

VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY VIETNAMESE EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: EVIDENCE FROM SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS

Nguyen My Phuong, Nguyen Huu Phat*

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Tra Vinh University, Vietnam

Abstract: *Employing effective vocabulary learning strategies is crucial for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners to overcome vocabulary learning challenges. Therefore, this descriptive study aimed to investigate the vocabulary learning strategies employed by university-level students. Based on the Raosoft sample size calculator, 120 second-year English majors at a Vietnamese University in the Mekong Delta were selected as the study population. Data were collected using a 29-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale to explore the vocabulary learning strategies students employed. Findings from the quantitative strand of the questionnaire indicated that students employed vocabulary learning strategies at a medium level, as indicated by the mean statistical measure presented. According to the One-way ANOVA analysis, students selected memorization, cognitive, metacognitive, and determination strategies for vocabulary learning, whereas social strategies received little attention. Based on the findings of the study, students are encouraged to adopt effective strategies for vocabulary learning at various English proficiency levels to enhance their lexical knowledge. Furthermore, pedagogical implications are provided to assist both teachers and students in improving the quality of English language pedagogy and learning achievement.*

Keywords: *English majors, survey, vocabulary learning, vocabulary learning strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Nation (2005), vocabulary is a fundamental component of language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) of learners. Furthermore, extensive evidence demonstrates that vocabulary is a crucial aspect in the development of language, fluency, and linguistic competence of learners (Robiya et al., 2024). According to Schmitt and Schmitt (2020), lexical knowledge is the most important and fundamental factor in learning and using a

second language (L2), and vocabulary is the key to developing all four language skills effectively. Schmitt and Schmitt (2020) also noted that vocabulary knowledge is the center that connects all other elements of a language, playing a decisive role in the success of acquiring and using L2. However, Rabadi (2016) claimed that the majority of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners struggle with both the range and depth of vocabulary, resulting in frequent incorrect word choices. Furthermore, EFL

learners might have problems memorizing difficult words, which make them tend to avoid using them.

Learning vocabulary is not simply about acquiring a certain number of words or phrases, but also about using that vocabulary accurately and appropriately in different scenarios. Wagner et al. (2007) figured out the difficulties that EFL learners commonly encounter in having to accumulate a huge amount of vocabulary in order to perform well in academic reading and writing tasks. Academic vocabulary is often abstract, contains many different meanings, and is morphologically complex. Nation and Beglar (2007) tested vocabulary size and suggested that learners need an amount of vocabulary of nearly 8,000 word families to perform subsequent tasks such as reading and listening effectively.

In fact, EFL learners often focus only on the meaning of words in a particular context rather than using them in a variety of contexts, which greatly affects their vocabulary use in other tasks such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In general, EFL learners face great challenges in vocabulary learning.

Many researchers have studied what makes some learners succeed in learning English. They examined both helpful factors and reasons for higher learning efficiency (Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Rahimy & Shams, 2012; Rigney, 1978). Williams and Burden (1997) argued that EFL learners actively

find and solve problems, including vocabulary acquisition challenges. As a result, vocabulary learning strategies have received much attention. Green and Oxford (1995) noted that using learning strategies appropriately helps learners perform better. Identifying and using learning strategies, especially for vocabulary, is important for tertiary-level EFL students in Vietnam (Le, 2018). Nevertheless, choosing appropriate vocabulary learning strategies can be challenging for EFL learners (Schmitt, 2008).

Several studies have examined vocabulary learning strategies among EFL learners in Vietnam (Le, 2018; Tran et al., 2023; Trinh & Trinh, 2020; Vu & Nguyen, 2024). Analyzing these strategies shows effective ways to improve English proficiency. Using these strategies may help learners master and improve their English. The findings of previous studies not only confirm the significance of vocabulary knowledge but also help learners realize that they need a certain level of vocabulary at different levels to master English language skills.

Based on related studies, vocabulary learning strategies are considered a significant element in EFL learning. As a result, the present study aims to clarify the importance of vocabulary learning strategies for EFL learners. In particular, the present study focuses on five groups of vocabulary learning strategies, including memorization strategies, social strategies,

cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and determination strategies, to investigate which strategies are employed by second-year English majors and their frequency of use. The findings of the present study might provide an objective overview of vocabulary learning strategies to help EFL learners orient to appropriate strategies and enhance their future English language development.

The present study is conducted to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What vocabulary learning strategies are employed by second-year English majors in the process of learning English?
2. What is the frequency of use of vocabulary learning strategies of second-year English majors?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies are specific actions that learners take, consciously or semi-consciously, to discover (figure out the meaning) and consolidate (remember and use) a new word unit in a second language (Schmitt, 1998). Meanwhile, vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies, which in turn are a part of general learning strategies (Nation, 2018). In addition, Schmitt (1997) provided an overview of the emphasis of strategy use in second language learning. The use of vocabulary learning strategies is considered an essential part of learning English, as they enable learners to take an active,

self-directed, and regulated role in the language acquisition process, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and retention. According to Ghalebi et al. (2020), building independent vocabulary learning requires high motivation and is a dynamic process. Although vocabulary learning strategies are often individualized for each learner, instructors play an important role in the classroom by explicitly modeling strategies, reminding learners of them, and organizing practice to promote learners' ability to build vocabulary independently. As a result, vocabulary learning strategies help language learners improve the acquisition and recall of new words. Due to the language's complexity and large vocabulary, memorizing all vocabulary is impossible; learners need to use vocabulary learning strategies at different stages to promote acquisition and retention. Furthermore, vocabulary learning strategies are highly individualized, varying significantly among learners based on factors such as age, gender, and language proficiency.

In conclusion, vocabulary learning strategies are vital for language acquisition, given the vast number of words to learn. They are conscious actions or thoughts that help learners explore, consolidate, and remember new words. These strategies enable learners to self-regulate and actively control their learning, improving vocabulary acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use. Although highly individualized, they support the development of comprehensive vocabulary knowledge.

The classification of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) has been a focus for many scholars, including Cohen (2011), Nation (2022), Oxford (1990), and Schmitt (1997).

For the present study, the classification of vocabulary learning strategies was adapted to Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of VLSs (see Figure 1 for details).

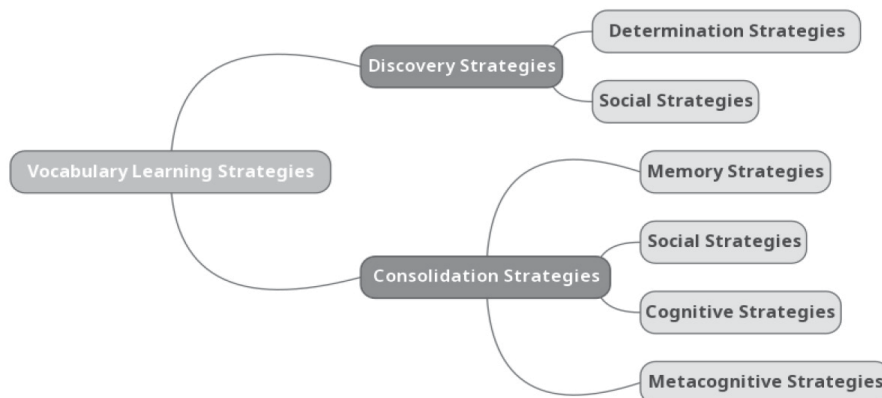


Figure 1. Schmitt's (1997) Taxonomy of VLSs

Source. Compiled by the authors with the support of MindMup Zero-friction online mind mapping

Schmitt's (1997) vocabulary learning strategies classification, there are two main vocabulary learning strategies: discovery and consolidation strategies. The first group-discovery strategies included determination and social strategies. The second group contains cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social strategies. The purposes of the two groups of vocabulary learning strategies are to define the meaning of new words and to consolidate the meaning of the new words when students are exposed to them again. According to Schmitt, social strategies meet the two mentioned purposes. Therefore, social strategies are arranged in both groups.

2.2. Related Studies on Vocabulary Learning Strategies in the EFL Context

Relevant studies confirm that vocabulary learning strategies benefit EFL learners.

When students use different strategies, they often succeed through deep, active processing of new words. Gu and Johnson (1996) studied the link between vocabulary learning strategies and English outcomes. Participants included 850 sophomore non-English majors. A questionnaire and two vocabulary tests measured students' strategy use. Students used two metacognitive strategies: self-initiation and selective attention. They also used contextual guessing, dictionaries, note-taking, word formation, contextual encoding, and activation of new words. However, visual repetition of new words did not help vocabulary size or proficiency. Overall, students used five strategies and often combined them in English learning.

In a similar vein, Nie and Zhou (2017) investigated vocabulary learning strategies

of three English postgraduates at the Foreign Language School of Hubei University. Data were collected from a 22-item questionnaire and structured interviews. Findings showed that three excellent language learners used three vocabulary learning strategies. This demonstrates that learners should combine vocabulary learning strategies to achieve better learning outcomes. Building on these results, Tran et al. (2023) conducted a descriptive study of the vocabulary learning strategies of 200 students majoring in English Studies, a high-quality program offered at four levels. Data from the questionnaire and interviews showed that all five vocabulary learning strategies were used by the four student groups in their vocabulary learning.

On the other hand, previous studies have also reported an imbalance in the frequency of vocabulary learning strategies used by students. First, Rabadi (2016) investigated vocabulary learning strategies employed by undergraduate Jordanian students majoring in English Language and Literature. The study was conducted on 110 undergraduate students from eight Jordanian universities, using Schmitt's (1997) 40-item Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire as the survey instrument. The results of the study showed that Jordanian EFL learners were overall "medium" strategy users. In general, memory strategies were the most frequently employed, while metacognitive strategies were the least frequently used group. Similarly, Logojan (2021) reported a research project aimed at identifying which

vocabulary learning strategies students employed and the frequency of their use. A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed to 107 students with an elementary level of English language proficiency, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The results showed that the students employed vocabulary learning strategies at a medium level. These results indicated that the students invested time in studying the meanings of words in context, but did not make efforts to develop approaches to word retention.

In the context of higher education in Vietnam, Vu and Nguyen (2024) conducted an investigation into English vocabulary learning strategies employed by English-majored freshmen at the School of Thai Nguyen University. In particular, the relationship between students' vocabulary learning strategies and their vocabulary size was examined to help students improve their lexical competence. The study involved 158 students at the school. Two research instruments were used in the study, including a questionnaire and a vocabulary size test. The results indicated that most students employed a variety of vocabulary learning strategies. However, it is recognized that students lack the average vocabulary size to comprehend academic materials at the university level. Interestingly, the study showed a connection between vocabulary size and vocabulary learning strategies.

To compare the relationship between students' levels and their use of vocabulary

learning strategies, Aljasir (2025) conducted a study investigating differences in vocabulary learning strategies used by beginner and advanced Saudi EFL learners. Participants included 60 learners, equally divided between beginner and advanced proficiency levels. Data were collected using three research instruments: a questionnaire, think-aloud protocols, and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that learners at the beginner level predominantly focused on basic memory and cognitive strategies for vocabulary learning. By contrast, the advanced learners used more complex strategies, including the use of monolingual dictionaries, contextual guessing, and morphological analysis, which contributed to their acquisition and retention of the new words.

Although the research theme of vocabulary learning strategies has been systematically investigated, little research has been conducted in the present context. In other words, the theme of vocabulary learning strategies has not been extensively studied in this particular teaching context, and the findings of previous studies may be outdated in terms of objective perspectives on improving learners' vocabulary learning. This leads to the difficulties that second-year English majors encounter in learning vocabulary more effectively, which has not yet been solved. Therefore, learners need not only to be aware of vocabulary learning strategies but also to determine which strategies are appropriate for them, as these strategies significantly affect the speed and

efficiency of vocabulary acquisition, which is the foundation of language competence. Therefore, the present study is based on a solid theoretical foundation in vocabulary learning strategies and aims to investigate students' use and navigation of these strategies to help EFL learners acquire appropriate strategies for their English language learning.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

Participants included 120 second-year English majors from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at a public university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21, and their years of learning English ranged from 10 to 14. Their English proficiency level was pre-intermediate, as they are in the second year of a 3.5-year undergraduate training program based on the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The population for the present study was selected using the Raosoft sample size calculator. As of the current academic year, the total number of second-year English majors at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University was about 171. Therefore, the calculator estimated 120 participants, representing the population of the present study. All participants were from the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, sharing a similar background of following the same undergraduate English Studies curriculum, with proportions of 68.3% female, 25.8% male, and 5.8% other (non-binary).

3.2. Questionnaire

The present study followed a descriptive survey approach. The 29-item questionnaire was designed and adapted from Rabadi (2016) using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from “Never” to “Always”). Based on teaching experience for English majors at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the English language proficiency of the learners, the researchers considered and selected 29 items to design the questionnaire. The items of the questionnaire survey center on investigating vocabulary learning strategies employed by second-year English majors at this university (see Appendix).

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire for official delivery, a pilot survey was conducted via *Google Forms* with 20 students with characteristics similar to those of the study participants. The questionnaire results from the pilot phase showed acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of .901 for 29 items. This demonstrated that the design of the questionnaire items was comprehensive and consistent (see further Bujang et al., 2024).

During the official phase of questionnaire delivery, participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in the classrooms for about 20 minutes. During this phase,

the researchers provided background information on the study and guidelines for completing the questionnaires. Particularly, 120 second-year English majors were surveyed across 4 classes in the field of English Studies at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University. The reliability of the questionnaire at the official delivery phase was Cronbach’s Alpha of .914 for 29 items, indicating high consistency among the questionnaire’s items. The questionnaire survey findings fully met the quantitative data requirements for the study. Finally, the collected data will be analyzed in detail.

3.4. Questionnaire Analysis

Data from the questionnaire were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22 (SPSS) software for analysis. Calculations were performed in the process of analyzing the data collection, including Cronbach’s Alpha to assess internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire at two phases (the pilot and official questionnaire delivery); descriptive statistics to summarize the sample characteristics and the key variables under investigation; and One-way ANOVA to compare the frequency of employing five groups related to vocabulary learning strategies of students. Additionally, Oxford’s (1990) scale was applied to indicate the frequency of use for each item within the vocabulary learning strategy groups (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Scale of the Frequency Levels of Strategy Use by Oxford (1990)

Level	Frequency	Scale
High	Always	4.5 to 5.0
	Often	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Rarely	1.5 to 2.4
	Never	1.0 to 1.4

Source: Data analysis finding of the study

4. FINDINGS

The first research question was to investigate which vocabulary learning strategies second-year English majors employed. The second research question concerns the frequency with which students use vocabulary learning strategies. Overall, the study found that students employed five vocabulary-learning-strategy groups, including memorization, social, cognitive,

metacognitive, and determination strategies. However, the frequency of use among the five vocabulary-learning-strategy groups of students is only at a medium level. These findings showed that the students did not engage much in exploring strategies for their vocabulary learning.

4.1. Vocabulary Learning Strategies Use

4.1.1. The Overall Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies of English Majors

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by English Majors

Number of participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency interpretation	Level interpretation
120	3.18	0.59	Sometimes	Medium

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 2 depicts the overall frequency of use of vocabulary learning strategies of second-year English majors. Based on the scale of Oxford (1990), the level of use of the five vocabulary learning strategy groups remained at a medium level ($M = 3.18$, SD

$= 0.59$). This indicates that students did not invest time in applying appropriate vocabulary learning strategies during their learning process.

4.1.2. The Use of Memorization Strategies in Learning Vocabulary

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Memorization Strategies

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency Interpretation
1	I categorize new words according to their synonyms.	3.00	0.89	Sometimes
2	I categorize new words according to their antonyms.	2.93	0.96	Sometimes
3	I use semantic mind maps to learn new words.	2.61	1.08	Sometimes
4	I observe the parts of speech of new vocabulary items (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).	3.70	1.02	Often
5	I connect images with the meaning of new words.	3.37	1.04	Sometimes
6	I use flashcards to learn and remember new words.	3.10	1.32	Sometimes
Overall Mean		3.12	0.68	Sometimes

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 3 presents the Descriptive Statistics of memorization strategies used by second-year English majors. Overall, second-year English majors employed memorization strategies in their vocabulary learning at a medium level ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.68$) on Oxford's (1990) scale. In particular, the students often observed parts of speech of new vocabulary items with the highest frequency ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.02$). This indicates that students could

recognize the part of speech of words as an effective strategy for learning vocabulary. Students sometimes connected images with the meanings of new words ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.04$). Categorizing new words by synonyms was also sometimes used by students in learning vocabulary ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.89$). In summary, second-year English majors sometimes used memorization strategies in their vocabulary learning.

4.1.3. The Use of Social Strategies in Learning Vocabulary

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Social Strategies

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency Interpretation
7	I communicate with my English teachers to use new words in sentences to enhance my vocabulary knowledge.	2.83	1.04	Sometimes
8	I learn new words through watching movies.	3.67	1.04	Often
9	I communicate with foreigners in English through different types of media to expand my vocabulary knowledge.	2.50	1.14	Sometimes
10	I discuss English with classmates to understand and expand the meaning of new words.	2.95	1.07	Sometimes
11	I read more national and foreign magazines to expand my vocabulary.	2.65	1.18	Sometimes
12	I attend workshops with foreign speakers to widen my vocabulary.	1.98	1.06	Rarely
Overall Mean		2.76	0.69	Sometimes

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

The descriptive statistics in Table 4 indicate that the average use of social strategies falls within the medium range of the frequency scale ($M = 2.76, SD = 0.69$). The selection of learning vocabulary through watching movies was frequently used by second-year English majors ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.04$). This showed that students preferred learning English vocabulary through movies. The students also sometimes discuss new words in English with classmates to understand and expand their meanings (M

$= 2.95, SD = 1.07$). Second-year English majors appeared to be less interested in direct interaction with others to enrich their vocabulary amount, as evidenced by their infrequent participation in workshops with foreign speakers ($M = 1.98, SD = 1.06$). It can be seen that social strategies require interaction and social experience as essential elements for effective vocabulary learning. In summary, second-year English majors primarily employed these strategies in this strategy group at a moderate level.

4.1.4. The Use of Cognitive Strategies in Learning Vocabulary

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Strategies

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency Interpretation
13	I practice writing new words repeatedly as a way to help me remember them.	3.74	1.10	Often
14	I create personalized lists of new words for myself.	3.34	1.18	Sometimes
15	I keep a notebook specifically for practicing and reinforcing new words.	3.42	1.19	Sometimes
16	I associate new words with physical objects to guess their lexical meanings.	3.42	1.12	Sometimes
17	I write down words while I read books and magazines to learn them.	3.19	1.26	Sometimes
18	I write down English definitions of new words.	3.17	1.10	Sometimes
Overall Mean		3.38	0.82	Sometimes

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 5 shows the frequency with which second-year English majors use cognitive strategies in vocabulary learning. The overall mean ($M = 3.38, SD = 0.82$) indicates significant use of these strategies for vocabulary learning remained at a medium level. In particular, second-year English majors tended to practice writing new words repeatedly ($M = 3.74, SD = 1.10$). Second-year English majors sometimes

used notebooks to reinforce new words ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.19$) and associated new words with physical objects to guess meanings at a similar rate ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.12$). It can be seen that writing down English definitions of new words reached the lowest frequency of use of second-year English majors ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.10$). Overall, second-year English majors sometimes employed cognitive strategies to learn vocabulary.

4.1.5. The Use of Metacognitive Strategies in Learning Vocabulary

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Metacognitive Strategies

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency Interpretation
19	I group new words into particular topics.	3.08	1.08	Sometimes
20	I widen my vocabulary acquisition by checking my vocabulary knowledge with word lists.	3.20	1.00	Sometimes
21	I listen to songs in English and try to understand the lyrics.	3.88	1.02	Often
22	I listen to podcasts in English and write down what I hear.	2.96	1.23	Sometimes
23	I learn new words from advertisements	2.84	1.14	Sometimes
Overall Mean		3.19	0.72	Sometimes

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 6 shows that second-year English majors most used metacognitive strategies for vocabulary learning ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.72$), particularly through listening to English songs and understanding lyrics ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.02$). Although these strategies are considered advanced and involve critical thinking and self-awareness, students also occasionally grouped new words by topic ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.08$) and checked knowledge with word lists ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.00$).

Furthermore, depending on their familiarity with media, they sometimes listened to English podcasts and recorded new words ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.23$) or learned vocabulary from advertisements ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.14$). Overall, this metacognitive strategy usage pattern was similar to that of memorization and cognitive strategies, indicating that second-year English majors use these strategies only occasionally in vocabulary learning.

4.1.6. The Use of Determination Strategies in Learning Vocabulary

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Determination Strategies

No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency Interpretation
24	I discover the meanings of new words by guessing their meanings from the context.	3.43	1.08	Sometimes
25	I have imaginations about new words' writing forms in order to remember them.	3.19	1.12	Sometimes
26	I use English standardized dictionaries to understand the meanings of new words.	3.52	1.10	Often
27	I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them.	3.92	1.05	Often
28	I use my topical knowledge to guess the meanings of new words.	3.50	1.03	Often
29	I guess the meanings of new words by analyzing the structure of the new words (e.g, prefixes, roots, and suffixes).	3.23	1.17	Sometimes
Overall Mean		3.46	0.72	Sometimes

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Based on the scale of Oxford (1990), Table 7 shows that second-year English majors most commonly used determination strategies in vocabulary learning, with an overall medium frequency ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.72$). Translating words into their mother tongue ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.05$) and using English-language standardized dictionaries ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.10$) were particularly frequent. Topical knowledge to guess meanings ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.03$)

was also used often, while analyzing word structure ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.17$), guessing from context ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.08$), and imagining word forms ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.12$) were used occasionally. In summary, although the overall use of determination strategies was at a medium level, these strategies were most prevalent among second-year English majors, highlighting their primary role in vocabulary learning.

4.2. The Impact of Each Vocabulary Learning Strategy Comparison

Table 8. Descriptive of Five Groups of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

VLSs	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Memorization Strategies	120	3.1181	.67860	.06195	2.9954	3.2407	1.67	4.67
Social Strategies	120	2.7611	.69369	.06332	2.6357	2.8865	1.17	4.17
Cognitive Strategies	120	3.3792	.81649	.07453	3.2316	3.5268	1.33	5.00
Metacognitive Strategies	120	3.1900	.71707	.06546	3.0604	3.3196	1.40	4.60
Determination Strategies	120	3.4639	.72251	.06596	3.3333	3.5945	1.50	5.00
Total	600	3.1824	.76512	.03124	3.1211	3.2438	1.17	5.00

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 8 shows the mean scores for five vocabulary learning strategies used by second-year English majors. Determination strategies had the highest mean score ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .72$), indicating they were used most often. Cognitive strategies were second ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .81$), followed by metacognitive strategies ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .71$). Memorization strategies had an average mean score ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .67$).

Social strategies were used the least ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .69$). To examine differences in how often each strategy was used, a one-way ANOVA compared the mean scores. The Levene Statistic was 1.045, with a significance of .383, which is above the .05 threshold. This shows there was no significant difference among the five strategy groups (see Table 9).

Table 9. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df ₁	df ₂	Sig.
VLSs	Based on Mean	1.045	4	595	.383
	Based on Median	1.063	4	595	.374
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.063	4	582.142	.374
	Based on trimmed mean	1.055	4	595	.378

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted in Table 10 to compare the effects of five vocabulary learning strategies: memorization, social, cognitive, metacognitive, and determination. The table shows that the *p*-value is less than .05 ($p < .05$), indicating a statistically significant difference among the five strategy groups. In other words, it can be concluded that there is at least one pair of strategy groups that differ significantly in mean score [$F(4, 595) = 16.995, p = .000$].

Table 10. The Results from the ANOVA

VLSs	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.956	4	8.989	16.995	.000
Within Groups	314.703	595	.529		
Total	350.660	599			

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 11. Multiple Comparisons of Five Groups of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

(I) VLSs	(J) VLSs	Mean Difference		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		(I-J)	Std. Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Memorization Strategies	Social Strategies	.35694*	.09389	.000	.1725	.5413
	Cognitive Strategies	-.26111*	.09389	.006	-.4455	-.0767
	Metacognitive Strategies	-.07194	.09389	.444	-.2563	.1125
	Determination Strategies	-.34583*	.09389	.000	-.5302	-.1614
Social Strategies	Memorization Strategies	-.35694*	.09389	.000	-.5413	-.1725
	Cognitive Strategies	-.61806*	.09389	.000	-.8025	-.4337
	Metacognitive Strategies	-.42889*	.09389	.000	-.6133	-.2445
	Determination Strategies	-.70278*	.09389	.000	-.8872	-.5184

Cognitive Strategies	Memorization Strategies	.26111*	.09389	.006	.0767	.4455
	Social Strategies	.61806*	.09389	.000	.4337	.8025
	Metacognitive Strategies	.18917*	.09389	.044	.0048	.3736
	Determination Strategies	-.08472	.09389	.367	-.2691	.0997
Metacognitive Strategies	Memorization Strategies	.07194	.09389	.444	-.1125	.2563
	Social Strategies	.42889*	.09389	.000	.2445	.6133
	Cognitive Strategies	-.18917*	.09389	.044	-.3736	-.0048
	Determination Strategies	-.27389*	.09389	.004	-.4583	-.0895
Determination Strategies	Memorization Strategies	.34583*	.09389	.000	.1614	.5302
	Social Strategies	.70278*	.09389	.000	.5184	.8872
	Cognitive Strategies	.08472	.09389	.367	-.0997	.2691
	Metacognitive Strategies	.27389*	.09389	.004	.0895	.4583

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source. Data analysis finding of the study

Table 11 presents Post Hoc Tests comparing five vocabulary learning strategy groups. Results show significant differences between memorization and social strategies ($p = .000$), cognitive strategies ($p = .006$), and determination strategies ($p = .000$). Social strategies also differ significantly from cognitive ($p = .000$), metacognitive ($p = .000$), and determination strategies ($p = .000$). Cognitive and metacognitive strategies differ ($p = .044$), as do

metacognitive and determination strategies ($p = .004$).

However, the differences between memorization and metacognitive strategies ($p = .444$) and between cognitive and determination strategies ($p = .367$) were not significant. Thus, according to the questionnaire, memorization, cognitive, metacognitive, and determination strategies had the most notable impact, while social strategies had less impact.

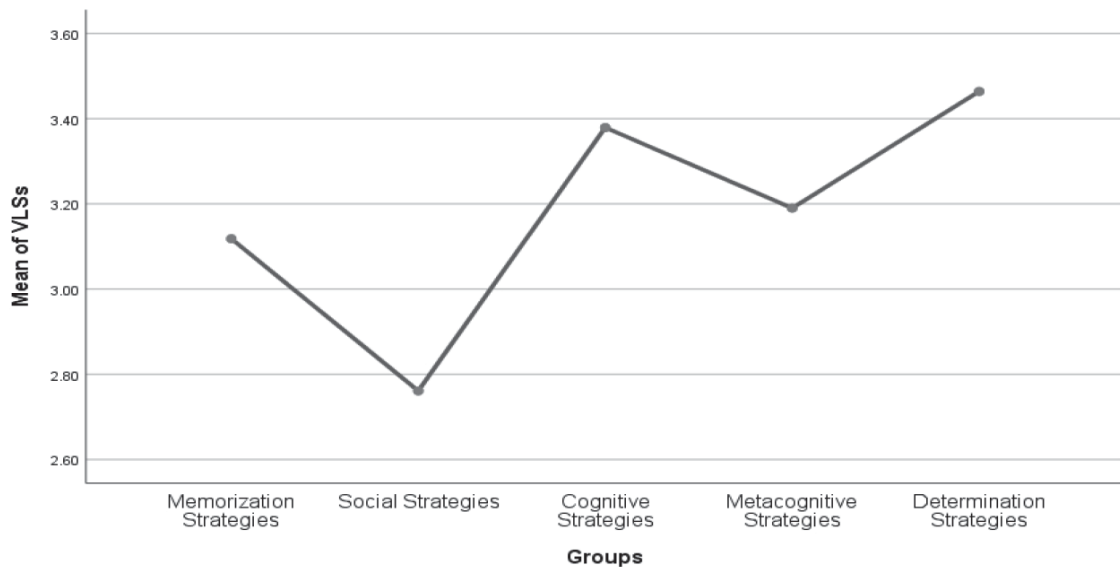


Figure 2. Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by Second-Year English Majors

Source. Compiled by the authors with the support of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22 (SPSS) software

Figure 2 below shows the vocabulary learning strategies employed by second-year English majors in the process of learning English. Overall, the four most used strategy groups among second-year English majors are determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and memorization. On the other hand, social strategies are the strategy group employed the least by second-year English majors.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the frequency with which second-year English majors at a public university in the Mekong Delta employed vocabulary learning strategies. Findings from the questionnaire revealed that students employed determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and memorization strategies in their vocabulary learning. In general, the five vocabulary learning strategy groups were used by second-year English

majors at a medium level. This is similar to Logojan's (2021) result. However, the One-way ANOVA analysis showed that students prioritized selecting determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and memorization strategies, while social strategies received little attention in their vocabulary learning. The detailed discussion for each group of vocabulary learning strategies is described as follows:

First, cognitive strategies prioritized systematic physical repetition rather than forming complex mental connections, unlike typical memorization strategies. Most second-year English majors preferred repetitive writing and keeping personalized word lists, reflecting their awareness of the importance of cognitive engagement for vocabulary learning. These findings agree with Le (2018), who found cognitive strategies were used most often and social

strategies least. Likewise, the frequent use of “keeping a notebook for practicing and reinforcing new words” aligns with Gu and Johnson (1996). This trend highlights that EFL students view systematic note-taking as essential for memory support.

Second, students used determination strategies moderately. The investigation indicated that determination strategies were preferred by most second-year English majors. These strategies enabled students to strengthen inferencing skills and independently explore word meanings. This result aligns with Ghalebi et al. (2020), who observed that university students regularly adopted determination strategies because the students preferred direct methods. Similarly, Nie and Zhou (2017) concluded that determination strategies dominated students’ practices, reflecting an inclination for autonomy when learning new word meanings. Additionally, data analysis showed that the mean scores across all vocabulary learning strategies were similar, suggesting that students used multiple strategies rather than relying on a single one. This concurs with Tran et al. (2023), who argued that students recognized the importance of utilizing all five strategy groups together. Ultimately, these strategies proved complementary; the findings recommend that students integrate various strategy groups to advance vocabulary learning. More importantly, students should tailor vocabulary strategies to specific situations and set clear goals to reinforce long-term retention and practical vocabulary use.

In contrast to Rabadi (2016), who found memory strategies to be the most frequently employed, the present study found that these strategies were used infrequently. This suggests a reliance on rote learning rather than on associative strategies. Social strategies similarly remained the least utilized. This may be due to students’ hesitation or limited opportunities for interaction. This finding is similar to that of Trinh and Trinh (2020). The moderate use of metacognitive strategies indicates that second-year English majors are beginning to regulate their vocabulary learning. However, the students still require further guidance to achieve autonomy. Nguyen et al. (2022) highlighted a common trend in Vietnam. Language learners, especially those at higher proficiency, often prioritize metacognitive strategies to coordinate their learning. The findings of the present study demonstrated the opposite perspective. Metacognitive strategies were categorized as having lower usage frequencies. This suggests that second-year English majors focused on simplified vocabulary acquisition strategies rather than the high-level strategic thinking associated with metacognitive strategies.

The findings of the study indicated that second-year English majors tended to prioritize cognitive and determination strategies to facilitate independent word recognition and memorization. Although previous studies, such as Nguyen et al. (2022), emphasized the significance of metacognitive strategies, the participants

in this study focused on specific practical strategies, including personalized note-taking, the use of English-English dictionaries, and inferring meaning through reading comprehension.

6. CONCLUSION

Our study examined the vocabulary learning strategies of second-year English majors at a Vietnamese university. The frequency of using these strategies was moderate, suggesting that students did not consistently apply them across different English language learning contexts. Students recognized how to use determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and memorization strategies in English. However, they used social strategies less often and viewed them as having less impact. There were no significant differences in student preferences for determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and memorization strategies.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study found that second-year English majors employed vocabulary learning strategies at a moderate level. Furthermore, the findings indicated that each strategy group possessed unique characteristics and offered distinct benefits to the students. The present study offers practical insights to help second-year English majors refine their vocabulary learning trajectories. Rather than relying solely on habitual strategies, the findings suggested that students should actively integrate metacognitive strategies to

manage their time and evaluate their self-perception of vocabulary acquisition. Simultaneously, these findings encouraged students to fully leverage social and cognitive strategies to transform theoretical vocabulary into practical communicative situations. Students are encouraged to enhance determination strategies by prioritizing contextual guessing rather than depending entirely on dictionaries. Using memory strategies, such as mind maps or visual associations, is also recommended to consolidate vocabulary and foster a holistic learning approach.

Based on the research findings, optimizing vocabulary learning requires second-year English majors to adjust their learning autonomy. First, the determination and cognitive strategies were the two groups most employed by second-year English majors in their vocabulary learning. In particular, students should progress from bilingual to monolingual dictionaries and maintain personalized learning vocabulary ways to deepen their contextual comprehension. In terms of metacognitive and memory strategies, it was recommended that students set specific weekly learning goals and replace rote learning or simple note-taking with deep-processing techniques such as mind maps and imagery. Finally, as the social strategy group recorded the lowest mean score, students should place a particular emphasis on collaborative learning, actively engaging in communication and inquiry with peers or instructors to use vocabulary in practical communicative scenarios.

This study does not address researchers should investigate strategies technology-mediated vocabulary-learning to integrate vocabulary learning with practices, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) technological advancements to maximize tools and other digital platforms. Future learning outcomes.

Appendix. Questionnaire

We are conducting a survey for our research titled “Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by Vietnamese EFL Undergraduate Students: Evidence from Second-Year English Majors.”

Please rate your use of each vocabulary learning strategy. Choose one: *Never* (you never use it), *Sometimes* (you occasionally use it), *Often* (you use it frequently), *Usually* (you use it most of the time), or *Always* (you use it every time). Responses are anonymous and for academic use only.

Thank you for your time and support.

SECTION I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender:

- Male Female Prefer not to say

2. Age: _____

3. Years of learning English: _____

SECTION II: VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS

Instruction: Circle to the most appropriate number.

Frequency Scale

1. *Never* 2. *Sometimes* 3. *Often* 4. *Usually* 5. *Always*

A. Memorization Strategies

1. I categorize new words according to their synonyms.

- Never 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. Always

2. I categorize new words according to their antonyms.

- Never 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. Always

3. I use semantic mind maps to learn new words.

- Never 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. Always

4. I observe the parts of speech of new vocabulary items (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

5. I connect images with the meaning of new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

6. I use flashcards to learn and remember new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

B. Social Strategies

7. I communicate with my English teachers to use new words in sentences to enhance my vocabulary knowledge.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

8. I learn new words through watching movies.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

9. I communicate with foreigners in English through different types of media to expand my vocabulary knowledge.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

10. I discuss English with classmates to understand and expand the meaning of new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

11. I read more national and foreign magazines to expand my vocabulary.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

12. I attend workshops with foreign speakers to widen my vocabulary.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

C. Cognitive Strategies

13. I practice writing new words repeatedly as a way to help me remember them.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

14. I create personalized lists of new words for myself.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

15. I keep a notebook specifically for practicing and reinforcing new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

16. I associate new words with physical objects to guess their lexical meanings.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

17. I write down words while I read books and magazines to learn them.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

18. I write down English definitions of new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

D. Metacognitive Strategies

19. I group new words into particular topics.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

20. I widen my vocabulary acquisition by checking my vocabulary knowledge with word lists.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

21. I listen to songs in English and try to understand the lyrics.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

22. I listen to podcasts in English and write down what I hear.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

23. I learn new words from advertisements.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

E. Determination Strategies

24. I discover the meanings of new words by guessing their meanings from the context.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

25. I have imaginations about new words' writing forms in order to remember them.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

26. I use English standardized dictionaries to understand the meanings of new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

27. I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

28. I use my topical knowledge to guess the meanings of new words.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

29. I guess the meanings of new words by analyzing the structure of the new words (e.g. prefixes, roots, and suffixes).

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

The present version of the questionnaire was mainly adapted from Rabadi (2016).

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Author Information:

B.A. Nguyen My Phuong, Graduate in English Studies, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Tra Vinh University, Vinh Long Province, Vietnam

Email: myphuongbhlvt@gmail.com

M.A. Nguyen Huu Phat (*Corresponding author), Lecturer, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Tra Vinh University, Vinh Long Province, Vietnam

Email: nhphat@tvu.edu.vn

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NGHIÊN CỨU CÁC CHIẾN LƯỢC HỌC TỪ VỰNG CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM HAI CHUYÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH TRONG MÔI TRƯỜNG HỌC TIẾNG ANH NHƯ MỘT NGOẠI NGỮ

Nguyễn Mỹ Phương, Nguyễn Hữu Phát*

Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Trà Vinh, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Việc áp dụng các chiến lược học từ vựng hiệu quả là rất quan trọng đối với người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ (EFL) để giúp vượt qua những thách thức trong việc học từ vựng. Do đó, nghiên cứu mô tả này nhằm mục đích điều tra các chiến lược học từ vựng được sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh áp dụng ở cấp đại học. Dựa trên công cụ tính toán cỡ mẫu Raosoft, 120 sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh tại một Đại học ở Đồng bằng Sông Cửu Long của Việt Nam được chọn tham gia nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu được thu thập bằng bảng khảo sát gồm 29 câu hỏi với thang đo 5 Likert nhằm tìm hiểu các chiến lược học từ vựng được sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh áp dụng. Kết quả từ phân tích định lượng của bảng câu hỏi cho thấy sinh viên sử dụng các chiến lược học từ vựng ở mức độ trung bình, như được thể hiện bằng chỉ số thống kê trung bình. Theo phân tích ANOVA một chiều, sinh viên lựa chọn sử dụng các chiến lược ghi nhớ, nhận thức, siêu nhận thức và xác định trong việc học từ vựng, trong khi các chiến lược xã hội lại không được sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh chú trọng nhiều. Dựa trên kết quả nghiên cứu, sinh viên được khuyến khích áp dụng các chiến lược học từ vựng hiệu quả ở đa dạng các trình độ tiếng Anh để nâng cao kiến thức từ vựng. Hơn nữa, nghiên cứu đưa ra các hàm ý sư phạm nhằm hỗ trợ cả giáo viên và sinh viên trong việc nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy tiếng Anh và thành tích học tập.

Từ khóa: chiến lược học từ vựng, khảo sát, sinh viên chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh, việc học từ vựng

Thông tin tác giả:

CN. Nguyễn Mỹ Phương, Cử nhân ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh, Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Trà Vinh, Tỉnh Vĩnh Long, Việt Nam

Email: myphuongbhlvt@gmail.com

ThS. Nguyễn Hữu Phát (*Tác giả liên hệ), Giảng viên, Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Trà Vinh, Tỉnh Vĩnh Long, Việt Nam

Email: nhphat@tvu.edu.vn

Ghi chú

Các tác giả xác nhận không có tranh chấp về lợi ích đối với bài báo này.