An assessment of vocabulary knowledge of Vietnamese EFL learners

Vocabulary is key to communication and developing vocabulary knowledge is important for the improvement of language skills. In Vietnam, according to the Ministry of Education and Training, by the end of high school (12th grade) Vietnamese students should have mastered around 2,500 English words (MOET, 2018). Also, Vu (2019) showed that the recent English exams for national high school graduation in Vietnam from 2015 to 2018 require a knowledge of 6,000 word families to comprehend 95% of the exam papers. However, no research has been conducted to assess vocabulary levels of Vietnamese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to examine whether they achieve the required levels of vocabulary knowledge. This study employed Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham’s (2001) Vocabulary Levels Test to assess vocabulary levels of 500 Vietnamese EFL 12th graders from both urban and rural areas. The results indicated that the majority of the students failed to meet the criterion of mastery (i.e. scoring 26 out of 30) for any levels of vocabulary knowledge suggested by Schmitt et al. (2001). Moreover, a Mann-Whitney U test (data not normally distributed) revealed that students in urban areas had significantly more vocabulary knowledge than students in rural areas at all word levels except 10,000 word level. In terms of sex, female students’ vocabulary knowledge was significantly better than male students’ at all word levels except 5,000 word level. The results would be interpreted in light of previous research with implications for vocabulary learning and teaching in Vietnam.

References: