Using "similar sound techniques" in learning English vocabulary for high school students at Duong Tu Minh High School of Grade 11.

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Abstract- Nowadays, the importance of vocabulary in learning English is undeniable. This study was conducted to examine the impact of the use of similar sound techniques on high school students' English vocabulary competence in a high school in Vietnam. In particular, the objectives of the study were to find out a) the current situation of learning English vocabulary of high school students in a high school in Vietnam, b) difficulties faced by high school students when learning English vocabulary, c) the effect of similar sound techniques on high school students' English vocabulary competence. Participants in this study were 20 students in grade 11. Questionnaires and tests were used as the main instruments to collect data in the current research. Research results have proven that students were given many opportunities to participate in vocabulary learning activities via Similar sound techniques and these techniques are really effective to motivate and improve their English vocabulary. There was a main reason why learning English vocabulary. In addition, this research also showed that high school students did not have many groups of vocabulary learning activities that were highly effective beside and outside the class. Based on these facts, this study made recommendations for high school students to learn English vocabulary through the application of Similar sound techniques.

Index Terms- Similar sound techniques, vocabulary competence, learning English vocabulary.

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is considered the key to success when learning any language in the world. The method of memorizing vocabulary helps students use English more effectively for a long time. David Willkin (2007) asserts that: "If you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English won't improve much. You will see significant improvement if you learn a lot of words and You can only say very little about grammar, but you can say a lot with vocabulary". Obviously, vocabulary is very necessary to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English. In particular, learning vocabulary needs the right methods and skills to absorb it most effectively.

Actually, "similar sound technique" is a method that appeared thousands of years ago to learn a new Jewish language. However, the number of English learners in Vietnam who know this method is only a minority. In addition, this method is very necessary for high school students. First of all, this method will help them remember English vocabulary effectively, thereby improving their English level comprehensively. Moreover, they help them save time learning English and get better scores in tests. In fact, there have not been many studies on the similar sound techniques in high school context in Vietnam. Therefore, the research was significant because it was conducted to test the effectiveness of this method.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As Foley and Thompson (2003, p. 10) said, "All languages have words, a vocabulary or lexicon". However, most people do not really understand and distinguish between "word" and "vocabulary". Therefore, a clear distinction between the terms word, vocabulary lexion should be made.

Some scholars such as Bowen (1985); Jackson & Amvela (2000); Trask, (1995); Read (2000) honestly said that "word" is recognizable, but difficult to define. Indeed, some famous researchers such as Trask (1995, p.46-51) have also pointed out "there are the difficulties in the definition of the word because words do not have meaning in isolation, but they are related to the meaning of other words in ways that may be 18 simple or complex". Furthermore, "a word, at least, relates to the fields of morphology, semantics, etymology or lexicology" (Jackson & Amvela 2000, p. 48). Indeed, "word" is hard to define and many researchers really want to focus on learning strategies for language learners. In addition, they want learners to better understand the term "vocabulary learning". Renowned researchers such as Richards et al. (1992); and Hornby (1984) etc. made the point that a word is an unbroken structural unit consisting of one or more morphemes and usually occurs in the structure of phrases. Furthermore, "word" is defined as a sound or a combination of sounds forming a grammatical or lexical unit of a language, whereas vocabulary with the same of "the total number of words which make up a language; and a range of words known to, or used by a person" (Hornby, 1984). In conclusion, based on the views of some researchers, we can understand that "word" is the smallest unit in language used to create phrases and sentences. Moreover, "word" represents an object, idea of action. In other hands, vocabulary is composed of single words, compound words and idioms. In other meaning, a word is a sound or combination of sounds forming a grammatical or lexical unit of language, or a form that can occur in isolation and meaning plays an important role as 'part of the vocabulary' in the language, so vocabulary consists of more than just single words, or as (Jackson & Amvela 2000, pp. 1-2) shared that vocabulary are meaningful units connotation of language. In conclusion, learning vocabulary means learning a bundle of words, or learning how to use strategies to deal with unknown, unused, or unfamiliar words.

The importance of vocabulary

In fact, most people recognized that vocabulary was an important skill in learning English. Without vocabulary, no one can communicate through a language that contains meaning, reading, writing and speaking. Indeed, it actually makes perfect sense with the view of Nation (1990) who asserts that learners also consider vocabulary to be an important factor in language learning or in other words. Honestly, the lack of vocabulary makes it difficult for many language learners to both acquire and use the language.

If we want to express ideas, feelings, or discover and analyze something, Vocabulary is the most effective tool. Furthermore, according to Nandy (1994): "*The more words one can use correctly, better people will be able to express themselves easily, confidently and understand the world they live in*". Therefore, an abundant vocabulary will make communication more convenient and natural.

In fact, there are many countries accepted that learning grammar and vocabulary are very important in language acquisition. Vietnam is also such a country and there are many comparisons between these two skills. However, from the point of view of international scientists, vocabulary is more essential than grammar when learning a language. Specifically, Allen (1983) also makes the point that in the best classrooms, grammar and vocabulary are indispensable, but vocabulary is more essential and should be taught before grammar. At the same, Flower (2000) indicated that: "Words are the most important things students must learn. Grammar is important, but the vocabulary is much more important". Likewise, according to Lewis (1993) 'grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized alphabet' and 'alphabet, as structure, is inferior to lexis. Thus, it can be said that vocabulary is the most important thing to acquire a language simply because many people can understand others even if they pronounce words badly and make grammatical mistakes. However, without vocabulary, communication is impossible. Especially for high school students in Vietnam with multiple choice exams at the moment, vocabulary is considered as a key to their success.

Similar sound techniques

The similar sounding technique is a new method in Vietnam and has been applied by many people to learn foreign languages in the past few years. The same sound will not replace your pronunciation but a temporary bridge to help you consolidate the meaning of English words into Vietnamese. Briefly, there is an English word, we will pair the sound similar to Vietnamese with a reading similar to it. Then, it helps to create a story that links all the pictures of the substitute words into the sentence that contains the word's meaning.

In Similar sound technique, learners can learn in three ways:

Firstly, learning from books and stories available: in Vietnam, there are many books to learn vocabulary by method of information security and among them, the most famous is Step-up publishing house which has very good books, collected attract a lot of students to study, especially high school students. Learning from books or stories will help learners save time to create a story. Moreover, learners can learn, exchange and share with friends, parents, and so on. However, the price of the book is quite high, quite heavy, difficult to move because most of the books have color photos, many pictures, and a lot of vocabulary to stimulate the interest of readers. Moreover, they will lack creativity due to learning according to a pattern, which is not created by themselves, and it can affect the quality of memorization. In addition, learning by books is also easy to get boring when studying independently.

Secondly, independent learning is a way of learning based on your own stories and ideas. It is clear that learners can selfadjust and create their own learning style. Thereby, increasing their creative thinking ability. According to Douglas B. Reeves, many teachers feel powerless and assume that we cannot force learners to learn. They believe that there should be practical methods to make learners more interested and motivated in their English learning. "*To be motivated, people must know how to trigger strong, positive emotions and direct them toward a specific benefit or goal.*" Therefore, Similar sound techniques are one of the methods of learning to do that. Nevertheless, learners may experience depression when they are introverts and do not like to share their stories with others. Moreover, fear of making mistakes, shame, anxiety, lack of motivation also cause difficulties for learners. In addition, learners will spend a lot of time creating stories through the Similar sound technique when they study independently without anyone helping them. In reality. Broughton (1978) once said that learners will feel most motivated to learn a language when they practice where they understand the language through real interactions in the right context. Because of that, the Similar sound technique is a free method and can be creative and adjusted by learners, so learners should have the right measures to achieve the best effect.

Thirdly, in term of Group learning, Group vocabulary learning through Similar sound technique is a learning method based on experiences and ideas contributed by many people in a group. From there, come up with one or more stories associated with the Similar sound technique so that learners can absorb vocabulary through it. In fact, this method is easy to absorb vocabulary because studying in groups makes learners less stressed, and more fun when studying alone. Moreover, it helps learners to be more confident in sharing and contributing ideas to others because in group learning according to the Similar sound technique, learners need to give opinions to contribute to the group's ideas. This helps learners reduce language barriers, increase their confidence in communication and teamwork. Yet, learners may face certain difficulties when learning vocabulary in groups using the Similar sound technique. First, they may have difficulty interacting with everyone in the group, and this is largely due to a lack of confidence in communication.

Previous studies

So far, the similar sound technique is a relatively new method and there have not been much research and experimental work. Indeed, although it is not known as a popular method, many teachers, book writers, and reputable websites have given quite good opinions about the "similar sound technique".

In Vietnam, Mr. Nguyen Hiep - Editor of two best-selling foreign language learning books Tiki 2018 & 2019: Before the book, Hack 1500 English words (a book that caused a fever in the foreign language learning community, the story method, and Similar sound were introduced by Mr. Nguyen Hiep on how to learn new words through Similar sound techniques). Also derived from the idea in the book I am talented, you too, Mr. Nguyen Hiep have applied this method and provided extremely detailed instructions on how to learn through this method.

On the website to learn foreign languages for free with videos https://www.engvid.com there are also many ways to memorize vocabulary. One of them, Ms. Ronnie who has more than three million subscribers and shares her method of using her mother tongue to learn vocabulary. It is the same with the similar sound technique, which uses similar-sounding words to make sentences and associate the meaning of words.

Paul Nowak - Founder and CEO of IrisReading.com: IrisReading.com is a website specializing in aggregating and introducing online courses to teach speed reading and improve memory. He is also the one who regularly organizes training sessions on teaching and improving memory for organizations such as NASA, Google, and several other Fortune 500 companies – some of which have detailed lessons on using Similar sound techniques to memorize new words.

From the above studies, we can see that most of the studies in both Vietnam and abroad have studied Similar sounds with aspects of communication and daily work. There have not been any studies on the use of similar sound techniques to improve the speed and efficiency of learning vocabulary, especially English vocabulary. As you can see, this research has gained new perspectives and it may also hold a lot of potential that "Similar sound technique" will be a widely used effective vocabulary learning method in the future.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this investigation, an experimental approach was utilized as the research method. To gather data and address the research questions, two primary tools were employed by the researchers: questionnaires and tests. The study involved 20 high school students from Duong Tu Minh High School who were enrolled in the 2022-2023 school year.

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Using non-probability sampling, 20 students were chosen for the study. These students were all high school students from Duong Tu Minh High School enrolled in the 2022-2023 school year. The students were then divided into two groups of equal size: 1) the experimental group used Similar sound techniques to learn English vocabulary (10 students). 2) The control group used a different technique to learn English vocabulary (10 students). The experimental group consisted of students from various classes at Duong Tu Minh High School. All participants had a basic understanding of Similar sound techniques. In fact, some students frequently used Similar sound techniques to learn new words, but not all of them knew how to use it effectively. As a result, the study included several activities related to Similar sound games to improve students' vocabulary acquisition.

Vocabulary is an important part of the grading criteria for all relevant grades, so using Similar sound techniques is a suitable way to meet the specific needs of high school students.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results from Questionnaires

The bar chart below demonstrates the percentage of students who assessed their competence in learning English vocabulary. As can be seen from the figure, 65% of students thought that their ability to learn vocabulary were bad, while only 5% of students thought that they were good at Learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, 30% of students believed that their English reading competence were normal. By contracts, the number of people choosing "excellent" was 0%. In fact, it can be understood that all the participants are high school students, and most of the students only have basic knowledge of learning English vocabulary. To sum up, the chart showed that high school students were aware of their ability to learn English vocabulary, and there was no doubt about that they needed an effective English vocabulary learning method.

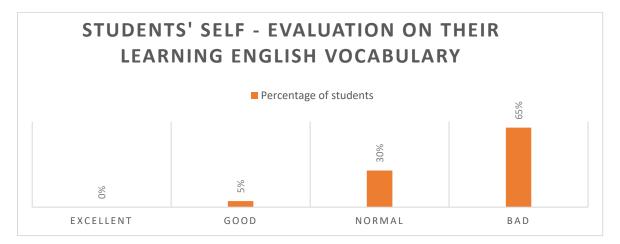


Figure 1. Students' self - evaluation on their learning English vocabulary

The second question in the questionnaire was used to find that whether students spent a lot of time learning English vocabulary or not. In general, to achieve good vocabulary learning ability depends mainly on how much time high school students spend on learning English vocabulary every day.

The pie chart illustrates the number of weekly time of students in learning English vocabulary. In facts, the number of participants who chose the option "8-14 hours" was the least (18%), while over a half of students (36%) admitted that they spent from 3.5 to 7 hours on learning English vocabulary in a week. Moreover, 46% was the percentage of pupils that thought they learned English vocabulary less than 3.5 hours per week. To sum up, the results showed that all students took the time to learn English vocabulary to improve their vocabulary. However, the time spent learning vocabulary was not enough to read English fluently. Moreover, students needed to spend more time at home learning English vocabulary instead of just studying at school. To summary, students also needed a method to help them less boring in learning English vocabulary.

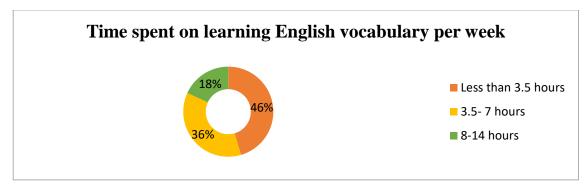


Figure 2. Students' spending on learning English vocabulary per week

Figure 3 below shows the frequency of students' learning English vocabulary during the week.

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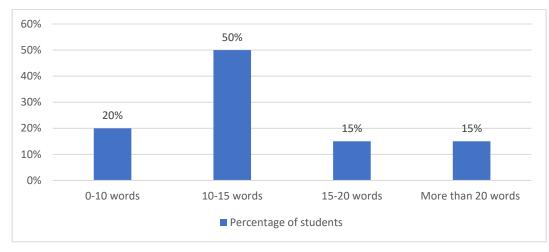
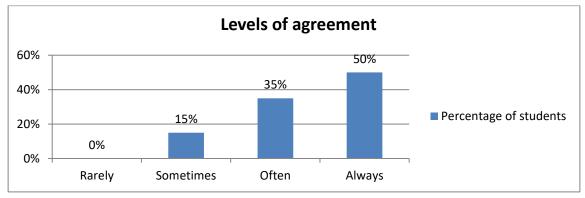
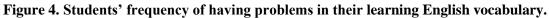


Figure 3. Students' frequency of learning English vocabulary peer week.

According to Figure 3, 50% of students learned vocabulary with a frequency of 10-15 words a week. In contrast, among the participants, 15% was the percentage figure of both students learning 15-20 words and students learning more than 20 words. Finally, the group of high school students who learned 0-10 words accounted for 20%. In shorts, we can see that the vocabulary learning ability of high school students is still not high. Moreover, this chart clearly showed the difference in vocabulary learning frequency of high school students. Indeed, the main reason was because high school students did not have an optimal method to learn vocabulary. Therefore, high school students needed a more effective method.





It is clear from the chart that most of the students have troubles while reading English. There were more than half of the participants (51%) answered that they always have problems with challenging texts in English. 17% was the percentage of those who often have difficulties, and the figure of choosing the categories of "Sometimes" almost doubled. The percentage of students choosing the option "rarely" was 0%. The data above undoubtedly prove that the students always have to tackle with the difficulties in reading the long texts in English.

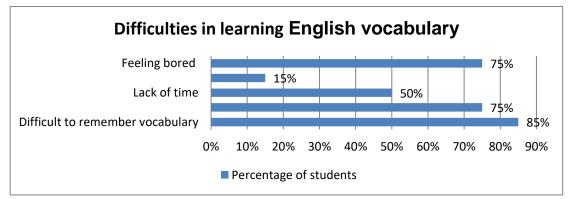


Figure 5. Students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary

In fact, all the participants reported that they had difficulty in learning English vocabulary. Indeed, the chart shows the difficulties students have encountered in learning vocabulary for various reasons. As can be seen in the chart, most students think that they have difficulty reading English for 5 main reasons: Feeling bored, Difficulty concentrating, Lack of time, forget easily and difficult to remember vocabulary. Most students (85%) agree that the biggest difficulty they face in reading comprehension is Difficult to remember vocabulary. Although unlearned words can be predicted, students cannot know how and when they are used. The second difficulty that the participants encountered when learning English vocabulary was Feeling bored, because the number for this option was 75%. Indeed, there is no doubt that learning sesame words with a less effective method can make students stressed and depressed. Furthermore, 75% is also a percentage of Forget easily. In fact, learning with methods is not long-term memorization that can make learners forget easily after one or more times of learning English vocabulary. Although the percentage is much lower than other reasons, Difficult hard work is also a common condition among high school students in learning English vocabulary with 15%. Today, not all high school students have an ideal learning environment or a completely comfortable psychology when learning vocabulary.

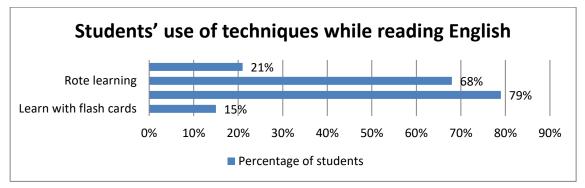


Figure 6. Students' use of techniques while learning English vocabulary.

Figure 6 shows the percentages of high school students using three English vocabulary learning techniques. It is clear from the chart that Learn English vocabulary through entertainment activities is used most frequently in vocabulary learning with 79 %. Meanwhile, almost no one knows about the Similar sound technique. On the other hand, up to 68% of participants chose Rote learning as a popular technique when learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, 15% of high school students think that using flash cards is an effective way to learn new English words. In addition, 21% of high school students have other options in the vocabulary learning methods mentioned above. Thus, the Similar sound technique is an uncommon English vocabulary learning method for high school students.

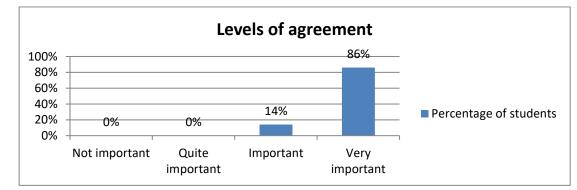


Figure 7. Students' agreement about the importance of using methods in Learning English vocabulary.

The bar graph above shows the percentage of high school students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of using their English vocabulary learning tips and techniques. It was clear that all the students agreed that these techniques enhanced their vocabulary learning skills. In particular, up to 86% of students surveyed think that it is very important to use English

vocabulary learning techniques. Not all students use tips and techniques when learning vocabulary, but they cannot deny the importance of tips and techniques in learning English vocabulary.

No	Classification	Score	Experimental Group		Control group	
			F	P (%)	F	P (%)
1	Excellent	9.5 to 10	0	0%	0	0%
2	Very Good	8.5 to 9.4	0	0%	0	0%
3	Good	7.5 to 8.4	0	0%	0	0%
4	Fairly Good	6.5 to 7.4	1	10%	1	10%
5	Fair	5.5 to 6.4	2	20%	1	10%
6	Poor	4.5 to 5.4	4	40%	4	40%
7	Very poor	0 to 4.4	3	30%	4	40%
	Total		10	100%	10	100%

Results from Tests

Table 1. The data percentage of students' score of pre-test

Table 1 above showed the pre-test scores of students in both experimental and control groups in learning English vocabulary. In fact, neither the experimental group nor the control group have effective vocabulary learners. In the experimental group, only 10% of students had scores from 6.5 to 7.4, which were assessed fairly good. Furthermore, this was similar for the control group students. In addition, two students (10%) were graded Fair in the control group and the percentage of students at this level in the experimental group was twice as high (20%). Moreover, both the experimental and control groups had 4 students with poor English vocabulary. Besides, both groups have a very large number of students learning English vocabulary very poorly. Specifically, there are four students with very poor English vocabulary in the control group. Meanwhile, the experimental group also has up to three students.

The data proved that students' reading comprehension ability is still weak. Students' reading ability is graded on a 7-point scale, but scores range from very poor to good. Therefore, the researchers tried to apply the Similar sound technique in class to demonstrate whether the Similar sound technique could improve the ability of high school students to learn English vocabulary. Furthermore, the reading ability of students in the control group used in their pre-tests was the same as in the experimental group. In other words, the level of English vocabulary proficiency of both groups was initially quite equal. There were no significant differences between the experimental and control groups; therefore, researchers can compare and analyze data easily, and this study has higher reliability.

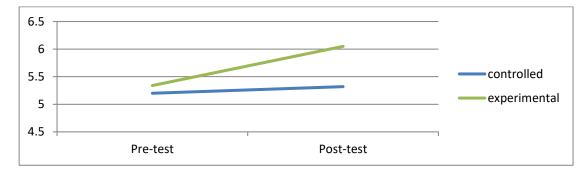
After applying the Similar sound technique to a test group while the control group was taught without using the method, both people were tested after the treatment to find out if there was a difference. improve after treatment or not. The score of students' post-test in both of group was recorded in the following table:

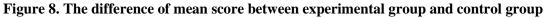
No	Classification	Score	Experimental Group		Control group	
			F	P (%)	F	P (%)
1	Excellent	9.5 to 10	0	0%	0	0%
2	Very Good	8.5 to 9.4	0	0%	0	0%
3	Good	7.5 to 8.4	1	10%	0	0%
4	Fairly Good	6.5 to 7.4	2	20%	1	10%
5	Fair	5.5 to 6.4	2	20%	1	10%
6	Poor	4.5 to 5.4	3	30%	5	50%

ſ	7	Very poor	0 to 4.4	2	20%	3	30%
		Total		10	100%	10	100%

Table 2. The data percentage of students' score of post-test

The data in the table above illustrate the post-test scores of students in both experimental and control groups. It is clear that in experimental group 1 (10%) students are quite good, so it has increased significantly compared to before the test, there are no students achieving this score. In contrast, 0% of students in the control group scored well. The number of students with poor and very poor scores decreased significantly in the experimental group. In the experimental group, the total percentage of poor and very poor students was 30% while in the control group it was 80%. The number of students with the highest scores increased and the number of students with the lowest scores decreased, indicating that students who were taught the Similar sound technique improved their English reading comprehension. Furthermore, students who were taught without using the Similar sound technique did not make much progress because they did not have a breakthrough in their scores, and were still limited in terms of vocabulary learning.





The researchers concluded that using chunking technique can improve students' reading comprehension. However, the students' mean score of pre-test of control group was (5.2) almost the same as the mean score of students' post-test and the standard deviation of students' post-test was higher than pre-test. Therefore, without using chunking technique there is not too much improvement of students' reading comprehension.

It cannot be denied that chunking had a positive effect on students' reading performance. There was a big difference between pre-test score and post-test score of the participants in the experimental group. This demonstrated that the participants' reading competence was improved when learning and applying chunking technique. The students, especially freshmen, get a lot of troubles while taking the English reading tests at University. Based on results of research process, it is clear that some students improved not only their reading comprehension but also their range of academic vocabulary, because they were practiced chunking the text into meaningful phrases.

V. CONCLUSION

Generally, through the research process, there are some conclusions about the use of Similar sound technique to improve English vocabulary learning skills of 20 grade 11 students at DUONG TU MINH high school. The information was collected using questionnaires, pre-test, post-test and practice test with data analysis to answer two research questions. It can be understood as follows:

Firstly, no doubt about that the results of students' answers to the questions show the fact that high school students have a lot of difficulty learning vocabulary. Specifically, when learning English vocabulary, students often feel frustrated because it is too stressful to remember. Most of them spend little time learning English vocabulary every day. Furthermore, due to overcrowded classrooms, limited space and resources, narrowly defined regular reading programs, and tightly controlled schedules and schedules, students have relatively little exposure to vocabulary learning combined with fun activities. In particular, students are affected by the habit of learning vocabulary by rote learning method (learning to memorize words by reading silently), so students often forget vocabulary and it is difficult to remember specific details. Indeed, this is why

the similar sound technique can play an important role in fostering high school students' ability to learn English vocabulary and learning attitudes.

Secondly, the researchers found that there was a big difference between the scores before and after the test of the participants in the experimental group. In contrast, the gap between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group students was not significant. Therefore, this proves that the participants' English vocabulary learning skills are significantly improved when learning according to the Similar sound technique. In the other hand, for the control group, the improvement in vocabulary skills of high school students was not considerable during the process.

Thirdly, it is conceivable that the study participants completed a questionnaire that they had never used the Similar sound technique before. However, in fact, by analyzing practice tests, the researchers found that there were some high school students who used the similar sound technique many times without them realizing it. By analyzing the students' responses to the questions collected, the researcher realized that the new method aroused interest and they accepted changes to improve their vocabulary learning skills. Moreover, they still maintain a positive attitude, so it can be commented that this model does not pressure them at all.

In conclusion, the researchers would like to point out some limitations of this study and give some effective suggestions on measures to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning English vocabulary. Hopefully, my research can help students and teachers in improving their ability to learn English vocabulary.

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