

# KHẢO SÁT CHIẾN LƯỢC GHI NHỚ TRONG VIỆC HỌC TỪ VỰNG: SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LẠC HỒNG

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày Nhận: 20/5/2023	Từ vựng là một thành phần quan trọng của mọi hệ thống ngôn ngữ. Từ vựng, theo Lewis (1993) [1], "là cốt lõi hay trái tim của ngôn ngữ." Nhiều nghiên cứu đã được thực hiện trong nhiều năm để tạo ra các phương pháp dạy và học từ vựng hiệu quả để giúp người học ngôn ngữ thứ hai (L2) thông thạo tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, việc phát triển vốn từ vựng không chỉ đơn thuần là học và hiểu nghĩa của từ; nó cũng liên quan đến việc ghi nhớ nghĩa để người học có thể sử dụng chúng khi giao tiếp. Để thu hẹp khoảng cách giữa việc học và nắm vững từ vựng, các chiến lược ghi nhớ phải được sử dụng. Nó có thể giúp người học hiểu cách nâng cao kiến thức từ vựng của họ. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là để xác định cách các sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh sử dụng các chiến lược ghi nhớ để học từ vựng và giá trị của những chiến lược này đối với việc học của họ.
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## AN INVESTIGATION INTO MNEMONIC STRATEGIES IN VOCABULARY LEARNING: ENGLISH MAJORS AT LAC HONG UNIVERSITY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 20, 2023	Vocabulary is a crucial component of every language system. Lexis, according to Lewis (1993) [1], "is the core or heart of language." Numerous studies have been conducted over many years to create efficient vocabulary learning and teaching methods to help second language (L2) learners master the use English language. However, developing vocabulary involves more than just learning and comprehending a word's meaning; it also involves remembering the meaning to ensure spontaneous communication using the word. In order to bridge the gap between learning and mastering vocabulary, mnemonic strategies must be used as it could help learners understand how to enhance their lexical knowledge. The purpose of this study is to ascertain how English majors employ mnemonic strategies to learn vocabulary and the value of these techniques to their learning
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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of vocabulary in acquiring and mastering a new language. According to Lewis (1993) [1], lexis is the core or heart of language. In fact, Wilkins (1972) [2] stated that "very little can be communicated without grammar, and nothing can be said without vocabulary." It is indisputable that vocabulary is the foundation of language acquisition. The challenge is how to successfully acquire vocabulary for second language (L2) learners. Numerous research has proposed a variety of lexical knowledge-enhancing and lexis-memory-preserving learning techniques for L2

learners. Mnemonic is one of the most prevalent vocabulary learning strategies that aids learners in recalling language effectively for long-term retention. According to Cohen (1987:43) [3], in order for learners to improve their receptive and productive vocabulary skills, they must first retain the words well enough to recognize them or attempt to employ them in speech or writing.

Regard of its significance, the purpose of this article is to determine how English majors of Faculty of English language (FEL) employ mnemonic strategies to acquire vocabulary. English majors must communicate or read content written in English at a high level of proficiency. To

attain the language students have learnt, it is necessary for them to have a vast vocabulary. In order to direct students toward a more effective means of enhancing their lexical knowledge, it is necessary to assess the extent to which students employ mnemonic methods for acquiring vocabulary and the utility of these strategies to their learning.

This paper seeks to solve the two research questions using Schmitt's taxonomy of mnemonic strategies.

- Which mnemonic strategies are most prevalent among English majors at Lac Hong University?

- What are the most effective ways for memorizing English vocabulary?

## 2. CONTENT

### 2.1 Vocabulary learning strategies

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) [4], language learning strategies are the unique ideas or actions that individuals employ to grasp, absorb, and retain new knowledge. They were derived from several research in order to apply to various domains of second language acquisition, of which vocabulary is one. On Nation's (1990) [5] arguments, vocabulary learning strategies are a component of language learning strategies. Numerous academics classify various vocabulary learning systems into taxonomies for various applications.

Gu and Johnson (1996) [6] presented four primary ways for acquiring vocabulary: metacognitive, cognitive, memory (mnemonic), and activation. Metacognitive strategies require the selective awareness and self-initiation of the learner, which determine which words to learn and how to learn them. Cognitive strategies consist of guessing strategies, dictionaries, and note-taking techniques. Memory strategies are classified as practicing (e.g., word lists, repetition) and encoding (e.g., encoding words into a database) strategies (e.g. imagery, visual, semantic). Activation strategies include ones in which students actually apply new vocabulary in various circumstances.

Schmitt (1997) [7] categorized vocabulary learning processes into two primary groups: discovery strategies, which identify the new word when learners meet it for the first time, and consolidating strategies, which consolidate when learners encounter the terms again. In Schmitt's taxonomy, discovery comprises determiner strategy and social strategy, which aid in determining the meaning of words, whereas consolidation comprises social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and metacognitive strategy, which aid in storing the words in long-term memory.

Nation (2001) [8] outlined three broad categories of strategies: planning strategies for selecting words to focus on, sources strategies for locating information about words, and processes strategies for developing vocabulary knowledge. Clearly, Nation's taxonomy organizes the vocabulary learning process into three steps: selecting, comprehending, and recalling words.

Although various taxonomies employ diverse methodologies for vocabulary learning, they all share a common goal: to aid L2 learners in acquiring vocabulary through a process or approach. Moreover, mnemonic or memory strategies remain a component of vocabulary learning strategies.

### 2.2 Mnemonic strategies

According to Oxford (1990), mnemonic strategies (also known as memory strategies) assist learners associate a new

concept with something they already know. As Schmitt (1997:210) [7] stated, the majority of memory strategies involve associating the word to be remembered with previously acquired information through the use of imagery or grouping. Evidently, these strategies are effective for memorizing information because they "bridge the gap" between old and new knowledge. Thompson (1987) [9] notes, "They facilitate the integration of new data into existing cognitive units and give retrieval signals, so accelerating learning and improving memory." It is essential to memorize vocabulary in order to maintain the language. When learners comprehend a term for the first time, they only master it if they recall it the following time. Consequently, mnemonics might be interpreted as "memory aids" (Higbee, 1979) [10].

Oxford (1990) separated mnemonic strategies into three sub-strategies - imagery, acronym, and grouping - to assess their effect on short-term and long-term vocabulary recall. Schmitt (1997) [7] classifies memory strategies into six primary classes with a total of twenty-seven techniques. The first group consists of images or imagery, which means that new words can be learnt by examining them with images of their meaning rather than definitions, or by associating them with a particularly vivid personal experience. The second set consists of terms that are connected to L2 words already known by the students. In contrast, irrelevant words connect words that have no logical connection. This group may be utilized frequently with the Loci technique, which aids with word recall by associating them with specific locales. The following group instinctively groups words into groups without prompting. The orthographic or phonological form of a word constitutes a typical group. It emphasizes the orthographic or phonological form of the target word to promote memory. Other memory strategies, such as structural analysis (affixes, root, and word class), paraphrasing, etc., are organized in a separate group.

There are several research examining the influence of mnemonic strategies on vocabulary retention. Nemati (2009) [11] conducted research on memory vocabulary learning and long-term retention with female Indian students. This study's findings demonstrate the long-term usefulness of teaching through mnemonic strategies and educating students on the significance of mnemonic strategies. Using a delayed post-test on Iranian students, Ghorbani and Riabi (2011) [12] reached the same conclusion that mnemonic strategy instruction is beneficial for the long-term retention of vocabulary. Both findings demonstrate that mnemonic strategies are crucial for developing and retaining vocabulary for second language learners. In general, many mnemonic learning strategies are an effective tool for assisting L2 learners in obtaining lexical knowledge.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants and instruments

This investigation includes 260 students from Faculty of English language at Lac Hong University. They are all English majors who have studied English as a second language at the intermediate and advanced levels.

In this study, a survey was employed to obtain the data. A 15-item questionnaire based on Schmitt's taxonomy (1997) [7] was constructed to meet the requirements of the study. Schmitt presented 27 memory mechanisms for

vocabulary, which he classified into six categories: imagery, related words, unrelated words, grouping, word's orthographical (or phonological form), and other memory strategies. Due to time constraints, the questionnaire includes 15 taxonomy items representing six primary groups. These items were chosen appropriately for students at Lac Hong University. Therefore, twelve controversial techniques, including the Peg method and the Loci approach, are not utilized in this study.

Each question item about the usage of 15 methods will be answered according to Likert's scale of frequency: mostly use, less use, and never use. In addition, students will self-evaluate their responses to the question on the utility of each technique. They can pick whatever vocabulary-memory techniques are most effective for them.

### 3.2 Procedure and data analysis

The questionnaire will first be presented to 260 English majors at Lac Hong University. The researcher will instruct each participant on how to respond at the same moment. They will be required to attentively read a 15-item questionnaire and select the responses that best characterize them about 15 minutes. Participants' completed surveys are gathered immediately after completion. Next, all of the surveys were examined. They were recovered and ready to be coded. The study results will be converted into percentages based on the total number of responses.

Using Microsoft Excel, the results of the study will be converted into percentages based on the total number of responses. On the basis of the collected data, two study questions will be answered and the prevalent trend of employing mnemonic strategies for vocabulary learning will be examined.

## 4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to investigate the use of mnemonic vocabulary learning strategies in order to answer the following two research questions: (1) the most prevalent mnemonic strategies used by first-year English majors, and (2) the most effective strategies for remembering words easily on student assessments. The outcomes will be studied to provide answers to these questions.

**Table 1:** *The highest number of mnemonic strategies mostly used*

Numbers of strategies	Mnemonic strategies	Numbers of students	Percentages
1	Image word's meaning	183	70%
2	Connect word to a personal experience	167	64%
3	Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms	154	59%
4	Use new word in sentences	134	52%
5	Say new word aloud when studying	131	50%

Table 1 displays the frequency of the most common strategies employed by 260 participants. 70% of the mostly used strategy consisted of imagining the meaning of the term. It indicates that three-quarters of these English majors prefer to learn new terms through images rather than definitions. 64% of students find that relating words to personal experiences is the second most effective remembering approach. Other considerably high amounts,

such as relating terms to their synonyms, employing new words in sentences, and pronouncing new words aloud when learning, are all around 50 percent.

In terms of mostly-used mnemonic strategies, students choose to acquire vocabulary using imagery sub-strategies in which "learners can generate their own mental representations of the word's meaning" (Schmitt, 1997) [7]. For instance, a student might associate the term "rich" with a lot of money. Other ways for acquiring vocabulary are not the most popular, but students still utilize them as a second option. The table 2 below will include several memory strategies that are lesser used than others.

**Table 2:** *The highest number of mnemonic strategies less used*

Numbers of strategies	Mnemonic strategies	Numbers of students	Percentages
1	Use 'scale' for gradable adjectives	172	66%
2	Study the spelling of words	161	62%
3	Study the sound of words	158	61%
4	Say new words aloud when studying	142	55%
5	Group words together to study them	139	53%
6	Use new word in sentences	135	52%

These 6 sub-strategies took the typical percentages of less used strategies by the students with more than 50%. In these instances, the usage of 'scales' for gradable adjectives is 66% less prevalent. This method aids in the collection of relative-meaning adjectives. For example, 'big' is larger than 'medium-sized' but less than 'huge,' therefore a scale (huge/ big/ medium-sized/ little) might be used to recall these terms (Gairns & Redman, 1986) [13].

In this study, most mnemonic strategies are selected for less frequent use rather than more frequent use. Particularly, in certain strategies, the percentages of less used are nearly double or triple those of mostly used, such as strategies focusing on the sound of words and the spelling of words, which account for approximately 30 percent of mostly used strategies but 62% of less used strategies, respectively. It is evident that learners do not always employ specific mnemonic strategies. They might employ a variety of ways for acquiring language depending on the context. However, of the 15 mnemonic strategies created, there are a few that nearly no pupils employ. The tactics shown in Table 3 below are the least popular among these students.

**Table 3:** *The highest number of mnemonic strategies never used*

Numbers of strategies	Mnemonic strategies	Numbers of students	Percentages
1	Use Keyword method	95	37%
2	Affixes and roots (remembering)	89	34%
3	Part of speech (remembering)	80	30%
4	Paraphrase the word's meaning	65	25%
5	Learn the words of an idiom together	52	20%

The majority of students (less than 50%) acknowledge they rarely or never employ the five mnemonic strategies.

These last strategies on the list belong to the other memory strategies - a distinct category within the six main classes of mnemonic strategies - which include strategies for acquiring vocabulary at a high level, such as evaluating word structure, paraphrasing meaning, and identifying parts of speech.

The findings of an evaluation of the effectiveness of 15 mnemonic strategies for remembering English vocabulary reveal that students had a favorable opinion of their effectiveness. 260 participants selected 'yes' in excess of 60% of the time for each of the techniques. Specifically, imagining a word's meaning continues to account for 98% of the most effective technique for learning vocabulary. Students ranked linking a term to a personal experience and using 'scales' for gradable adjectives as the second most effective strategy, at 86%. Clearly, the more prevalent a strategy is, the more valuable it is perceived.

It may be inferred that the first 10 mnemonic strategies are the most popular among students. Schmitt (1997) [7] categorizes these methods into five groups: imagery, similar words, unrelated words, grouping, and orthographic or phonological form of the word. In addition, students favor the two strategies from the imagery group, which involves imagining a word's meaning, and the linked group, which involves relating a word to a personal experience. In other words, students are able to readily recall the meaning of words by seeing them in their minds or associating them with comparable things they have already learned. Other strategies tend to relate L2 terms that students are already familiar with, such as synonyms, antonyms, or the "scale" of gradable adjectives. It is also a preferred method for pupils to acquire vocabulary. In addition, mnemonic strategies that emphasize a word's orthographic or phonological shape are commonly recognized as effective memory aids. Specifically, speaking words aloud when studying is the only method utilized by the majority of pupils. It implies that acquiring vocabulary by repeating a word's sound will aid students in remembering it. These English majors widespread use of mnemonic strategies will be identified in order to assist students in memorizing L2 vocabulary more effectively.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Mnemonic strategies are generally regarded as an effective method for learning and retaining words. Craik and Lockhart (1972) [14] suggested that the Depth of Processing Hypothesis requires elaborate mental processing for long-term memory retention. Mnemonic strategies facilitate quicker learning and enhanced memory (Thompson, 1987) [9]. Consequently, the usage of mnemonic methods explored in this study intends to define the prevalent tendency of English majors at FEL in order to orient and enhance these strategies for the students. Some recommendations for both teachers and students can be provided based on data analysis. First, the sub-strategies from three groups - imagery, related terms, and the word's orthographical or phonological form - that are the most effective mnemonic techniques for learning and retaining vocabulary should be consistently enhanced. Learners at a low level, such as elementary, are familiar with these strategies. However, as English majors, they must learn more academic skills for dealing with new terms at the level of English majors. Therefore, secondly, the five mnemonic tactics that are rarely utilized on the list, such as dissecting word pieces or paraphrasing meaning, should

also be geared for intermediate or advanced students. Studying a word's affixes, origins, and word class, according to Schmitt, is a potential means of cementing its meaning.

Despite the fact that this study provides some favorable trends for the application of mnemonic strategies to vocabulary acquisition, a few limitations should be acknowledged. Time is one of the most restrictive aspects of the study. Due to time constraints, this study focuses solely on the prevalent usage of mnemonic vocabulary learning strategies among English majors of FEL. It is hoped that future research would encourage the adoption of teaching mnemonic strategies and evaluate the influence of these strategies on supporting L2 learners' vocabulary memory for long-term retention. This study is anticipated to be the starting stage in the development of mnemonic aids for teaching and remembering English vocabulary.

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