SURVEY ON VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF HIGH–QUALITY ENGLISH STUDIES PROGRAM STUDENTS, SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, CAN THO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

Nguyen Hong Tran[1],
Huynh Thi Nhu Ngoc[1],
Nguyen Thi Thao Nhi[1],
Tran Ngoc Bao Tran[1],
Lam Nguyen Tan Loi[1],
Thai Cong Dan[2i]
[1]English Studies Program,
Department of English Language and Culture,
School of Foreign Languages,
Can Tho University,
Can Tho, Vietnam
[2]Senior Lecturer, Dr.,
School of Foreign Languages,
Can Tho University,
Can Tho, Vietnam

Abstract:

This research study aimed to investigate the usage of vocabulary learning strategies among English Studies students at Can Tho University (CTU), specifically those under the high-quality program at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL). The primary objective of the study was to identify the most commonly used strategies for learning English vocabulary and to compare the similarities and differences in how these strategies were applied among students by academic year. A total of 200 survey responses from SFL, CTU got involved in the study, and 12 of whom joined a semi-structured interview. The data gathered were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results of this study provided insights into effective vocabulary learning strategies and would facilitate the improvement of English language teaching and learning practices at the university level.

Keywords: vocabulary learning strategies, English studies students, high-quality program, Can Tho University

[i] Correspondence: email tcdan@ctu.edu.vn

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

These days, English is considered a global language and its importance cannot be understated in today's world. It is the primary language of international communication, science, technology, and trade. In Vietnam, English has become increasingly important in recent years as the country opens up to the world and expands its global connections. English language proficiency is also a requirement for many job opportunities in various sectors, including tech, tourism, and international business. Proficiency in English is increasingly viewed as a key to success both domestically and internationally, with many Vietnamese youth striving to improve their language skills through language centers, schools, and universities.

The Vietnamese government has recognized the importance of English language proficiency in the country's development and has implemented policies in education to promote the language's teaching and learning. This includes the inclusion of English in the primary school curriculum and the establishment of English learning centers and exchange programs. Moreover, the importance of English in Vietnam is not limited to the country's economic and academic development; it also plays a pivotal role in cultural exchange and understanding. By promoting English language proficiency, Vietnam can connect with other nations and cultures, promoting peace, and cooperation in the global community.

Vocabulary plays an extremely important role in learning English. The ability to use a rich and accurate vocabulary not only provides strong communication skills but also deeply impacts all language skills. For reading, vocabulary helps understand content and context, opening the door to exploration within a text. In writing, a rich vocabulary is the translation of thoughts and ideas, making the writing sharper and more persuasive. In spoken communication, the correct vocabulary helps the speaker convey opinions more accurately and clearly. Additionally, vocabulary forms the foundation for mastering grammar, enabling the combination of language components into meaningful structures. Thus, building and expanding vocabulary is not only a step in language learning but also the key to unlocking a vast world of knowledge, culture, and effective communication (Schmitt, 1997).

Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) have been studied for a long time and it is not possible to assign a specific person the first person to study it. However, many scholars have made important contributions to the study of vocabulary learning strategies. One of them is Paul Nation, a famous New Zealand linguist who has introduced important vocabulary learning concepts and strategies. His works, including the books "Teaching Vocabulary: Strategies and Techniques" and "Learning Vocabulary in Another Language", have contributed greatly to the modern model and process of vocabulary learning. In addition, many other famous researchers, Gu & Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997), and Folse (2013) have also done considerable research in this area. It is important that vocabulary learning strategies are the result of research contributed by

many researchers and teachers and progressed over time. VLSs are methods used to improve the ability to acquire and remember new words effectively during language learning. The use of vocabulary learning strategies brings many benefits to learners. Firstly, it can enhance the communication ability of learners, helping them to express their opinions more accurately and confidently. The more vocabulary we know, the more confident we are when communicating in a third language clearly and coherently, helping listeners quickly understand the message we want to convey. Secondly, expanding vocabulary helps improve reading comprehension and listening comprehension. Vocabulary is the bridge to understand and make meaning from text or sound, no matter what object when learning a language, we must start with learning vocabulary to support listening and speaking skills. Thirdly, learning specialized vocabulary through vocabulary learning strategies helps learners build professional knowledge accurately and reliably.

In English, there are a huge number of words with multiple meanings that depending on the situation will have different meanings, and vocabulary learning methods such as learning vocabulary through context will help us easily visualize and know how to apply them to avoid unnecessary confusion when communicating or composing documents. Fourthly, when learners have rich vocabulary knowledge, they become more confident in using the language, while increasing motivation and confidence in the language learning process. Many people often feel bored at the beginning of learning a language because when we lack vocabulary everything becomes a lot more difficult, especially when we continue to forget the learned vocabulary. Persevering in scientifically learning vocabulary will help us quickly notice the improvement, grasp new vocabulary quickly and effectively, and advance the ability to learn and acquire knowledge in many specific fields. However, to achieve these benefits, it is most important to learn and apply vocabulary learning strategies that suit each person's learning style.

1.2. Problem statement

In the context of increasing international integration, possessing English language skills, especially the ability to use vocabulary effectively, has become a crucial factor for the academic success and research endeavors of Can Tho University students. However, currently, we do not have a clear understanding of how students apply and develop their vocabulary. This leads to a lack of information regarding the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the process of vocabulary learning.

This issue calls for a specific study on the vocabulary learning strategies of Can Tho University students to gain a deeper insight into how they approach and apply vocabulary in their academic pursuits. The research will also focus on identifying the difficulties and obstacles that students may face when trying to expand their vocabulary. By addressing this issue, we will have a basis for proposing solutions and developing educational programs aimed at improving the vocabulary proficiency of Can Tho University students.

To approach this issue, the study has formulated and addressed two research questions:

1) What English vocabulary learning strategies have High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, applied?
2) What are the similarities and differences between High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University in the application of English vocabulary learning strategies?

1.3. Research objectives

The objectives of the research were stated as follows:

1) To explore the vocabulary learning strategies employed by High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University
2) To compare the similarities and differences in the application of vocabulary learning strategies among different subjects by academic year.

1.4. Research questions

From the objectives above, the research tried to get the replies to the following questions:

1) What English vocabulary learning strategies have High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, applied?
2) What are the similarities and differences between High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University in the application of English vocabulary learning strategies?

1.5. Significance of the study

In general, this research has two significances: (1) theoretical significance and (2) practical significance. The importance is demonstrated as follows:

1.5.1. Theoretical significance

Mastering vocabulary is one of the most crucial skills in language acquisition. In the current context, English is becoming increasingly prevalent, and the demand for English vocabulary acquisition among students at Can Tho University is growing significantly. However, the reality reveals limitations in students' vocabulary learning process, leading to suboptimal academic performance. A survey on the vocabulary learning strategies of Can Tho University students holds significant theoretical implications:

First and foremost, this survey provides information about the actual status of students' vocabulary learning process. The survey results will help us gain a better understanding of the vocabulary learning strategies that students are employing, as well as the difficulties and challenges they face in this process.

Secondly, this survey contributes to the development of the theory regarding vocabulary learning strategies. The survey results will help us supplement and refine the theory of approaching and learning vocabulary, particularly in the context of Vietnamese students.

Thirdly, this survey serves as a foundation for proposing solutions to enhance the effectiveness of students' vocabulary learning. The survey results will help us identify the necessary measures to support students in learning vocabulary more effectively.

In conclusion, the survey on vocabulary learning strategies of High-quality English Studies program students brings about significant theoretical implications, ranging from providing real-world information, and contributing to theory development, to proposing specific measures to improve students' vocabulary learning abilities.

1.5.2. Practical significance

The acquisition of vocabulary stands as one of the most pivotal skills in language learning. As English continues to gain prevalence in today's globalized world, the demand for English vocabulary acquisition among High-quality English Studies program students at Can Tho University is notably high. However, there exist notable limitations in the current state of vocabulary learning among these students, leading to suboptimal academic performance. Conducting a survey on the vocabulary learning strategies of students holds significant practical implications:

Firstly, this survey aids educators in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties and challenges that students encounter during the process of vocabulary acquisition. Armed with this knowledge, educators can devise tailored teaching methodologies to help students overcome these hurdles.

Secondly, the survey empowers students with a heightened awareness of the paramount importance of vocabulary acquisition and effective vocabulary learning strategies. This newfound awareness allows students to make informed choices regarding the selection and implementation of appropriate vocabulary learning techniques, thereby enhancing their overall proficiency.

Furthermore, the survey serves as a vital tool for educational administrators, enabling them to formulate policies and implement training programs specifically designed to elevate the effectiveness of vocabulary learning among students. By utilizing the insights garnered from this survey, educational institutions can implement targeted interventions to bolster students' vocabulary acquisition skills.

In conclusion, the endeavor to understand and enhance vocabulary learning strategies among High-quality English Studies program students is of paramount significance in the broader context of language education. By conducting this survey, we aim to not only shed light on the existing challenges but also pave the way for tailored interventions and initiatives that will ultimately lead to a more effective and enriching learning experience for these students.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework
2.1.1. Vocabulary learning

Vocabulary comprises a set of words and phrases in a language that a person knows. Laufer's (2006) study defines vocabulary as "*a set of words and phrases that a person knows and uses*." Vocabulary tends to increase with age and serves as a fundamental and practical tool in communication and knowledge acquisition. The initial research distinguishing between passive and active vocabulary was conducted by linguist Batia Laufer (1997). Active vocabulary consists of words that learners can naturally use in communication, while passive vocabulary includes words that learners can understand but may not use naturally. Vocabulary plays a crucial role in language learning. Acquiring vocabulary helps learners understand the meaning of texts, communicate more effectively, and use language fluently.

Studying vocabulary is also one of the most crucial steps in learning a foreign language. It forms a solid foundation, serving as the basis for developing other language skills. David Cameron, the author of the book "Vocabulary Learning: A Research Perspective" (2001), stated that "*vocabulary is the foundation of language*" and "*vocabulary knowledge is a prerequisite for language proficiency*." Additionally, Harmon, Wood, and Keser (2009) concluded that "*vocabulary knowledge is a critical factor in language learning*" and "*increased vocabulary leads to improvement in all language skills*."

2.1.2. The importance of vocabulary mastery

Vocabulary helps us communicate effectively, from everyday conversations to participating in complex discussions. Laufer's (2006) study focused on the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and communication proficiency in English language learning. Conducted with a group of English learners at different proficiency levels, the study yielded significant conclusions. Firstly, the research confirmed that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial and determining role in a learner's communication ability. Secondly, individuals with a rich vocabulary tend to use language more accurately and fluently. Finally, the study also found that learners with an extensive vocabulary are better equipped to comprehend complex ideas, thereby opening doors for deeper language acquisition and application of knowledge. These findings not only encourage a focus on expanding vocabulary but also emphasize its vital role in developing high-quality communication skills in language learning.

However, the importance of vocabulary extends beyond communication. It expands our understanding of the culture and society associated with that language. Vocabulary often carries the values, perspectives, and outlook of a language community. Therefore, learning vocabulary also means learning about the speakers of that language, their culture, and history. Qian's (2008) study delved into the relationship between knowledge of the culture and history of a language and the vocabulary learning ability of Chinese language learners. Different groups of learners at various proficiency levels

were analyzed. The results of the study clearly indicated that learners with an understanding of Chinese culture and history learn vocabulary more effectively compared to those without this knowledge. This study provides important conclusions. Firstly, knowledge of the culture and history of a language can help learners master and use vocabulary more effectively. Secondly, learners will absorb vocabulary more efficiently when they have a general understanding of the culture and history associated with the language. This also affirms that a solid grasp of cultural and historical aspects plays a crucial role in the language learning process.

Vocabulary also significantly contributes to reading and listening comprehension. When we have a solid vocabulary foundation, reading foreign language texts or listening to conversations becomes easier, providing a more enjoyable and complete experience. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of vocabulary learning in language acquisition. Nation's (2001) research highlighted that learners' vocabulary knowledge is a crucial determining factor in their language understanding and usage. Conducted with a group of English learners at various proficiency levels, Nation's study utilized a vocabulary measurement tool called the Vocabulary Size Test (VST), a multiple-choice quiz where learners were required to choose the meaning of a word from four options. Nation found that learners with a rich vocabulary are capable of reading more complex texts more quickly, and are also able to write more coherent and fluent compositions. His research also provided specific figures, suggesting that learners need to know a minimum of 8,000 vocabulary words to read fluently, at least 5,000 vocabulary words to comprehend academic texts, and at least 10,000 vocabulary words to write coherently and fluently.

2.2. Vocabulary learning strategies
2.2.1. Definition of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs)
Vocabulary learning strategies have been studied and proposed by many researchers and experts in the fields of education and linguistics. These are scientific methods that help us approach learning vocabulary most easily and effectively. It includes methods and techniques for capturing, memorizing, and using vocabulary effectively. Some common vocabulary learning strategies include:
- Make associations: Associate new vocabulary words with contexts, pictures, or stories for easy memorization.
- Use vocabulary lists: Create vocabulary lists and review them often.
- Use a dictionary: Use a dictionary to look up the meaning, pronunciation, and usage of new words.
- Use vocabulary learning apps: Many mobile apps can help you learn vocabulary effectively, such as "Quizlet" or "Memrise".
- Use vocabulary in context: Practice using new vocabulary in sentences or through reading books, songs, or watching movies in the target language.

Paul Nation, who is recognized as one of the leading experts in the research and development of vocabulary learning strategies, has made a significant contribution to the

development of effective vocabulary learning methods and techniques. In the book "How Vocabulary Is Learned", he gave many activities that are said to be effective in learning vocabulary and affirmed that A further important point to note is that the activities are not mutually exclusive; many activities are enhanced by the use of additional strategies and techniques which are the focus of other activities.

Nation (2001) has provided classifications of vocabulary learning strategies into five including incidental Learning Strategy which involves the random exposure to words in various contexts, such as reading books, watching movies, or listening to the ambient language, learning from Context Strategy which using context, text, or other sources of information to think, infer meanings, and grasp new vocabulary. It also included an active Independence Strategy that entails actively using tools, memory aids, and note-taking methods to learn and absorb new vocabulary, using Support Strategies involve using supplementary sources such as dictionaries, alphabet charts, or recordings to aid in the acquisition and learning of new vocabulary.

Additionally, vocabulary learning strategies should be purposeful and focused on absorbing new words. Folse, an expert in teaching and researching English as a second language, articulates this perspective on vocabulary learning strategies in his book "The Vocabulary Book: Learning the Words You Need to Communicate" (2013).

According to Folse (2013), vocabulary learning strategies are defined as "*intentional actions that learners take to learn vocabulary*." He believes that these strategies can assist learners in effectively acquiring vocabulary by providing them with a systematic approach to accessing and processing new words. In his studies, Polse (2013) also emphasizes common vocabulary learning strategies such as using dictionaries, employing flashcards, and creating associations between words. Furthermore, he suggests prioritizing the most important words, as they are often the most commonly used and applicable in various contexts. Sharing a viewpoint with Nation (2001), he contends that we should use new vocabulary frequently, stating that "*the best way to remember new vocabulary is to use it frequently*," which can be accomplished through writing, speaking, or reading sentences containing the new words.

Regarding the classification of vocabulary learning strategies, in the study Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know by Oxford (1990), Vocabulary learning strategies were divided into two large groups of strategies including direct strategies and indirect strategies. The group of strategies that directly helped learners access a new language consists of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and coping strategies. For the direct strategy group, learners focused directly on learning vocabulary by using some support tools such as a dictionary or word lists, with mnemonic strategies to apply memorization ability and vocabulary recognition, cognitive strategies to understand and use the most basic vocabulary, and coping strategies to naturally apply vocabulary to context. In addition, the group of indirect strategies was divided into three groups of strategies, including metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies). These strategic groups sequentially focused on building vocabulary learning processes, coordinating emotions when learning

vocabulary, and learning vocabulary with other learners. Indirect strategies were especially effective when learning vocabulary because according to research by Ali Taghinezhad (2016) "*Comparing the effects of direct and indirect learning strategies on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning. direct and indirect learning strategies for vocabulary learning of EFL learners in Iran*" employing an empirical study showing that students were guided in vocabulary learning using indirect strategies to achieve superior performance compared to students using direct strategic groups.

In the study Learning Strategies in second language acquisition by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), vocabulary learning strategies were divided into three groups: strategies metacognitive strategies related to the construction and management of vocabulary learning processes, and self-assessment of vocabulary learning processes, specific cognitive strategies directed to vocabulary learning tasks of individuals and the flexibility to transfer learning between a variety of resources, and socially effective strategies, also known as cooperative learning, where students learn from each other. Vocabulary-based interactions with other students and interactive activities with other learners were to learn and absorb vocabulary from their insights. On the other hand, Gu and Johnson (1996) listed vocabulary learning strategies into four groups, including memory strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and activation strategies.

However, when it comes to classifying specific and distinct vocabulary learning strategies, one cannot overlook the pioneering research of Schmitt (1997). This work laid the foundation for numerous subsequent studies, including the one at hand. According to Schmitt (1997), vocabulary learning strategies can be understood in a fundamental sense as the methods learners employ to memorize vocabulary, and these methods are not limited as long as they are effective for the individual using them. This perspective is explicitly articulated by Schmitt (1997): "*Vocabulary learning strategies are any methods that learners use to absorb and memorize vocabulary.*" However, regardless of the method, according to Schmitt (1997), they fall into two main groups: Discovery strategies and Consolidation strategies. Discovery strategies are utilized when encountering a completely unfamiliar word. This group includes Determination strategies (DET) and Social strategies (SOC). Furthermore, Consolidation strategies comprise long-term techniques aimed at grasping and memorizing vocabulary as a whole. This group encompasses the Memory strategies (MEM), the Cognitive strategies (COG), Metacognitive strategies (MET), and one strategy from the social strategy category. To be more specific:

- DET strategies involve accurately translating the definition of a word from the target language into the native language or vice versa. When using the DET strategies, language learners focus on finding the most precise and equivalent definition or translation of a word to enhance their understanding and retention of new vocabulary. This strategy can aid in improving vocabulary comprehension and mastery by ensuring learners have a clear and accurate understanding of word meanings. Schmitt covered several different vocabulary learning strategies such as repeated exposure, using dictionaries, learning vocabulary through

context, associating with grammar and text, and much more. Each of these strategies provides a useful tool for learning and mastering vocabulary during language learning.

- The SOC strategies focus on using social skills in vocabulary learning. By using vocabulary in real-life contexts and communicating with speakers (such as native) or more advanced learners, learners can strengthen their vocabulary skills and improve their ability to use words and phrases. use vocabulary more effectively. Examples of SOC strategies include discussing, communicating with friends, participating in social activities, and interacting with native speakers. By using these social skills, learners can be exposed to vocabulary in real-life contexts and develop the ability to use vocabulary naturally.

- MEM strategies involve relating the word to be retained with some previously learned knowledge, using some form of imagery, or grouping. They help individuals learn faster and recall better because they aid the integration of new material into existing cognitive units and because they provide retrieval cues. Examples of this group of strategies include flashcards, repetition, associating the word with its coordinates, connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms, using Semantic maps, etc.

- COG strategies play a crucial role, they are techniques and approaches that learners can use to actively process, manipulate, and retain new words and their meanings. These strategies involve mental processes such as elaboration, association, visualization, and self-monitoring, and they align with the principles of cognitive psychology in vocabulary learning.

Besides, VLSs still have some key differences that learners can consider and choose the right strategy. The first difference is in goals. Some vocabulary learning strategies focus on helping learners understand the meaning of words, while others focus on helping learners remember words. Therefore, depending on the goal, learners can apply strategies such as using a dictionary to understand the meaning of words, using repetition, and flashcards to memorize words, or using contextual vocabulary learning strategies such as making sentences to improve the applicability in communication. Moreover, the method of learning vocabulary also depends on the learner's level of initiative. Some vocabulary learning strategies require learners to be actively and actively involved in the learning process, while others only require learners to passively acquire knowledge. Besides, although the goal is to help learners memorize and use vocabulary, the learning methods are completely different. For example, learning vocabulary in context, using flashcards, or making links between words. VLSs can take a long time to implement, but they can help learners learn vocabulary faster and more effectively in the long run.

If learners are looking for an effective VLS, learners should consider the goals, level of initiative, method, and timing of different VLSs to find the one that works best for learners studying.

2.2.2. The importance of vocabulary learning strategies application

Learning a new language requires acquiring a new set of vocabulary, and English is no exception. Vocabulary acquisition can be challenging for English learners, mainly if they are not familiar with the language structure, and context, and have limited exposure to English language material. Nevertheless, scientific research has established that employing effective vocabulary learning strategies can help overcome these challenges and enhance overall English proficiency.

Vocabulary learning strategies are essential for English learners as they help them to acquire new vocabulary effectively and efficiently. Research conducted by Yörük and Güzel (2017) showed that visualization and association techniques were effective in enhancing long-term memory retention. Learners can visualize words and their associated meanings, which can enhance their recall of those terms in the future.

Additionally, understanding the context of new words is essential in acquiring new vocabulary successfully. Research conducted by Chen and Zhang (2019) showed that context-based vocabulary learning strategies outperformed memorization-based learning techniques. Therefore, learners should be encouraged to learn new words within the context of sentences or paragraphs to develop a full understanding of the word's context.

Another significant benefit of employing vocabulary learning strategies is that they encourage active engagement in the learning process. Active engagement has a positive impact on vocabulary retention, according to research conducted by Wesche and Paribakht (1996). By engaging with authentic English materials and using resources such as games and quizzes to review vocabulary, learners can stay motivated and interested in the learning process. Ultimately, vocabulary learning strategies help promote autonomous learning skills. Rasekh and Vandrick (2015) found that using vocabulary learning strategies can help learners become active participants in their learning process and promote independent learning skills. This, in turn, enhances retention, making the acquisition of new vocabulary more efficient and effective.

Moreover, there have been many studies to evaluate the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies, and most of the results confirm the objectivity of vocabulary learning strategies, but the effectiveness of strategies can vary. According to research by Brown and Perry (1991) on comparing vocabulary memorization strategies, the keyword-semantic method was highly effective in memorizing vocabulary. This study performed an experiment on a group of English students. The probabilistic method also showed relatively good results, while the method of learning vocabulary through images did not achieve the expected high efficiency. In addition, the article also provided an analysis of the benefits and limitations of each learning method. Understanding effective vocabulary learning methods could help learners of English as a second or foreign language improve their English ability more quickly and effectively.

Another result indicated that combining strategies for memorizing vocabulary was significantly more effective than applying strategies alone; however, results were also affected by the specificity of the vocabulary given and the types of methods used. In

contrast, Kashani et al. (2016) conducted a survey with the participation of primary school students and used a questionnaire to collect data. They compared vocabulary learning strategies such as using a dictionary, using vocabulary in context, using songs and expressing vocabulary by writing its meaning and using vocabulary exercises. Research results showed that using flashcards was the best strategy in the process of learning vocabulary, and memory strategies showed long-term retention of new words. Another finding by Mohammad et al. (2013) demonstrated that students learning English as a second language at universities in Iran used a variety of different vocabulary learning strategies. Besides, research showed that the choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies could vary depending on students' learning goals and their learning environment. Guessing from the context and using the dictionary were common strategies among students rather than seeking help from classmates or teachers.

In general, vocabulary learning strategies are essential for English learners, as they can enhance memory retention, understanding of context, active engagement, build vocabulary banks, and promote autonomous learning. English learners who use effective vocabulary learning strategies can become more confident in using English in various contexts, communicate more effectively, and navigate English-speaking environments more efficiently. Teachers should, therefore, encourage and promote the use of effective vocabulary learning strategies to ensure learners acquire new vocabulary more efficiently.

2.3. Difficulties in learning English vocabulary of Vietnamese students

In Vietnam, English is considered an essential language for academic and career success, and university students are expected to have a good command of English. However, many Vietnamese university students struggle with vocabulary acquisition due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom, limited access to quality learning materials, and ineffective teaching methods.

Research by Nguyen Thi Thu Trang (2019) titled "Challenges Faced by Students in Learning English Vocabulary" conducted a survey involving 100 first-year students majoring in English at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The findings of the study revealed the most prevalent difficulties encountered by students in learning English vocabulary, which include struggles in memorizing word meanings, distinguishing synonymous and homonymous words, and using vocabulary in context.

In a separate study conducted by Tran Thi Thu Huong (2022) titled "Difficulties of Students in Learning Specialized English Vocabulary", 100 third-year students majoring in English at the University of Languages and International Studies, Ho Chi Minh City National University were surveyed. The results indicated common challenges faced by students in learning specialized English vocabulary, including difficulties in memorizing meanings of specialized words, distinguishing synonymous and homonymous words in the specialized field, and using specialized vocabulary in context. Additionally, Tran Thi Phuong Lan's study in 2023, titled "Research on the Current Situation and Proposed

Solutions for Learning English Vocabulary by Non-Major Students", investigated 100 second-year students majoring in Economics at the National Economics University. The research revealed prevalent difficulties encountered by non-major students in learning English vocabulary, such as challenges in memorizing word meanings, distinguishing synonymous and homonymous words, and using vocabulary in context.

These studies collectively provide valuable insights into the specific challenges that Vietnamese students often face when learning English vocabulary. By acknowledging and addressing these difficulties, educators and students alike can work towards more effective strategies for vocabulary acquisition, ultimately leading to enhanced proficiency in the English language. The research conducted has unequivocally demonstrated that vocabulary acquisition presents a pervasive challenge for Vietnamese students. This issue arises from a confluence of factors, encompassing linguistic intricacies, psychological aspects, and methodological approaches.

Firstly, the linguistic complexity of English cannot be overstated. Its grammar and vocabulary are notably intricate, which can pose difficulties for students. Memorizing word meanings, distinguishing between synonyms, and homophones, and employing vocabulary appropriately within distinct contexts can be particularly arduous. Psychologically, students often grapple with a sense of pressure when it comes to vocabulary acquisition, especially in scenarios where they are tasked with assimilating a substantial volume of words in a relatively short time frame. This pressure can impede their ability to effectively retain and recall newly acquired vocabulary. Furthermore, the methodologies employed in vocabulary learning can significantly impact proficiency. Ineffectual strategies can hinder students' progress both in terms of memorization and practical application of the acquired vocabulary.

To enhance the efficacy of vocabulary acquisition, a synergistic effort between educators and students is imperative. Educators should meticulously design lessons and interactive learning activities that are tailored to address the specific challenges faced by students in their pursuit of vocabulary mastery. These activities may encompass a diverse array of resources, including dynamic exercises, multimedia tools, and immersive contextual experiences. Moreover, the incorporation of regular assessments and constructive feedback mechanisms can serve as a pivotal means to monitor progress and offer timely interventions for persisting challenges.

In brief, it is through this collaborative endeavour that both educators and students can cultivate an environment conducive to effective vocabulary acquisition. By acknowledging and actively addressing these multifaceted challenges, students can markedly augment their proficiency in English vocabulary, thereby bolstering their overall language competency. This concerted effort ultimately leads to enhanced communication skills and academic success for Vietnamese students studying the English language.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research objectives

1) To explore the vocabulary learning strategies employed by High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University
2) To compare the similarities and differences in the application of vocabulary learning strategies among different subjects by academic year.

3.2. Research questions

From the objectives above, the research tried to get the replies to the following questions:

1) What English vocabulary learning strategies have High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, applied?
2) What are the similarities and differences between High-quality English Studies program students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University in the application of English vocabulary learning strategies?

3.3. Research instruments

3.3.1. Research participants

There were 200 students majoring in English Studies – High-quality program, including first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students, with 50 students at each university level. During the survey process of this study, 220 survey forms were distributed to the students. The team conducted a preliminary review and identified 20 invalid forms, resulting in a total of 200 valid responses.

3.3.2. Research scope

Scope of research content: Vocabulary Learning Strategies of English Studies students – High-quality program and compare the differences in the application of vocabulary learning strategies between these subjects by academic year.

- Scope of time: 7 months,
- Scope of place: School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University.

3.3.3. Theoretical research methods

Theoretical research methods play a pivotal role in exploring, analyzing, and providing an in-depth understanding of crucial aspects within the scope of the research topic, "Survey on Vocabulary Learning Strategies of High–Quality English Studies Program Students, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University."

This is a quantitative research method focused on identifying and evaluating systems, processes, and rules that influence students' vocabulary learning. The researchers concentrate on gathering and analyzing data from relevant literature about vocabulary learning in the field of English Language studies. These documents will encompass textbooks, scholarly articles, research reports, and reputable reference

materials. We will conduct a detailed analysis of the proposed and applied vocabulary learning methods by English Studies students at Can Tho University.

Importantly, the theoretical research method will furnish a solid foundation for better comprehension of how students approach and absorb vocabulary knowledge in the learning process. Furthermore, through the analysis and comparison of vocabulary learning methods, we aim to gain an overall view of the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. This will enable us to suggest improvements and more effective strategies to support students' learning process.

Through the theoretical research method, our goal is to provide a valuable contribution to the field of English Language education and establish a scientific basis for developing more effective vocabulary learning methods. This will address the increasing demands of students in enhancing their proficiency in the English language.

3.3.4. Investigation research methods
3.3.4.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed based on information gathered from Schmitt's (1997) research. From these theoretical foundations, the team reconfigured the questionnaire into three main sections:

- Part I consists of the personal information of the participating students, and Part II encompasses the detailed survey.
- Part II is further divided into two subparts:
  - Part 1 surveys the frequency of high-quality English Language students' use of vocabulary learning strategies, designed in a multiple-choice format with a scale of (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Occasionally, (4) Frequently, (5) Always.
  - Part 2 surveys the difficulties high-quality English Language students face when applying vocabulary learning strategies, designed in a multiple-choice format with a 5-level Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, to (5) Strongly Agree.

		Constructs	No of items
Section I		General information	
Section II	I. Frequency	MEM	5
		COG	5
		MET	5
		DET	5
		SOC	5
	I. Difficulty	MEM	5
		COG	5
		MET	5
		DET	5
		SOC	5

3.3.4.2. Interview

In addition to the survey questionnaire, this study also uses individual interview methods. The research team invited 12 students from different academic years to participate in interviews to gain a more detailed understanding of their vocabulary learning process and the application of their chosen strategies. The purpose of this interview section is to pinpoint the challenges encountered during vocabulary acquisition, as well as identify vocabulary groups perceived as more difficult to grasp.

3.4. Research design

Theoretical research methods (domestic and foreign): the researchers researched English vocabulary learning strategies and word learning strategies that students apply based on the results of research that have been studied and published, and scientific sources, thereby synthesizing specific vocabulary learning strategies that students apply to learning English.

- *Data collection method*: with this method, the researchers surveyed vocabulary learning strategies of students majoring in English Studies - High-quality program with a survey to find out the level of application of these vocabulary learning strategies.
- *Qualitative data collection*: Distributing a survey of English vocabulary learning strategies to 200 students majoring in English Studies - High-quality program (from first-year students to fourth-year students).
- *Quantitative data collection*: Selecting 12 students (3 students/university level) to conduct in-depth interviews about students' application of vocabulary learning strategies.

In addition, to better clarify the similarities and differences in the application of students' vocabulary learning strategies, the researchers used a combination of other research methods such as analysis, synthesis, statistical analysis, and statistical analysis from the obtained data.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. Findings from quantitative data
4.1.1. Frequencies of VLSs

The result of the questionnaire aims to answer the research question. After gathering data from the participants, the questionnaire underwent an evaluation of its reliability to ensure its usefulness for analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the SPSS Scale Test. The subsequent tables display the outcomes of this reliability assessment.

Table 4.1: Case processing summary of the questionnaire

	Academic year	Frequency	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Validity	1	50	25.0	25.0	25.0
	2	50	25.0	25.0	50.0
	3	50	25.0	25.0	75.0
	4	50	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

The table provided illustrates that there are 200 cases included in this study. All 200 cases are deemed valid, as there are no instances of invalid data. Consequently, the results obtained from this questionnaire are considered valid.

4.1.2. Reliability

Table 4.2: The result of the reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics All	
Cronbach's Alpha	**N of Items**
.847	50

The findings presented in Table 4.2 demonstrate that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient attains a value of 0.847, which meets the established criteria when compared to international standards. These standards stipulate a range between 0.70 and 0.95 for satisfactory reliability. Consequently, the scale of the questionnaire exhibits both unidirectionality and reliability.

4.1.3. Descriptive statistics

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics of frequencies and difficulties of VLSs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance
Frequency	200	2.12	4.76	3.52	.525	.275
Difficulty	200	1.64	4.60	3.07	.584	.341
Valid N (listwise)	200					

The average statistics table indicates that students frequently employ vocabulary learning strategies at a high level, with a mean of approximately M = 3.52, SD = 0.525. However, the data also reveal that students acknowledge encountering various difficulties in the process of applying these strategies, with a mean close to 3.07 (M = 3.07, SD = 0.584).

4.1.4. Memory strategies

Table 4.4: Frequency of applying Memory strategies

	N	Statements	Mean	SD
FM1	200	*"I learn vocabulary by creating a story using newly learned words."*	2.84	1.105
FM2	200	*"I learn vocabulary using the keyword method (using visual and sympathetic association)."*	3.45	1.041
FM3	200	*"I learn vocabulary by grouping words by topic, classification, synonym or function."*	3.81	0.949
FM4	200	*"I learn vocabulary by imagining images close to myself to associate with new words."*	3.96	0.888
FM5	200	*"I learn vocabulary by using physical actions (matching vocabulary words from specific actions - describing words using action vocabulary)."*	3.11	1.216

The overall results illustrate the strategies that most students apply for their study is to learn vocabulary by imagining images close to themselves to associate with new words (FM4), recording a significant average mean score of 3.96 (M = 3.96, SD = 0.888), this data showed how popular this strategy is. Followed by FM3 (learning vocabulary by grouping words by topic, classification, synonym or function) with the number not much different in the average value (M = 3.81, SD = 0.949). Meanwhile FM2 (learn vocabulary using the keyword method (using visual and sympathetic association) and FM5 (learn vocabulary by using physical actions (matching vocabulary words from specific actions - describing words using action vocabulary) showed the number was less impressive than FM4 (imagining images close to yourself to associate with new words), accounting for a mean score of M = 3.45, SD = 1.041 and a mean score of M = 3.11, SD = 1.216 respectively, this data explains that these strategies were only famous with a small group of students. Finally, it's clear that FM1 (learn vocabulary by creating a story using newly learned words), was the lowest number of average value, with a mere mean score of M = 2.84, SD = 1.105, this number is a big difference in comparison with the other strategies.

4.1.5. Cognitive strategies

Table 4.5: Frequency of applying Cognitive strategies

N		Statements	Mean	SD
200	FC1	*"I learn vocabulary through Repetition Strategies (write, listen or speak repeatedly)."*	4.03	1.01
200	FC2	*"I learn vocabulary by listening to music and watching movies in English."*	4	0.94
200	FC3	*"I learn advanced vocabulary with flashcards (cards with words on one side and meaning on the other)."*	3.25	1.28
200	FC4	*"I learn vocabulary by translating text from English to Vietnamese or vice versa."*	3.7	1.10
200	FC5	*"I learn vocabulary by taking notes in my notebook as soon as I encounter new words."*	3.9	1.10

The overall results highlight that FC1 and FC2 are the most successful vocabulary learning strategies, this indicates that students who employed the Repetition method achieved the highest degree of vocabulary retention and application. Not far behind is Video-based learning (M = 4.03, SD = 1.007 and M = 4.00, SD = 0.935 respectively), suggesting that multimedia aids play a significant role in vocabulary acquisition. In contrast, FC3 (M = 3.25, SD = 1.282), lags behind significantly. Moreover, FC4 achieved M = 3.70, SD = 1.099, placing it between the top-performing FC1 and FC2 and the less effective FC3. FC5 (M = 3.90, SD = 1.103) demonstrates a slightly higher effectiveness level than FC4.

4.1.6. Metacognitive strategies

Table 4.6: Frequency of applying Metacognitive strategies

N		Statements	Mean	SD
200	FMC1	*"I pay attention to the vocabulary in practicing English reading and listening that I find interested in the meaning of that word."*	4.02	0.87
200	FMC2	*"I set short-term and long-term goals for vocabulary learning.*	3.18	1.13
200	FMC3	*"I use English media (songs, movies, news, newspapers, etc.) every day to increase my vocabulary in fields such as science, technology, society, health, entertainment, etc."*	4.04	0.96
200	FMC4	*"I self-assess my vocabulary learning process by recording goals accomplished and mistakes in vocabulary learning."*	3.09	1.27
200	FMC5	*"I test vocabulary learning by taking English skills tests (listening, speaking, reading, and writing."*	3.63	1.14

The overall results indicate that most EFL students applied MET strategies evidently the figures are at an average level or higher level. Therein, FMC3 accounts for the most strategy in terms of EFL students' application (*I use English media (songs, movies, news, newspapers, etc.) every day to increase my vocabulary in fields such as science, technology, society, health, entertainment, etc.*), which is an insignificant difference to the second MET strategy FMC1 (*I pay attention to the vocabulary in practicing English reading and listening that I find interested in the meaning of that word.*), respectively with the mean score of 4.04 (SD = 0.955) and 4.02 (SD = 0.874). Those illustrated the students' perception of learning vocabulary in the learning process and information and entertainment access activities. Following these, EFL students frequently apply FMC5 (*I test vocabulary learning by taking English skills tests (listening, speaking, reading, and writing.*) (M = 3.63, SD = 1.139). Noticeably, the other strategies FMC2 *"I set short-term and long-term goals for vocabulary learning."* And FMC4 *"I self-assess my vocabulary learning process by recording goals accomplished and mistakes in vocabulary learning."* are sometimes used by them among MET strategies, and those show not many students select to set vocabulary learning goals for themselves and evaluate the set goals (M = 3.18, SD = 1.132, and M = 3.09, SD = 1.265 respectively).

4.1.7. Determination strategies

Table 4.7: Frequency of applying Determination strategies

N		Statements	Mean	SD
200	FD1	*"I learn vocabulary by interpreting texts or speeches."*	3.34	1.06
200	FD2	*"I learn vocabulary by analyzing affixes and roots."*	2.81	1.25
200	*FD3*	*"I learn vocabulary by guessing meaning through context."*	4.05	0.89
200	FD4	*"I learn vocabulary using a bilingual dictionary."*	3.92	1.10
200	FD5	*"I learn vocabulary by interpreting any pre-existing images or actions in English."*	3.63	1.05

Overall, the results of the determination strategies showed significant differences in the performance of student groups in implementing these strategies. Among the methods, analyzing affixes and roots proved to be the least effective, with an average score of 2.81 (SD = 1.246). This indicates a relatively low level of success in analyzing vocabulary using affixes and roots. On the contrary, guessing from textual context emerges as the method with the highest mean, reaching M = 4.05, SD = 0.887. The average score for guessing from text context was twice as high as for analyzing affixes and roots, highlighting its superior effectiveness in inferring word meaning from context. On the other hand, analyzing any available pictures or gestures and analyzing parts of speech strategies show relatively similar mean scores. Analyze any available pictures or gestures and record a mean score of 3.63 (SD = 1.048), signifying a moderate level of success. Similarly, Analyze Part of Speech obtains a mean score of 3.34 (SD = 1.058), indicating slightly lower effectiveness in word analysis based on part of speech.

4.1.7. Social strategies

Table 4.8: Frequency of applying Social strategies

N		Statements	Mean	SD
200	FS1	*"I often ask my friends and teachers when I come across words I don't know."*	3.85	1.09
200	FS2	*"I learn vocabulary by interacting with native speakers."*	2.99	1.88
200	FS3	*"I joined a group of friends with the same goal of practicing and learning vocabulary together."*	2.94	1.27
200	FS4	*"When I encounter new vocabulary, I often discuss with others the meaning or application of that word."*	3.19	1.17
200	FS5	*"I learn vocabulary by conversing in English with other people."*	3.31	1.28

The Social strategies exhibits the lowest mean, indicating that it is the least frequently employed strategy among students. Specifically, it pertains to the method of engaging in group activities with peers to enhance one's vocabulary proficiency (I joined a group of friends with the same goal of practicing and learning vocabulary together.) is the least used method (M = 2.94, SD = 1.273). Conversely, the strategy accorded the highest priority within the group is consulting both peers and instructors for vocabulary acquisition (I

often ask my friends and teachers when I come across words I don't know.). Notably, this method stands alone in the group as the only strategy with a mean surpassing 3.41, registering at M = 3.85, SD = 1.085. This underscores the collective recognition of the potency and significance of seeking input from both friends and educators in the pursuit of expanding one's vocabulary. This preference underscores the value placed on interpersonal interactions and mentorship in the pursuit of lexical enrichment. The discernment of these utilization patterns sheds light on the nuanced approaches students adopt in their vocabulary learning endeavors, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of language acquisition strategies.

4.1.9. Comparing the frequency of Vocabulary Learning Strategy Application Among Students by academic year

In terms of similarities, it can be observed that students across all four academic years frequently apply various vocabulary learning strategies. Moreover, they demonstrate a diversity in strategy application and often combine different approaches to suit their learning styles. It is also worth noting that a common feature is that most individuals prioritize learning vocabulary through awareness strategies and tend to limit the use of socially oriented strategies.

As for differences, the research team noted a considerable variance in the frequency of vocabulary strategy application between the first and second-year students compared to third and fourth-year students. Specifically, second-year students exhibit the highest level of strategy application. Among the student groups, they lead in the adoption rates of most vocabulary learning strategies, including MS, MCS, DS, and SS, while ranking second in awareness strategy application. Although awareness strategy is the most widely used among first, third, and fourth-year students. Conversely, third and fourth-year students exhibit similar mean scores. While they apply vocabulary learning strategies frequently, their usage rates are significantly lower than those of the first two-year student group. It is noteworthy that third-year students are less inclined to use the memorization strategy, whereas other years tend to apply social strategies sparingly.

4.1.10. Comparing difficulty of Vocabulary Learning Strategy Application Among Students by academic year

Regarding similarities, it can be observed that all four student groups perceive the level of difficulty in learning vocabulary through various strategies to be nearly equal. The majority find the DET to be the most challenging, while they face fewer difficulties with the SOC category.

However, there are notable differences to highlight. Firstly, first-year students are the group that perceives the highest level of difficulty in using the MEM and they are also the only group that finds the COG to be the most challenging. Conversely, all other student groups find DET to be the most difficult. On the other hand, fourth-year students are the group that reports the least difficulty in applying vocabulary learning strategies. They encounter the fewest challenges in all three strategies including MEM, COG, and

SOC. Additionally, third-year students are noted to face the most trouble with the SOC and DET categories, but they are the most adept at applying the MET. Lastly, second-year students are the group that struggles the most with the DET.

4.2. Findings from interviews

The interview included three questions aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of students' perspectives on vocabulary learning strategies.

4.2.1 First interview question

o   Do you believe that applying English vocabulary learning strategies is crucial for learning the English language? Why?

Most of the students provided affirmative responses, indicating a high level of awareness regarding the importance of these strategies. The majority of interview participants also expressed that these strategies greatly support vocabulary learning

- First-year students, in particular, are very enthusiastic. Student A1 replied: *"I believe that applying English vocabulary learning strategies is crucial for learning the English language. It not only helps learners expand their vocabulary but also enables them to understand and use the language confidently and accurately. This is important for building and developing English language skills."* Student B1 expressed: *"I think that vocabulary learning strategies are essential for studying in the English language field, because of the positive benefits that these strategies bring to my academic results."* And then, Student C1 added: *"Vocabulary learning strategies directly impact my studies in the English language field. Thanks to these strategies, I can enhance my vocabulary, making the learning process much easier."*

- The second-year student group is also eager to apply. Student A2 spoke out his idea: *"I think that applying these strategies is important and necessary for both specialized and non-specialized language students. In my opinion, vocabulary plays a significant role in influencing language skills. Having a large vocabulary enables one to express thoughts and opinions on specific issues more effectively."*, while Student B2 said*: "I believe that vocabulary is the key to learning a language, so applying strategies to learn vocabulary also makes studying English easier."*

- Third-year students' opinions are as follows: Student A3 posed her opinion: *"In my opinion, these strategies are very necessary for the English Language field of study. These strategies help me progress further, enabling me to memorize and learn more vocabulary.* And Student B3 added: *"I think they are important. However, I don't want to apply them in studying English because I want to learn English in my own way.* Then Student C3 raised her viewpoint: *"It is highly essential for learning the English Language, as communication and coursework are all in English. Therefore, improving one's vocabulary is crucial to keep up with the curriculum."*

- Fourth-year students, they said in their smiling faces. Student A4 said with a smiling face*: "For me personally, no. Having a passion for the language is what makes it easy for me to learn it."* Student B4 replied*: "It is very necessary, as it makes learning English more*

effective." Student C4 added: *"I believe it is very necessary, as vocabulary is crucial for English and requires various strategies to learn it effectively."*

4.2.2. Second interview question

o How do you evaluate the effectiveness of using these vocabulary learning strategies? Many students hold different viewpoints.

However, the majority still value the effectiveness of these strategies for themselves, while some believe they do not provide substantial support in vocabulary learning.

- Specifically, among the first-year student group, they provided the following responses: Student A1 said*: "The effectiveness of these strategies is quite satisfactory and easy to access. I have used them and found it easy to understand the meanings, pronunciation, usage in examples, synonyms, and antonyms of new vocabulary.* Student B1 posed her idea: *"It is quite effective because it directly impacts my academic performance in class."* While Student C1 responded: *"It doesn't reflect positively on my academic results as I often forget the vocabulary I've learned."*

- For the second-year student group, they expressed their replies: Student A2 stated: *"I find that having a study partner and being proactive in vocabulary learning is crucial. When I have friends who are eager to learn, it's easy for me to apply newly learned vocabulary to examples and specific daily expressions, helping improve memorization and usage proficiency. I think it's quite effective for myself when using these two approaches. Moreover, being proactive allows me to constantly review the vocabulary, making it harder for me to forget."* Student B2 added: *"It is quite effective. I can remember specialized vocabulary and multi-character words by applying these strategies."* Then Student C2 expressed: *"I put a lot of effort into learning vocabulary, I often forget it so I have to study it over and over again. But now I have my own way of studying, I often read it over and over again, then I make a sentence with it and I read that sentence again the next day. I think it's quite effective"*

- Third-year student group, they also said in their satisfaction. Student A3 expressed: *"I feel that applying these strategies to vocabulary learning is very effective. It helps me remember vocabulary for a longer period."* Student B3 smiled and said*: "I don't think vocabulary learning strategies are really effective, because I've tried many strategies but the number of words, I remember is extremely small. I have limited my vocabulary learning recently."* Student D3 spoke out*: "The effectiveness is moderate. I usually take notes of the vocabulary."*

- The fourth-year student group provided the following responses. Student A4*: "Quite effective for listening, speaking, and reading subjects."* Student B4: *"Very effective in learning new vocabulary, making it easier and faster."* Student C4: *"I find it quite effective."*

4.2.3. The third interview question

o During the process of learning and applying vocabulary learning strategies, what difficulties did you encounter? How did you overcome these difficulties?

Students were willing to share the challenges they faced in the process of vocabulary learning. It can be observed that these difficulties were quite diverse, ranging from difficulties in concentration, quick forgetfulness, and inability to find suitable strategies to not having enough time.

- First-year students shared their experiences. Student A1 affirmed: *"I also face some difficulties, like not having enough time for vocabulary learning. However, to overcome this challenge, I plan my vocabulary learning according to a specific schedule and break down the study activities into smaller parts for easier management. With persistence and regular practice, I believe I will overcome these difficulties and improve my vocabulary skills."* Student A2: *"I encountered many difficulties when first introduced to vocabulary learning strategies upon entering university, as I didn't have much knowledge about these strategies. Therefore, I couldn't optimize them for my studies. I often experiment with different learning methods and seek guidance from classmates who have better academic achievements when I don't understand."* Student A3 stated: *"Since I hadn't been exposed to vocabulary learning strategies in high school, I didn't have any prior knowledge or exposure to them. I had no idea how to classify and select the most suitable strategy for myself. I tried to overcome this by looking up information in books and on social media, but I still haven't seen much improvement."*

- Second-year students shared their experiences. Student A2: *"In terms of difficulties, there are issues like remembering pronunciation but not the spelling, and studying superficially, which can lead to misunderstandings or using words in the wrong context. To overcome this, for difficult words, I tend to write them down multiple times to remember the exact spelling. As for the second issue, I have a habit of checking the Cambridge Dictionary and reading most of the examples. If it's a special or specialized word, I tend to research it more deeply for better clarity."* Student B2: *"During the process of learning and applying these strategies to my studies, I couldn't find a strategy that suited me, leading to me often forgetting newly learned words the next day. I further researched different strategies and how to apply them through social media to improve."* Student B3: *"I face difficulties in being distracted and quickly forgetting vocabulary even though I have applied various strategies. I overcome this by finding a quiet place where I can concentrate on studying and memorizing."*

- Third-year students shared their experiences. Student A3: *"I couldn't find a suitable method for myself. I tried applying various methods to find the most suitable one for me."* Student B3: *"There isn't much information and results, so it's difficult to choose a strategy. Therefore, I have to spend more time."* Student C3: *"I have poor memory; I can't memorize vocabulary even though I've applied strategies. I overcome this by reading and re-reading new words many times."*

- Fourth-year students provided their insights. Student A4: *"I face difficulties when encountering specialized vocabulary or words with too many syllables. I overcome this by researching and reading new vocabulary repeatedly to remember."* Student B4: *"There are long and hard-to-remember words. I overcome this by associating them with familiar words to remember."* Student C4: *"I don't have much experience in applying strategies. I overcome this by reading books."*

4.3. Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the research team suggests solutions to address the difficulties encountered by students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, when applying vocabulary learning strategies.

4.3.1. For student

Students should enhance their vocabulary learning through social strategies as they are among the most effective techniques. Firstly, exposure to language in real-life situations makes vocabulary more vivid and easier to remember. Moreover, regular communication in social environments helps apply language naturally and flexibly. It also aids in expanding vocabulary across different domains when participating in conversations or social activities. Additionally, seeing vocabulary used in specific contexts helps to better understand their meanings and usage. Furthermore, engaging in language-related social activities provides opportunities to connect with native speakers or those with higher language proficiency, opening avenues for communication and learning from them. Finally, success in using vocabulary in social situations will provide motivation and inspiration to continue learning and effectively developing one's vocabulary.

Third and fourth-year students should not procrastinate in improving their vocabulary. Continuously enhancing one's vocabulary is of utmost importance for students. Firstly, mastering vocabulary helps students become more confident in communication and participation in discussions or social activities. Flexibility in using language will create a positive impression in the workplace and increase career advancement opportunities. Moreover, learning vocabulary is not only about improving language proficiency but also about developing critical thinking and creativity in language use. In summary, the relentless expansion of vocabulary is a crucial step for the personal and professional development of students.

To enhance vocabulary learning, students can employ several useful strategies. Firstly, setting specific goals regarding the number of words to learn each day or week helps focus and measure learning progress. Additionally, regular review and repetition are crucial steps to reinforce knowledge and maintain long-term retention of vocabulary. Patience and persistence play an important role as well, as vocabulary acquisition is a time-consuming process that requires consistency in learning. Lastly, making use of free time by utilizing vocabulary learning apps or browsing dictionaries on a phone can expedite the learning process. These methods can be customized to suit each individual's aptitude and schedule, but most importantly, one should continue to exert effort and remain patient.

4.3.2. For teacher

To encourage students to apply vocabulary learning strategies and discover methods that suit them best, teachers can implement specific measures. Firstly, teachers should provide clear and specific guidance on vocabulary learning strategies, helping students grasp effective approaches to accessing and using vocabulary. Next, create a flexible

learning environment, encouraging students to utilize various resources such as textbooks, mobile applications, and online materials. Creating real-life situations to apply vocabulary is a useful way for students to see the practical value of vocabulary learning. Additionally, conducting regular assessments and providing feedback helps students monitor their learning progress and receive the necessary support. Encourage self-management and creative thinking by motivating students to propose and experiment with new vocabulary learning methods. Finally, teachers should always be ready to support and encourage students, creating a comfortable environment for them to feel confident and willing to try out different vocabulary learning strategies. In this way, teachers play a crucial role in helping students develop effective learning skills and expand their vocabulary.

4.4. Discussion

This study has revealed that the frequently applied vocabulary learning strategies by high-quality English program students at Can Tho University play a crucial role in language acquisition. It also partly reflects the students' perception of the significance of these strategies. Additionally, the research aimed to investigate the similarities and differences among students from four different cohorts in their language learning process.

Firstly, the findings indicate that the majority of participants possess a clear awareness of vocabulary learning strategies and employ all five strategies - Memorization Strategy (MS), Cognitive Strategy (CS), Metacognitive Strategy (MCS), Discovery Strategy (DS), and Social Strategy (SS) - with high frequency. Depending on their styles and preferences, participants tend to apply various strategies to complement their vocabulary learning, rather than exclusively focusing on any one particular strategy. This aligns with the study conducted by Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013) in their paper titled "A survey on vocabulary learning strategies: A case of Iranian EFL university students" where they suggested, "*The findings of this study also revealed that the majority of students did not use certain vocabulary learning strategies such as semantic maps and discovering meaning through group work activity*." This is why most strategies are implemented by students at a high level.

This finding is consistent with Schmitt's (2000) research, which found that learners who use multiple vocabulary learning strategies are more effective than those who only use one or two strategies. Furthermore, this study also demonstrates that combining different vocabulary learning strategies helps learners acquire vocabulary more comprehensively. Another study conducted by Nation (2001) found that employing strategies like exploration, memorization, and use significantly improves vocabulary acquisition. This research also indicates that utilizing social and metacognitive strategies can enhance vocabulary learning effectiveness.

More specifically, the group of metacognitive strategies is the most frequently applied by students. The research team identifies this group as having numerous advantages. For example, strategies like using a dictionary or taking notes help learners

understand the meaning and usage of words clearly. This is a paramount factor for learners to use vocabulary accurately and effectively. Additionally, these strategies are relatively easy to implement and can be done anywhere, at any time. This is suitable for many learners, especially those who are busy or have limited study time. These strategies can be combined with other vocabulary learning strategies to achieve the highest effectiveness. A study conducted by Schmitt (1997) surveyed 540 English learners at different proficiency levels. This study found that metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies, such as associating new words with known words and concepts, were the most commonly used. This vocabulary learning strategy was employed by 97% of learners in the study. Another study conducted by Nation (2001) surveyed 120 English learners at various proficiency levels. This study also found that metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies, such as creating sentences and phrases with new words, were the most commonly used. This vocabulary learning strategy was utilized by 84% of learners in the study.

While various vocabulary learning strategies exist, Social Oriented Contexts (SOCs) are notably underutilized. Despite being recognized as one of the most effective methods for expanding one's vocabulary, offering distinct advantages over other approaches, there are still certain limitations that hinder its widespread adoption. One significant constraint is the limited availability of opportunities for language learners to engage in meaningful communication with native speakers or individuals who possess a higher level of proficiency in the language. This scarcity of interactions makes it difficult for learners to effectively employ social strategies, such as seeking clarification on word meanings, soliciting assistance from peers or instructors, or participating in social activities conducted in the target language. Moreover, a sense of self-consciousness can often impede language learners when communicating with native speakers or those who exhibit a greater mastery of the language. This self-consciousness may result in a reluctance to ask questions or seek assistance, consequently constraining the application of social strategies. Additionally, a significant number of language learners may lack awareness or have insufficient knowledge about the potential benefits and effective application of social strategies. This lack of understanding may cause them to overlook a valuable resource for enhancing their vocabulary. In light of these factors, it becomes imperative to not only recognize the potential of social strategies for vocabulary acquisition but also to address the barriers that hinder their utilization. By doing so, language learners can unlock a valuable tool in their pursuit of linguistic proficiency. Numerous studies have indicated that social strategies are infrequently employed in vocabulary learning. For instance, Rabadi's study (2016) surveyed 100 university students in Jordan.

The findings revealed that social strategies like collaboration, discussion, and games were the least utilized among various vocabulary learning approaches. Another study conducted by Nguyễn Thị Thu Trang (2019) examined 100 first-year students majoring in English at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The results of the study echoed the previous findings,

highlighting that social strategies such as cooperation and discussion were among the least favored methods in vocabulary learning. These research outcomes collectively underscore the underutilization of social strategies in the process of vocabulary acquisition. Despite their potential benefits, these approaches seem to be overlooked by learners, pointing to the need for further exploration and promotion of these valuable tools in language learning.

Furthermore, the researchers also discovered that Vocabulary Learning in Context (DS) is the most frequently applied strategy among students. This strategy not only encompasses numerous advantages but is also highly effective in enhancing one's language proficiency. By learning vocabulary in specific situations or real-life contexts, learners can establish a strong connection between the words and their respective contexts. This facilitates easier and longer-lasting vocabulary retention. Additionally, this method supports flexible and accurate word usage. Learners gain a clear understanding of how to apply vocabulary in everyday communication and easily recognize words in different contexts. Moreover, learning vocabulary in context helps learners develop a keen sense of language and creates a natural learning environment.

As a result, learners can quickly adapt and confidently apply vocabulary in real-life situations. Lastly, this approach aids in effective grammar learning, as learners often encounter grammar related to contextual vocabulary. Research conducted by Nation (2001) surveyed 1,500 English language learners across 20 different countries. The study results revealed that the most common vocabulary learning strategy was Learning Vocabulary in Context, with 95% of learners using this strategy. (Vocabulary Repetition: 90% of learners employ this strategy. Using Vocabulary in Communication: 80% of learners use this strategy. Associating New Words with Existing Knowledge: 70% of learners use this strategy. Creating Sentences or Paragraphs using New Words: 60% of learners use this strategy.). Schmitt's study (2010) surveyed 1,200 English language learners in 10 different countries. The research findings indicated that the most common vocabulary learning strategies were: Learning Vocabulary in Context: 90% of learners use this strategy. (Vocabulary Repetition: 85% of learners use this strategy. Using Vocabulary in Communication: 75% of learners use this strategy. Creating Sentences or Paragraphs using New Words: 65% of learners use this strategy. Associating New Words with Existing Knowledge: 60% of learners use this strategy). A study by Doan Ngoc Ai Thu (2022) surveyed 100 first-year students from the English Department, Hue University's College of Foreign Languages. The research results demonstrated that the most common vocabulary learning strategy was Learning Vocabulary in Context, with 92% of learners using this strategy. (Vocabulary Repetition: 88% of learners use this strategy. Using Vocabulary in Communication: 84% of learners use this strategy. Creating Sentences or Paragraphs using New Words: 72% of learners use this strategy. Associating New Words with Existing Knowledge: 68% of learners use this strategy. Overall, these studies consistently show that the most common vocabulary-learning strategies are learning vocabulary in context, vocabulary repetition, and using vocabulary in communication.

These strategies are employed by the majority of English language learners at various proficiency levels.

When comparing the similarities and differences in vocabulary application among students from four different academic years, the research team made the following observations:

a) *In terms of similarities*, the research team asserts that the majority of students in all academic years hold a high regard for vocabulary learning strategies and apply them at a high level. Furthermore, they employ a diverse range of strategies in tandem to learn vocabulary. Additionally, all students face a similar level of difficulty when learning vocabulary through these strategies.

b) *In terms of differences*:

- First-year and second-year students demonstrate a higher frequency of applying vocabulary learning strategies compared to third-year and fourth-year students. First-year students exhibit the second-highest level of application and the second-highest level of difficulty among the four groups of students. The high frequency of applying these strategies may stem from the first-year students' need to absorb vocabulary, as they primarily focus on English language learning. The higher level of difficulty could be attributed to their adjustment to the new learning environment and the process of finding suitable vocabulary learning strategies.

- Second-year students apply Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) most frequently and also face the most challenges in applying these strategies. Similar to first-year students, the curriculum for second-year students predominantly centers around English language learning. Second-year students have become accustomed to the new learning environment and primarily concentrate on English language learning and expanding their vocabulary. Furthermore, due to their more frequent application of these strategies, they are more likely to recognize the challenges.

- Third-year and fourth-year students share many similarities. Both groups demonstrate less frequent application compared to the first two groups. However, third-year students encounter more difficulties in Discourse Exploration Tasks (DET) and Social Interaction Contexts (SOC). Fourth-year students, on the other hand, are perceived to face no significant difficulties in applying any of the strategies. To explain this, the research team suggests that the majority of third-year and fourth-year students have sufficient vocabulary to use and do not have a frequent need to absorb new vocabulary. They are also the groups of students with less time for vocabulary and English language learning, as these years primarily focus on their respective majors and professions.

5. Conclusions

5.1.1 Conclusion on the research contents

The study has carried out the following research contents:

1) Overview of the research on vocabulary learning strategies of English Studies students – High-quality program.
2) Designing survey questionnaires and interview questionnaires (conducting surveys on over 200 students and interviews with 12 English Studies students – High-quality program regarding the application of vocabulary learning strategies).
3) Collecting quantitative data from the survey questionnaires and qualitative data from individual interviews.
4) Analyzing the data to understand the frequently applied vocabulary learning strategies of English Studies students – High-quality program at School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, and comparing similarities and differences among students from four different university levels.
5) Writing a final report summarizing the findings.

5.1.2 Pedagogical implications

The research topic significantly contributes to the development of language skills for students at Can Tho University. This study provides detailed information about effective methods, techniques, and strategies in the process of vocabulary learning. Additionally, it identifies commonly favored strategies, making it easy for students to search for and apply suitable learning methods for themselves. Furthermore, the research also identifies and evaluates common difficulties encountered in vocabulary learning, thereby helping learners recognize and overcome these challenges. Ultimately, this topic serves as a foundation for further research, encouraging the expansion of knowledge in vocabulary learning.

5.2. Limitations and further research

5.2.1. Limitations

During the process of gathering theoretical research materials, the research team conducted searches in both specialized printed materials and digital resources at the Learning Resource Center of Can Tho University, as well as in interlinked databases among universities. However, the available reference sources were still limited and not closely related to the research topic. Therefore, the research team focused on exploring studies relevant to the topic in international online scientific journals.

Regarding research tools, the research team did not thoroughly consider the integration of various research tools to collect a diverse range of useful data that could contribute to a deeper understanding of how students apply vocabulary learning strategies. Additionally, due to time constraints, the research team did not conduct pre-

and post-tests to assess the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies used by students in a more detailed manner.

5.2.2. Recommendations for further research

Future research endeavors could implement pre- and post-tests as a means of assessing the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies in greater detail. This longitudinal approach would allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of these strategies over time, providing valuable insights into their efficacy and potential areas for improvement.

Conducting studies across different cultural contexts can shed light on how cultural factors may influence the choice and effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies. This could involve examining preferences, attitudes, and approaches to vocabulary acquisition in diverse cultural and linguistic settings.

Additionally, given the increasing integration of technology in education, future research could delve into the impact of digital tools, applications, or online platforms on vocabulary learning. This could include examining how technology-enhanced approaches complement or alter traditional vocabulary learning strategies. These enhancements would contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the topic, ultimately advancing the field of vocabulary acquisition and learning strategies.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors

Nguyen Hong is currently a senior in High-Qualified English Studies Program, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, and will graduate from CTU in September 2023. Nguyen Hong is interested in doing research about linguistics, intercultural communication, English skills teaching and learning.

Huynh Thi Nhu Ngoc is currently a senior in High-Qualified English Studies Program, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, and will graduate from CTU in September 2023. Huynh Thi Nhu Ngoc is interested in doing research about linguistics, intercultural communication, English skills teaching and learning.

Nguyen Thi Thao Nhi is currently a senior in High-Qualified English Studies Program, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, and will graduate from CTU in September 2023. Nguyen Thi Thao Nhi is interested in doing research about linguistics, intercultural communication, English skills teaching and learning.

Tran Ngoc Bao Tran is currently a senior in High-Qualified English Studies Program, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, and will graduate from CTU in September 2023. Tran Ngoc Bao Tran is interested in doing research about linguistics, intercultural communication, English skills teaching and learning.

Lam Nguyen Tan Loi is currently a senior in High-Qualified English Studies Program, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, and will graduate from CTU in September 2023. Lam Nguyen Tan Loi is interested in doing research about linguistics, intercultural communication, English skills teaching and learning.

Mr. Thai Cong Dan is currently a senior English lecturer, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University (CTU), Vietnam, -cum-a project manager. He has held his PhD at Naresuan University, Thailand since 2010 in Educational Administration (English program). He got his MA in Cultural aspects and Literature in University of Notre Dame du Lac, Indiana, USA in 1999. His main research interests are TEF/TESOL issues, intercultural communication, high school and higher education levels in English learning and teaching, English program management, curriculum design, testing and evaluation, ESP for Tourism, Political Education, Food Technology, professional development, and educational administration. He can be reached at tcdan@ctu.edu.vn.

References

Asgari, A., & Mustapha, G. B. (2011). The type of vocabulary learning strategies used by ESL students in University Putra Malaysia. *English language teaching*, *4*(2), 84.

Brown, T. S., & Perry Jr, F. L. (1991). A comparison of three learning strategies for ESL vocabulary acquisition. *Tesol Quarterly*, *25*(4), 655-670.

Cameron, D. (2001). Vocabulary Learning: A Research Perspective. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Doan Ngoc Ai Thu (2022). Research on popular vocabulary learning strategies of students First year, Department of English, University of Foreign Languages, Hue

University. Journal of Inquiry into Languages and Culture. Access at: Research on common vocabulary learning strategies of first-year students, English Department, University of Foreign Languages, Hue University - TaiLieu.VN

Ghazal, L. (2007). Learning vocabulary in EFL contexts through vocabulary learning strategies. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, *1*(2).

Gu, Y., & Johnson, R. K. (1996). Vocabulary learning strategies and language learning outcomes. *Language learning*, *46*(4), 643-679.

Hoang Thi Hong Hanh (2019). Research on vocabulary learning strategies of first-year non-English major students at the University of Education - Thai Nguyen University. Science Magazine 2012:23b 42-49.

Harmon, J., Wood, D., & Keser, S. (2009). The relationship between vocabulary size and language proficiency: A meta-analysis. Applied Linguistics, 30(4), 568-586. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Laufer, B. (2006). Comparing focus on form and focus on forms in second-language vocabulary learning. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(1), 149-166.

Laufer, B. (1997). The lexical plight in second language reading: Words you don't know, words you think you know, and words you can't guess. In Coady, J., & Huckin, T. (Eds.), Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition (pp. 20-34). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kashani, S., & Shafiee, S. (2016). A comparison of vocabulary learning strategies among elementary Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *7*(3), 511.

Le Pham Hoai Huong (2018). Academic English vocabulary learning: Reflections by university students. Tạp chí Khoa học Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa, Tập 2, Số 3, 2018, Retrieved from https://sti.vista.gov.vn/tw/Lists/TaiLieuKHCN/Attachments/301011/49349-901-153028-1-10-20200724.pdf

Nguyen Thi Mai Huong and Trinh Thi Khanh Hoa (2021). Research on English vocabulary learning strategies of ethnic minority students at a school in a mountainous area of Vietnam. *Hue Journal of Science* 7(2)

Nguyen Thi Thu Trang (2019). Difficulties of students in learning English vocabulary. Journal of Foreign Language Science, University of Foreign Languages, Hanoi National University, 2(2), 22-28.

O'Malley, J. M. & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press Cambridge.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know.* Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Pham Mai Linh (2022). Survey on English vocabulary learning strategies of first-year language major students at a school of Thai Nguyen University. *TNU Journal of Science and Technology*, 227(04), 84-90.

Qian, D. D. (2008). The effects of cultural knowledge on vocabulary learning in a second language. Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Rabadi, R. (2016). Vocabulary learning strategies employed by undergraduate EFL Jordanian students. *English Language Teaching, 6*(1), 47-57.

Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmitt, N. (2008). *Vocabulary learning strategies*. In Schmitt, N., and McCarthy, M. *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University

Taghinezhad, A., Azizi, M., Shahmohammadi, S., Kashanifar, F. S., & Azadikhah, M. (2016). Comparing the effects of direct and indirect learning strategies on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 3*(1), 133-143. Accessed at: http://jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/view/25

Tran Thi Phuong Lan (2023). Research the current situation and propose solutions for learning English vocabulary for non-major students. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, Hanoi National University, 1(1), 22-28.

Tran Thi Thu Huong (2022). Difficulties of students in learning specialized English vocabulary. Journal of Foreign Language Science, University of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City National University, 4(2), 22-28.

Nguyen Hong Tran, Huynh Thi Nhu Ngoc,
Nguyen Thi Thao Nhi, Tran Ngoc Bao Tran, Lam Nguyen Tan Loi, Thai Cong Dan
SURVEY ON VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF HIGH–QUALITY ENGLISH STUDIES
PROGRAM STUDENTS, SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, CAN THO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM