*Original Paper*

# Investigation into the Negative Factors in English Vocabulary Acquisition of College Students

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*Abstract*

*Vocabulary acquisition is the premise of learning language. In English learning, college students always feel perplexed and painful on acquiring English vocabulary. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze and reveal negative factors in English vocabulary acquisition of college students and put forward some countermeasures. Compared with previous studies, this paper comprehensively analyzes most of negative factors on English vocabulary acquisition and according to collected data, more concrete and practical measures are put forward to help college students acquire English vocabulary. Interviews and questionnaires are conducted in turn. Interviews with college students and teachers shows there are many factors that have an negative impact on vocabulary acquisition such as the influence of Chinese and culture, individual motivation, learning habits and teaching model. Questionnaire shows the difficulties and learning habits most students had as well as English teaching model they desire. Through questionnaire, it is found that low motivation is the most influential factor and there is a relationship between students' grade and their motivation. At the end of this paper, some countermeasures are proposed to help students learn vocabulary more effectively.*

*Keywords*

*Negative factors, English vocabulary acquisition, college students*

## 1. Introduction

*1.1 Background of the Study*

For English learners, the most indispensable and fundamental section of English learning is vocabulary acquisition. Although many strategies have been introduced to college students for them to learn words, the negative factors are relatively fixed and some factors in English vocabulary acquisition do limit their learning effect. Prior literature indicates that English vocabulary acquisition is a lasting and

arduous process in which many negative factors may hamper college learners' progress. Since the article "*Vocabulary Acquisition: A Neglected Aspect in Language Learning*", written by English psychological linguist P. Meara, was published in the magazine *Language Teaching and Linguistics* in 1980, there have been many scholars using questionnaires, corpus and experiments to explore sociocultural influence, L1 transfer and self-regulation influence on English vocabulary learning. However, there are few studies on how learners' emotions and words themselves (word length, multi-meanings and phonics) influence acquisition. There is not much research exploring other negative factors usually ignored by many researchers and how far those factors affect students' vocabulary learning. Hence, the major negative factors, their effects and relevant countermeasures are the central parts this paper attempts to address.

*1.2 Significance of the Study*

The importance of vocabulary acquisition was stressed by Nation (2001), "For all second language (L2) learners, the development of a rich L2 is challenging yet essential goal". When it comes to the significance of vocabulary acquisition in English learning, from the macroscopic view, vocabulary as the building material of a language carries and conveys cultural information of a language; for college students, enlarging vocabulary and improving the ability to use words are prerequisites to develop five basic skills of English learning and English outputs. From the microcosmic view, a word of its own is a product of pronunciation, meaning and grammatical characteristics.

This paper aims to reveal and analyze negative factors in vocabulary acquisition from different perspectives, including the difficulties college students may encounter, learners' negative emotions and weak motivation, the complexity of words and influence of environment and culture, etc. There are further surveys and studies that should be made to figure out concrete negative factors and how much they influenced on both vocabulary learning and vocabulary using. In accordance with analyzed data and figures, the corresponding resolutions and strategies to minimize these negative factors will be proposed in this paper so as to put forward some suggestions for English learners on taking balanced attitudes, clarifying their thoughts and effectively making study plans.

## 2. Literature Review

*2.1 The Intentional and Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition*

Since 1970s vocabulary acquisition has become the focus of second language acquisition. Lewis (1993) thinks that vocabulary acquisition is the core task of L2 acquisition research. No language can be learnt without learning its vocabulary; however, no one could learn all of the words of a language, which arouses many researchers' interest in the study of vocabulary acquisition. Some researchers divide vocabulary acquisition into intentional vocabulary acquisition and incidental vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 1990). Intentional vocabulary acquisition refers to students learning words with clear purposes, while the latter means that students do not pay attention to learning words but have a grasp of them in their input or output. Joe (1998) thinks that compared with leaning words by reciting and referring to

dictionaries, incidental vocabulary acquisition is an unconscious process which may play the more important role in vocabulary acquisition.

Intentional vocabulary acquisition and incidental vocabulary acquisition are inseparably interconnected. Some researches testify that students with a larger vocabulary can learn more words in the process of incidental vocabulary acquisition (Gai, 2004). Therefore, learning words proactively is the basis for English learning. Only when we know the way we learn words can we make an investigation into the negative factors in vocabulary learning.

*2.2 The Width and Depth of Word Acquisition*

It is found that "there is a large gap between students' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge" (Yamamoto, 2014). In China, English learners have the same problem as Japanese students. There is a massive imbalance between the acquisition of the depth and width of vocabulary knowledge. Although students' language proficiency has seemingly been improved, their semantic knowledge and ability to output still remain stagnant (Zhang & Wang, 2006).

The width of vocabulary acquisition refers to quantity of vocabulary, while the depth of vocabulary acquisition is the embodiment of words proficiency. Walance thinks that we can say students indeed learn those words only when they reach the following requirements, correct pronunciation, correct spelling, connecting words with objects or conception, using them grammatically, and proficient use in English speaking, ability to recall at any time and using with proper collocation (Duan, 2005). For example, these words, "rancid", "addled", "sour", "rotten", have the same meaning "something undergoing deterioration". However, they should be used with different collocation, "rancid butter", "sour milk", "addled eggs" or "rotten eggs" and the word "rotten" should not be used with milk. During the process of learning English words, the width and depth of vocabulary acquisition should be balanced because they are of equal importance.

*2.3 Factors Affecting Vocabulary Acquisition*

2.3.1 Individual Factors

Some individual factors like motivation, personal habits, bad self-control, negative emotions and small vocabulary quantity may have a great influence in acquiring vocabulary to some extent.

Park (1995) asserts that learning is a mental activity that people use when they study to help themselves to acquire, remember or organize the incoming knowledge more efficiently, which indicates that the more learners' involvement in processing of new words, the more easily and readily they retain words. Learners' involvement is also presented by intentional learning. Schmidt thinks that language acquisition is the result of intentional learning and intention is the prerequisite of language intake. Ellis also points out that language input cannot be absorbed by learners without intentional learning.

As for motivation, Tseng and Schmitt (2008) think that motivation shows its own features in accordance with different periods of study. Before you take an action, choice motivation can help you to have a decision; when you have decided, your executive motivation may manage your action; the last one is motivational retrospection, which is used to evaluate action effect. It is also found that

3

executive motivation have a great effect on grades of College English Test- Band 4 (CET4) (Shi, 2014).

### 2.3.2 Environmental Factors

There are many environmental factors that may have a negative influence in vocabulary acquisition, among which cultural differences and negative transfer of first language are considered as two main factors (Zhang, 2015). Gao (2012) claims that the same word may have different cultural connotations in different languages. A typical example of cultural differences can be shown by some color words. For example, white in English means purity and good luck. "A white day" means "a good day"; however, Chinese people use white in funerals and we are supposed to dress red not white clothes to attend friend's wedding. Therefore, it is of necessity to learn the connotations and to understand words' cultural backgrounds during the process of learning words.

Another factor is negative transfer of first language. Sometimes what we say and what we write seem to be "Chinglish", not English, which is the result of negative transfer of our native language. Created to carry meaning, languages have the similar functions (Su & Su, 2005). However, these similarities may hinder learners in language acquisition.

### 2.3.3 Teaching Factors

Although teachers and students are aware of significance of vocabulary acquisition, they lack systematic theory on how to learn words effectively. Hence teachers do not spend much time on teaching words, and students memorize these words by rote without knowing their collocations and cultural connotations (Gao & Su, 2009). However, it is actually crucial for both teachers and learners to be able to distinguish definitional knowledge and contextual knowledge in vocabulary learning. Therefore, teachers should combine definitional knowledge with contextual knowledge to help students learn and understand the words. Nagy, Anderson and Herman (1987) found that most of words American students learnt are from context, not directly form English teaching. However, the basis of vocabulary learning is in class. Only when you have a certain amount of vocabulary can you retain new words without so many difficulties. Low recurrence rate of new words is also a negative factor that influences English vocabulary acquisition (Su, 2008). Teachers are expected to focus on using new words repeatedly and try to help students to understand new words in different context.

### 2.4 Evaluation

Vocabulary learning plays a significant role in language learning. However, it remains a major problem in second language acquisition, which motivates countless studies. Past decades have witnessed many studies on the factors affecting vocabulary acquisition, but they either focus on the learning strategies or overall influence of different factors. It still remains unanswered as to what are the negative factors that hinder students' vocabulary learning and to what extent they affect their language learning. Therefore, with questionnaire and interview as the major research tools, this paper aims to analyze the negative factors affecting students' vocabulary acquisition from different perspectives and at the same time put forward some suggestions for more effective vocabulary learning.

4

**3. Research Design**

*3.1 Objective of the Study*

The study is aimed at exploring some factors that can lead to negative impacts on vocabulary acquisition, whether these factors can be divided into several types on the basis of their influence, to what extent negative factors influence vocabulary acquisition and whether there are some countermeasures that can help students minimize negative factors. On the basis of collected data and analyses, relevant measures and suggestions will be presented in this paper.

*3.2 Respondents*

Qualitative and quantitative research will be both conducted in this paper.

In terms of qualitative research, interviews with about twenty college students and teachers from the Beijing Institute of petrochemical technology are to be made in this paper with the purpose of understanding students' and teachers' experiences.

As for quantitative research, the research will be conducted through vocabulary quiz and online questionnaire for its wild coverage of respondents and different regions, which is beneficial to cost-effectivity, efficiency and accuracy of data collection.

*3.3 Interview Design*

A series of questions will be raised in the interview. According to different subjects, certain questions will be asked. For example, students will be asked some questions about difficulties they encounter, study habits and learning methods, while some questions about vocabulary teaching will be asked to teachers.

From the interview, some subjective ideas, difficulties and experiences interviewees had can give us a visual presentation to explore some common negative factors in English vocabulary acquisition.

*3.4 Quiz and Questionnaire Design*

3.4.1 Quiz and Questionnaire Design Source

Vocabulary is often accessed as an independent construct. For example, vocabulary scores are treated as either a discrete aspect of candidates' language profile or as a distinctive contributor to a composite final score (Hui, 2014). Vocabulary could be an indicator of learners' English proficiency. The quiz will be made in accordance with College English Syllabus in China, while the questionnaire will be designed in the light of study habits and difficulties which are mentioned in prior interviews.

3.4.2 Outline

The quiz will be designed to test those respondents' vocabulary levels and their scores can be viewed as a reference value to explore how much these factors affect vocabulary acquisition. An online questionnaire can be divided into two parts. The first part is about the subject's basic information including gender and grades from freshmen to senior students. The second part is about some study habits and difficulties students have in both words learning and words using, which can also be divided into five parts, including complexity of words, learners' emotion and motivation, L1 transfer and cultural elements embedded in words, teaching model and unknown factors that may influence

5

vocabulary acquisition.

3.4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data from the quiz and questionnaire will be analyzed with Excel or SPSS. On the basis of collected data, analysis can be made from the following perspectives. What negative factors are, how much they influence vocabulary acquisition and what factors that always ignored by learners. Finally, the corresponding suggestions that can easily be accepted and be taken into action by college students will be promoted.

*3.5 Procedure*

The procedure of the paper includes the following aspects. Firstly, some essential information will be selected from the Internet. Both Chinese and English journals will be read for reference, from which research gap will be found and on the basis of prior researches, something new will be stressed in my paper. Then, interview, quiz and questionnaire will be made according to such existing research. Thirdly, my supervisor and ten college students will be invited to evaluate my quiz and questionnaire. Fourthly, it is of significance to distribute and retrieve the questionnaire. Fifthly, some software will be used to analyze the collected data. After that, final findings will be presented in my paper.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

*4.1 Findings of Interview*

According to some interviews with college students, it turns out students are less interested in English learning, especially in vocabulary acquisition. In general, they are more willing to focus on their own major and cram for their English tests. In English class, teachers spend only a little time on vocabulary teaching and they pay more attention to the meaning of words. Without strong motivation to learn English, college students prefer playing games to acquiring vocabulary.

In addition, most students complain that even if they remember some new words now, they will forget them soon, because there is not much exposure to English and the low frequency occurrences of these new words have a negative effect on the acquisition of them. Some students say the difficulty lies in the nature of polysemy in English, that is, a word may have many different meanings, so it is difficult for students to totally remember them. If they only memorize some meanings, some sentences do not make sense due to the misunderstanding of the word.

There are many other difficulties college students encounter when they learn English vocabulary. For example, slang in an essay may hinder their comprehension, causing anxiety or loss of interest in learning. Moreover, dull English class is another reason why students are not willing to learn English vocabulary.

Based on information from interview with teachers, in college class, teachers may pay more attention to guiding students how to think creatively and dialectically and leave such basic work like vocabulary learning, reading comprehension to students themselves. At the same time, teachers seldom teach English words through using and analyzing picture, video or music in depth, which may make students

6

feel boring. Some teachers also say that they do not have enough time to teach all the words in depth and they think that in English class cultivating students' mind is more significant than teaching those basic skills.

*4.2 Findings of Questionnaire*

4.2.1 General Analysis of the Negative Factors

Many negative factors in English vocabulary acquisition are revealed and proposed through the questionnaire. It is found that most difficulties students encounter are similar and students intend to choose the fixed traditional way to memorize words, which offers us a premise to analyze major factors that negatively affect most students and put forward to some effective measures on words learning.

Questionnaire investigation shows that the major negative factors in English vocabulary acquisition of college students are their low motivation, bad vocabulary learning habit, less frequency of occurrences, the negative transfer of Chinese and misfit for teaching model. As for the influential degree, it turns out that the most influential factors in top three on acquiring vocabulary for college students, in descending order of magnitude, are students' low motivation, less frequency of occurrences and the influence of Chinese. According to Table 1, the higher the Mean, the more negative impact the correspondent factor may have. Table 1 shows students' low motivation gets nearly 58 points, higher than that of other factors. The standard deviation of those negative factors are around 27, which means that points given by respondents fluctuate wildly; that is to say, many students think low motivation has a highly negative impact on English vocabulary learning, while other factors are milder in the negative influence. Therefore, it is necessary for students to reflect on themselves with the reference of this investigation and take specific countermeasures based on their own situation.

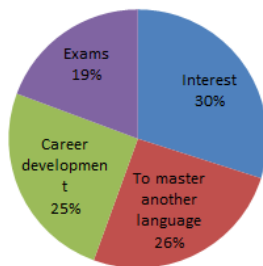**Table 1. Negative Factors in English Vocabulary Acquisition**

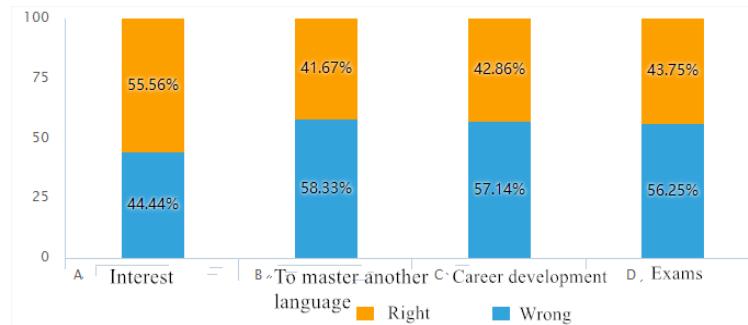| Negative factors | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Low motivation | 165 | 57.96 | 29.093 |
| Less frequency | 165 | 53.90 | 26.401 |
| The length of word | 165 | 42.92 | 28.457 |
| Differences of thinking mold | 165 | 42.42 | 27.815 |
| Teaching factors | 165 | 46.33 | 26.885 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 165 | | |

4.2.2 Low Motivation

In terms of students' low motivation, collected data shows that there is a relationship between grades and objectives of learning vocabulary. Among 165 surveys, 120 samples are drawn randomly. Some trends can be reflected to some extent from Table 2. Overall, 60.8% students learn English vocabulary for career development and mastering another language. Such motivation can indeed stimulate students

to learn vocabulary. However, those who learn English vocabulary out of interest are more likely to study precisely and delightfully since interest and curiosity draw them to explore the subtle differences between the synonyms and the cultural connotations of words. A quiz illustrates that those who learn English out of interest get more correct answers (Figure 1). Moreover, it shows, in terms of such exam questions as words' collocation and translation, students motivated by interest have the relatively lower error rates (Figure 2).



**Figure 1. The Accuracy of Quiz      Figure 2. Accuracy and Error Rates Related to Motivation**

Table 2 illustrates that most freshmen and senior students learn English vocabulary for their vocational development, probably because they desire to become more competitive so as to get a better job, especially for senior students. Moreover, compared with freshmen, sophomore and junior students, the senior students are required to memorize more words since many of them intend to take exams like TEM-8, IELTS, etc.

**Table 2. The Relationship between Objectives and Ages**

| Ages / Objectives | Freshmen | Sophomore | Junior | Senior | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interest | 6 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 23 |
| To master another language | 6 | 13 | 11 | 6 | 36 |
| Career development | 12 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 37 |
| Exams | 5 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 18 |
| Other factors | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 120 |

In this survey, it is also found that all the respondents tend to feel anxious and troublesome when they acquire vocabulary and the occurrence of bad emotions is somewhat related to students' learning goals. From Figure 3, it can be learnt that there is high frequency of occurrence of anxiety if students learn

vocabulary for exams. The famous Chinese educator Confucius once said, "Interest is the best teacher". Therefore, it is vital for students to get more interested in vocabulary learning. At the same time, students are expected to adjust their emotions in time.
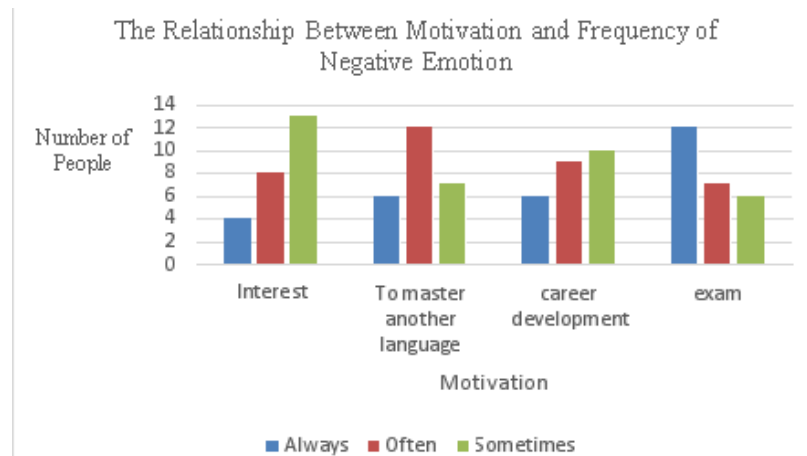


**Figure 3. The Relationship between Motivation and Frequency of Negative Emotion**

### 4.2.3 Learning Habits

As for learning habits, questionnaire investigation shows that most college students do not have a regular plan to review new words, which may result in the vicious circle of remembering and forgetting. In senior high schools, there are many quizzes and regular exams like unit testing and monthly tests, which requires students to review words and do practice frequently in their spare time. Nevertheless, in college, students badly need to have a regular word-review plan since there are fewer exams.

What's more, according to Table 3, 115 college students intend to choose the English-Chinese dictionary instead of English-English dictionary when they meet some unknown words. It is indeed convenient for college students to look up English-Chinese dictionary, for they only need to remember the relevant Chinese meaning. However, there always exist numerous differences between a word's Chinese translation and English explanation. At the same time, if we only remember words' Chinese meaning, distinguishing synonyms will be more difficult for us, leading to the improper use of the synonyms.

**Table 3. Dictionaries Students Use in English Learning**

| Frequency | | | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Chinese-English Dictionary | 115 | 69.7 | 69.7 | 69.7 |
| | English-English Dictionary | 38 | 23.0 | 23.0 | 92.7 |
| | Do not use dictionary | 12 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 165 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

9

It is common that students, lack of rich vocabularies, often use the same word repeatedly in English writing so that their compositions are always monotonous. Figure 4 illustrates that most students do not develop a habit of sorting out and summarizing new words; that is to say, when they are expected to say some words to describe others' personality, they may only think of the most common words like "shy", "outgoing" or "naughty". In fact, students have learnt some advanced words like "optimistic", "candid" and "faithful", but such words can not be recalled by students when they are writing essays. Therefore, students should learn to sort out words, build up associative memory networks and remember them in category.
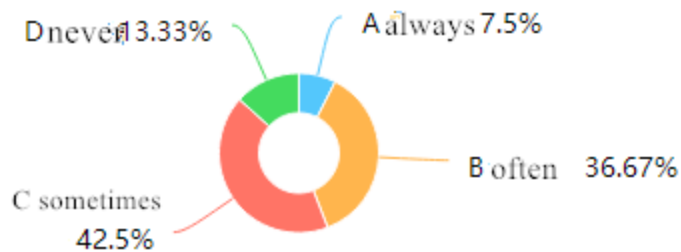


**Figure 4. The Chart of How Often Students Sort Out New Words**

4.2.4 Cultural Differences and Negative Transfer of Chinese

Cultural differences between the East and the West contribute to some negative influences for college students on English vocabulary learning as well. According to Table 4, about 87.9% college students think that cultural differences have a negative impact on vocabulary learning. For example, the word "dragon" represents royalty and nobility in China, while in western countries, it means wickedness and ferocity. There are also some proverbs and idioms which are confusing without knowing their cultural backgrounds, such as "Achilles' Heel" and "An Apple of Discord". Therefore, students ought to catch a glimpse of the books related to western history, the Bible and Greek and Roman methodology in order to have a fair idea of western culture.

**Table 4. The Degree of Cultural Influence**

| Frequency | | | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Great | 62 | 37.3 | 37.6 | 37.6 |
| | A little | 83 | 50.0 | 50.3 | 87.9 |
| | Not great | 20 | 12.0 | 12.1 | 100.0 |
| | Not at all | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 165 | 99.4 | 100.0 | |

Moreover, it is found that students are always influenced by Chinese thinking pattern. In Chinese we often use the person as subject. For example, according to Chinese thinking pattern, we tend to write a sentence like "We have witnessed a great change during the last decade". However, in English it is common to say some sentences like, "The last decade has witnessed a great change". According to Figure 5, 61.67% students think English output process is often intervened by traditional Chinese thinking mold. Students sometimes make sentences like "There have been great harvests in agriculture". This sentence does make sense in Chinese thinking mold. However, English native may feel it is redundant, because the word "harvest" has already implies the meaning of agriculture.
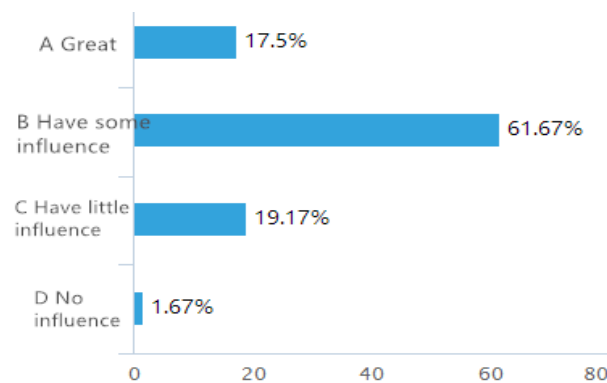


**Figure 5. The Influence of Chinese Thinking Mold**

4.2.5 Teaching Factor

What and how teachers teach also have an effect on students' vocabulary learning as well. With the view of improving students' autonomous learning ability, teachers intend to let students learn vocabulary by themselves and show their self-study results in class. However, the self-study results are sometimes confusing and inaccurate. Without supervision, some students tend to plagiarize others' results although every college student is expected to be self-disciplined. Therefore, in class teachers had better stress some key words and their collocations, synonyms and usages to deepen students' impression.

In addition, boring teaching model may make college students lose their interest in vocabulary acquisition. Table 5 shows that most teachers choose to teach English vocabulary in context, which is good for students' comprehension and memorization. Nevertheless, if the article is too long and difficult to be understood by students, teaching words in context does not offer too much help. On the contrary, students may be tired of both vocabulary and context. Therefore, teachers are expected to choose an appropriate way to teach vocabulary in class based on the context.

**Table 5. Teaching Mold**

| Frequency | | | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | To only teach words' definition | 20 | 12.1 | 12.1 | 12.1 |
| | To teach words in context | 108 | 65.5 | 65.5 | 77.6 |
| | To teach words with visual demo software | 33 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 97.6 |
| | Total | 165 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

*4.3 The Countermeasures*

Aimed at different negative factors discussed above, the countermeasures are proposed as follows.

Firstly, college students are expected to maintain their initial motivation and ambition in English learning throughout their college study. They should maintain interest in English and try to avoid the exam-oriented learning attitude. Students can deliberately listen to English music, read foreign magazines and watch English dramas in a regular way, which may not only arouse their interest in English but also become more exposed to English.

Secondly, the research shows that anxiety is bound to happen when college students are learning English words. Therefore, there are some ways that respondents suggest to ease anxiety. Table 6 shows that listening to music, taking a walk and eating snacks are top-three ways to relieve students' tiredness and anxiety. At the same time, these measures mentioned above are more easily to make students continue to study after a short rest.

**Table 6. Ways to Relieve Anxiety**

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listen to music | 164 | 58.88 | 27.344 |
| Go for a walk | 164 | 53.93 | 30.147 |
| Watch TV | 164 | 48.70 | 28.428 |
| Play computer games | 164 | 46.16 | 29.057 |
| Eating snacks | 164 | 52.72 | 29.695 |
| Check blogs | 164 | 44.55 | 29.499 |

Thirdly, based on metacognitive strategies, students ought to make a plan to regularly review words and check their learning effects; otherwise gradually students will lose their confidence in reciting words. Moreover, students are suggested to use English-English dictionary when they encounter some new words and it is essential to regularly distinguish synonyms and sort out words according to its classification. When college students learn new words, they should figure out their part of speech, style, emotional coloring and their collocation.

Fourthly, it is of necessity to know the relevant western culture while students are learning English words, which can not only widen their horizon, gain more knowledge but also can arouse students' interest in English vocabulary acquisition. College students can travel abroad, communicate with foreign friends, read English novels or magazines and watch English movies in order to make them more exposed to western culture. They can learn what they are interested in rather than passively read *Economists* or *Times* assigned by teachers.

Finally, as far as teaching model is concerned, college students prefer teachers to teach vocabulary concretely including its part of speech, grammatical usage and collocation. What's more, many students think it is a good way to teach vocabulary with pictures, videos and media instruction (Table 7). Variety in the explanation of a word is quite essential as it helps to arouse interest and leave deep impressions on students. Although teachers are less likely to teach in the way that we desire for because they are required by teaching program, students still hope that teachers can try their best to choose a vivid way to teach English vocabulary. Due to limited time, teachers do not have enough time to teach vocabulary in class, so more importantly they should teach their students how to learn vocabulary; just as the old saying goes, giving a man a fish, and you have fed him for today; teach a man to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime.

**Table 7. Suggested Ways of Teaching Vocabulary**

| Frequency | | | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Simply teach the definition of words | 16 | 9.6 | 9.8 | 9.8 |
| | Precisely teach the meaning, grammar and collocation of words | 60 | 36.1 | 36.6 | 46.3 |
| | Teach words with videos and pictures | 53 | 31.9 | 32.3 | 78.7 |
| | Focus on usage of words in daily life | 35 | 21.1 | 21.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 164 | 98.8 | 100.0 | |

*4.4 Summary*

Interviews and questionnaire are both conducted to precisely reveal negative factors on English vocabulary acquisition. According to some interviews, interviewees' opinions about learning English vocabulary can be shared and thus major negative factors can be concluded. Students' low motivation, bad vocabulary learning habit, less frequency of occurrences, the influence of Chinese and misfit for teaching model are major factors interviewees mentioned during the interview. Questionnaire can help us to analyze those factors and find out their influence degree. From the research, it turns out that low motivation is the most influential factors, which require students to find more chances to contact with western ideas and western civilization in order to trigger constantly their desire of learning English. At the end of the research, some countermeasures are proposed.

## 5. Conclusion

*5.1 Major Findings*

This paper aims at exploring negative factors in English vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary is the premise of English learning, so it is necessary to reveal negative factors in vocabulary acquisition in order to help students to minimize or avoid those negative factors. English learning follow the "cask principle", that is to say a cask's volume decides on the shortest wood plate that consists the cask. Therefore, negative factors are as important as positive factors. Research on negative factors should not be ignored.

Through a series of interview and questionnaire, findings can be summarized as follows. Firstly, students' low motivation, bad vocabulary learning habit, less frequency of occurrences, the influence of Chinese and misfit for teaching model are major negative factors that have an enormous impact on English vocabulary acquisition. Secondly, among those negative factors mentioned above, the most influential factors in top three on acquiring vocabulary for college students, in descending order of magnitude, are students' low motivation, less frequency of occurrences and the influence of Chinese. Thirdly, as students' motivation is the most influential factor, the relationship between grade and motivation is further explored. It turns out that the reason why they study English vocabulary shifts from interest and being more competitive in occupation to coping with various exams. Fourthly, there is no extensive exposure to English environment, which result in repeatedly forgetting words they have recited recently. In terms of teaching model, there is no way of requiring teachers to spend most of the time teaching words, but students wish that teachers can teach words in a vivid way, and at the same time, slang and authentic real English should be taught. Finally, there are other negative factors that are frequently mentioned by some respondents. For example, the length of words or their complicated spelling may have an effect on vocabulary acquisition more or less, especially when some words' spelling is not the same with phonics and lack of recitation skills.

In accordance with the findings, some countermeasures can be concluded as follows. Firstly, college students are not expected to forget their initial motivation with grade growth. Students can deliberately listen to English music, read foreign magazines and watch English dramas in a regular way, which may not only arouse their interest in English but also make students more exposed to English. Secondly, in order to minimize influence of the first language, students should adapt to think in English mold and try to look up English-English dictionary and remember English meanings.

*5.2 Limitation and Suggestions for Further Research*

Because of limited resources, the questionnaire only covers students in a certain region instead of all over the country. Although it can show some basic negative factors in vocabulary acquisition as well, to some extent the variety of answers is limited; that is to say, it is not enough to represent all college students' opinions. Moreover, the quiz in questionnaire is not sufficient to precisely show students' vocabulary level. Therefore, in further research, quiz can be more detailed to truly reflect students' strong points and shortcomings in quantity of vocabulary, fixed collocation and translation.

14

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