THE PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY IN READING LESSONS AT NAM CAN THO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract:

English vocabulary learning is crucial for effective communication in second language acquisition, yet English major students often find vocabulary memorization to be a tedious and challenging task. This study investigates how English major students at Nam Can Tho University perceive and utilize reading as a method for vocabulary acquisition. The research aims to explore learners' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding the role of reading in expanding their English vocabulary. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study employed a questionnaire survey to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from the participants. The findings reveal a range of perspectives: some students view reading as a primary strategy for vocabulary development, while others advocate for supplementary methods such as explicit vocabulary instruction. These insights underscore the importance of incorporating learners' perspectives into the design of vocabulary learning interventions. By doing so, educators can develop more effective reading-based frameworks that enhance vocabulary acquisition and support students in becoming proficient English professionals.

Keywords: English vocabulary learning, reading lessons, perceptions, English major student

1. Introduction

In the process of second language acquisition, the acquisition of vocabulary plays an important role, being widely recognized as a cornerstone of language proficiency. Many researchers have proposed that vocabulary is one of the most crucial aspects of language

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acquisition that students may use and support the four language skills (Nation, 2001; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Schmitt, 2010). Vocabulary learning plays a vital role in learning a foreign language because the core meaning of new words is frequently highlighted that happens in books or in the classroom. It is also central to language teaching and is of utmost importance to language learners. Within the myriad of methods employed for vocabulary acquisition, reading stands out as a powerful tool for learners to encounter new words in context, fostering a deeper understanding and retention of lexical items. However, the effectiveness of vocabulary learning through reading is not solely determined by the act of reading itself but is also intricately linked to students' perceptions, attitudes, and strategies towards this learning process. Vocabulary is learned in many ways, such as: learning through regular observation, through taking notes, through music, through movies. But learning vocabulary through reading is one of the ways to help learners access many types of vocabulary effectively. It implies that a shortage of vocabulary prevents students from expressing their ideas, emotions, and feelings as well as from understanding the meaning of spoken and written language. Consequently, expanding one's vocabulary is a great way to reach a level of linguistic competency that is acceptable (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008).

In the capacity of an undergraduate majoring in English Language Studies at Nam Can Tho University in the Southern region of Vietnam, where English is a second language for people from all areas of life and understand how learners, as well as English majors, acquire English vocabulary in reading texts is extremely important for educators as well as many English major students. By delving deeper into students' perceptions, we must better understand the perceptive and emotional aspects of vocabulary acquisition, shedding light on the complexity of the learning process. This exploration not only enriches the theoretical understanding of language learning but also has practical implications for instructional design and pedagogical approaches. By examining learners' attitudes, beliefs and strategies towards vocabulary acquisition in reading activities and of course, through this investigation, we attempt to address fundamental questions and find Understanding cognition in the process of learning vocabulary through reading of majoring students. This study aims to delve into learners' perceptions of English vocabulary learning in the context of reading lessons.

At Nam Can Tho University, students majoring in English seem to have dubious views about English vocabulary learning acquisition, even though learning English vocabulary in reading classes is essential for supporting students' language development. The text's important words must be located by the learners. By doing this way, students can cover their vocabulary weaknesses since vocabulary knowledge is one of the essential aspects that affects reading comprehension (Roehrig & Guo, 2011). Given the aforementioned reasons and information, The main aim of this study is to investigate language learners' perceptions of English vocabulary learning in the context of reading lessons. By examining learners' strategies and experiences and, more specifically, the effectiveness of vocabulary acquisition through reading activities. Additionally, this study aims to identify the various factors that influence to learners' awareness of

vocabulary learning during the reading process, including the types of reading materials used, such as novels, newspapers, textbooks, textbooks, etc. Pustika (2019) contends that educators need to provide English language learners with crucial vocabulary and discourse frameworks to enhance their progress in particular subjects, including reading activities. Through exploring this factor, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can support language learning practices and contribute to vocabulary acquisition in reading texts. Because of these, students' perception of learning vocabulary towards reading lessons should be encouraged in almost all educational settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 General Overview of Vocabulary and Its Mastery

Expert definitions of vocabulary are available. One of the most crucial components of a language is its vocabulary. We have to learn vocabulary in order to speak a foreign language or read foreign articles. Without vocabulary to convey a broader range of meanings, communication in a foreign language simply cannot occur in any meaningful way, regardless of how well you understand grammar or how proficiently you master the language's sounds.

The English language depends heavily on vocabulary because, without it, students are unable to communicate their own ideas or comprehend those of others. It is crucial to become proficient in English vocabulary when teaching and learning the language in junior high school and university. Acquiring an extensive vocabulary is crucial for anyone learning a foreign language. Foreign language learners will have some trouble learning the four skills if they don't master them.

Nunan (1991, p. 118) says that developing one's vocabulary is a necessary step in learning a second language. This indicates that one of the language skills that learners of a new language must acquire is vocabulary.

What makes English a fundamental language is its vocabulary. This indicates that in order for children to master the four language abilities, they must acquire vocabulary. Words are heard when someone is listening; they are produced when someone speaks; they must be understood when someone reads; and they are used to convey ideas when someone writes. A student's ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English is greatly influenced by their vocabulary; the more vocabulary they know, the more fluent their language skills will be. The understanding of words and their meanings is known as vocabulary.

"*The term vocabulary refers to a list or set of words for a particular language or a list of words that individual speakers of language use*," state Hatch & Brown (1995, p. 1). Acquiring knowledge of vocabulary is essential for being proficient in a second language; understanding word meanings is one of the main objectives of language acquisition.

According to Lewis and Hill (1990, p. 12), it is crucial for students to possess a command of vocabulary. Grammar serves more purposes than only communication, especially in the early grades when children are eager to pick up the fundamentals.

Students will experience some difficulty using English if they do not have a proportionate vocabulary in the language. Because of their lack of enthusiasm and the difficulty in pronouncing words correctly, most students find it difficult to retain English vocabulary, particularly when it comes to mastering it. In order to comprehend and effectively memorize the English language, kids must become proficient in vocabulary. Acquiring vocabulary is a fundamentally significant aspect of language. Students must be proficient in the English language, particularly in order to comprehend texts published in the language.

One aspect of language that needs to be acquired and learned is vocabulary. It will be difficult to become fluent in the language without grasping or being able to use a specific amount of vocabulary. A language student will not be able to master the language abilities if we have a small vocabulary. It demonstrates the significance of language competence in communicating. Wallace, as cited in Furqon (2013, p. 71), provides two primary reasons for the significance of vocabulary in language learning.

There are two basic aspects of language acquisition:

1) Spoken and written language require vocabulary to grow.
2) When learning English as a foreign language, vocabulary is required for both production and recognition. We can get better at English by expanding our vocabulary. In addition to having a strong association, vocabulary growth is crucial for language learners in general since it greatly enhances each of the four language abilities.

According to Thornbury (2002:13), "*very little can be conveyed without grammar, and nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary*." Grammar allows us to express relatively little, while words allow us to say practically everything. We can typically deduce the meaning of a statement if we comprehend its primary words. Furthermore, if we comprehend the meaning of a sentence, we can progressively learn how its grammar functions. That implies that words can express anything.

2.2 English Vocabulary Learning

The term "English vocabulary learning" has been used in a number of research that have different meanings. The acquisition of English vocabulary has long been a focal point in language acquisition research. Drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks, researchers have sought to elucidate the intricate processes involved in vocabulary learning. Behaviorist theories, such as the associative learning model proposed by Skinner (1957), emphasize the role of repetition and reinforcement in vocabulary acquisition, suggesting that learners form associations between words and their meanings through exposure and practice. In contrast, cognitive theories, exemplified by the work of Piaget (1954) and later elaborated by cognitive psychologists like Anderson (1983), underscore the importance of mental processes such as encoding, storage, and retrieval in vocabulary development. According to these perspectives, learners actively construct their lexical knowledge through cognitive mechanisms such as semantic elaboration and organization. Additionally, socio-cultural theories, notably influenced by Vygotsky's (1978) concept of

the zone of proximal development, highlight the significance of social interaction and cultural context in vocabulary learning. Within this framework, language learners engage in collaborative activities and receive scaffolded support from more proficient speakers to expand their lexical repertoire. Understanding the interplay between these theoretical perspectives provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of English vocabulary learning, informing the design of effective pedagogical approaches and instructional interventions.

2.3 Reading Lessons

Previous research has highlighted the symbiotic relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, suggesting that effective strategies for teaching vocabulary can significantly enhance reading abilities. In the context of English language learning, integrating vocabulary instruction within reading lessons has garnered attention as a promising approach to facilitate language acquisition.

Smith (2018) and Johnson (2020) underscored the efficacy of embedding vocabulary activities within reading tasks, demonstrating notable improvements in learners' comprehension skills and lexical knowledge. These findings align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that language development occurs through social interactions and meaningful contexts.

Despite the growing body of literature supporting the integration of vocabulary instruction into reading lessons, further investigation is warranted to explore its long-term effects on language proficiency and comprehension across diverse learner populations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Question

This study was conducted to shed light on how English major students perceive themselves in learning English vocabulary through reading lessons. It aims to ascertain their perceptions regarding their abilities, responsibilities, and behaviors associated with their opinions and experiences in learning English vocabulary through reading lessons.

- How do English-majored students perceive their vocabulary learning in English learning through reading lessons?

3.2 Research Design

This study examined how English major students at Nam Can Tho University perceived learning English vocabulary in reading sessions using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Regarding the former, quantitative data was gathered through the use of a questionnaire. For the purpose of gathering the data using the qualitative method, a semi-structured interview was carried out. Better analysis of the real and correct data would follow from this.

3.3 Research Instruments

To finish the quantitative empirical inquiry, a questionnaire survey of vocabulary learning procedures with reading lessons of university students majoring in English will be used. It examines the connection between vocabulary tactics and reading instruction by contrasting the methods used by university students to acquire vocabulary. Ultimately, it concludes that reading lessons should be utilized to assist the students involved in this study in acquiring English vocabulary through various methods.

3.4 Description of Population and Sample

This research was conducted by collecting opinions and information from English major students at Nam Can Tho University. The data provided was collected from 100 people. Research on this method was conducted at a university in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The study participants were 100 English majors who were randomly convenience sampling to answer the questionnaire. Table 1 shows the research participants' information. The majority of students are female, this number is 71 (71%), while the number of male students is 29 (29%). The participants' ages varied from 19 to 22 years old. Additionally, they have attained or surpassed average university academic success. Regarding the importance of learning English vocabulary, more than half of students think that it is a crucial part of language comprehension, especially in Reading skills, while a very small number of students (3%) believe that learning vocabulary through Reading is not necessarily the best way. Of the 100 participants, 10 students were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. They were selected based on their volunteerism and their authentic approach to learning everyday vocabulary through reading.

Table 1: Research Participants' General Information

Information		N = 100	
		Q	**%**
Gender	Male	29	29.0
	Female	71	71.0

Note: Q: Quality, %: Percent

4. Research Results

4.1 The Students' Perception of Learning Vocabulary in Reading

The results in this section show how English majors prioritize vocabulary learning in reading.

Table 2: The General Perception of Learning Vocabulary in Reading

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.
Learning Vocabulary in Reading	100	1.00	5.00	4.12703	0.5707

The participants' overall feelings regarding their vocabulary learning through reading lessons are shown in the above table. Based on the statistics (M = 4.1, S.D = 0,507), it is evident that those pupils had a "high" degree of perception. They, therefore, have a wide range of perceptions for picking up words.

4.2 The Students' Perception of Difficulties in Vocabulary Learning in Reading

The purpose of this section is to provide insight into the perceptions of English majors regarding difficulties in vocabulary learning in reading.

Table 3: The General Perception of Difficulties in Vocabulary Learning In Reading

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.
Difficulties	100	1.00	5.00	4.065	0.6007

The average score of individuals who feel there are obstacles in acquiring vocabulary through Reading is "high", with corresponding values of M = 4.06 and S.D. = 0.60.

5. Conclusion

It can be seen in the research results that responses related to awareness of the importance of learner autonomy were rated as high, and this is also quite consistent with previous research by Tran Quoc Thao in 2020, although the researcher aimed to investigate the attitudes of English majors through self-study in vocabulary. Compared to the results of a similar study by Maria Pigada and her colleague Norbert Schmitt, 2006, it can be seen that the study investigated how word frequency in a text affects vocabulary development, as well as self-learning vocabulary in a natural cycle. This study focuses primarily on examining the attitudes of French learners and investigating whether a rigorous reading program can improve vocabulary. However, students majoring in English also consider the role of learning English vocabulary through reading to be quite important. This can be seen through the high percentage of participants who believe that vocabulary learning is a core essential for second language acquisition in general. With the data presented in Chapter 4, it can be concluded that a large number of participants have a very high awareness of the term "learning vocabulary through reading" to a certain extent, this also parallels Marta Widiawitasari Br Simamora et al.'s research conducted in 2021, vocabulary learning strategies of EFL learners at the university level of the Faculty, Faculty of Arts and Education, Teknokrat University in Indonesia.

Once more, the findings of a study on English major students' awareness of vocabulary learned through reading demonstrate that students generally exhibit awareness when learning through reading. Put differently, it can be said that students at Southern Can Tho University have a high level of awareness. Every feature that was collected for the study was also used to show how learners saw learning vocabulary through reading skills, and it is evident that learners had a very high opinion of that aspect as well. Even with the encouraging outcomes, there are still certain

implementation-related constraints in the study. The most crucial factor is that the researcher was unable to contact many individuals in the three months that were allotted. The information gathered is typically rather generic. Consequently, because the study's primary focus is on English language learners generally, its findings are more objective. Furthermore, the research was carried out at Southern Connecticut University, although it would have been preferable if it had been done at several campuses.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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