PART 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

In the structural approach, the predominance of structures made people disparage the role of vocabulary. In the current communicative approach, the overwhelming interest in language functions and communicative skills has pushed back the elements and units of language to the farther reaches of attention. In language use, the learner’s background knowledge of the topic, not only in comprehension but also in expression, plays a very important role. In fact, this schema enables people to talk, to write and to understand what is being said or written. This schema is stored in people’s mind in the form of linguistic elements, especially words and lexemes (i.e. Wordlike phrases) (Khoo, R. 1994).

Ruth Wajnryb (1992) shares this view by saying that traditionally, lexis has not been given pride of place in teacher’s priorities, serving more as a cushion on which to practise grammar patterns than as an important section of the learning curriculum in its own right. This contrasts strikingly with learners’ perceptions about vocabulary: very often learners equate language learning with learning new labels for familiar concepts.

In the context of Vietnam University of Commerce (VUC), English is being taught as Business English and a compulsory subject for non-major students. The teaching and learning of vocabulary, therefore, is obviously a very significant aspect in foreign language methodology and needs to be taken into much consideration. For the teachers of English, what vocabulary teaching strategies and techniques should they use to maximize the student’s learning effectiveness? For the students, what learning strategies or techniques should be used to satisfy their needs when they are well aware that English is increasingly considered their instrumental objective to help them succeed not only in their semester exams but also in their future job seeking after graduating from university.

Having worked with the book “Business Basics” for several years, the researcher has noticed that a number of problems faced by the 1st year students at VUC still exist in the process of English (EVL) vocabulary learning. She realized from her observation and
experience for years that many of the 1st year students produced various kinds of writing and speaking errors in their English learning. A lot of her colleagues complained that a considerable number of their students could not even give a simple answer or speak a simple sentence. One of the main reasons, found from a quick interview on these students, causing this problem is that vocabulary seems to be hard for them to remember, to correctly pronounce and use. On the other hand, time allocated for the English learning course is limited, which allows only a little amount of time for students to learn new words, to practise, and consolidate them. Poor learning and teaching environment is the last but not least reason to slow down students’ improvement in their vocabulary learning. As a result, The students cannot avoid the feeling of much anxiety in their speaking activities, and failure in their written tests at the end of every semester, and consequently English turns to become a very challenging subject for them to accomplish at university.

This problem inspires the researcher a real desire to do a small research to find out the most common problems in learning vocabulary in the book “Business Basics” towards the 1st year students in VUC and the teaching implications to be taken into consideration to eliminate these.

2. Aims of the study
   a. To specify the most common problems in learning business vocabulary in the book “Business Basics” faced by the 1st year students in VUC
   b. To suggest some solutions to improve the students’ vocabulary learning

3. Scope of the study

This study is limited to the area of investigating in English vocabulary learning faced by the first-year students in VUC when working with the book “Business Basics” by David Grant (2001). More importantly, it tries to serve the purpose of finding out the most common problems in the students’ vocabulary learning and seeking for possible solutions to deal with the found problems.

4. Methodology:
The study is designed to use a quantitative method combined with a qualitative method to obtain its aims and objectives. Below is a description of the subjects, the instruments, and procedures employed for the study:

4.1. The subjects

There are two types of subjects participating in the study. The first type is the first year students at VUC, and the later is the teachers who have been working with these students for years.

100 of the 1st year students were chosen by random to take part in a questionnaire survey. They came from 10 classes (10 per class) in different faculties at the university. They are both male and female, at the age from 19 to 20 and have learnt English for at least three years at high school.

In addition, 15 teachers who are working with these students were invited to participate in an interview held by the researcher. They are both male and female, aging from 25 to 50 and have worked with the book “Business Basics” for at least 3 years.

4.2. The instruments

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, different tools were used, namely written test, questionnaires, and interview.

Instrument 1: The 2nd mid-term test was used as a tool to investigate what problems the 1st year students have in learning English vocabulary in the book “Business Basics” at VUC. This kind of test has much to do with vocabulary, and includes 4 parts presented in the following order: Gap-filling (10 points), word forms (10 points), reading comprehension (10 points), and letter reordering (10 points). (see appendix 3)

Instrument 2: Survey questionnaires on the 1st year students were employed to find out what attitudes they have towards their vocabulary learning, what common vocabulary problems they have to cope with when working with the book “Business Basics”, and what teaching methods used by their teachers they would enjoy. (see appendix 1)
**Instrument3**: An interview was organized with 15 teachers who are teaching English to the first year students at VUC to find out what teaching methods they are using, what problems they find from their 1st year students in vocabulary learning, and some recommendations made by them. This is to support the two aims of the study. (see appendix 2)

**4.3. The procedures**

**4.3.1. The 2nd mid-term test**

100 written tests done by the 1st year students at the middle of the 2nd term at VUC were chosen randomly from ten classes of different faculties to mark for statistical data. The test is scaled by the researcher as follows:

Very bad: 0 – 2;  Bad: 3 – 4;  Good: 5 – 6;  Very good: 7 – 8;  Excellent: 9 - 10

**4.3.2. Questionnaires**

100 questionnaires were delivered to 100 randomly chosen students. Each questionnaire consists of 12 items designed with both close-ended and open-ended questions which are to help respondents feel free to express their own ideas.

**4.3.3. Interview**

An interview was organized between the researcher and 15 teachers mentioned above. These teachers were asked to help the researcher to take notes on the common problems which often occurred during the English lessons before the interview. The interview was a semi-structured kind with 5 items focusing on their routine teaching methods and comments on vocabulary learning problems which occurred during their teaching process. It was recorded for later reference.

**4.4. Data analysis**

As stated above in the introduction, the data for this study is collected by means of the
middle semester tests, students’ questionnaires, and teachers’ interview. With the 2nd mid-
term tests, their vocabulary acquisition can be accurately assessed. Information provided
from Students’ questionnaire and comments and perceptions collected from teachers’
interview will be categorized, tabulated and converted to percentages for the convenience of
analysis. Along with these, information raised during teachers’ interview is added to assist
interpretation.

5. Design of the study

This study is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the rationale for the study
carried out by the researcher, the aims of the study, the scope of the study, and the method
by which the study was conducted. The second part is developed into four chapters. To
begin with, an overall literature review is introduced in the first chapter, underlying the
concept of vocabulary, vocabulary aspects need to be taught, some vocabulary learning
strategies and vocabulary teaching methods which have great impact on the efficiency of
students’ learning of vocabulary. The second one gives a brief introduction on the context of
English vocabulary teaching and learning in VUC. And the last one presents analysis from
data collected from the subjects and instruments employed in the research added with some
discussion. Finally, major findings are identified. Chapter four suggests some solutions
which are expected to improve the 1st year students’ vocabulary learning in VUC context.
Part three reviews the major findings of the study, refers to some limitations of the study,
and also suggestion is made for further study.
PART 2. DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

I.1. What is vocabulary?
It can be difficult to define precisely what vocabulary is. According to Penny Ur (2000), we should mention two concepts when talking about vocabulary: Words and vocabulary items.

I.1.1. The notion of “words”
In Michael McCarthy’s view (1990), words are defined as “free-standing items of language that have meaning. For example: the word “eating” is freestanding in itself, and that within it has another potentially freestanding element “eat”, independently meaningful from the second element “-ing”. These two meaningful parts of “eating” are called “morphemes”. Some words consist of several morphemes: “deformed” consists of three “de-form-ed”-only “form” is a word in its own right. And sometimes when morphemes combine to form words, sound changes and/or spelling changes can disguise them, making the presence less obvious to the untrained ear or eye. For example: “Reduce” changes its vowel sound to “reduction” when it becomes a noun. Therefore, studying how words are formed offers one way of classifying vocabulary for teaching and learning purposes.

Pyles and Algeo (1970:96) said “when most of us think about language, we think first about words. It is true that the vocabulary is the focus of language. It is in words that sounds and meanings inter-lock to allow us to communicate with one another, and it is words that we arrange together to make sentences, conversations and discourse of all kinds”.

I.1.2. Vocabulary items
A new item of vocabulary may be more than a single word: For example, post office and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. Another term to call for vocabulary is “chunks” as stated by Schmitt, N & McCarthy, M (1997) that “Some of the vocabulary people know is originally learned as parts of multi-word chunks, often as phrases, idioms, or proverbs”. There are also multi-word idioms such as call it a
day, where the meaning of the phrase cannot be deduced from an analysis of the component words. A useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary “items” rather than “words”.

I.2. Vocabulary aspects need to be taught

I.2.1. Pronunciation and spelling:

The concept of pronunciation may be said to include the sound of the language, or phonology, stress and rhythm, and intonation (Penny Ur's, 1991). In most languages there is a fairly clear correspondence between sounds and symbols. Certain letters or combinations of letters are pronounced in certain ways, and if there are variations, these are governed by consistent rules. When, for example, the letter $e$ in English is pronounced /e/ (educate) or /i/ (economic) when this letter is always pronounced /e/ in Vietnamese.

To many students, the complex relationship between sound and spelling in English seems to make the language inexplicable to foreign learners. This can result in the learners failing to understand words in connected speech that he understand clearly in written English. Careful attention to pronunciation is, therefore, an essential part of vocabulary teaching if new lexis is to be used effectively, or understood without difficulty, in spoken English. (Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman, 1986).

Once learners have mastered the basic sound-symbol correspondence they may in some languages, be immediately able to decode and pronounce correctly any written text-or, conversely, write down a spoken one. In others, it may not be so simple. They may need a whole set of extra sound-symbol rules: for example, that -tion at the end of a word in English is usually pronounced /ʃən/. Words or sets of words with unusual pronunciation or spelling you may need to be taught and practise on their own-some ideas follow at the end of the unit.

I.2.2. Grammar:

Regarding Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman’s view (1986), foreign language learners need some guidance on how to use vocabulary accurately. There are two main pedagogic issues involved here: one is the highlighting of regular and irregular forms, and the second is the role of source books in allowing learners to be self-sufficient.
In the classroom, teachers need to clarify regular forms and common irregular forms for their students. In some cases, these will merit considerable attention: Irregular verbs, verb patterns, countable and uncountable nouns, adjectives versus adverbs are common examples here. When teaching a new verb, for example we might give also its past form, if this is irregular (think, thought), and we might note if it is transitive or intransitive. Similarly, when teaching a noun, we may wish to present its plural form, if irregular (mouse, mice), or draw learners' attention to the fact that it has no plural at all (advice, information).

I.2.3. Collocation:
The collocation typical of particular items is another factor that makes a particular combination sound "right" or "wrong" in a given context. So this is another piece of information about a new item which may be worth teaching. When introducing words like decision and conclusion, for example, we may note that you take or make the one, but usually come to the other; similarly, you throw a ball but toss a coin; you may talk about someone being dead tired but it sounds odd to say dead fatigued.

Collocations are also often noted in dictionaries, either by providing the whole collocation under one of the head-words, or by a note in parenthesis.

I.2.4. Aspects of meaning: denotation, connotation, appropriateness, meaning relationship
The meaning of a word is primarily what it refers to in the real world, or its denotation. This is often the sort of definition that is given in a dictionary. For example, dog denotes a kind of animal; more specifically, a common, domestic carnivorous mammal; and both dank and moist mean slightly wet.

A less obvious component of the meaning of an item is its connotation: the associations, or positive or negative feelings it evokes, which may or may not be indicated in a dictionary definition. The word dog, for example, as understood by most British people, has positive connotations of friendship and loyalty; whereas the equivalent in Arabic, as understood by most people in Arab countries has negative associations of dirt and inferiority.

A more subtle aspect of meaning that often needs to be taught is whether a particular item is the appropriate one to use in a certain context or not. Thus it is useful for a leaner to know that a certain word is very common, or relatively rare, or "taboos" in polite conversation, or tends to be used in writing but not in speech, or is more suitable for formal than informal discourse, or belongs to a certain dialect. For example, you may know that depart is
virtually synonymous in denotation with leave, but it is more formal, tends to be used in writing more than in speech, or business conversation, and is in general much less common. It is also useful to list aspects of meaning in the sense of meaning relationships. How the meaning of one item relates to the meaning of others can also be useful in teaching. There are various such relationships like synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, co-hyponyms or co-ordinates, superordinates, and translation. Besides these, there are other, perhaps looser, ways of associating meaning that are useful in teaching. You can, for instance, relate parts to a whole (the relationship between arm and body); or associate items that are part of the same real-world context (tractor, farmer, milking and irrigate are all associated with agriculture). All these can be exploited in teaching to clarify the meaning of a new item, or for practice or test materials. Therefore, "the meaning of a word can only be understood and learnt in terms of its relationship with other words in the language" (Gairns R & Redman S, 1986).

1.2.5. Word formation

Vocabulary items, whether one-word or multi-word, can often be broken down into their component "bits". Exactly how these bits are put together is another piece of useful information-perhaps mainly for more advanced learners.

You may wish to teach the common prefixes and suffixes: for example, if learners know the meaning of sub-, un-, and -able, this will help them guess the meanings of words like substandard, ungrateful and untranslatable. They should, however, be warned that in many common words the affixes no longer have any obvious connection with their root meaning (for example, comfortable). New combinations using prefixes are not unusual, and the reader or hearer would be expected to gather their meaning from an understanding of their components (ultra-modern, super-hero).

Another way vocabulary items are built is by combining two words: two nouns, or a gerund and a noun, or a noun and a verb to make one item: a single follow-up, swimming pool.

Again, new coinages using this kind of combination are very common.

I.3. Vocabulary in Business English

I.3.1. Business English Vocabulary

Ellis Mark and Johnson Christine (1996) state that “Business English courses often focus
on topics such as meetings, presentations and negotiations, formal letter writing, etc”.

Dudley-Evans T & John M.J.S (1989) argue that the focus of the course of business English is presentation, through listening and/or reading, followed by exercises to practise grammar and vocabulary. These focus on accuracy and correct answers. Finally, there are activities which are more open-ended and develop fluency in one or more of the four skills. The settings include “meeting people”, “making arrangements”, “talking about yourself and your company”, and “traveling”. Typical business carrier content topics include organizational charts, marketing, branding, advertisements and product development. Therefore, vocabulary in business English mainly contains words, items, idioms to express these topics, plus words in the general English.

I.3.2. The teaching of Business English Vocabulary

The teaching of vocabulary in ESP follows similar general principles to those in English for General Purpose (EGP). It is important to distinguish between vocabulary needed for comprehension and that needed for production. In comprehension, deducing the meaning of vocabulary from the context and from the structure of the actual word is the most important method of learning new vocabulary. For production purposes, storage and retrieval are significant. Various techniques have been suggested for storing vocabulary: the use of word association, mnemonic devices and loci, that is the use of visual images to help remember a word (Nattinger, 1988). Different learners favor different techniques, and it is important that teachers encourage learners to find out what works best for them. Each of these techniques involves cognitive processing rather than mechanical learning of lists. There are ways in which vocabulary may be gathered to facilitate cognitive processing: 1) Situational, semantic and metaphor sets; 2) Collocation and the use of corpora; 3) Lexical phrases.

I.4. Vocabulary learning strategies

Rubin (1987:29) gives a definition of learning strategy, in which learning is “the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used”.

In addition, Norbert Schmitt makes a discussion of the vocabulary learning strategies and present them in two stages: discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. The discovery strategies refer to determination strategies and social strategies and the consolidation
strategies with 10 types of strategies. In the boundary of this paper, only the consolidation strategies which can serve the study are reviewed herein after.

I.4.1. Social strategies:
The first strategy employs cooperative group learning, as it is stated by Nation (1977) that beside the initial discovery of a word, group work can be used to learn or practice vocabulary, because that it promotes active processing of information and cross modeling/imitation; The social context enhances motivation of the participants; Moreover, cooperative learning can prepare the participants for “team activities” outside the classroom. And because there is less instructor intervention, students have more time to actually use and manipulate language in class. Krashen (1982) proposed that interacting with native speakers would be an excellent way to gain vocabulary.

I.4.2. Memory strategies:
Memory traditionally known as mnemonics work by utilizing some well-known principles of psychology: a retrieval plan is developed during encoding, and mental imagery, both visual and verbal, is used. “They help individuals learn faster and recall better because they aid the integration of new material into existing cognitive units and because they provide retrieval cues”. Thompson, op.cit
Most memory strategies involve relating the word to be retained with some previously learned knowledge, using some form of imagery, or grouping. It is suggested that for a long-term retention, a new word can be integrated into many kinds of existing knowledge or images can be custom-made for retrieval.

I.4.3. Related words:
New words can be linked to L2 words which the student already knows. Usually this involves some type of sense relationship, such as coordination (apple-other kind of fruit like pears, cherries, or peaches), synonyms (irritated-annoyed), or antonymy (dead-alive). Word association research has shown that coordinates in particular have very strong connective bonds (Aitchison, 1978). These and other sense relationships (hyponymy and metonymy) can be illustrated with semantic maps, which are often used to help consolidate vocabulary (Oxford, op.cit).
I.4.4. Grouping:

Grouping is considered an important way to aid recall and people seem to organize words into groups naturally without prompting. In free-recall studies, L1 subjects were given lists of words to study and then recall in any order. Typically, words belonging to each meaning category are recalled together, for example, all animals first, before moving onto another category like names (Bousfield, 1953). If the words are organized in some way before memorization, recall is improved. This strategy works well with L2 learners, but better for more proficient learners than beginners.

Bower & Clark (1969) proposes that “words can be grouped together in a very natural way by using the target word in sentences”. Similarly, words can be grouped together in story, and the narrative chain method has been shown to be highly effective with L1 undergraduates, who recalled six to seven times as many words with this method than with rote memorization.

I.4.5. Cognitive strategies:

These strategies include repetition and using mechanical means to study vocabulary. Written and verbal repetition, repeatedly writing or saying a word over and over again, are common strategies in many parts of the world. Many learners have used these strategies to reach high levels of proficiency.

Word lists and flash cards can be used for the initial exposure to a word, and can be arranged to create logical groupings of the target words (Gairns and Redman, op. cit; Cohen, 1990).

Another kind of cognitive strategy is to use note taking in class which can invite learners to create their own personal structure for newly learned words, and also affords the chance for additional exposure during review. Students can also make use of a social vocabulary sections in their textbooks to help them study target words or they can make a tape recording of words lists (or any other vocabulary materials) and study by listening.

I.5. Methodology in vocabulary teaching

So far, Many methods have been used for foreign language teaching. However, not all of them are equally advantageous to the vocabulary learning of target language learners. Here
are some common methods which have been widely used to serve the purpose of both vocabulary teaching and learning, especially in the context of VUC.

**I.5.1. Vocabulary teaching according to the Grammar-translation method:**

The grammar-translation method of foreign language teaching is one of the most traditional methods. The major characteristic of the grammar-translation method is, precisely as its name suggests, a focus on learning the rules of grammar, and their application in translation passages from one language into the other. In this method, very little teaching is done in the target language. Instead, readings in the target language are translated directly and then discussed in the native language, often precipitating in-depth comparisons of the two languages themselves. Grammar is taught with extensive explanations in the native language. This method also lays a focus on the memorization of vocabulary. However, much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.

What learners can benefit from the method is that translation is the easiest way of explaining meanings or words and phrases from one language into another. Any other method of explaining vocabulary items in the second language is found time consuming. A lot of time is wasted if the meanings of lexical items are explained through definitions and illustrations in the second language. Further, learners acquire some short of accuracy in understanding synonyms in the source language and the target language. Nevertheless, when laying emphasis on reading and writing, it neglects speech. Thus, the students who are taught English through this method fail to express themselves adequately in spoken English.

**I.5.2. Vocabulary teaching according to the Direct Method**

The basic promise of the Direct Method is that second language learning should be more like first language learning. The method would include lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammar rules.

In general, the method can be considered useful for teaching vocabulary in the sense that firstly, it focuses on both speech and listening comprehension. The teacher gives instruction exclusively in the target language, teaching everyday vocabulary and sentences. The teacher develops oral communication skills in a careful progression that she frequently organizes
around questions-and-answer exchanges. He/she explains new teaching points through modeling and practice. Secondly, it emphasizes correct pronunciation and grammar, which he/she teaches inductively. Concrete vocabulary is presented through demonstration, regalia and pictures, for example, and teaches abstract vocabulary through association of ideas.

I.5.3. Vocabulary teaching according to the Communicative approach (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. CLT places great emphasis on helping students use the target language in a variety of contexts and places great emphasis on learning language functions. Its primary focus is on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop perfectly grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successfully learning a foreign language is assessed in terms of how well learners have developed their communicative competence, which can loosely be defined as their ability to apply knowledge of both formal and sociolinguistic aspects of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate.

The advantage it brings in is that teaching practice helps students develop their communicative competence in an authentic context. Thus, in the classroom, CLT often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, role-plays in which students practise and develop language functions, as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation focused activities.
CHAPTER II. THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING VOCABULARY IN “BUSINESS BASICS” IN VUC

II.1. The learning context
II.1.1. The teachers

Teaches are considered one of the most important factors in ESP teaching (Tony Dudley-Evans, MaggieJo St. John, 2000 ). At VUC, teachers working with these 1st year students are at different ages, with different working experience and graduated from not the same kind of educational training. Half of them are at the age from 45 to 55 and learned Russian before being re-trained to teach English. The rest are ranked from 25 to 38 years old, majored in English and graduated from Hanoi National University or Hanoi Foreign Language University.

In terms of language teaching method, an information exchange among these teachers shows that they are applying different kinds of teaching methods like the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct method, the Audio-lingual method, and the Communicative approach. It is very important that most of them are very aware of the importance of the Communicative approach when working with this book and teaching English to their students.

II.1.2. The students

At VUC, students come from different parts of the country. Most of these students commonly did not spend much time learning English at high school before as they had to spend most of time learning three subjects: mathematics, physics, and chemistry in order to pass VUC entrance examination. Thus, they are real beginners of English when entering the first year at university, and of different language proficiency levels.

II.1.3. The teaching material
II. 1.3.1. The text book
The book “Business Basics” has been used as the only textbook to teach the first year students in VUC for four years. This material is designed for students at elementary level studying or working in the world of business, and with the following features:
- “Business Basics” aims to provide students with basic knowledge and skills to work in international trade environment.
- It consists of 12 units, designed in a harmonious combination with business topics to enable students to develop both their language skills and working skills in business world, from low to higher level.
- A unit is divided into three parts, and each part lays a focus on grammar, function or vocabulary. Every unit provides students with opportunities to learn and develop their knowledge in categories of grammar, vocabulary, communication skills, and pronunciation through practice activities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- It is very interesting that when working with this book, students are given chances to practise English in actual situations in the form of pairs or groups, as information about people, companies and events in the book is selected from our real world. Also, accompanied with a set of original tapes/CDs, students can listen to both native and non-native speakers. This is greatly significant to increase students’ interest to take part in these situations, resulting in a higher learning effectiveness and to develop students’ communicative competence.

**II.1.3.2. The course content**

The whole course for the 1st year students consists of 7 units, divided into two semesters. For the first semester, four units from unit 1 to 4 are taught in 45 periods (45 minutes per period), and delivered within about 7 weeks, introducing four topics on you and your company (people in business, talking about your company, and company facts and figures), preparing a trip (choosing a hotel, flying out, arriving), away on business (finding your way, going out, and eating out), and visiting a company (meeting new people, reporting on a trip, and describing a company structure).

The second semester is organized for students to learn three units, unit 5, 6, and 8, within 30 periods, in about five weeks and a half. Students still work on four main areas of grammar, vocabulary, communication skills, and pronunciation, dealing with different
topics on **a company’ new development** (describing a company current activities, company developments, and personal developments), **making arrangements** (talking about dates and schedules, getting connected, and arranging to meet), **life stories** (success stories, making money, and company history). Again, an end-semester group discussion and writing examination are held to evaluate students’ language knowledge.

**II.1.4. The physical setting**

Setting refers to the classroom arrangements specified or implied in the task of the lesson, and it also requires consideration of whether the task is to be carried out wholly or partly outside the classroom (Dung, 1999). At VUC nevertheless, all lessons take place in fixed classrooms that makes it very difficult for teachers to make a change in an effort to apply ideas of new teaching methods in language teaching. The following facts can be used to make a real illustration about the teaching context at VUC.

- **Classroom size**: each class has about 45-72 students.
- **Classroom equipment**: All teachers at this university are supplied with a cassette recorder to use for their class contact when necessary. There are some new lecture halls equipped with modern devices such as an overhead projector, a television set but rarely can teachers and students use them because it usually takes much time for the teacher to apply for that kind of room and wait for the university authority to approve it.
- **Materials**: There have been some sorts of materials for reference like English books, magazines, newspapers in the library but they are not enough and available to meet the students’ need at this university.

It is obvious that the physical setting for English teaching at VUC is of much limitation due to large-size classroom, poor classroom condition and poor supported facilities. This certainly has a considerable negative affects on English teaching and learning at the university.
CHAPTER III. FINDINGS

The issues mentioned in the literature review only belong to the theoretical category. To seek for an insight into the problems in learning English vocabulary both theoretically and practically, this chapter presents the results derived from analyzing the data collected, and findings are identified.

III.1. Presentation of data analysis results

III.1.1. Mid-term test

Results from marking the tests are ranked according to a scale coded by the researcher and calculated by proportion of students and changed into percentage for data analysis of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts of the test</th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>Pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gap-filling</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>+ 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reading comprehension</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>+ 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Word usage</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>+ 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Letter re-ordering</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>+ 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The 2nd mid-term test

It can be seen from the table that the number of students who did badly the word usage in the test is highest, counting for 47%, followed by the gap-filling part with 40%. The reading comprehension part was done best with the lowest percentage (32%) of students failed. However, there is only an increase of 1% in the number of students who did not pass the letter re-ordering part (33%). This indicates that there may be some reasons for these problems. For the first part of the test, these students might have a bad memory in word meaning, and a difficulty in word forms or word usage, which led to their failure to fill appropriate words in sentences. For the second one, a lot of them seemed to be weak at word guessing in context, plus being unable to recall the meaning of the learned words. As a result, they could not answer or gave wrong answer in the comprehensive reading. The third part is the most problematic as students were really confused in deciding what part of speech to choose: verb, noun, or adjective; or which noun is the most suitable one in a range
of nouns like in (competitors, competitiveness, competition). For the last part, it is clear that a business letter is normally written in a format including certain parts. When failing to reorder it, the students did not remember a business letter format, or there might be some new word phrases or expressions they forget or they could not guess word meaning in context. All those prevented them from re-arranging the letter in the right order.

**III.1.2. The students’ questionnaires**

1. **How do you think of the importance of VEL?**

It can be noticed obviously from this pie chart that there is a strong trend of these students at VUC are well aware of the importance of English vocabulary learning. This number represents 94%, while only 4% of them considers it as important, and 2% not important at all.

![Chart 1](image)

This signifies that most of these students have a very good attitude towards their vocabulary learning, leading to a fairly high motivation in their learning process.

2. **How do you learn to pronounce a word?**

It is so surprising that learning to pronounce a word by looking up the phonetic transcription in a dictionary is the most popular way for students at VUC, taking up 34.9% of students. Meanwhile, imitating teachers and friends covers only 33.7%. Perhaps, after their lessons at school, there are newly taught words students may forget and dictionary is the only available material to show them how to pronounce a word. Moreover, when being equipped with an electronic bilingual dictionary, it is very convenient for students to listen to the dictionary voice and repeat. Listening to tape and repeating is chosen by 18.6% and learning to pronounce a word by other ways like watching TV, imitating foreigners is the least popular (12.7%).
Listening to tape are foreigners is a very good way to help students pronounce a word correctly, but not many students are supported with a tape recorder or feel self-confident enough to have a talk with foreign English speakers.

![Chart 2](image)

3. **How do you usually learn English vocabulary?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of English vocabulary learning</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write the words many times</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the words and Vietnamese equivalents</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sentence with them</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the words and meaning, their synonyms or antonyms</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read them aloud</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match the words with pictures</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ways (internet, TV, song, game)</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Ways of students’ EVL*

As is illustrated by the table, writing the words and Vietnamese equivalents is widely used by most students, covering 23.1%. Writing the words many times is also popular and less than the above way by 1%. Writing the words and meaning, their synonyms or antonyms is also paid much attention by 18.3% the students. Compared with this way, the choice of learning English vocabulary via internet, TV, songs, and games reduces to 14.4% while reading aloud, making sentences with them takes up only 10.6% and 7.7% corresponding. Matching words with pictures seems to be not attractive to get students involved in vocabulary learning as it takes up 3.8% only.

It can be inferred that when most students choose to write the words and Vietnamese equivalents, or write the words many times, they focus only on the spelling aspect of the words rather than how to use the words in sentences or context. Further more, with only a
small number of students learning words by making sentences (7.7%), which lead to students’ failure in both writing and speaking tasks at school as well as at home.

4. Which way of vocabulary presentation are you interested in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ interest in ways of new word presenting</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using visual aids</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying the words clearly one by one and writing them on the board</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating all the words into Vietnamese</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using synonyms and antonyms</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using mimes, gestures and facial expressions</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using target language to define the new word</td>
<td>13.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ways (TV, song, game)</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Ways of vocabulary presentation students like most

As an overall trend, it is obvious from the table that the biggest choice is made by 21.7% of the students for presenting new words by saying the words clearly one by one and writing them on the board. The next choice falls into the way of using synonyms and antonyms, counting for 19.8%, then comes the interest in translating all the new words into Vietnamese equivalents. The number of students who are interested in new word presenting by using visual aids, using mimes, gestures, and facial expressions represents nearly the same percentage (12.3% and 10.4% correspondingly). Using the target language to define the new words receives 13.2% while only 6.6% like to have new words presented by TV, songs, or games.

From these figures, it can be stated that three techniques, namely Saying the words clearly one by one and writing them on the board, Using synonyms and antonyms, and Translating all the words into Vietnamese are most liked by the students. This may be explained that they find these ways easy to learn new words than the other ones. Using the target language to define a new words is not their favorite choice though it is a very useful way to review and develop students’ vocabulary. It may be due to the fact that this technique causes them much difficulty to understand the new word, and even sometimes become time-consuming within a limited boundary of time. Using visual aids, using mimes, gestures, and facial expressions and other ways are least liked because in business English, it is not easy for the
teacher to find appropriate visual aids, or present words by mimes, gestures and facial expressions, for example, budget, stake, dividends etc…

5. Which way of vocabulary practice do you like most?

This pie chart reveals that 20% of the students show interest in learning English vocabulary by making sentence with the new words and by playing games (19%). Asking and answering questions related to the new words and making dialogues with the new words hold the same percentage of 18%. 16% of the students like to repeat the new words while only 9% want to have discussion with the new words.

It is likely to mean that the students are aware of their weakness in making sentences, so they want to have more practice of this kind. Playing games receives many participants as the students find it very interesting to create an enjoyable atmosphere in their classroom. This can motivate their want of learning a lot, especially when business English is sometimes considered rather boring and to cause much pressure to many of them during a long lesson. Discussing with the new words is chosen by the least is perhaps due to the fact that when students have not acquired sufficient vocabulary store to talk, they do not feel self-confident enough or even very difficult to participate in this task.

6. Which kind of vocabulary consolidation are you most interested in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consolidating exercises students are most interested in</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making sentences with given words</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing sentences</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Filling in the gaps | 13.1%
---|---
Finding synonyms and antonyms | 6.5%
Matching words | 13.1%
reordering words | 9.2%
Asking and answering questions | 11.8%
Discussing | 6%
Playing games | 14.5%

| Table 4. Kinds of vocabulary consolidation students like most |

As surprisingly seen from the above table that playing games has the leading position in all with the biggest number of 14.5%, which means that games are always attractive to young students, hence playing more important role in EVL. Sentence completing (13.8%), gap-filling (13.1%), and word-matching (13.1%) take the second position with nearly the same percentage. This may propose that these kinds of exercises are found to be very useful and practical for the students to do as they will help them so much when they are included in their end-semester tests. Making sentences with given words and making and answering questions are rather difficult tasks, causing only 11.8% of the students to take consideration. Re-ordering words and discussing position at the bottom of the table with 9.2% and 6% accordingly may refer that these are the most challenging jobs for them to do.

7. What problems do you have when learning vocabulary?

As apparently observed from this chart, the biggest problem for students (34%) in learning English vocabulary is they are easy to forget the words they learned before. Students who cannot remember words hold 14.2%. This may indicate that there should be more impressive method of vocabulary teaching and more consolidating strategies from their teachers, and their effective self-learning ways of vocabulary from students to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 4</th>
<th>Students' vocabulary learning problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot remember words</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to forget words</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forget some words only</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember words but cannot pronounce correctly</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know how to use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23
help them improve this problem as well. Concerning word usage and use, students’ problem in using learnt words holds 15.2%, indicating that it is necessary to take this problem into consideration by the teachers. 

14.2% of the students make complaints about being unable to remember words, and 13% worry about forgetting some words only. With respect to the field of pronunciation, 24% of them say they remember words but cannot pronounce or cannot pronounce correctly. Some reasons may be counted for this problem. First, class time is not enough for students to practise pronouncing both new words and the taught words. Second, there is no guideline from their teachers to instruct them how to learn to pronounce words from dictionary phonetic transcription, or from some relative pronunciation rules in English.

8. What problems do you have when participating in discussion in your class?

The above chart represents 40.7% of the students who admit being able to speak only a little English. Fortunately, the number of students who cannot speak any words falls down to 11.9%. 28.8% of them says sometimes they cannot recall learned words while 18.6% can remember words but cannot speak.

There is a great possibility that poor word memory, the lack of practising and recycling of learnt words and speaking should be counted for this problem to happen.

9. What kind of tasks do you find most difficult in your last examination?

There is no surprise that 31.7% of the students feel the gap-filling part most difficult to do in their last English exam. On the contrary, reading is the least difficult of all, making up
only 11.7%. Sentence building is found more difficult, counting for 16.4%. Letter re-ordering is less difficult than sentence building, 18.9% opposed to 21.1%.

What implied from this chart is that students need more exercises of such kinds like gap-filling, then verb-forms, as practice is always of great necessity to improve students’ learning.

III.1.3. Teachers’ interview

1. *What problems do you have when teaching English vocabulary in the book “Business Basics” to the first year students at VUC?*

When being asked the question, most of the teachers (12 in 15) agree that the first year students in VUC are of different level of English competence and time given for students to practise vocabulary taught in “Business Basics” in particular and other skills in general is not enough. Phuong, one of the teachers says “*our students of English are not of the same competence, so it is difficult for teachers to choose an appropriate method to teach all. In fact, a method can work with a number of students but don’t work with the others*” All of the teachers have the complaint about the over-size class at the university as they always consisted of from 45 to 73 students. This certainly has a bad affect on the quality of English learning and teaching of the university. “*the size of classes in our university is too large for students to practise vocabulary effectively.*” Nga complains.

In addition, student’s attitudes are also taken into consideration here by 4 teachers. It is said to be “*not good enough to increase their interest and want in English learning,*” Phuong adds.

2. *What problems do you find from your students' vocabulary learning when working with the book “Business Basics”?*
13 out of 15 interviewed teachers give the same comment on their students’ pronunciation, stating that many mistakes are found from their pronunciation of the taught words. This problem becomes worse when a considerable number of students pronounce the taught words incorrectly or even cannot say them at all.

In Mai’s opinion, the students’ mistakes usually fall into three categories: sound and spelling patterns, word stress, and intonation. Her comment is shared by many other colleagues. Following are their common pronunciation errors exemplified by them:

**Errors in sound and spelling patterns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Correct pronunciation</th>
<th>Incorrect pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce</td>
<td>/intraˈdjuːs/</td>
<td>/intrəˈdus/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>/intrəˈdəʃ(ə)n/</td>
<td>/intrəˈdjuːʃ(ə)n/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>/prəˈdəʃ(ə)n/</td>
<td>/prəˈdjuːs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>/ˈkʌstəma(r)/</td>
<td>/ˈkustəma(r)/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce</td>
<td>/riˈdjuːs/</td>
<td>/reˈduːs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enclose</td>
<td>/ɪnˈkləʊz/</td>
<td>/enˈkləʊz/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>/ˈsɜːvɪs/</td>
<td>/ˈsɜːvɪs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compete</td>
<td>/kəmˈpiːt/</td>
<td>/kəmˈpɛt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>/kəmˈpɛtɪʃ(ə)n/</td>
<td>/kəmˈpɛtɪʃ(ə)n/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the causes of the above mistakes? My believe is that for one thing, there is an interference of the students’ mother tongue in their vocabulary acquisition. The letter *u* is pronounced /u/ in Vietnamese, so they bring it onto the word *produce* to pronounce /prədus/ whereas *u* is pronounced correctly /ju/ in English. In a similar way, *e* is pronounced /i/ or /e/ in English while it is only pronounced /e/ in Vietnamese, leading to a mistake /kəmˈpɛtɪʃ(ə)n/ instead of /kəmˈpɛtɪʃ(ə)n/. For another thing, the students may over-generalize some sound rules in English. As *u* is usually pronounced /ju/ in English, they tend to apply it in any words which contain *u*, like introduction /intrəˈdjuʃ(ə)n/.

The other kind of very common mistakes happens in pronouncing the past simple of regular
verbs. Students often pay no attention to pronounce /t/, /d/, /id/, or with verbs which end with k (booked), p (stopped), s (passed), t (started), d (attended); or sh (pushed), ch (watched), they often confuse where to pronounce /t/, /d/, or /id/ in these verbs. A lot of them tend to forget /t/ in booked, missed, or pronounce /id/ in every regular verbs of the past form, such as /laikid/ liked, /di’velapid/ developed, /əpɔnɪd/ opened, etc.. Others ignore to produce /d/ in improved, learned, lived, or failed.

**Errors in word stress**

There is an overall trend of placing no stress on a word said by the students. For example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Correct word stress</th>
<th>Incorrect word stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>/lːkə’nɒmɪk/</td>
<td>/lːkənɒmɪk/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>/lː’kɒnəmi/</td>
<td>/lːkɒnəmi/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compete</td>
<td>/kəm’pɪt:/</td>
<td>/kampɪt:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export (v)</td>
<td>/’ekspɔːt/</td>
<td>/ekspɔːt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>/tek’nɒlədʒi/</td>
<td>/teknɒlədʒi/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This mistake is made by our students’ habit in using their mother tongue, because Vietnamese words are one syllable words, not multi-syllable ones, hence no word stress like in English.

**Errors in intonation**

Equally, there is a common mistake in speaking with no focus on words which need to be emphasized. There is no rising tone at the end of yes/no questions and falling tone at the end of Wh-questions. “Most of the students produce a flat intonation when speaking. I think the reasons are, first, they are not aware of the importance of sentence intonation in English. Second, they are not taught how to give intonation on a sentence.” Hong says.

**Poor memory**
In the aspect of students’ word memory and retrieving, 9 teachers say the students often forget the taught words or expressions. This causes students to be unable to recall words to express their ideas when participating in speaking activities like a telephone conversation, a customer visit, or a business lunch. The same holds true to teacher-student exchanges in class when students cannot answer their teachers’ questions. That’s why about 8% of students in each class are unable to produce a complete sentence.

**Errors in formality and informality**

Formality and informality are also worth discussing about because the appropriate use of them is really significant in business communication. “Yet, it is not paid much attention by students”, Phuong said and gave a list of mistakes made by her students below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The correct expression/sentence</th>
<th>Students’ incorrect production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can/could/may I speak to Mr. Green, please? (on phone)</td>
<td>I want to speak to Mr. Green, please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>please let me know if you require any information“ (in a business letter)</td>
<td>Please let me know if you have any information“ (in a business letter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We look forward to being of service to you</td>
<td>We want to serve you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d be grateful if you could arrange a schedule of visits and appointment for Frau Kohman</td>
<td>I want you to arrange a schedule of visits and appointment for Frau Kohman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Incorrect word usage**

11 teachers make strong comments about students’ incorrect usage or use of words. When being asked this question, Son said “not a small number of students are weak at using words in sentences. They are confused in what parts of speech to choose to make a sentence”. Instead of using the adjective successful, they use the noun success, For instance, he is a success man in business; or competition instead of competitive because market is competition, we have try to catch up with other companies, or using produce instead of product in Nokia provides a range of mobile phone produce in all parts of the world; or the same between sale and sell.

**Errors in word grammar**
Notably, more than a half of the teachers complain that the problem in word grammar is even worse when students don’t remember the past simple and participle forms of many verbs like *rise* – *rose* – *risen*; *fall* – *fell* – *fallen*; *buy* – *bought* – *bought*; *pay* – *paid* – *paid*; *fly* – *flew* – *flown*. “Although being taught the verb *fly*, with the past simple form *flew*, the past participle *flown*, a lot of them use *flied* instead of *flew*; or in terms of nouns, they often confuse between the singular and plural form of the nouns like *businessman* & *businessmen*; *woman* & *women*, both in spelling and pronunciation. *Information, furniture, work, money* are uncountable nouns, but they are used by most of students as countable ones with *many*, like *many information, many money*, or when being preceded by *a lot of*, Hong says.

**Errors in word collocation**

With regard to the aspect of collocation, there is also a common trend for students to say

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn a training course</th>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Do/take a training course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make market research</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do market research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I write a message?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can I take a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get early retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take early requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have attention to</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pay attention to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a decision</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make a decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When being asked for explanations about the above problems, most of the teachers mention the very shortage of time for vocabulary practice in students’ classroom. “If more time was spent on students’ vocabulary classroom learning, they could reduce these problems to a considerable extend”, Lien said.

3. **What techniques and activities do you often use to present new words?**

Overall, there is a strong trend of teachers (12) towards the techniques of saying the word clearly one by one and writing them on the board and using synonyms and antonyms for new words presentation. They all agree that the first technique is necessary for students to recognize the new words in forms of pronunciation and spelling. The later aims to help them consolidate the taught words or expand their vocabulary.
Translating all the words into Vietnamese and using the target language to define the new word are equally chosen by 8 teachers while using visual aids and using mimes, gestures and facial expressions are picked up by only 7 teachers. Guessing word meaning is used by the least.

“In my opinion, although it is necessary to make the new words clear for the students to understand their meaning, we shouldn’t translate all of them. Target language should be used as much as possible in a foreign language class in order to provide students more chances to recall the taught words through the activities of listening”, Hop commented.

4. What techniques and activities do you often use to help students to consolidate and remember the taught words?

13 teachers prefer using the techniques of making sentences with given words and finding synonyms or antonyms for the given words. Gap-filling and word matching are selected by 10 teachers, and completing sentences is often used by only 8. Compared with all above mentioned techniques, word re-ordering is preferred by the least teachers (6).

Hop proposes that students should be given a variety of these exercises to help them remember the words taught. The more exercises they can do, the more improvement they can make.

5. What recommendations should be made to improve your students’ vocabulary learning?

Various recommendations are made by the interviewed teachers with the hope to improve the students’ vocabulary learning. They can be categorized as follows:

- With reference to presenting vocabulary, 7 of them suggest diversifying teaching activities by using visual aids, vocabulary games or songs to motivate students’ learning. One teacher likes using synonyms and antonyms to presenting new words, and one is against the constant translating of the new words into Vietnamese.
- With regards to vocabulary consolidation, 6 teachers agree on the necessity of designing exciting and practical exercises to help students strengthen their word memory. Lien proposes that “vocabulary consolidation can be supported by tests” or “there should be regular check of the taught words” said Chung.
• Relating to word pronunciation, only 3 teachers propose a regular check of students’ pronunciation during their lessons at school.

Things considered, teachers and their teaching methods or techniques are factors partly counting for their students’ problems. With nearly half of the interviewed teachers proposing a diversity of vocabulary presenting and consolidating techniques, one of fifths requiring a regular check of students’ pronunciation, it reveals that the teachers’ motivation is not high enough to make a considerable improvement in their students’ vocabulary learning. Therefore, there is no doubt that teachers’ enthusiasm and responsibilities should be enhanced in order to pursue for the optimum ways of teaching.

III. 2. Findings

Having analyzed the data from the above mentioned sources, the researcher notices that there is a high level of agreement on the results from students’ responses and teachers’. That is, there are some common problems in their vocabulary learning which occur in the following aspects:

1. Students’ poor word memory
2. Students’ incorrect word usage/use
3. Students’ incorrect pronunciation

Though the researcher has touched upon causes of the above problems, it is still worth further discussing them, since a deeper understanding is greatly significant to help the researcher to find out the best solutions to those problems.

Obviously. Nearly all of the 1st year students are aware of the importance of EVL. This is backed up by the fact that many students try to find other sources to learn vocabulary, and use dictionary as a tool of assistance to check new words up and word pronunciation. But why problems still happen in their EVL?

Firstly, reasons for students’ poor word memory are countable. For the first one, lack of time for vocabulary practice is always a big problem in VUC. Thus, consolidating activities and exercises given by the teachers are not done regularly, as stated by Gairns, R &
Redman, S (1986:77) that “We need to practice and revise what we learn otherwise the new input will gradually fade in the memory and ultimately disappear”. For the second one, being affected by the above said reasons, not much consideration is taken by teachers to give students necessary instruction on ways to review and strengthen their learned vocabulary. For example, some relative rules on how to work with dictionary, or relative rules on word pronunciation, intonation. Next, students’ word pronunciation is often interfered by their mother tongue (Richard, 1974). For instance, they tend to pronounce /e/ in words beginning with the latter e: /enˈklɔːz/ (Enclose) instead of /inˈklɔːz/. The final reason is students’ attitude towards their vocabulary learning. In classroom, from the researcher’ observation, many of students don’t have a habit to take notes in a well-organized plan (like word family, parts of speech, word groups …), and at home they may feel not like to have a look at the learnt words, or they may do it but not in an effective way. As a result, only a short memory exists in their mind.

Concerning the problem of incorrect word usage/use, at least several reasons are counted for. Again, the interference of student’ mother tongue takes place to cause students to say phone to someone instead of phone someone, or a man successful, not a successful man. Another factor is the intralingual errors like overgeneralization and incomplete application of the previously learned rules. For example, I goed, She can sings or we are hope etc....

For the last problem of students’ incorrect pronunciation, it is repeatedly influenced by a number of the above-said causes: the limited time for word pronunciation practice during lessons, not enough guideline from teachers on how to have a look at dictionary phonetic transcription for students’ self-learning, and perhaps their improper techniques of vocabulary learning.

What the researcher has mentioned is meant to call for more awareness of the importance of their students’ vocabulary teaching, hence more consideration and contribution to their students’ vocabulary learning at the university. Their contribution can be made in the kind of encouraging and guiding their students how to approach effective strategies of learning English vocabulary, and designing vocabulary presentation, consolidation through diversified teaching techniques in order to lessen their students’ to the minimum.
CHAPTER IV. SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Based on the results obtained from the study, herein after are some solutions suggested by the researcher, with a hope to partly reduce the problems of English vocabulary learning faced by the 1st year students at her university in particular, and to improve the English learning and teaching at the university in general.

IV.1. Toward students

In the researcher’s opinion, Individual learning and student autonomy have become increasingly significant in their learning process, and it becomes more important than ever in the case of foreign language teaching at VUC. Student autonomy is a very valuable answer to the question If the student has no teacher or peer to ask, how can he solve a number of problems? To her best understanding, there should be a number of ways for students to make progress in their vocabulary learning.

IV.1.1. Using dictionary

Many researchers suggested using a bilingual dictionary as a reference work to support their self-learning. For, using dictionary offers us many advantages. In the first place, it puts words in context and show you how to use them in context. Next, it gives you the spelling of the words and both formal and informal expressions. Last, “a learner who makes good use of a dictionary will be able to continue learning outside the classroom” (Gairns, R & Redman, S.(1986:77)

However, one of the problems teachers may encounter in encouraging their learners to use dictionary is that learners may not be experienced in using dictionaries, or else might be demotivated by the complexities of the larger desk-dictionaries. To solve this problem, it is the role of the teacher who should give instructions to his students to use dictionaries.

Based on Scholfield’s view (1996), a range of instructional possibilities can be introduced as follows:
- Introducing the English alphabetical system and how to pronounce them
- Teaching the phonemic alphabet of consonants and vowels illustrated with examples
- Teaching symbols used in a dictionary, grammar codes and terms. for instance,
V stands for verb; N for noun; Adj for adjective, Adv for adverb, Pre for preposition, etc…;
3rd has means the third single of have, pron-(obj). him is a pronoun used as an object; poss means possessive; pl is plural; abbr means abbreviation ect …
- Going systematically through the front-matters with learners like, the title, dedication, foreword, preface, etc., in a dictionary.
- Teaching how to look up the meaning of a new word, showing how to explore all the expressions related to a word, look for examples in which it is used, how to interpret its pronunciation and stress. To make it clear, teacher should give students copies of some dictionary pages, ask them to have a look at particular entry and make explanation on it.
- Giving exercises/games focused on component skills like quick alphabetical order search, finding the right numbered sense to match the meaning of an underlined word in a sentence, or locating collocation information of an entry to choose the correct alternatives given.

IV.1.2. Self-access materials
Some materials are designed for self-access with an aim to diversifying out-of-class activities, for example, cassette courses are useful for businesspeople on driving time, or computer-assisted language learning is good for home training. Such self-access materials help increase motivation and awareness of learners, and enable learners to access authentic materials besides class times. (Ellis Mark, Johnson Christine, 1996). Therefore, students at VUC should be advised to listen to tapes accompanied with the textbook and others more frequently to better their pronunciation and word memory as well.

Computers are seen to be an invaluable teaching aid for teachers of English. In modern society, mostly everyone is required to be computer literate. The use of computers helps students to learn at their own pace, lever their motivation and enable self-check. (Penny Ur, 1996).

Currently, a variety of websites are offering learners different sorts of materials. Authentic reading materials about topics students have learned are really necessary as through which learners can acquire vocabulary, grammatical structure and rhetoric. Therefore, students should be more active to ask from their friends or teachers to get addresses of these websites to visit and practise subject to their need. Here are addresses of some websites:
1. Hoc thi website:
   • http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning
   • www.freenglish.com
   • www.english-at-home.com
   • www.vocabulary.com

2. Golden Key Education & Training Investment: www.easvenglish.com

3. English Word Builder 2.0 – Vvara học vvara choî luyện tîr vung tiéng Anh
   24.07.2007 22:31

IV.1.3. Making vocabulary notebook

The aim of making vocabulary notebook is to build vocabulary. Students are advised to start keeping a vocabulary notebook and organize their words under different subject headings, like Work, Leisure and Culture. Students could also make word maps, grouping together words on different topics or themes, like Company, Traveling, City Life, Films and Journeys. Here are some tips for them:

- Start a vocabulary notebook. The best kind is a small ring binder, so you can add more pages as you need them.
- Use an alphabetical card system and group words under different subject headings, so you can find them easily.
- Then choose language from your notebook to make useful word maps.

Write a large number of words in it; organize your vocabulary into themes, and carry it around with you all the time
**IV.1.4. Group work**

As stated in chapter I. 4.1.2, creating the social context enhances motivation of the participants; thus, cooperative learning can prepare the participants for “team activities” outside the classroom. Group work can be divided into pair work or team work. And because there is less instructor intervention, students have more time to actually use and manipulate language in class. Also through this activity, they can help to correct their partner’ mistakes both in pronunciation or word use. This activity is actually very useful in the context of VUC when group discussion is a must to every student at school.

This work should be supported by teachers. For instance, having studied unit 1, part 3 *company facts and figures* in the book, the teacher can ask her/his students to work in groups of three or four, to prepare a presentation about some well-known Vietnamese at home for the next class discussion. The goal of this team work is to help them consolidate a range of the taught verbs like *found, establish, produce, sell, develop, expand* ..., and a lot of nouns like *product, sales, turnover, customers, market, market share, future development* ..., and how they are used in sentences (word form/usage).

**IV.2. Towards the teachers**

According to Dudley-Evans & John (1998) teachers are both good teachers and good designers of course materials. To be a good provider of materials, one of their roles is to modify activities to suit learners’ needs. In the case of VUC, given these tasks, the teachers should be encouraged to help their students to solve their problems by

**IV.2.1. Presenting vocabulary by using effective teaching techniques**

Besides the traditional techniques like saying the words clearly one by one and writing them on the board, translating all the words into Vietnamese, more use of using synonyms and antonyms, using target language to define the new word is also necessary. Nevertheless, the over-use of these two techniques may make it time-consuming because an endless explaining of new words may take place. In addition, the use of visual aids, mimes, gestures and facial expressions and especially TV sets, head-projectors, songs, word games should be used more widely to promote students’ motivation and interest in English learning, and to meet their need as expressed in the questionnaires. Some useful books introduce a full range of games, like “Business Communication Games” (Lloyd, A & Preier, A, 1996); New Ways in Teaching Vocabulary (Nation, P, 1994).
IV.2.2. Improving students’ pronunciation

Teachers take a very important role in searching for techniques to better their students’ pronunciation. The techniques may lay a focus on

- Raising the awareness of students about the importance of correct pronunciation

There is a great need for students to be well aware of the importance of producing words correctly, and elements involved like word stress, rhythm, intonation, and thought groups. These are decisive factors to enable their speaking more natural and understandable. In the same way, good pronunciation has a great effect on students’ listening skill as these two skills are interacted. In other words, a successful communication cannot be reached without a good acquisition of correct pronunciation.

- Providing relative rules of word pronunciation and intonation: Relative rules of these kinds should be drawn from books and teachers’ experience to help facilitate students’ correct pronunciation. For example, the group of words ending with “ation” like in communication has a stress on the second syllable backward /kəˈmjuːniˈkeɪʃ(ə)n/. With word group which ends with “ty” like in ability, activity, utility, the second syllable is stressed as: /əˈbilɪtɪ/; /æktɪˈvɪtɪ/; /juːˈtɪlɪtɪ/.

- Conducting regular check on students’ pronunciation through vocabulary drilling: This check can be made when students read aloud individually, oral pair work or group work, but there should not be much interference from teachers on their speaking to avoid interruption or discouragement.

IV.2.3. Providing authentic reading materials

Teachers should be well aware of the important role of authentic reading materials. They are greatly significant in the sense that it offers a number of factors that highly motivate learners’ interest: credibility, up-to-date and attractiveness (Ellis Mark, Johnson Christine. 1994). Therefore, selection of the materials should be based on a number of criteria, one of which is that of motivation, for learners of Business English often have some knowledge of the subject, the materials chosen for teaching and learning should be authentic and of interest to learners. Outmoded ideas or information generally discourages learners’ motivation. In the case of VUC, teachers should try to look for materials
introducing well-known foreign and domestic companies or businesses (history, development, products, future plans), famous business people, business customs in some countries, and so on…

IV.2.4. Using vocabulary consolidation as warm-up activities

It is common that diversity will encourage motivation. Students often welcome an offer of varieties of exercises, however, teachers are responsible for explaining what learners are expected to do in each exercise type and get them to be familiar with it. (Tony Dudley-Evans, Maggie Jo St. John, 1998)

In the light of the above view, a series of exercises should be designed for students to review the previously learnt words as follows: Making sentences with given words; Completing sentences; Filling in the gaps; Finding synonyms and antonyms; Matching words; Word mapping; Word form; Word collocation; and Word games.

However, due to limited time of the course, vocabulary consolidation should be done as warm-up activities in students’ class, lasting for 10-15 minutes only. Another choice is to give these exercises to them to prepare at home, and teachers will check the results during the next class contact. Also, evaluation on students’ vocabulary pronunciation should be included. Here are some of the sample activities suggested by the researcher to provide students to do in their classroom or at home.

Sample activity 1: Word form

Level: elementary
Aim: Revise learned word usage in unit 2
Time: 10 – 15 minutes
Source: Activity sheet
Procedures:
1. Teacher gives 10 incomplete sentences with a given word in bracket.
2. Students open the bracket to complete the sentence. For example,
   Can you confirm your …reservation  ... in writing, please? (RESERVE)

Sample activity 2: Word mapping

Level: elementary
Aim: Recall students’ memory of learned words in association with others in unit 3
Time: 10 – 15 minutes
Source: Activity sheet
Procedures:
1. Teacher design a diagram which show some words students have learnt in unit 3, organized in logical groups.
2. Students are encouraged to recall words to add in each logical group. For example

![Diagram showing logical groups: PLAY, GOING OUT, EAT]

Sample activity 3: word pronunciation

Level: elementary
Aim: Check students’ pronunciation of verbs in the past simple tense, and words learned in Unit 4.
Time: 10 – 15 minutes
Source: Activity sheet for homework
Procedures:
1. Gives some regular verbs used in the past simple tense. Ask students to put them in the correct columns. For example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/l/</th>
<th>/d/</th>
<th>/id/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>Attended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Give words in columns of verb, noun, adjective, and example. Ask students to find other forms of the word to fill in other columns, work with dictionary to find out how to pronounce them., and make sentences. For example,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compete</td>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>We tried to offer a competitive price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Productive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART 3. CONCLUSION

In this last part of the paper, an overall of the study is viewed with a brief description of the study together with the findings and conclusion. Also, there are some suggested solutions for both teachers and students who are working with the book “Business Basics” at VUC. Finally, the limitations of the study are notified and some recommendations for further study are made.

1. Summary of the study

The study set out to investigate the common problems of Business English vocabulary learning faced by the first year students when working with the book “Business Basics” at Vietnam University of Commerce. It was conducted in the light of a qualitative method combined with a quantitative one, using different research instruments, namely test, questionnaire, and interview. Subjects of the study are the first-year students and the teachers working with these students at VUC.

To begin with, it reviews theoretical issues related to some concepts of vocabulary, aspects of vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategies, and a number of the common teaching methods which have shown much of significance to vocabulary teaching so far. Findings from the study lays the foundation for the researcher to seek some feasible solutions to the discovered problems in order to minimize them, and to maximize the effectiveness of vocabulary learning at the university.

The statistics from the students’ tests and the questionnaires, together with the information provided by the 1st year students indicates that a considerable number of the 1st year students at VUC have problems in their vocabulary learning. Their common problems are identified in three aspects: poor word memory, incorrect word pronunciation, and incorrect word usage/use. There must be some reasons counting for this situation, and the study has found out that for the first one, time is not efficient for these students to have necessary practice or drills on vocabulary previously learned. Also, over-size classroom in particular, and the physical setting of the university in general are another factors to slow down their
vocabulary learning here. Finally and noticeably, it is the students’ vocabulary learning techniques which seem not to be proper and effective enough to help them succeed as expected by both their teachers and themselves.

The results from the teachers’ interview backs up the above-mentioned problems found from students’ questionnaires. More importantly, the interview reveals that a variety of teaching methods are being used by the interviewed teachers, including the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, and the Communicative Approach (CLT), in which stronger trend towards the Grammar-Translation method compared with CLT. This is considered one of the reasons to cause problems on their speaking activities, especially their poor pronunciation, as well as poor word usage/use in context.

Also, some recommendations are made by the teachers on what vocabulary teaching techniques to be further used to improve students’ word memory and pronunciation, with a focus on diversifying teachers’ presenting vocabulary, designing exercises, and regularly checking the pronunciation which aim to increase students’ motivation in their learning process.

At last, based on the study’s findings, and to the best understanding of the researcher, some solutions are suggested for both students and teachers at VUC, with a hope to partly improve this situation, making vocabulary learning here less challenging as before. To the students, it is necessary for them to be more ware of the importance of their self-learning while time distributed for their English lessons is strictly limited. Dictionary use, E-learning, vocabulary notebook, and group work are recommended as tools to serve their self-learning. To the teachers, they are encouraged to look for more interesting and effective vocabulary teaching methods or techniques with a range of tasks to fulfill students’ gaps in their vocabulary learning.

2. Limitation of the study

Although the study is done to the best understanding of the researcher, it is unavoidable for
the study to have some limitations. For the first one, if the study was conducted in the light of an experimental research, it could provide her more exact evaluation on the effectiveness and workability of the solutions suggested. From this, the researcher could make the best choice of what techniques should be used by both the teachers and the students in their vocabulary teaching and learning. For the second one, if students’ questionnaires were backed up with a quick interview with some of the surveyed students, the researcher could touch upon deeper insights to explore their thoughts, feelings, or opinions freely about their problems and need.

3. Suggestion for further study

Vocabulary learning in Business English is a complex process which depends upon a lot of other factors. Future researcher can further investigate problems and causes on vocabulary learning by looking at learners’ internal factors (Lightbown PM & Spada N, 999) like learner’ Intelligence, Aptitude, Personality, Motivation and attitudes, preferences, belief, age acquisition, or external factors like learner’ FL environment, or learner’ cultural background.

Future researcher may pursue for a study on business students’ vocabulary learning on the whole compared with students of general English to find out what similarity and difference, and causes are there in this process, what should be done to treat the would-be found problem?