NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN TIẾNG ANH NĂM THỨ NHẤT VỀ CÁC YẾU TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG TỚI VIỆC HỌC TỪ VỰNG TIẾNG ANH

Phạm Thị Hương*, Đinh Thị Bảo Hương**

Nghiên cứu điều tra nhận thức của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh năm thứ nhất tại Trường Cao đẳng Sư phạm Điện Biên (DBTTC) về các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến việc học từ vựng tiếng Anh và tác động của các yếu tố đối với việc học từ vựng. Phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp thăm dò tuần tự được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu này. Dữ liệu được thu thập bằng bảng câu hỏi dành cho 104 sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh năm thứ nhất và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc được thực hiện với 10 sinh viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng trong số tám yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến việc học từ vựng của sinh viên, thì các yếu tố cá nhân và nhóm yếu tố tình huống, thái độ và động lực của sinh viên, phát âm và phương pháp giảng dạy với các hoạt động đa dạng là các yếu tố quan trọng nhất. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra rằng sinh viên ít bị ảnh hưởng bởi việc học thuộc lòng mặc dù yếu tố năng khiếu có tác động đáng kể. Dựa trên những phát hiện này, các khuyến nghị cho giáo viên và sinh viên được đưa ra để giúp họ dạy và học từ vựng tiếng Anh tốt hơn.

Từ khóa: *Các yếu tố, học từ vựng, sinh viên không chuyên Tiếng Anh năm thứ nhất.*

The current study investigates the perceptions of the first-year non-English major students at Dien Bien Teacher Training College (DBTTC) regarding the factors affecting English vocabulary learning and their impacts. A sequential exploratory mixed methods approach was used in this study. The data were collected by a questionnaire administered to 104 first-year non- English major students and semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 of them. The research findings indicated that among eight factors affecting students' vocabulary learning, the most important ones include individual and situational factors, students' attitude and motivation, pronunciation and teaching methods with various activities. The findings also showed that students were less influenced by rote learning despite significant impacts of their aptitude. Based on these findings, recommendations for both teachers and students are produced to facilitate English vocabulary teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Factors, vocabulary learning, first- year non- English major students.*

---

* **Trường Cao đẳng Sư phạm Điện Biên**

Email: phamhuongspdb1986@gmail.com

** **TS., Khoa Đào tạo Sau đại học, Trường Đại học Hà Nội**

Email: huongdtb@hanu.edu.vn

FIRST YEAR NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING THEIR VOCABULARY LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

English education in recent time has an increasingly important role in the Vietnamese education system. This is reflected in such policies by the Vietnamese government as the Prime Minister's 2080 Decision on the National Language Project 2025 (Decision 2080/QD-Ttg) with the goal of universalizing English at all educational levels, from primary school to university levels. English like other languages is a combination of elements such as phonetics, vocabulary, grammar and skills. Among these elements, vocabulary is possibly one of the most important elements to be mastered by students (Wilkin, 1972).

However, mastering English vocabulary is not an easy task for students because there are many factors that affect the process. The factors, which include aptitude, attitude and motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, contextualization, intra-lexical, teachers' teaching methods and environment of learning, have been explored in a number of studies (Cohen, 1998; Lighbown & Spada, 1999; Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy, 2010; Pham Thi Thao, 2016; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997). However, most of the previous studies focus on learners who have good living and learning conditions. None of them has studied the factors that affect vocabulary learning for non-English major students in mountainous areas who had difficulties in learning. Moreover, previous studies often refer to vocabulary learning strategies rather than factors that affect vocabulary learning. Very few research studies on factors affecting vocabulary learning could be found in Vietnam and at Dien Bien Teacher Training College (DBTTC).

At Dien Bien Teacher Training College (DBTTC), General English is a compulsory subject in two semesters for non-English major students in the first year. The textbooks used for students are "New English File" Elementary and Pre-intermediate. However, students' vocabulary is not very strong, as shown in the low test results of the course. The gaps in previous research and the current context of DBTTC show the need for a study to be conducted on the factors that affect non-English major students' vocabulary learning at the College.

Research question

The research study was carried out with an attempt to find out the answer to the following question: "What factors do first-year non-English major students at DBTTC perceive as affecting their English vocabulary learning?".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary and its importance in English education

Vocabulary is defined in different ways. The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992) defines vocabulary as a set of lexemes, including single words, compound words and idioms. Lewis (1993) extends the definition to the extent that vocabulary "... may be individual words or full sentences

- institutionalized utterances - that convey fixed social or pragmatic meaning within a given community". Ur (1996) conceptualises the definition of vocabulary in terms of methodology in that vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words to be taught in the foreign language. Vocabulary is the total number of words that a language possesses, including a single word, two or three word items expressing a single idea and multi-word idioms of which meaning cannot be deduced from the analysis of the component words but only understood as the whole, or in contexts.

It cannot be denied that vocabulary has an important role to play in English education. It facilitates the development of all other skills: listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension and writing. It is central to language because it is considered the "basic building block of language, the unit of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and whole text are formed" (Read, 2000, p.1). Inspite of the importance of vocabulary, acquiring broad vocabulary is one of the biggest challenges in learning a foreign language because many factors might come into play. Below are some of the most common factors affecting English vocabulary learning.

Categorising the factors affecting English vocabulary learning

A variety of factors affecting vocabulary learning have been suggested in the literature, such as background knowledge, aptitude, intelligent, motivation, intralexical factors, teachers and teaching methods, learning styles

(learning by strategies) and tasks. These factors can be categorized into two groups, namely individual factors and situational factors.

a. Individual factors

Aptitude: Aptitude refers to "a combination of many different abilities, such as the ability to identify sound patterns in a new language, the ability to recognize differences of functions grammar of words in sentences" Richards (1985, p. 154). Aptitude is a stable factor, which cannot be trained; and it is separate from motivation, achievement and intelligence. It is an ability that allows learning a foreign language (L2) faster and with less effort. There are four factors in language aptitude: phonemic coding ability, rote learning ability, inductive language learning ability and grammatical sensitivity, of which the first three are hypothesized to be involved in vocabulary learning (Carroll & Sapon, 1966).

Attitude and motivation: Attitude and motivation factors also play an important role in foreign language learning. Language attitudes are defined as the attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other' language or their own language (Gardner & Lamber, 1972). Language attitudes provide useful information for language teaching and language planning (Richards & Platt, 1993).

Motivation is the extent to which goals are chosen to pursue and the effort devoted to that pursuit (Brown, 1994). Motivation in language learning is a complicated phenomenon, which can be defined regarding two factors:

communicative needs of learners and their attitudes towards the language community (integrated motivation and instrumental motivation) (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999). If learners perceive a goal and if that goal is sufficiently attractive, they will be strongly motivated to do whatever necessary to reach that goal, including vocabulary learning.

Learning styles: Learning styles are also called "cognitive styles, in which learners try to learn something" (Richards, 1985, p. 45). Learning styles do not seem to predict the success of L2, but they show the most effective way to achieve the best results. If students are aware of their learning styles, highly motivated and have a positive attitude, they are likely to succeed in learning a foreign language, including learning vocabulary.

Learning strategies: Learning strategies are a series of actions that learners take to facilitate the completion of learning tasks. Language learning strategies and language use strategies can be formed in two stages: the former being strategies for learning tasks such as remembering, and the latter being strategies for language use, such as communicating in L2. Each strategy will determine to a large extent how and how well a new word is learned.

b. Situational factors

Contextualization: Davies and Pearse (2000, p.63) stated that "...an appropriate context helps learners begin to understand the use of the item as well as its basic meaning." Vocabulary is better absorbed not in isolated form but in context or

situation. Although the learner is already proficient in the pronunciation, spelling and meaning of a word, a text with the appearance of that word will promote the storage of the word deeper in the learner's mind.

Intra-lexical factors: According to Laufer (1997), the factors that affect the learnability of lexical items include pronunciation (phonological or suprasegmental features), orthography, length, morphology, including both inflectional and derivational complexity that increase the vocabulary learning load, similarity of lexical forms (e.g. synforms, homonyms), grammar, i.e. part of speech, and semantic features (e.g. abstractness, specificity and register restriction, idiomaticity and multiple meaning).

Teachers' teaching methods: Another factor that is also very important in the success of a foreign language learner is the teaching method. Clearly, some language teachers are better than others at providing appropriate and effective learning experiences for their students in their classrooms. These students will make faster progress in language learning in general and vocabulary memorizing in particular.

Environment of learning: It is a general knowledge that environments are important elements to the success of teaching and learning. Schneider (2002) suggests six categories: indoor air quality, ventilation, thermal comfort; lighting; acoustics; building age and quality; school size and class size that affect not only English teaching and learning in particular but also other subjects in general.
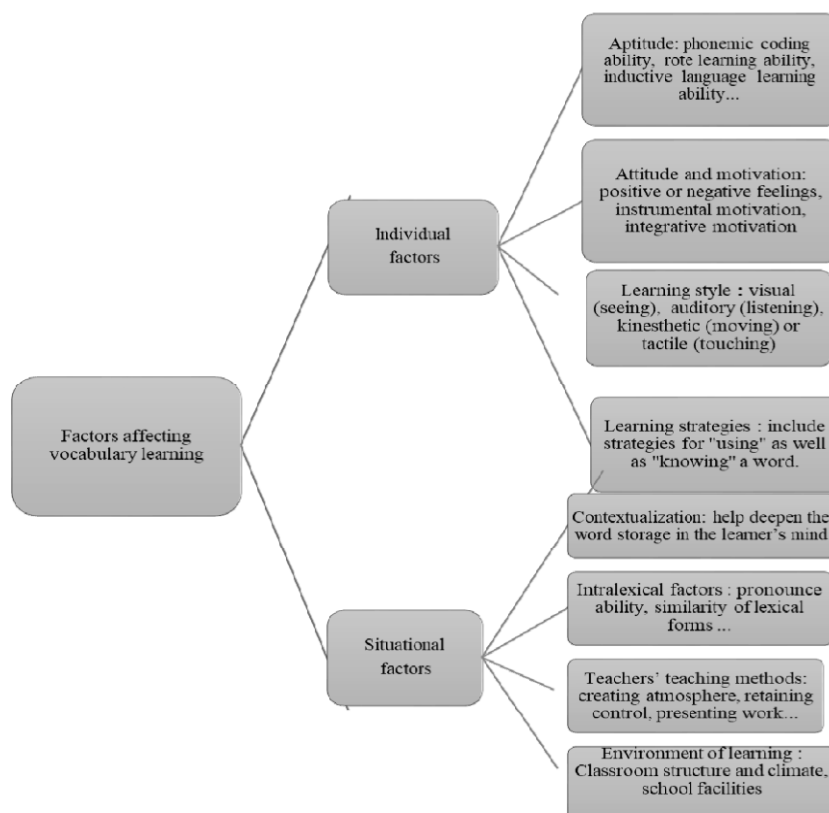
Figure 1: A Summary of the Factors Influencing Students' Vocabulary Learning

Figure 1 summaries the factors discussed above. This provides a theoretical framework for the study and for designing the questionnaire items.

Previous research regarding the factors that affect students' vocabulary learning

Research on the factors that affect students' vocabulary learning is centered around two groups of factors: individual factors and situational factors. To begin with, in terms of individual factors, research has found that such factors as aptitude, motivations, learning styles and experience, learning strategies have a role to play in students' vocabulary learning. For example, a research by Nathaya (2011) in Thailand found that there were three main factors that influenced learners' use of vocabulary learning (VL): individual differences of learners (trust,

motivation, language learning experience and learner results (language achievement, language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge). Several other individual factors were also confirmed in a study in China by Wu (2013), such as the family background, including family involvement, students' years of learning and motivation. A number of other factors such as students' motivation and their self-initiated learning also had an important impact on vocabulary learning strategies. Another research study presented by Bellout (2014) also found that individual learner variables (learning styles and motivation) had a great effect in vocabulary acquisition as a crucial aspect of developing proficiency in SL. In addition, a study carried out by Thao (2016) was concerned with the second year students at University of Fire Fighting and Prevention. The study

mainly focuses on the investigation of factors most affecting ESP vocabulary learning by the second-year students at University of Fire Fighting and Prevention. The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods including questionnaires and interviews. Some major factors that are affecting students' ESP vocabulary learning include: students' vocabulary learning strategies and their background knowledge of fire and rescue.

When it comes to situational factors, some main factors such as learning environment or teachers' teaching methods have been identified in previous research. To illustrate, Nathaya (2011) found many affecting factors to students' vocabulary learning such as situational and social factors (field of study, course type, level of class, gender, language learning environment. In contrast, a lack of some important factors may result in problems in learning vocabulary (Thuy, 2010). The factors include efficient vocabulary teaching methods, ineffective vocabulary learning strategies, some contextual problems such as large-size class, poor facilities, lacking of teaching materials, and out-of-date textbooks. Teacher's teaching methods of also affect student' vocabulary learning (Thuy, 2010, Thao, 2016).

The review of previous research shows that most of the previous studies have been conducted in the contexts where learners had access to English easily. Not much research has been done in a mountainous college such as the DBTTC where the majority of the students are ethic minority people. The difference mainly in context resulted in the need to conduct the study at DBTTC.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was used in the current study because of its advantages. According to Creswell (2009), this method is easy to follow its steps, which fall into two clear and separate stages. In addition, the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches generates a more thorough understanding of the research problems in compared with the use of either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Specifically, in the first phase, questionnaires for non-English major students at DBTTC to examine the factors affecting their English vocabulary learning were collected and analyzed. Based on some important findings from the questionnaire, in the next phase, the interview questions, which consider the possible impact of these factors on the first year non-English major students, were designed. Last, the findings of the 2 phases were discussed in light of the literature reviewed.

Participants

In this study, the researcher drew on a convenience sample as the sampling design. A convenience sample is defined as respondents being chosen based on their convenience and availability (Creswell, 2009).

As mentioned in the scope of the study, the researcher invited 104 first year non-English major students to participate into the research study. These students came from 5 classes in 2 different faculties at DBTTC namely, K21CX (Faculty of Social Sciences), K21TH, K21MN1, K21MN2, K21MN3 (Faculty of Kindergarten and Primary Education).

The participants were chosen due to some reasons. First, they were the first-year non- English major students in the academic year 2018-2019. At this stage, they were developing their four skills of English, so learning vocabulary was essential in this process. Second, they were from different faculties in the school, so they could provide a more comprehensive account of the factors that affected their vocabulary learning.

In the first data collection phase, 128 questionnaires were distributed to all of the students, of which 104 questionnaires were returned showing the response rate of 81%. The return of the questionnaire was deemed consent by the students. Data from the questionnaire were then analysed quantitatively. In the second collection phase, interviews were conducted with ten students agreeing to participate in this phase to identify the impacts of the factors on students' vocabulary learning. The students signed a consent form before taking part in the interviews. General background information of the participants is summarized in detail in Table 1.

CLASSIFICATION	ITEM	QUANTITY	PERCENTAGE
Gender	Male	5	4.8 %
	Female	99	95.2 %
Age	18-20 years	99	95.2%
	21-25 years	5	4.8%
Ethnicity	Thái	65	62.5%
	Kinh	11	10.6%
	Hmong	19	18.3%
	Khơ mú	5	4.8%
	Giáy	2	1.9%
	Lào	2	1.9%
English learning experience	One year or less	2	1.9%
	Two to seven years	10	9.6%
	Over seven years	92	88.5%

Table 1: Students' demographic information

Table 1 gives information on the participants' background information. As can be seen, more than 95.2% of the participants were female. Mostly average age ranged from 18 to 20 years (95.2%) and only 4.8% of the was over 20. More than half of the sample was Thai ethnic minority group (62.5%), the second most common sample was Hmong group (18.3%), and the rest of the participants were Kinh, Kho Mu, Giay, and Lao groups. All of them had been studying English for at least one year, especially the majority of them (88.5%) had studied English for over 7 years.

Data collection

Questionnaire

A questionnaire with 35 items was designed based on the theoretical framework and previous studies on the factors that affect vocabulary learning. These 35 items were categorised into 2 main groups: Individual factors and Situational factors. The answers were designed following a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

The first draft of the questionnaire was checked by a senior lecturer with research experience from Hanoi University and 8 items were removed because they overlapped with other items. Then the 27 item questionnaire was piloted on 20 students. Cronbach's Alpha for the groups of factors were calculated. Table 2 shows the Cronbach's Alpha for each group of factors.

Section	Factors	Cronbach's alpha
Individual factors	Aptitude	0.77
	Attitude	0.64
	Learning styles	0.71
	Learning strategies	0.75
Situational factors	Contextualization	0.63
	Intralexical factors	0.75
	Teachers' teaching methods	0.66
	Environment of learning	0.68

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha of questionnaire items

Table 2 shows that the Alpha value of Cronbach is greater than 0.6 for all groups of factors, showing acceptable reliability for the items (Cohen, 2007). Nevertheless, an item should be eliminated if its Corrected Item-Total Correlation is less than 0.3 (Cohen, et al., 2007). Therefore, 4 out of original 27 items (items 11, 23, 24, 25) which had poor Corrected Item-Total Correlation continued to be removed. As a result, the final questionnaire consisted of 23 items (Appendix 1).

Interviews

A sequential explanatory mixed methods strategy was employed in this study. The researcher developed interview questions in the second phase based on the results of quantitative analysis in the first phase to collect data which could not be explained by quantitative data.

After collecting and analyzing questionnaire data, the researcher noticed that there were seven outstanding findings. Typical of them was the large number of students (85.6 %) who were aware of the importance of good vocabulary with other skills. Following that, they often remembered the words, which they knew the pronunciation, (85.4%). Next, 81.92 % of participants would have more motivation to learn vocabulary if their teacher provided a variety of activities. About three-quarters (74.6%) of the

students confirmed that vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them in contexts. Moreover, the majority of them (75.8%) preferred to practice vocabulary by verbal instructions like dialogues, discussions and plays... They confirmed that visual aids help them imagine the meaning of new words better, at 73.5%. Lastly, only a small number of students (21.2%) thought that rote learning is effective in learning vocabulary.

Seven interview questions were made based on those outstanding findings from this questionnaire. The interview questions were developed so that respondents could explain and give insight into their survey responses. For example, Question 3 considered pronunciation was an important element to remember the words: "Can you pronounce all the words you know the meaning?

The interview questions were trialed with three participants who voluntarily took part in the process to check for the clarity of wording.

Data analysis techniques

In the first phase (quantitative data analysis), all data collected from 104 questionnaires were imported into SPSS software (version 20.0) for descriptive analysis. After that, descriptive statistics (%) were obtained and presented in tables. In the second phase (qualitative data analysis), the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data were then thematically coded (Richards, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questionnaire findings

After collecting and analyzing the data in the questionnaire, the results are detailed in Table 3:

Factors	Label	Quantity and Percentage								
		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
Aptitude	I have good ability to learn new vocabulary.	8	7.7%	35	33.7%	42	40.4%	19	18.3%	0	0.0%
	I think rote learning is effective in learning vocabulary	*23*	*22.1%*	*34*	*32.7%*	*25*	*24.0%*	*16*	*15.4%*	*6*	*5.8%*
	I can use words correctly and efficiently after memorizing them	5	4.8%	20	19.2%	28	26.9%	45	43.3%	6	5.8%
	I can memorize examples in some context when using the words	2	1.9%	23	22.1%	32	30.8%	45	43.3%	2	1.9%

Attitude & motivation	*Good vocabulary will help me learn other skills well*	3	2.9%	0	0.0%	12	11.5%	**70**	**67.3%**	**19**	**18.3%**
	Motivation makes me try to learn more words than the ones that appear in the lesson	2	1.9%	11	10.6%	30	28.8%	56	53.8%	5	4.8%
Learning styles	I prefer to learn vocabulary by visuals pictures, wall displays, diagrams, videos	4	3.9%	4	3.9%	22	21.4%	57	55.3%	16	15.5%
	I learn vocabulary well in hands-on activities like projects and demonstrations	7	6.8%	22	21.4%	38	36.9%	32	31.1%	4	3.9%
	I prefer to practice vocabulary by verbal instructions like dialogues, discussions and plays...	2	1.9%	6	5.8%	17	16.5%	**66**	**64.1%**	**12**	**11.7%**
Learning strategies	*Vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them in contexts*	0	0.0%	8	7.8%	16	15.7%	**64**	**62.7%**	**14**	**13.7%**
	I only use vocabulary strategies which are provided by teacher.	5	4.9%	23	22.5%	27	26.5%	42	41.2%	5	4.9%

Contextualization	Learning vocabulary in a context or situation is better in an isolated form	2	1.9%	10	9.7%	25	24.3%	57	55.3%	9	8.7%
	The appearance of a word in a text will help the word storage deeper in the learner's mind.	1	1.0%	11	10.7%	20	19.4%	60	58.3%	11	10.7%
Intralexical factors	*I often remember the words which I knew the pronunciation*	2	1.9%	5	4.9%	8	7.8%	*62*	*60.2%*	*26*	*25.2%*
	The differences in spelling and pronunciation of many words make me feel confused learning vocabulary	0	0.0%	9	8.8%	16	15.7%	63	61.8%	14	13.7%
	I have more difficulties in learning longer words than shorter ones	3	2.9%	6	5.8%	21	20.4%	50	48.5%	23	22.3%
	Features such as irregularity of plural, gender of inanimate nouns, and noun cases make an item more difficult to learn than an item with no such complexity	0	0.0%	10	9.8%	29	28.4%	44	43.1%	19	18.6%
Teachers' teaching methods	Teacher's methodology is a pivotal factor that contributes to learners'	0	0.0%	4	3.9%	23	22.5%	61	59.8%	14	13.7%

	vocabulary memorizing success									
	I cannot comprehend the lesson when the teacher just gives the new words without explaining and taking examples.	5	4.9%	7	6.9%	14	13.7%	55	53.9%	21	20.6%
	If teacher provides a variety of activities, I will have more motivation to learn vocabulary	1	1.0%	5	5.0%	13	12.9%	*60*	*59.4%*	*22*	*21.8%*
Environment of learning	The number of students in the class affects the ability to learn vocabulary	7	6.9%	35	34.7%	34	33.7%	22	21.8%	3	3.0%
	Comfortable classrooms help me increase my ability to learn vocabulary	2	2.0%	8	7.8%	23	22.5%	54	52.9%	15	14.7%
	Visual aids help me imagine the meaning of new words better.	3	2.9%	4	3.9%	20	19.6%	*62*	*60.8%*	*13*	*12.7%*

Table 3: Summarizing the results of the questionnaire

Table 3 gives information on the students' views on the factors affecting their vocabulary learning. It was worth noting that the significant majority of the first year non- English major students thought that their vocabulary learning were affected by eight factors, namely aptitude, attitude and motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, contextualization, intralexical factors, teachers' teaching methods and environment of learning.

There were 7 main findings (italics bold in the table). Typical of them was the large number of students (85.6 %) who were aware of the importance of good vocabulary with other skills. Following that, they often remembered the words which they knew the pronunciation, at 85.4%. Next, 81.92 % of participants

45

would have more motivation to learn vocabulary if their teacher provided a variety of activities. About three-quarters (74.6%) of the students confirmed that vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them in contexts. Moreover, they prefered to practice vocabulary by verbal instructions like dialogues, discussions and plays... (75.8%). Following that, they confirmed that visual aids help them imagine the meaning of new words better, at 73.5%. Last, only a small number of students (21.2%) thought that rote learning is effective in learning vocabulary.

Interview findings

Eight semi-structured interviews with students of DBTTC gave more insights into possible impacts of the outstanding factors. First of all, attitude and motivation helped students to recognize the important role of English and that is why they spent a lot of time on vocabulary to learn English better, as Student 1 said:

…I think vocabulary is like a key. To unlock the knowledge of other skills, we cannot lack that key. Especially in listening and speaking skills, if I don't have the vocabulary I can't express my words. So I spent a lot of time on vocabulary.

Second, it was discovered that pronunciation of new words regularly helped them to remember these words better and pronunciation support them in developing other skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Student 5 said:

Of course I can't pronounce all the words I know but I will also pronounce most of them. On the contrary, I will also remember the meaning of many words that I know to pronounce. Between them

there is a close relationship because when we learn new words, we always combine pronunciation and word meaning at the same time…

In addition, the findings from interviews added more information about the role of teachers' teaching methods, for example, diverse activities in the vocabulary teaching process helped students to enjoy and expect more vocabulary lessons, as indicated by student 2:

… I think the most effective way to teach vocabulary is matching words and pictures. Pictures help me relate to the meaning of words faster and I also remember longer. Teachers should put some activities like crossword, hangout, guessing, role play, singing ...

Moreover, suitable learning strategies helped the students to learn vocabulary better, especially when putting words in context like in sentences, in paragraphs, or in stories.

Student 7 shared his opion on this aspect as follows:

… I think learning words in context is very important. That helps me to understand more about the meaning of words. I often learn words by making sentences after knowing the meaning of the word.

All the eight interviewees asserted that in environment of learning, visual aids helped them 5

 the factors that affect students' vocabulary learning at Dien Bien Teacher Training College. The factors were categorised into two groups: situational factors and individual factors. Referring to situational factors group, both the questionnaire findings and interview findings confirm the important role of the

teachers. To be more specific, the questionnaire findings showed that a large number of students at DBTTC were aware that they were more motivated to learn and memorize vocabulary when teachers provided a range of activities. Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews also showed that all of the interviewees acknowledged they could not comprehend the lesson when the teacher just gave the new words without explanation or examples. They also affirmed teacher's methodology is a pivotal factor that contributes to learners' vocabulary memorizing success. This matches the result in the study by Williams and Burden (1997), and Thuy (2010) that one of nine key factors contributing to effective teaching is a variety of activities during lessons. If teachers provide a variety of activities, students will have more motivation to learn vocabulary. Additionally, the interviewees in the second phase showed the importance of using words in context. According to the students, if learning vocabulary without putting it into context, it is easy to forget the meaning of the word. This outcome was also in line with Davies and Pearse (2000) and Thuy (2010), which confirmed the importance of "an appropriate context... that helps learners begin to understand the use of the item as well as its basic meaning. The item is associated with a certain type of context or situation" (Davies & Pearse, 2000, p. 63). Lastly, pronunciation is an indispensable factor when it comes to vocabulary learning. Most students indicated in the questionnaire that they often remembered words they knew how to pronounce. The pronunciation and vocabulary have a close relationship. Actual pronunciation is also a requirement when learning vocabulary. The similarity was found in the conclusion of the Laufer (1997), the factors that affect

the learnability of lexical items include ability to pronounce.

In the individual factor category, most students acknowledged the contribution of visual aids in directing their attention to new words as well as catching the meaning of the new words in the contexts. Students in DBTTC recognized that visual aids boost their interest in learning and help them memorize faster. They preferred learning by visual aids such as pictures, wall displays, diagrams, videos to just listening to the lecture and taking notes. This is in line with the conclusion in the study of Bellout (2014) that visual aids is a significant influencing factor to students' vocabulary learning. From the results of the questionnaire about the aptitude factor, most DBTTC students were not good at learning new vocabulary. They were also aware of the disadvantages of rote learning because rote learning helped them remember vocabulary only temporarily, so students quickly forgot.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Recommendations

This study has found that students' motivation and aptitude are the two most influencing factors to their vocaublary learning. The teacher's teaching methodology, with various activities is also found very helpful. The students are also aware of the importance of using words in context and the use of visuals aids in vocabulary has an important role to play in their vocabulary learning. The students also show their disapproval of rote learning. It is therefore recommended that teachers should use a variety of activities in vocabulary lessons, putting the vocabulary items in context, with visual aids such as by images, diagrams,

simulated objects to attract students' attention and and provide them with more motivations to learn vocabulary. The use of rote learning should be discouraged as much as possible both in teaching and learning vocabulary.

The study only focused on eight major factors affecting the first non-English major students' vocabulary learning (Aptitude, attitude and motivation, learning style, learning strategies, contextualization, intralexical factors, teachers' teaching methods and environment of learning). There may also be other factors that affect the students' vocabulary learning such as sex, age, memory, prior knowledge and personality of the learner, which might be the focus of future reseach. The sample of the research study was small and confined to the research participants at DBTTC. Thus, future research could recruit a bigger sample size, so the findings could be more generalizable.

Conclusion

The results of the study helped answer the research question. In students' perception, there were eight factors affecting the vocabulary learning of the first year non- English majors, divided into two groups: individual factors (aptitude, attitude and motivation, learning style, learning strategies) and situational factors (contextualization, intra-lexical factors, teachers' teaching methods and environment of learning). Among these factors, motivations, pronunciation and teacher's teaching methods and activities were found to be the most important. The findings of the research showed that students were less influenced by rote learning although the aptitude factor had great influence on their vocabulary learning. The findings of this study could benefit both teachers and non-major

English students in finding the effective ways of teaching and learning vocabulary.

REFERENCES

1. Bellout, H. (2014). *The effects of learning styles and motivation on students' vocabulary acquisition for writing purposes. the case of 2nd year l.m.d students of english at the university of constantine 1*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Constantine 1, Algeria.

2. Brown, J. D. and Rodgers, T. S. (2002). *Doing second language research.* Oxford: OUP.

3. Cohen, A.D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language.* Essex: Longman.

4. Cohen, A. D. (2001). *The learner's side of foreign language learning: Where do styles, strategies, and tasks meet?* Unpublished manuscript. University of Minnesota.

5. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.): Pearson Education.

6. Davies, P. and Pearse, E. (2000). *Success in English teaching.* Hong Kong: OUP.

7. Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom.* Hong Kong: OUP.

8. Laufer, B. (1997). What's in a word that makes it hard or easy: some intralexical factors that affect the learning words. In Schmitt, N. & McCathy, M. (Eds). *Vocabulary description, acquistion and pedagogy.* Cambridge: CUP

9. Laufer, B. & P. Nation. (1999). A vocabulary size test of controlled productive ability. *Language Testing*, *16*, 33-51.

10. Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach.* Michigan: Language Teaching Publications.

11. Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned.* Oxford: OUP.

12. Nation, L. S. P. (1982). Beginning to learn foreign Vocabulary: a review of the Research. *Relc Journal. 13*(1), Regional Language Centre, Singapore.

13. Richards, J., & John, P. (1992). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics.* Essex: Longman.

14. Thao, P.T. (2016). *Factors affecting ESP vocabulary learning by the second-year students at University of Fire Fighting and Prevention.* Unpublished M.A Minor Thesis. Vietnam National University.

15. Thuy, N.T.T. (2010). *Problems and solutions in teaching and learning medial vocabulary at Thanhhoa Medical College.* Unpublished M.A Minor Thesis. Vietnam National University.

16. Wilkins, D. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching.* Cambridge: CUP.

***
APPENDIX 1
QUESTIONAIRE

My name is Pham Thi Huong and I am conducting a study on *"Factors affecting English vocabulary learning of the first year non-English major students at Dien Bien Teacher Training College"* as a part of MA study. Please fill the following information or tick (√) in the appropriating spare (tick only one that true of you most)

1. Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female
2. Class: …………………………..
3. Age: ☐ 18-20 years ☐ 20-25 years ☐ over 25 years
4. Ethnicity: ……………………………
5. Years of learning English: ☐ 1 year or less   ☐ 2 to 7 years   ☐ over 7 years

The following are five levels of assessment of the influence of factors affecting vocabulary. Please, indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement by circling the appropriating the number:

1 **STRONGLY DISAGREE**   2 **DISAGREE**
3 **NEUTRAL**   4 **AGREE**   5 **STRONGLY AGREE**

Section 1: Individual factors affecting vocabulary learning

No	Factors	1	2	3	4	5
A	*Aptitude affecting vocabulary learning*					
1	I have good ability to learn new vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I think rote learning is effective in learning vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
3	I can use words correctly and efficiently after memorizing them	1	2	3	4	5
4	I can memorize examples in some context when using the words	1	2	3	4	5
B	*Attitude and motivation affecting vocabulary learning*					
5	Good vocabulary will help me learn other skills well	1	2	3	4	5
6	Motivation makes me try to learn more words than the ones that appear in the lesson	1	2	3	4	5
C	*Learning style affecting vocabulary learning*					
7	I prefer to learn vocabulary by visuals pictures, wall displays, diagrams, videos	1	2	3	4	5
8	I learn vocabulary well in hands-on activities like projects and demonstrations	1	2	3	4	5

9	I prefer to practice vocabulary by verbal instructions like dialogues, discussions and plays...	1	2	3	4	5
D	*Learning strategies affecting vocabulary learning*					
10	Vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them in contexts	1	2	3	4	5
11	I only use vocabulary strategies which are provided by teacher.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2: The situational factors affecting vocabulary learning

No	Factors	1	2	3	4	5
A	*Contextualization*					
1	Learning vocabulary in a context or situation is better in an isolated form	1	2	3	4	5
2	The appearance of a word in a text will help the word storage deeper in the learner's mind.	1	2	3	4	5
B	*Intralexical factors affecting vocabulary learning*					
3	I often remember the words which I knew the pronunciation	1	2	3	4	5
4	The differences in spelling and pronunciation of many words make me feel confused learning vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have more difficulties in learning longer words than shorter ones	1	2	3	4	5
6	Features such as irregularity of plural, gender of inanimate nouns, and noun cases make an item more difficult to learn than an item with no such complexity	1	2	3	4	5
C	*Teachers' teaching methods*					
7	Teacher's methodology is a pivotal factor that contributes to learners' vocabulary memorizing success	1	2	3	4	5
8	I cannot comprehend the lesson when the teacher just gives the new words without explaining and taking examples.	1	2	3	4	5
9	If teacher provides a variety of activities, I will have more motivation to learn vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
D	*Environment of learning*					
10	The number of students in the class affects the ability to learn vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
11	Comfortable classrooms help me increase my ability to learn vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
12	Visual aids help me imagine the meaning of new words better.	1	2	3	4	5

***

APPENDIX 2
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This study is to investigate the factors affecting English vovabulary learning of the first year non- English major students at Dien Bien Teacher Training College. I would highly appreciate if you could respond to the questions below because your opinions are very useful to this research. All of the answers will be confidential and not for any purpose other than for research purposes. The interviews would be handled on an anonymous basis (no name of the interviewer).

1. In your opinion, is it important to investigate the factors affecting the first year non-English major students' vocabulary learning? Why or Why not?

2.   Do you think that vocabulary is an important factor to help you learn other skills better? How does it help? In what way? What difficulties have you encountered while learning English because of vocabulary?
3.   Can you pronounce all the words you know the meaning? How important is the combination of pronunciation and meaning of a word in learning vocabulary?- Give example.
4.   Should teachers organize many activities during vocabulary lessons? - Why or Why not? What activities will be suitable for teaching and learning vocabulary?
5.   In your opinion, is the ability to use words in context important? - Why or Why not? What do you do to use the new words in contexts?
6.   Do the practice activities like dialogues, discussions and plays...help you learn vocabulary faster? Why or Why not.
7.   Do you like learning vocabulary by visual aids? Why or Why not? What kinds of visual aids do you often use in vocabulary learning?
8.   Do you often learn by memorization of information based on repetition when learning vocabulary? How does it affect vocabulary learning? Explain.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.
**

APPENDIX 3
Sample interview transcript (English translation)

Teacher (T): Hello

Student (S): Hello

Hello. This study is to investigate the factors affecting English vovabulary learning of the first year non- English major students at Dien Bien Teacher Training College. I would highly appreciate if you could respond to the questions below because your opinions are very useful to this research. All of the answers will be confidential and not for any purpose other than for research purposes. The interviews would be handled on an anonymous basis (no name of the interviewer).

T: The first question, in your opinion, is it important to investigate the factors affecting the first year non- English major students' vocabulary learning?? Why or Why not?

S: Very useful. Thanks to this research, I can understand the factors which influence my vocabulary learning so that I promote positive factors and overcome negative factors.

T: Do you think that vocabulary is an important factor to help you learn other skills better?

S: Yes, of course, vocabulary helps me a lot in learning other skills.

T: Oh, how how does it help? And in what way?

S: When I understand vocabulary, you can listen, read, express your ideas when speaking and writing. Without vocabulary, it is difficult to learn these skills.

T: What difficulties have you encountered while learning English because of vocabulary?

S: When learning English I find the biggest obstacle is vocabulary. It affects all other skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. I can't listen, speak, read, write well if I don't know many vocabulary.

T: Can you give an example?

S: Oh, for instance, When I do a comprehension exercise, if I know a lot of vocabulary, I can easily understand the content of the lesson and answer the questions well. But if I

do not know a lot of vocabulary, I cannot understand the content of the text and cannot answer the questions correctly

T: The next question, Can you pronounce all the words you know the meaning?

S: Of course I can't pronounce all the words I know but I will also pronounce most of them. On the contrary, I will also remember the meaning of many words that I know to pronounce.

T: How important is the combination of pronunciation and meaning of a word in learning vocabulary?

S: Between them there is a close relationship because when we learn new words, we always combine pronunciation and word meaning at the same time. So this will help me to remember comprehensively about vocabulary.

T: Can you give an example?

S: I have an example below. When I study the phrase "detached house", if I remember the pronunciation I will easily remember the meaning of the word. Only by hearing the word "house" can I partially guess the meaning of the word

T: Ok. Should teachers organize many activities during vocabulary lessons? Why or Why not?

S: Yes, of course, teachers should organize many activities to make vocabulary lessons more exciting and less boring.

T: What activities will be suitable for teaching and learning vocabulary?

S: I think teachers should put some activities like crossword, hangout, guessing, role play, singing

T: In your opinion, Is the ability to use words in context important? Why or Why not?

S: Yes, certainly. I think learning words in context is very important. That helps me to understand more about the meaning of words.

T: What do you do to use the new words in contexts?

S: I often learn words by making sentences after knowing the meaning of the word.

T: Do you like learning vocabulary by visual aids? Why or Why not? What kinds of visual aids do you often use in vocabulary learning?

S: Yes, certainly. I really like teachers to use them when teaching vocabulary, they make lessons more interesting and make us remember vocabulary faster. Some kinds of visual aids used in vocabulary learning are projectors, pictures, posters, real objects ...

T: The last question, do you often learn by memorization of information based on repetition when learning vocabulary?

S: Yes of course

T: How does it affect vocabulary learning? Explain?

S: I used to learn vocabulary by repeating the word to remember. However, I realized that this way of learning is not effective because I will quickly forget. At first I thought I had memorized the word but after a while or the next day I forgot it.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.