foreign Language middle school learners in Korea and examined the relationship between the middle school learners' vocabulary learning strategy use and their vocabulary proficiency level. One hundred and forty-one students in a public middle school participated in the study and the data for this study were collected from a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire and a vocabulary proficiency test. The purpose of the study was to investigate vocabulary learning strategies used by Korean middle school students and the relationship between vocabulary proficiency and the use of vocabulary learning strategies. Based on the result of the vocabulary proficiency test, the participants were divided into three proficiency groups: high-, mid-, and low-level proficiency groups. The overall findings of the study revealed that the participants used cognitive strategies most frequently and social strategies least frequently. The most frequently used individual strategies were “using a bilingual dictionary”, “studying the sound of a word” and “practicing words through verbal repetition”. The least frequently used ones were “interacting with native speakers” and 'studying or practicing the meaning of a word in a group”. The research results also showed that the vocabulary proficiency level has a significant influence on vocabulary strategy use. The more proficient learners used vocabulary learning strategies more actively.

Another study was carried out by Pham (2014) who did a study called *“An exploratory study on vocabulary strategies by first-year non-English major at Tan Trao University”*. The participants of this study were 219 first-year non - English major students at Tan Trao University. The purpose of the study is to explore the most commonly - used vocabulary learning strategies that the first year non - English major students at Tan Trao University were using to learn English vocabulary, (2) the reasons for their preferences, and (3) the effectiveness of those strategies to their vocabulary learning which is self - evaluated by the students. A vocabulary learning questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. The study points out that (1) learners are only limited to some strategies, (2) there is a strong influence of teaching methods and past learning experiences on learners' choice of vocabulary learning strategies, and the practice of these limited vocabulary learning strategies helps learners to retain sound, spelling and equivalent meaning of a word, and (3) learners realize the benefits of those strategies on retaining sound, spelling and equivalent meaning of a word and help them concentrate on lessons.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research questions**

The study was undertaken to deal with the following research questions:

1. What are the frequently-used vocabulary learning strategies acquired by English major first-year students at the Tay Do University?
2. What are the most effective vocabulary learning strategies employed by English major first-year students at Tay Do University?

#### **3.2 Hypothesis**

According to English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University, vocabulary is one of the basic foundations for learning any language. Hence, based on the related references and the research questions, the researchers hypothesize that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University use a variety of strategies to learn vocabulary including determination

strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. Remarkably, depending on these strategies, students can find the most effective vocabulary learning strategy for themselves. Since then, they will have more useful strategies for improving their vocabulary.

### 3.3 Research design

This is a descriptive study based on survey research. The study aims at studying vocabulary learning strategies of first-year students in English major at Tay Do University. From that, several possible ways are expectedly recommended to help students better vocabulary learning strategies.

In order to achieve the aims mentioned above, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The former was obtained through the questionnaire which was used to figure out what vocabulary learning strategies were most commonly used by the students. It is believed that the survey is the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research. The qualitative data are collected through semi-structured interviews with ten students. The interviews are exploited with the purpose of asking for students' use of English vocabulary learning strategies. After collecting, analysing, and discussing data, some conclusions are drawn.

Furthermore, information from the interviews about the vocabulary learning strategies that students apply supported further findings for in-depth discussion and conclusions.

### 3.4 Participants

The conduct of data collection for this research was carried out on 95 first-year students from English classes of course 16 at Tay Do University (45 students of English 16A and 50 students of English 16B) in order to explore the strategies they employ to learn English vocabulary. They are both males and females. The students' ages range from 18 to 19 years old. In addition, they have studied English for 7 to 13 years. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English as a foreign language. They were given questionnaires and interviews in order to get information about the vocabulary learning strategies which they used.

### 3.5 Instruments

The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire and an interview, representing the quantitative and qualitative methods respectively.

#### Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed and used to measure the frequency of the vocabulary learning strategies. The strategies were based on the study by Schmitt (1997). The questionnaire consisted of two parts: questions to gain personal information about the participants from item 1 to 5 and questions relating to the strategies that participants may have used. These strategies contained 30 items pertaining to students' approaches to vocabulary learning strategies, which were divided into five categories: determination strategies (DET) from item 6 to 10, social strategies (SOC) from item 11 to 16, memory strategies (MEM) from item 17 to 24, cognitive strategies (COG) from item 25 to 30, and metacognitive strategies (MET) from item 31 to 35 (Schmitt, 1997). The respondents were asked to rate each strategy statement on a 5-point interval Likert scale in terms of their frequency of use in descending order ranging from 1 (always), 2 (often), 3 (sometimes), 4 (seldom) to 5 (never). Students could tick on the appropriate column next to each statement provided. They were classified into the following groups:

**Table 2:** The gist of questionnaire

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 5	Students' general background
From 6 to 10	Determination strategies
From 11 to 16	Social strategies
From 17 to 24	Memory strategies
From 25 to 30	Cognitive strategies
From 31 to 35	Metacognitive strategies

### Interview

The interview questions are designed to get specific information from the juniors about vocabulary learning strategies. It consists of 4 questions that focus on the two main points. The first one is to find out how students learned vocabulary, and the second is what vocabulary learning strategies they used most effectively. The purposes of the interview were clarified in the below table:

**Table 3:** The gist of the interview

Questions	Purposes
1	How the students learn vocabulary
2	The most and least used strategies
3	Aspects of words are noticed by students when learning vocabulary
4	The most effective strategy

### 3.6 Data collection

For questionnaire survey, it takes about 15 minutes to complete and is administered in the students' regular English class. Before filling out the questionnaire, students are told that their participation is voluntary and their responses would remain confidential. Students are also asked to give their opinions as honestly as possible, which is crucial to the success of this investigation.

After finishing the questionnaires, 10 out of 95 students were chosen to complete the interview papers designed to get information from participants about vocabulary learning strategies. Each interview paper comprised 4 questions which were about how they learned vocabulary, what strategies they used the most and least, what aspects of words they paid attention to when learning vocabulary, and how their progress in applying their vocabulary learning strategies was. Each interview takes around twenty minutes to complete.

### 3.7 Data analysis

After the data has been collected, they are processed with both quantitative and qualitative methods.



The data gathered through the questionnaire are coded for statistical analysis to answer the research questions indicated above. The Microsoft Excel 365 is used for statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis is applied to obtain patterns of demographic information from the background questionnaire and strategy use. Interviews are also analysed based on themes to offer insights for discussion and conclusion.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

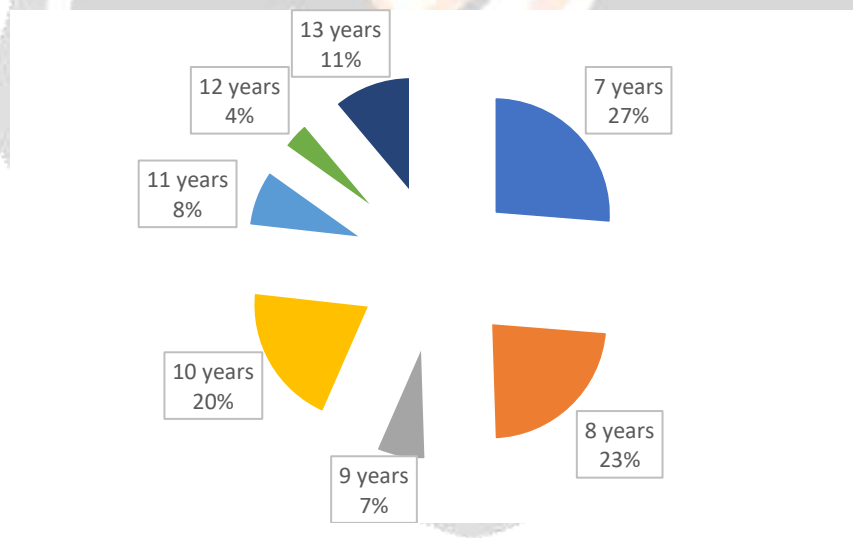
##### 4.1 Results

This part illustrated the ultimate results of the study. They were depicted for analyzing the data amassed from all participants. The results comprised two sections, namely the results from the questionnaire and the results from the interview.

##### 4.1.1 Results from the questionnaire

Thanks to the questionnaire, a great deal of valuable and reliable information was obtained and sub-divided into three parts, embracing students’ background and their attitudes toward the importance of vocabulary learning in learning English, participants’ perspectives about teaching, and learning vocabulary strategies in class.

##### Students’ background and their attitude toward vocabulary learning

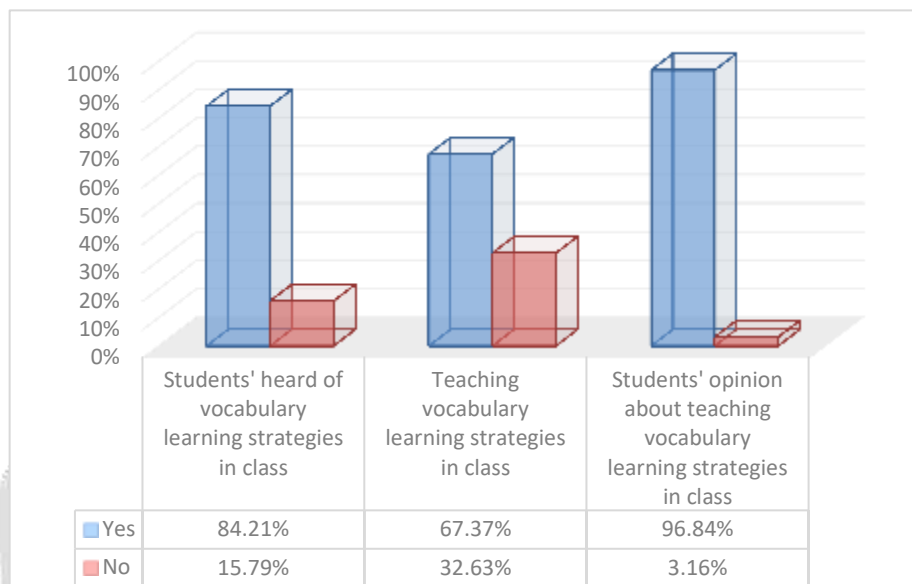


**Figure 1:** Proportion of students’ English learning years

Taking a look at the above pie chart, the largest piece represented 27% (25/95) of the participants who have learned English for 7 years. It means they have studied this language since grade 6th and have spent 7 years learning the language before enrolling in university; however, this did not imply they have a wide range of vocabulary. This is because they learned not only English but also a variety of other subjects as part of the school curriculum during those years. Another significant one came from those studying English for 8 years, accounting for 23% (22/95). Aside from that, 20% (19/95) of participants have learned English for 10 years. Surprisingly, the same 11% came from 13 years (10/95) and 11 years accounting for 8% (8/95) as well. Further, the percentage of freshmen studying this language for a 9-year period was minor, only 7% (7/95). Lastly, 4% was the tiniest slice of the pie chart since just 4/95 participants

have studied English for 12 years. In general, the percentage of students studying English for 7 years was the most dominant, while the quantity of freshmen learning English for the period of 12 years was super little. Over the years of learning the global language, they were likely to assess the amount of their English knowledge which they gained unequally.

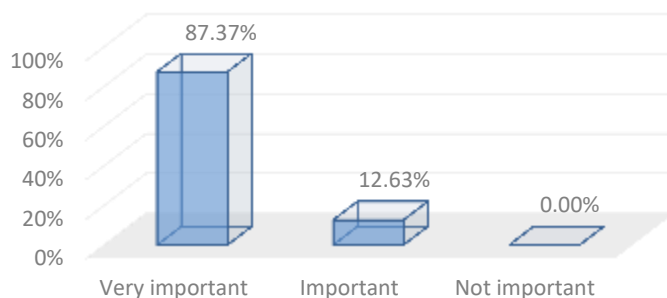
**Student’s attitude toward the importance of vocabulary learning in learning English**



**Figure 2:** The importance of vocabulary learning

According to Figure 2, there is no room for suspicion that the crucial role of vocabulary has been widely recognized in the learning English process. By looking at the figure, it is visible that the percentage of students who claimed that English vocabulary learning was “very important” was the highest rate, at 87.37% (83/95). The next was “important” with 12.63% (12/95). Nevertheless, no one reported “not important” for the role of English vocabulary learning. Principally, it could be deduced that most of the percentage of freshmen who have acknowledged the importance of vocabulary learning dominated the overall statistic; moreover, there has not been even one of them who possessed a negative perception of it.

**Participants’ perspective toward vocabulary learning strategies in class**

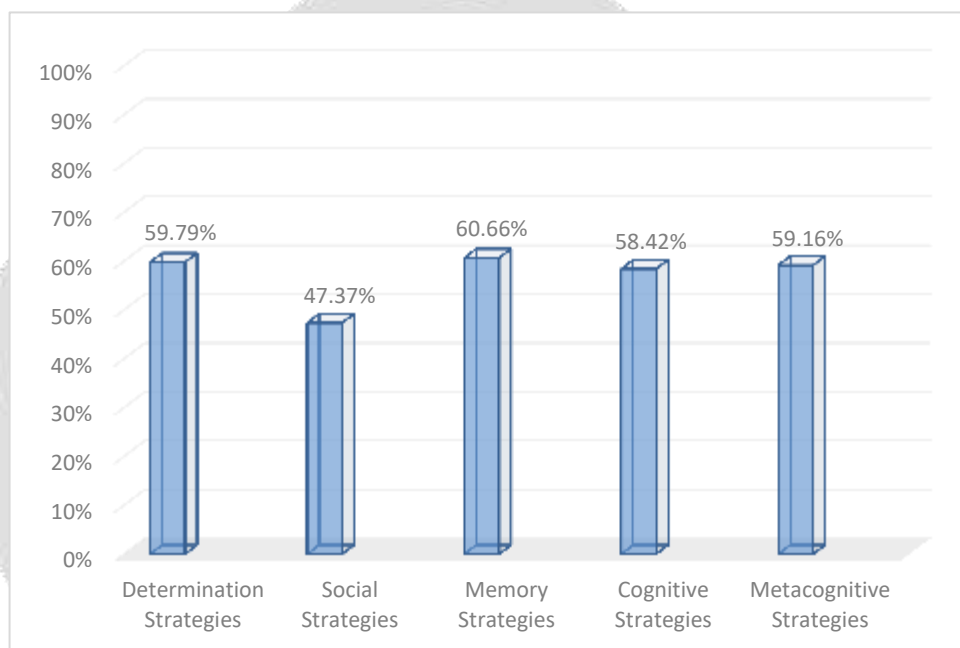


**Figure 3:** Students' perspective toward vocabulary learning strategies in class

The issue of knowing vocabulary learning strategies could not reach a consensus among students who were asked. As can be observed from Figure 4.3, it goes without saying that the majority of students (80/95), equivalent to 84.21%, of

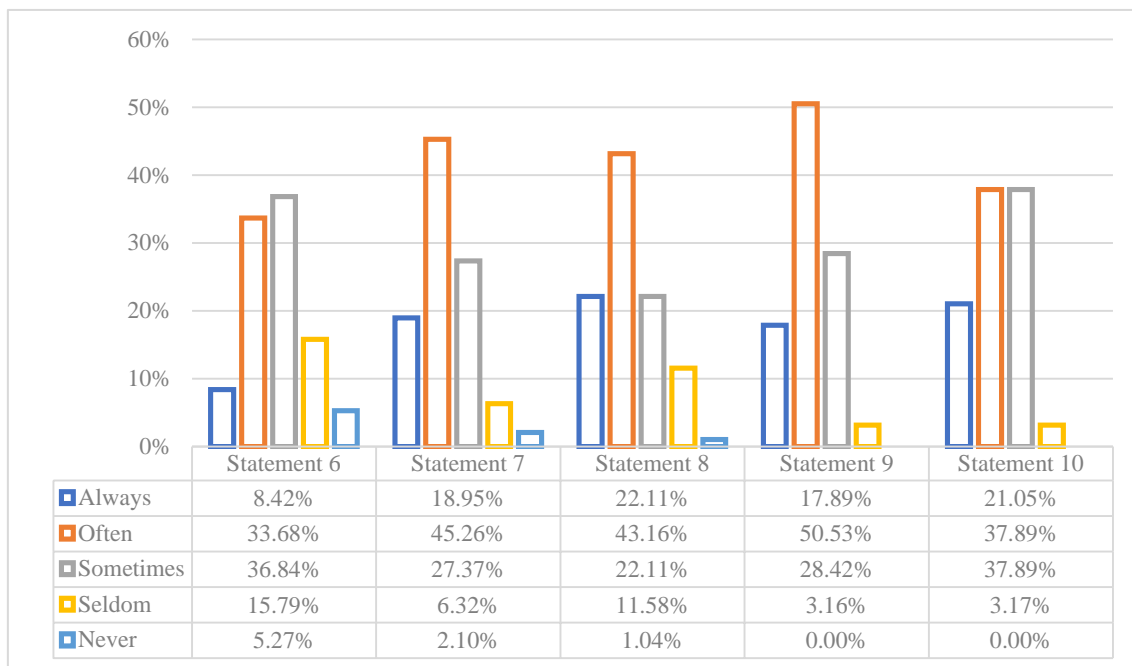
them said that they had ever heard of vocabulary learning strategies, while 15.79% said that they had never heard of anything like that. Another superior level of statistics was presented in the figure pertaining to the question “Have you been taught vocabulary learning strategies in class?” There was 67.37% (64/95) of students from English course 16 reported that they were taught vocabulary learning strategies in the class while 32.63% said that they were not taught. In another scenario, the percentage of participants whose perspective on vocabulary learning strategies should be taught in class accounts for 96.84% (92/95), in contrast, the remaining students with a rate of 3.16% denied that vocabulary learning strategies are not necessary to be taught in class.

By means of the students’ responses to these questions, it built to the conclusion that most of the freshmen have heard and been taught about vocabulary strategies when they are in class. More than that, they think those teaching vocabulary strategies should be taught in the classroom.



The student’s vocabulary learning strategies

Figure 4: Students' vocabulary learning strategies



**Figure 5:** Students’ use of Determination strategies in vocabulary learning

This section was incredibly vital to the study. This is due to it was conducted in an effort to gain more insights into English-majored freshmen’s strategies that they applied in vocabulary learning. Markedly, the section was categorized into five minor parts, each of which corresponded to the substance of the literature review. To see such issues clearer, let us observe the following figure.

As the given statistics, freshmen used a variety of strategies for their English vocabulary learning. This can be witnessed by the fact that all strategies listed in the questionnaire experience a pretty high percentage. Initially, ways relevant to “Memory strategies” group were considered the most challenging with 60.66% of the most frequently used level. The second place went to “Determination strategies” group with 59.79%. The percentage of the subsequent strategy groups like “Metacognitive strategies”, and “Cognitive strategies” are 59.16%, and 58.42% respectively. Finally, students seem to be little use of the “Social strategies” group when its percentage hit the lowest at 47.37%.

The researchers are expected to elaborate on each type of problem discussed in the next five sub-sections so that freshmen’s strategies related to vocabulary learning can indeed be drawn in detail.

**The use of Determination strategies in vocabulary learning**



Continuing with students' vocabulary learning ways relevant to determination strategies, Figure 4.5 was made up of five statements as can be seen above.

First of all, for statement 6, nearly two-thirds of participants, particularly 8 of them (8.42%) with usage level is always and 32/95 (33.68%) of freshmen said that they often apply the method of writing new words on a small card to learn vocabulary. The remaining consisted of 36.84% (35/95), 15.79% (15/95), and 5.27% (5/95) of students sometimes, seldom, or never do so, listed in succession.

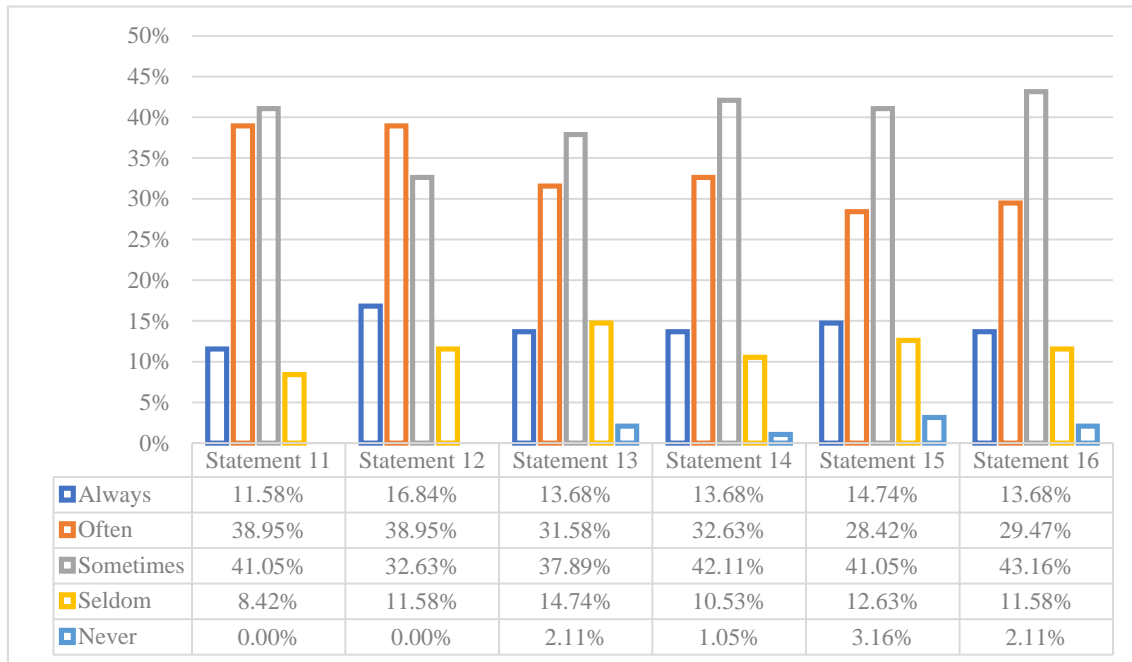
The next one was statement 7 whose results revealed that the usage level in statement 7 was given by almost half of the respondents. To be more specific, 45.26% (43/95) often used English - English dictionary in order to learn vocabulary and 18.95% (18/95) always did so. On the contrary, 34 students, corresponding to 27.37% sometimes applied this way, including 6.32% (6/95) and 2.10% (2/95) seldom and never used the statement respectively.

Similarly, in statement 8 the number of freshmen using this strategy was also quite high with 43.16% (41/95) often using this method and 22.11% (21/95) always doing so. On the other hand, the percentage of students who seldom or never did this was 11.58% (11/95) and 1.04% (1/95) respectively. Through the findings from these two statements, it led to the conclusion that dictionaries are easily approached, many visual students chose this way to figure out the new word meaning.

Turning to the last two statements in the table, statement 9 and statement 10. In statement 9, only 30 students, composed of 27/95 (28.42%) and 3/95 (3.16%), only sometimes or seldom learned new words by guessing the meaning of the word based on the structure of the word. By contrast, there were 17 students (17.89%) giving always level, along with the often level of 48 freshmen (50.53%). As for the latter, who learned new words by guessing the meaning of the word from textual context, the percentage of students giving sometimes and seldom levels were approximate to the prior statement with 36 (37.89%) and 3/95 (3.17%) in turn. Along with that, the number of people gave the level of always and often was 21.05% (20/95) and 37.89% (36/95), respectively. Besides, both statements have no students who never did.

Thus, it found that first-year students majoring in English applied vocabulary learning methods belonging to the "Determination strategies" group accounts for a relatively high rate of use, ranking second after the "Memory strategies" strategy group based on Figure 4.4. More than that the strategy which was used most was guessing the meaning of the word based on the structure of the word and textual context (statement 9 - 10).

#### **The use of Social strategies in vocabulary learning**



**Figure 6:** Students’ use of Social strategies in vocabulary learning

Figure 6 includes six statements that went on freshmen’s ways to learn vocabulary belonging to "Social strategies". Starting with statement 11, 11 out of 95 participants (11.58%) gave always level, and 37 others (38.95%) often with vocabulary learning by asking the teacher for the meaning. The residual consisted of 41.05% (39/95) of sometimes level, 8.42% (8/95) of seldom level, and 0.00% (0/95) of never level.

For statement 12, only 11 students, equivalent to 11.58% claim that they seldom learned words and practiced with friends to enhance their vocabulary. Conversely, more than 50% was the combined proportion in which 16.84% (16/95) participants always applied and 38.95% (37/95) showed often level with the statement. And the rest of them 31/95 (32.63%) sometimes used this way.

Regarding statement 13 findings, 13 participants (13.68%) gave always, 31.58% (30/95) of students gave often and 37.89% equivalent to 36 respondents showed they sometimes practiced using words through interacting with native speakers. There were merely 14 out of 95 freshmen (14.74%) who seldom did so and only two-person never applied this method. It found participants learn vocabulary through interacting with native speakers with relatively high frequency because communicating with native speakers is a fantastic way to practice their English in general and their vocabulary in particular.

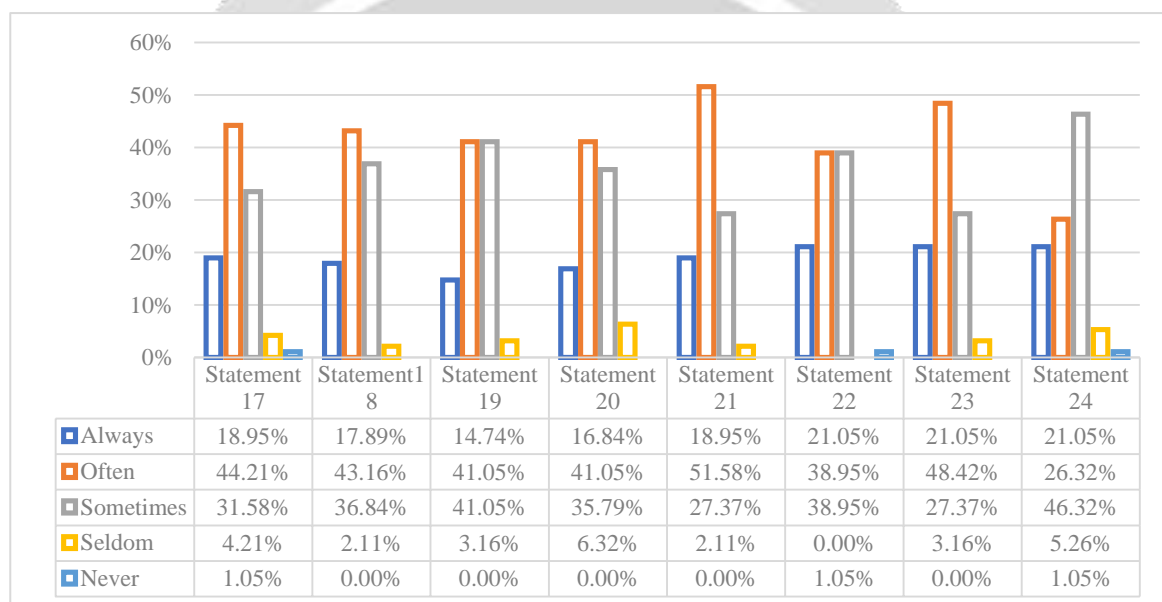
Moving on to statements 14 and 15, it was a coincidence when the level of never asking teachers about some aspects of new words and asking teachers to check their flashcards accounts for a relatively small percentage of 1.05% (Question 14) and 3.16% (Question 15) respectively. In statement 14, there were 40 participants (42.11%) who gave sometimes levels with asking the teacher to paraphrase or giving synonyms of new words. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents 13.68% (13/95) and 32.63% (31/95) gave always and often level with this statement, respectively. Down to

statement 15, over 30%, sequentially 14.74% (14/95) and 28.42% (27/95) of participants chose always and often for strategies to have your teacher check flashcards or lists of words for accuracy. Furthermore, the ones who elected sometimes are approximate 39/95 students (15.32%) compared to 42.11% (40/95) in the preceding statement. At the same moment, 12.63% of freshmen (12/95) gave a seldom level.

As regards the last statement in the figure. Only 13 participants, composed of 11/95 (11.58%) and 2/95 (2.11%), chose seldom and never with discovering new meanings through group work activity. On the other hand, there were 13 students (13,68%) who gave always level and elected often of 28 freshmen (29,47%). Finally, in statement 16, the ones who gave ideas sometimes are relatively much more with 43.16% (41/95) than the portion of the previous mention.

To be brief, it could be implied that "Social strategies" used by students are not high. This strategy is the lowest usage rate compared to the rest of the strategy groups.

**The use of Memory strategies in vocabulary learning**



**Figure 7:** Students’ use of Memory strategies in vocabulary learning

As seen from figure 7 involved eight statements. They indicated strategies that first-year students use to learn vocabulary belongs to the "Memory strategies" group.

To begin with statement 17, more than half of respondents admitted that they frequently learn words by topic. In particular, there were 24.32% (18/95) for “always” and 45.05% (42/95) for “often”. However, 30 participants (31.58%) performed in "sometimes" and there were 5 students, embracing 4/95 (4.21%) and 1/95 (1.05%) choosing “seldom”, and “never” in succession.

Concerning statement 18, there were 2 students who selected "seldom" for 2.11%, particularly no one selected "never". Additionally, the ones staying in the mid-column were considerably up to 36.84% (35/95). Besides that, 17 students (17.89%) gave always level and 41 remainders (43.16%) exposed often level. The ultimate results pointed out that students learn words by associating a new word with a word that has already been known very often.

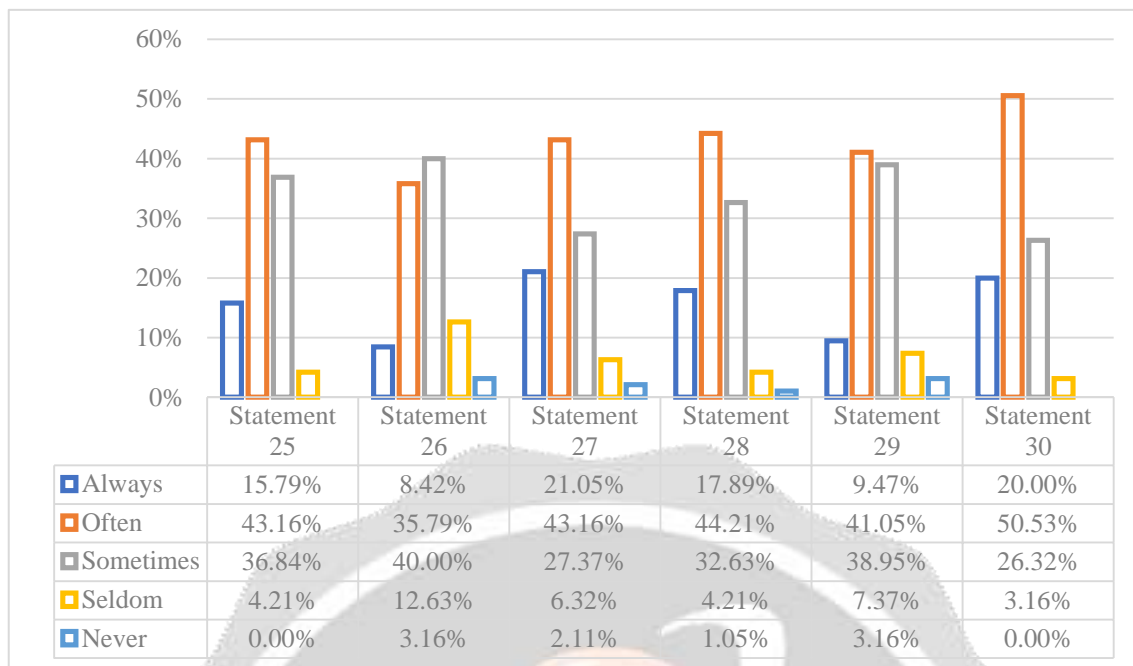
What is more, statement 19 revealed students' way relevant to connecting the word with its synonyms and antonyms. Over 50% of students claimed that they often used this strategy including 14.74% (14/95) for "always" and 41.05% (39/95) for "often". To be more specific, there were 39 students (41.05%) who selected "sometimes" and only 3 out of 95 freshmen expressed "seldom" (3.16%).

Moving on to the next three statements which are statements 20, 21, and statement 22. As for statement 20, the strategy in question focuses on whether the students memorize the prefix, suffix, and root of the word. More than half of them used this strategy with high frequency. It was surprising that 16.84% always used strategy, and 41.05% often employed strategy. Meanwhile, 35.79% sometimes used this strategy and 6.32% never adopted the strategy. In statement 21, nearly two-thirds of participants supposed memorizing the part of speech such as noun, verb, adjective, etc... a relatively effective vocabulary learning method (18/ 95 (18.95%) "always" and 49/95 (51.58%) "often"). Then, the percentage of the rest was 27.37% for "sometimes", 2.11% for "seldom", and 0.00% for "never", listed in succession. In statement 22, 20 students (21.05%) selected "always" and 38.95% of them (37/95) selected "often" to learn words through phrasal verbs. Besides, the ones who opted for "sometimes" are 37/95 (38.95%) and the remaining showing "never" was 1 student (1.05%).

Continuing with the last two statements, namely statement 23 and statement 24. When asking participants about the vocabulary learning "make sentences using new words", the researchers came to know that once again, over 60% of the participants gave opinion on the supposition mentioned above (the combination of 21.05% (20/95) selected always and 48.42% (46/95) for often). Meantime, 27.37% of participants showed sometimes, and 3 respondents (3.16%) gave seldom do so. Discussing statement 24's results, there was 1 student who gave low level with associating the word with its coordinates, particularly 5/95 (5.26%) of seldom and 1/95 (1.05%) of never. Then, the ones staying in the middle were high level at 46.32% (44/95). In contrast, 20 students made up (21.05%) and 25 remainders (26.32%) for always and often level the statement, listed in sequence.

Through analyzing the findings in this figure, it found that students in English course 16 had applied a wide range of strategies. These strategies come from the fact that memory strategies which the respondents most frequently used for storing and retrieving new information are strategies in question 21 (memorize the part of speech such as noun, verb, adjective, etc). Meanwhile, the least employed strategy by the students is the strategy in question 24 (associate the word with its coordinates).

#### **The use of Cognitive strategies in vocabulary learning**



**Figure 8:** Students’ use of Cognitive strategies in vocabulary learning

Relation to Figure 8 which included strategies of freshman related to learning vocabulary by cognitive strategies. This table involved six statements.

According to statement 25, nearly two-thirds of participants, specifically 15 of them (15.79%) for always and 41/95 (43.16%) of students selected often toward the fact that learning vocabulary by reading and writing new words many times. The remaining comprised 36.84% (35/95), 4.21% (4/95), and 0.00% (0/95) of freshman delivering "sometimes", "seldom" and "never" with this statement, enumerated in sequence.

The next one is statement 26 whose results revealed that the use level of learning words through flashcards was given by one-third of the respondents. To be more specific, 8.42% (8/95) executed always use and 35.79% (34/95) illustrated their selection for often. On the contrary, 53 students, corresponding to 40% for sometimes and the residual, including 12.63% (12/95) and 3.16% (3/95) seldom and never with the statement respectively. Through the findings from this statement, it led to the conclusion that learning words through flashcards are low level.

The following two statements are statements 27 and 28. The former’s findings showed use level was given by over 60% of the respondents. To be more specific, 21.05% (20/95) offered "always" and 43.16% (41/95) expressed "often". There were just 6.32% (6/95) of "seldom" and 2.11% (2/95) in keeping a vocabulary notebook in order to learn vocabulary. Likewise, using the vocabulary section in the textbook seems to be convenient for students (question 28). Therefore, the majority of the informants applied this strategy with high frequency of 62.11%. Meanwhile 32.63% sometimes, 4.21% seldom and 1.05% never did so.

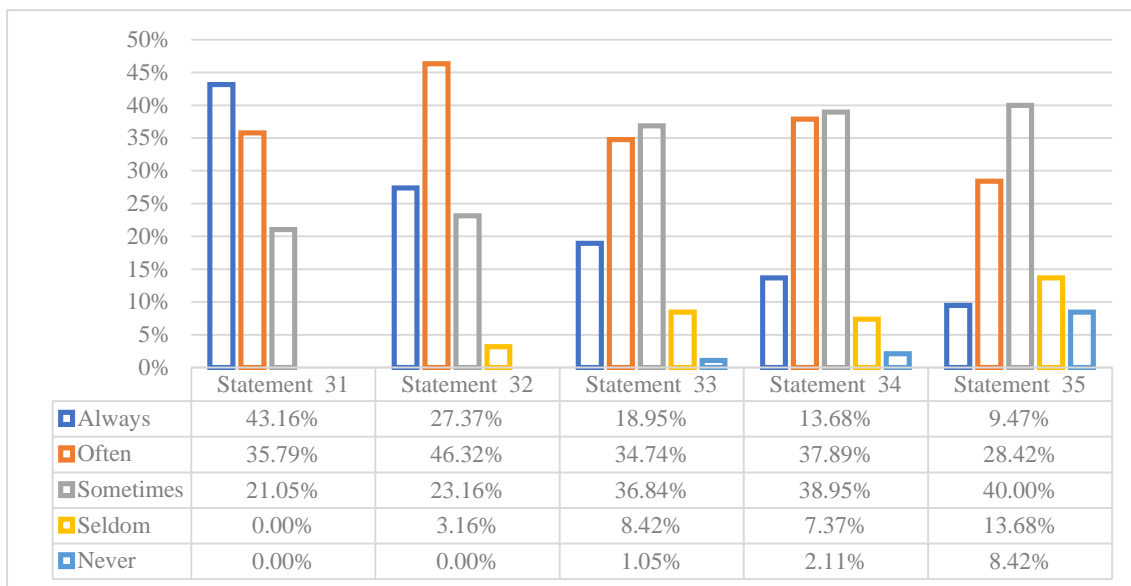
Turning to the last two statements in the figure, statement 29 and statement 30, putting English labels on physical objects is not only relaxing and fun but also helpful activity for learning vocabulary. The use of this strategy with high frequency. There was 89.47% of the students always and often or sometimes used it while nearly 3.37% seldom did it and up to 3.16% of the informants never employed this strategy. As for the latter, taking notes in class is a helpful way



for learners (question 30). Perhaps for that reason, up to 96.84% of the informants reported that they took notes in class with high frequency. Only 3.16% did so with low frequency.

In short, figure 4.8 shows that to develop automatic vocabulary retrieval, cognitive strategies that students used most frequently, is the strategy taking note in class (question 30) with (96.84%), while the strategy using the vocabulary section in the textbook (question 28) was the least used with (62.11%).

**The use of Metacognitive strategies in vocabulary learning**



**Figure 9:** Students’ use of Metacognitive strategies in vocabulary learning

Learning English vocabulary from mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio/TV programs, the internet, app, etc are not only informative but also an effective way to enrich and retain vocabulary. That is why the students are always and often encouraged to make use of it. In the current trend of internet development, it is not surprising to find that almost all of the students used this strategy with rather high frequency (78.95%). It concluded that 43.16% of the students always and 35.79% of the students often used this strategy and 21.05% of them sometimes applied it.

Continuing to study the word overtime is supposed to be necessary for all learners. Therefore, the majority of the informants applied this strategy with rather high frequency. There were 26 students (27.37%) who gave "always" level and elected "often" 44 freshmen (46.32%). A very small proportion of them did this job with low frequency. Up to 23.16% sometimes studied words every day and 3.16% seldom studied words over time.

Testing oneself with a word test is also a way to help learners self-assess their vocabulary and was employed with high frequency. There were 18.95% of the students who always used this strategy, while 8.42% of them seldom and 1.05% never did so.

For the strategy of setting learning goals for yourself, the students agree with a fairly high percentage. There were 90.53% of the students who always and often or sometimes used it while nearly 7.37% seldom did it and up to 2.11% of the informants never employed this strategy.

Next is the last statement in the questionnaire (question 35) is the strategy that does not pay attention to unfamiliar words. In general, students seemed to dislike this strategy. They used these methods at very low frequency, the highest percentage of usually use was only 9.47% while 13.68% of them seldom and 8.42% never did so.

In conclusion, figure 4.9 shows that to enhance vocabulary, metacognitive strategies that students used most frequently is strategy of learning English vocabulary from mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio/TV programs, the internet, app, etc (question 31) with (100%), while strategy setting learning goals for yourself and not paying attention to unfamiliar words (question 34, 35) was the least used with (90.53%).

#### **4.1.2 Results from the interview**

In this sub-section, the researchers amassed valuable information from 10 English course 16 students, aging from 18 to 19. By examining the data, every answer to four questions made by these participants was clarified one by one as follows.

When being asked "How do you learn your vocabulary? Surprisingly, all respondents said that they applied vocabulary learning methods through watching movies with subtitles, listening to English music, tik tok, online games, and books... On top of that all, those strategies are all "Metacognitive strategies". In addition, 1 out of 10 students learned vocabulary through dictionaries and flashcards.

Through giving answers to question 2 in the junior interview, participants showed that they applied a variety of vocabulary learning strategies. And, almost every strategy they applied is mentioned in both the literature review and the questionnaire. After analyzing the data, the freshmen used different vocabulary learning methods. Almost evenly distributed in five groups of strategies including determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. More than half of the participants said that "Memorize strategy" is considered to be one of the most effective and most used vocabulary learning strategies. Because through "Memory strategies" students can be exposed to a lot of new aspects of words as well as the ability to remember new words for a long time. In contrast, cognitive and social strategies were the least used by the participants.

In question 3 of the interview for students, participants are requested to write down their idea about aspects of words that they attention to when learning new words. The following represented the analysis of students' answers collected. Based on the results, 4 out of 10 people shared that they often focus on aspects related to the meaning of words. And, the rest of them are virtually almost all chose to learn new words by word form and collocation. All things considered, vocabulary is apparently seen as the most challenging factor by participants; as a result, English-majored freshmen pay attention to many diverse aspects of the word when learning a new word.

Ten students gave several different answers. However, they all agreed that they had made significant progress when using strategies to learn vocabulary. In a more specific analysis, only two people found that social strategies were the most effective for them. Others argue that memory and metacognitive strategies are equally effective.

In conclusion, it doesn't matter which strategy the students choose to use, but what matters is that the vocabulary learning strategy is effective for their progress.

#### **4.1 Discussion**

##### **4.2.1 Research question 1: What are the frequently-used vocabulary learning strategies acquired by English major first-year students at the Tay Do University?**

Among the most frequently used strategies, the strategy of using English language media: magazines, internet, TV, apps, etc (Question 31) has reached the highest level of use. This might be because using English language media is the most effective way to learn a new word. Because it is extremely convenient, they only need a phone or a laptop and they can learn English immediately. Also using this strategy is very cost-effective. Above all, this is a very interesting way to learn instead of having to learn dry theory and practice solving exercises, many magazines, social networks or English learning applications now integrate various forms to keep learners interested. Furthermore, according to information from the interview, most of the participants share that they frequently apply this strategy to learn vocabulary. This might be an explanation for why learners enjoyed using metacognitive strategies.

The second top-rated strategy is to continue to study the word over time (question 32). This might be affected by a number of English courses at both high schools and universities in which students are required to do the homework that the teacher gives them. Therefore, the freshmen have formed a habit of studying after class hours.

Next, the third percentage is the use of English - Vietnamese dictionary (Question 8). This might be because using a monolingual dictionary is the easiest way to find the meaning of a new word. This might be an explanation for why learners enjoyed using English - Vietnamese dictionary.

Thus, this strategy of using bilingual dictionary might enable the students to encounter, comprehend and, internalize the unknown words more effectively and lead them to retain more vocabulary. Although it was found in Hulstijn's (1993) study that good learners are more likely to consult a bilingual dictionary to confirm their guesses about the meaning of words, it was not quite clear in this study of the high vocabulary size students used these strategies for the same purposes. However, correlation analysis revealed that using English - Vietnamese dictionary in order to discover the words' meaning did not contribute to increasing the students' vocabulary size. Regarding this finding, teachers should train the students on how to use an English- English dictionary more appropriately rather than let them use an English-Vietnamese dictionary just for getting word meaning in Vietnamese.

On average, most of strategies introduced in the questionnaire received the means at medium level. That means despite the fact that students are aware of employing strategies in learning vocabulary, they do not make use of them. Plenty of useful strategies was underutilized such as guessing the meaning of the word from textual context, remembering a word with its affixes and suffixed, and so on.

In interviews, giving further interesting information about the other strategies students usually apply to broaden their knowledge. Although most students have no ideas about other different vocabulary learning strategies, some of the common ones that can be found are discovering and consolidating new words by playing games, listening to music, or watching movies on YouTube with subtitles, and remembering words.

Compared to the studies mentioned, the researchers have found that research results in this statement have shown three most frequently used vocabulary strategies including using English language media: magazines, internet, TV, apps, etc; continuing to study the word over time, and using bilingual dictionary. In which the strategy of using the bilingual dictionary coincided with the research results of Huh, Jin-Hee (2009) which is said to be the most frequently used strategy. It is possible to comment that the use of bilingual dictionaries to learn vocabulary is very interested and used by students.

**4.2.2 Research question 2: What are the most effective vocabulary learning strategies employed by English major first-year students at Tay Do University?**

The results of question 4 in the interview are used to answer the second research question. It can be seen that the most effective strategies are used very often. This result cannot accurately assess the effectiveness of each strategy, but it is also valuable information for students to use vocabulary learning strategies, especially first-year students at universities. Using English language media: magazines, internet, TV, apps, etc ... is one of the most effective strategies found in this study. This result is consistent with the results of the number 31 survey question, the most used strategy in vocabulary learning strategies for first-year English students at the Tay Do University. The second effective strategy is the memory strategy. Six people of 10 respondents answered that this is the most effective strategy. Besides those two strategies, learners also listed some other strategies that are considered effective vocabulary learning strategies such as using English - Vietnamese dictionary, listening to speech videos of native speakers, and continuing to study the word over time... Not surprisingly, strategies belonging to the group "Social strategies" are not answered by any students. These are the least frequently used strategies in the questionnaire.

After going through in-depth analysis, the researchers have realized that each strategy has a certain effect. And in the results obtained in this statement, it has been shown that the strategy of using English language media such as newspapers, internet, TV, applications, etc... belonging to the group of "metacognitive strategies" is the most effective for learning vocabulary. Above all, this finding is similar to the research results of researchers Xu Gang (2014) and Pham (2014). In summary, the studies that have been done and they all show that the metacognitive strategy is highly effective for learning vocabulary.

## **5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION**

It is confirmed vocabulary learning strategies frequently used by first-year English majored students of English at the Tay Do University. It also made suggestions for the teaching and learning of English language skills in general as well as the teaching and learning of English vocabulary in particular. However, due to the limited time and scope, the study was conducted on a small scale with a small number of participants. It is hoped that the findings of this study can be more powerful with further studies using a quantitative research approach or mixed research approach to provide more insights into the vocabulary learning strategies in Vietnamese universities in general as well as at the Tay Do University in particular.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

In the present study, vocabulary is seen as an important ingredient of language, and vocabulary learning is an essential part of second or foreign language learning. Language learners need a wide variety of target language words to be able to tackle successfully both production and comprehension activities in the second or foreign language. One way to help learners to enhance their knowledge of second language vocabulary is through equipping learners with a variety of vocabulary learning strategies.

The results of the study indicate an overall medium use of vocabulary learning strategies of students at the Tay Do University. Although data from the questionnaire and interview indicate that learners use all most every strategy given, the frequency is not really high. Some strategies are reported to be applied frequently such as "using English language media: magazines, internet, TV, apps", "continuing to study the word overtime", "taking notes in class", and "memorizing the part of speech: noun, verb, adjective, etc", "making sentences using new words". The other strategies



are used with low frequency or even rarely used. In reality, students are usually expected to learn vocabulary on their own, mostly by mechanical memorization, without much guidance from teachers.

In brief, it could be implied the fact that English-majored juniors had been applying a variety of vocabulary learning strategies; nevertheless, they still could not put their strategies into vocabulary learning efficiently and effectively. One possible explanation for this case was that they seemingly had no proper method of learning English vocabulary. According to the study "Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use and Vocabulary Proficiency" by Jin-Hee Huh (2009), he offers some advice that learners can write the words they encounter in their vocabulary notebook and add from the second language to first language translation or other knowledge they gradually acquire about the words such as collocations, semantic associations, frequency tallies, roots, and derivations. Learners can also be reminded to go through their notebooks regularly in order to add more information and rehearse what they already recorded. Moreover, researchers make some suggestions that teachers also should try to have information on the strategy used by students and to give students opportunities to explore various kinds of effective vocabulary learning strategies to help students find ones that lead them to effective vocabulary learning.

### **5.2 Implication**

Based on these results of the study, there are two implications that the researchers would like to refer to which might be helpful for teachers and learners are recommended by Ghazal Lotfi (2007) in the study entitled "Learning Vocabulary in EFL Contexts through Vocabulary Learning Strategies". Firstly, teachers should choose some typical vocabulary learning strategies such as using English – English dictionary and using notebooks which are highly beneficial and could be introduced as early as possible. Learners can write the words they encounter in their notebook and add a translation or other knowledge they gradually acquire about the words such as collocation, synonyms, and antonyms. Learners can be reminded to go through their notebooks regularly in order to add more information. The vocabulary notebook could then serve as a valuable resource. Secondly, learners should be given opportunities to examine the effectiveness of their vocabulary learning strategies. In addition, teachers can provide learners with different vocabulary exercises so that students' vocabulary learning strategies will be exposed. Hence, learners will discover which strategies are suitable for them. In general, teachers play an important role in making students aware of vocabulary learning strategies' value. Vocabulary learning strategy training, therefore, is necessary for both learners and teachers. Learners should be trained to realize which strategies they lack and teachers should be trained to think of the most appropriate method to introduce the strategies.

Personally, the researchers feel that learning vocabulary by writing or reading new words many times and combining with translating passages will be an effective method to improve one's vocabulary. This method not only helps in long-term memory but can also help with translation skills.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

First of all, a larger sample size should be put into investigation to form an intensive perspective on the topic; simultaneously, achieve some beneficial features for the research findings such as representativeness, generalizability, and trustworthiness. As a consequence, an abundance of novel insights into the issue may arise or be extended thanks to the diverse viewpoints of participants. Another possible recommendation is that future research should be undertaken with a broader scope like sophomores, juniors, and seniors, non-English-majored students, students at higher or lower educational levels, or even teachers' perspectives on collocational problems. Finally, it is highly recommended future



studies should employ the findings of this study as a source of supplementary data to support their arguments, generating those findings into researchable hypotheses or even extending them to be a distinct area of research.

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