

ENGLISH VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

NGUYEN HUU CAT NGUYEN

INSTITUTIONS: UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

EMAIL : NGUYENHUUCATNGUYEN@GMAIL.COM

PHONE: 0775476070

ABSTRACT

The present study explored the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by students of the University of Danang by using the VLS taxonomy proposed by Schmitt (1997). Comparisons were made to compare the VLS usage among students of English majors and non-English majors, as well as students from different academic years. A questionnaire was used to gather data from the population, which was adopted from the studies by Rabadi (2016). The data gathered from 245 students, after analysis, revealed that there was no major difference between the VLS usage of students from different majors; however, it was spotted that there were slight differences between VLS usage among students of different academic years. Recommendations were given based on the result of this study with the hope of improving the learning experience and outcome of the population in this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Participants and Sampling

The study only employed quantitative method. The study was carried out at both UFLS and UE in Danang, Vietnam. The population of this study was students of the English Faculty of UFLS and the International Business Faculty of UE ranging from the first-year to the last-year, all of whom are studying English for their own purposes. The number of participants was 245 including 134 students of UFLS and 111 students from UE. This number was from 81 freshmen, 64 sophomores, 53 juniors and 47 seniors. This population was chosen randomly by asking teachers of the two mentioned faculties of both universities to randomly hand the Google Form out to the target students.

2. Data collection

The questionnaire was originally designed by Rabadi (2016) based on the VLS taxonomy introduced by Schmitt (1997). The survey was conducted via Google Forms and included two sections. The first section: information about respondents' academic year and whether they were English major or non-English major students. The second section was the Vietnamese translated version of the questionnaire which contained 40 items and 5 factors. These factors including Memory Strategies (1 – 8), Determination Strategies (9-16), Social Strategies (17-24), Cognitive Strategies (25-32), Metacognitive Strategies (33-40). Participants were required to reflect their extent of frequency of use of each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always).

3. Data analysis

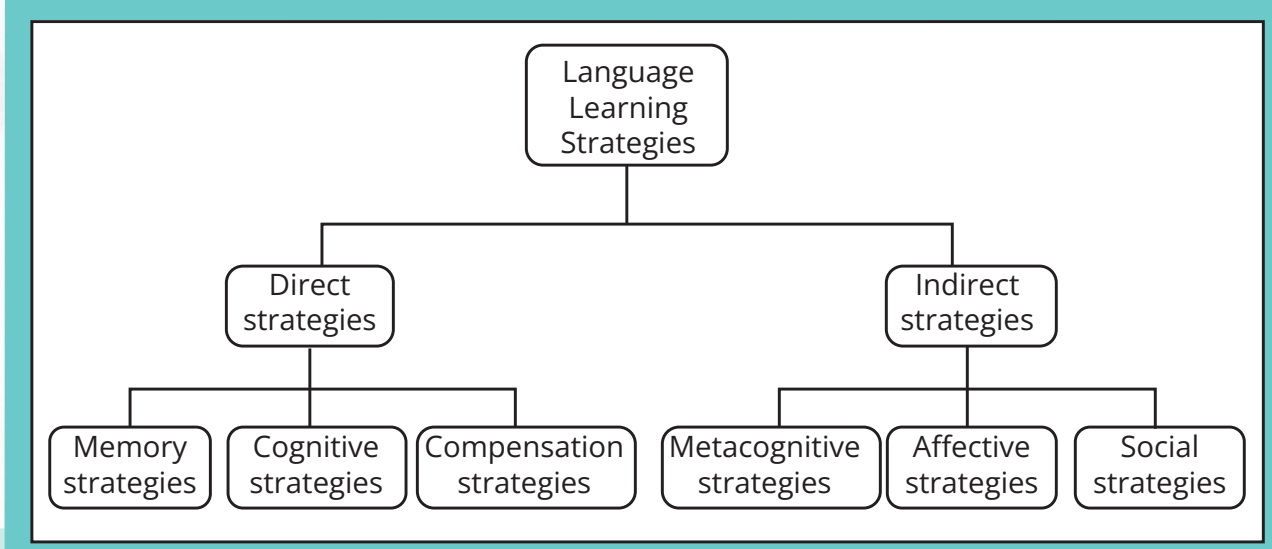
The result was collected and stored in Google Drive, which was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) later on. After that, the researchers reported descriptive statistics in tables and described the analysis generally and in detail under the research model by Rabati (2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oxfords taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies

A widely accepted classification of LLS was presented by Oxford (1990) who defined LLS as conscious and specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques used by learners to boost their apprehension, internalization, and use of the target language. The author classified LLS into two main branches: direct strategies and indirect strategies, both of which included three more sub-classifications. Oxford's (1990) classification of LLS is demonstrated in Figure 1. The sub-classifications of direct strategies include **Memory strategies** are used to store and retrieve newly learned language information. **Cognitive strategies** allow learners to comprehend and produce new language by various means. **Compensation strategies** which enable learners to use language without in-depth knowledge of the target language. Under indirect strategies, **Metacognitive strategies** provide opportunities for students to manage their own cognition. **Affective strategies** help students to regulate their emotions, motivations, and attitudes when dealing with language learning. **Social strategies** are described as tactics to support students' language learning through interaction with other people.

Figure 1. Language Learning Strategies



AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study was conducted to discover the VLS usage of the students of the University of Danang. To achieve the aim of the study, three objectives need to be addressed:

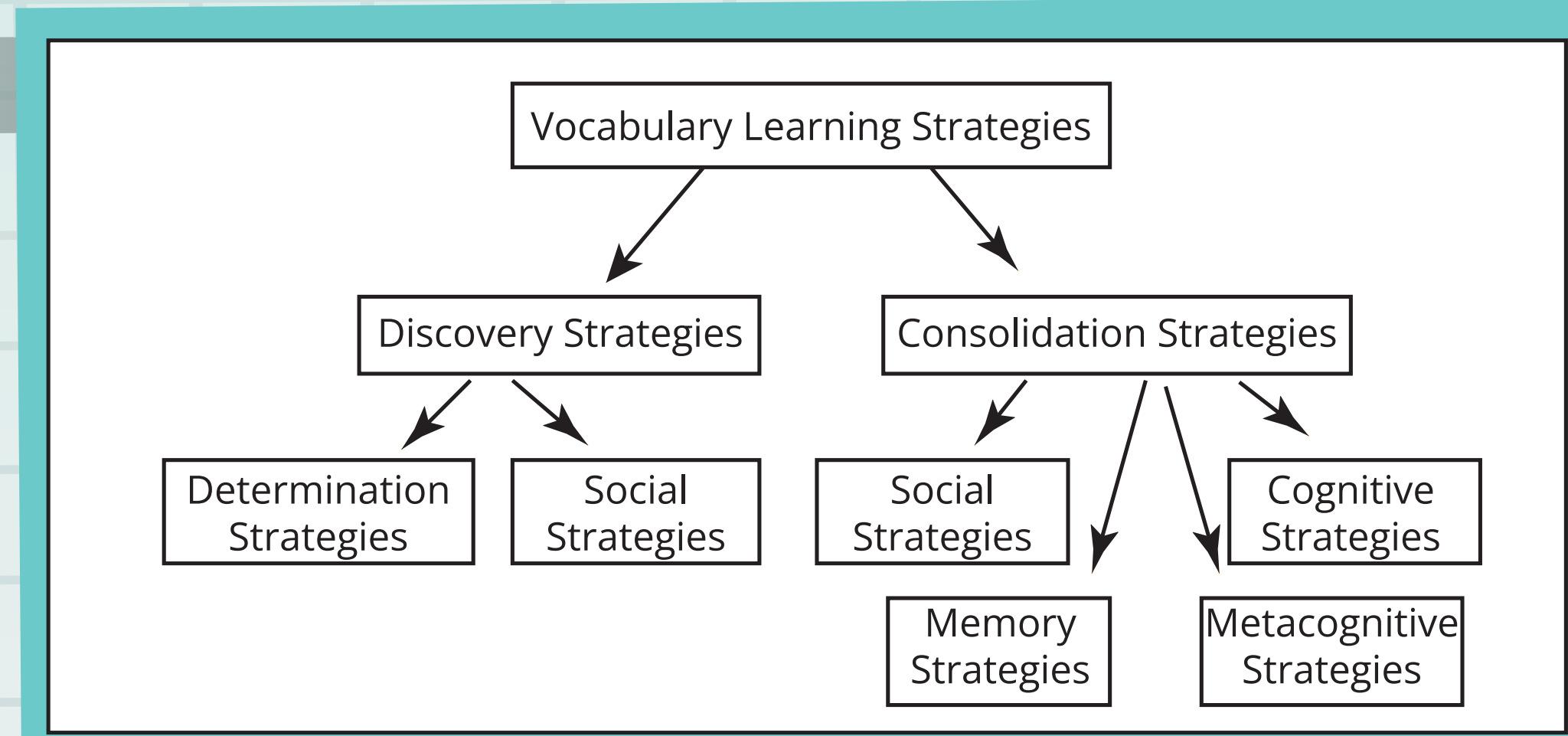
- To discover the VLS used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary
- To discover which VLS groups are the most and least frequently used by the population in this study
- To discover whether factors such as majors (English major and non-English major) and academic years (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior) affect the VLS used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of this study are:

- Which are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary? Which are the most and least frequently used VLSs?
- Do factors such as majors (English major and non-English major) and academic years (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior) affect the VLS used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary?

Figure 2. Vocabulary Learning Strategies



Schmitt's taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

One of the most trusted and well-used taxonomies of VLS is the one by Schmitt (1997) which Schmitt (1997) designed based on the mentioned Oxford's (1990) LLS taxonomy. **Discovery Strategies** describes those that students used to determine the meaning of vocabulary which were encountered for the first time; meanwhile, students use Consolidation Strategies to reinforce the meaning of encountered vocabulary when they meet them again. **Social Strategies** support learner's vocabulary learning through socializing and learning from each other. According to the author, it can be both utilized to discover new words and reinforce the students' memory of the old words. **Determination Strategies** are helpful at aiding learners to determine the meaning of new vocabulary by multiple methods such as using dictionary, guessing meaning, identifying the parts of speech and constituent elements. **Memory Strategies** assists learners in acquiring new vocabularies by mentally process and connect their background knowledge to those vocabularies. **Cognitive Strategies** refer to the mental processes learners use to acquire, sort, remember and use the language information. Repetition was one of the most common Cognitive Strategies used by the participants in Schmitt's (1997) study. **Metacognitive Strategies** refers to those more sophisticated skills used by learners to oversee, regulate and self-direct their own vocabulary learning. It includes advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention, self-management, delayed production and self-evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students of the University of Danang often use VLSs to assist their language learning journey

Table 2. Overall Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	245	1.00	5.00	3.49438	.77430
Valid N (listwise)	245				

Table 3. Frequency Rank of VLS

	Mean
Cognitive strategies	3.6730
Determination strategies	3.6158
Metacognitive strategies	3.5499
Memory strategies	3.3403
Social strategies	3.2929
Valid N (listwise)	

"Which are the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary? Which are the most and least frequently used VLSs?"
All of the strategies in the VLS taxonomy introduced by Schmitt (1997) are used by the students of the University of Danang. The most frequently used strategy category is Cognitive Strategies, while Social Strategies are least used by the population.

Table 4. VLS Comparisons

	Major	Std. Error Mean
Memory strategies	Non_Eng	.07332
	English	.06170
Determination strategies	Non_Eng	.06891
	English	.06092
Social strategies	Non_Eng	.07936
	English	.06846
Cognitive strategies	Non_Eng	.07915
	English	.06366
Metacognitive strategies	Non_Eng	.08269
	English	.06711

Do academic years (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior) affect the VLS used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary?

In the SPSS program, T-test was conducted to spot the differences and similarities of VLS used between both English major group and non-English major group. Indicated that there is no significant difference between the VLS used of both English major and non-English major participants of this study.

Do majors (English major and non-English major) affect the VLS used by the students of the University of Danang in acquiring English vocabulary?

Differences and similarities on VLS used by students of different academic years were analyzed using one-way ANOVA in the SPSS program. Overall, there were slight differences between the Memory Strategies and Social Strategies used between students of different academic years to assist them with their vocabulary learning.

Table 5. The significance level of 5 categories of VLS

		Sig.
Memory strategies	Between Groups	.018
	Within Groups	
	Total	
Social strategies	Between Groups	.002
	Within Groups	
	Total	

The significance level of 5 categories of VLS

It indicated that the students of different academic years use these two VLS group at different frequency. Further investigation was conducted to gather more information from the data, which revealed that there are significant differences between freshmen and seniors among the study's population, while freshmen, sophomores and juniors were quite similar in term of Memory Strategies and Social Strategies used.

Suggestion for Further Research

This section suggests solution for the limitations mentioned in the previous section. Investigation into the VLS usage of other university affiliate to the University of Danang should be taken into consideration. There are universities with majors that do not need an English certificate to graduate but still have English as a course in the curriculum or ones that simply do not have English in their curriculum but the students choose to still study it for their own benefit, which can bring different result to this study. More information should be gathered that can be more interesting than this study. As mentioned in previous section, the question "Why?" was not answered, making the study be shallow and not detail. Further research can target this limitation and bring more information to other studies of the similar field.

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