

An Analysis of Vocabulary Learning Strategies among Second Semester Students of the English Education Study Program at Nusa Cendana University in the Academic Year 2024/2025

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history	
Received : Nov, 28 th 2025 Revised : Dec, 12 th 2025 Accepted : Dec, 22 nd 2025	This research aimed to analyze the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by second semester students of the English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University in the academic year 2024/2025. The objectives are to identify types of strategies they used, the most and least used strategies, and to explore students' opinions regarding their use of these strategies. The research used a mixed-method design. Data were collected through a questionnaire based on Schmitt's taxonomy (1997) and followed by interviews. The results showed that students used all five categories of strategies: memory, cognitive, determination, metacognitive, and social. The most frequently used strategies were interacting in social media (social), repeatedly using words in sentence (cognitive), guessing the meaning of word from the context in sentence (determination), listening to podcasts, musics or movies (metacognitive), and relating them to personal opinion (memory). Meanwhile, the less frequently used strategies included speaking directly with native speakers (social), setting targets to learn new words (metacognitive), analyzing word parts (determination), making vocabulary flashcard (cognitive), and studying the spelling of words (memory). This finding indicates that students preferred strategies that involve active engagement and practice rather than mechanical memorization. They believed that repetition, contextual learning, and exposure to English through media were effective in helping them remember and apply new vocabulary. Factors such as comfort, motivation, learning style, and confidence were found to influence their choice of strategies.
Keywords:	<i>Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Nusa Cendana University, English Language Learning</i>

1. Introduction

Language plays an important role in human life because it helps people express thoughts, ideas, and social needs (Tadjuddin, 2013). In today's global world, English has become an international language that is widely used in education, business, research, and technology (Anabokay & Suryasa, 2019). For this reason, English is learned by students in many

countries, including Indonesia, especially at the university level where students are expected to use English for academic purposes.

One of the most important elements in learning English is vocabulary. Vocabulary is not only a list of words. It includes words, phrases, and expressions that are used to communicate meaning in daily life (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Vocabulary helps learners express ideas, thoughts, and emotions more clearly (Binder et al., 2017). A good vocabulary also allows learners to communicate more effectively and confidently in real situations (McKeown, 2019). Without sufficient vocabulary, learners may struggle to understand messages and to express what they want to say. Vocabulary is essential because it carries meaning and allows learners to understand and express ideas clearly. Students with limited vocabulary often face difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Rohmatillah, 2014). Several researchers highlight that vocabulary plays a more important role than grammar in communication. Ta'amneh (2021) states that vocabulary is more crucial than grammar, while Ellis (1994) explains that vocabulary errors can cause more serious misunderstandings than grammatical errors. This shows that vocabulary development is a key factor in successful language learning.

Because vocabulary is so important, it is necessary to understand how students learn new words. This is closely related to Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS), which refer to the ways learners discover, remember, and use vocabulary. Vocabulary Learning Strategies are part of Language Learning Strategies (LLS). Oxford (1990) divides language learning strategies into direct and indirect strategies, which help learners manage and improve their learning. Many experts have proposed different classifications of vocabulary learning strategies, such as Cook and Mayer (1983), Gu and Johnson (1996), and Nation (2001, 2013). Among these classifications, Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy is one of the most widely used in vocabulary research. Schmitt divides vocabulary learning strategies into two main groups: discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. These strategies are further categorized into determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. This framework helps researchers understand how learners find the meaning of new words and how they remember and use them later. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, students often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Therefore, using appropriate vocabulary learning strategies can help students learn words more effectively. Oxford (1990), as cited in Asyiah (2017), explains that learning strategies

support active and independent learning. In addition, Schmitt and Schmitt (2020) state that vocabulary learning strategies can increase students' motivation, focus, and involvement in the learning process.

At the university level, vocabulary development becomes even more important, especially for students in the early semesters. Second semester students are still adjusting to academic English after graduating from high school. At this stage, vocabulary knowledge is needed to support the development of other language skills. Previous research by Nejang, Djahimo, and Suek (2023) revealed that fifth-semester students experienced speaking difficulties due to several factors, with lack of vocabulary identified as the most dominant one. This finding suggests that the vocabulary problems reported in the fifth semester may originate from weak vocabulary foundations developed in earlier semesters. Therefore, studying vocabulary learning strategies among second semester students is important to understand their learning habits and needs.

Based on these considerations, this study is conducted with the following research aims:

1. To identify the types of vocabulary learning strategies used by second semester students of the English Education Study Program at Nusa Cendana University in the academic year 2024/2025.
2. To determine the most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies in each strategy category.
3. To explore students' opinions toward the vocabulary learning strategies they use.

Through addressing these aims, the present study is expected to provide useful insights for both lecture and students in improving vocabulary learning and teaching at the university level. Therefore, the researcher considers it important to conduct a study entitled "**An Analysis of Vocabulary Learning Strategies among Second Semester Students of the English Education Study Program at Nusa Cendana University in the Academic Year 2024/2025**"

2. Research Method

This study used a mixed-method explanatory sequential design. In this design, the researcher first collected quantitative data through a vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire. After that, qualitative interviews were carried out to help explain and deepen the results obtained from the quantitative data. The participants in this study were 34 second

semester students from class 2D of the English Education Study Program at Nusa Cendana University. From this group, 10 students were selected using purposive sampling. These students were chosen because they had the highest VLS usage scores and were willing to participate in the interviews.

This study employed two research instruments. The first instrument was a 25-item questionnaire adapted from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy, which measured students' use of five categories of vocabulary learning strategies, namely memory, determination, cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. The questionnaire applied a five-point Likert scale. The second instrument was a set of semi structured interviews consisting of six questions designed to explore students' opinions regarding the vocabulary learning strategies they used.

Data collection began with the distribution of the questionnaire through Google Forms. The researcher collaborated with the class captain to share the questionnaire with all students. After the quantitative data were collected, interviews were conducted with the 10 selected participants. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent. The collected data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and then described in words. The analysis started with calculating the results of the questionnaire. Each item used a five-point Likert scale (5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, 1 = Never), and responses were obtained from 34 students. The percentage of each response was calculated using Sudjiono's (2004) formula, $P = F/N \times 100$, where P refers to the percentage, F to the frequency of responses, and N to the total number of respondents. The five items within each vocabulary learning strategy category were then averaged to determine the overall percentage for that category. Following Boone and Boone (2012), responses were grouped into positive (Always–Often), neutral (Sometimes), and negative (Rarely–Never) categories to identify the most and least frequently used strategies. In line with the explanatory sequential mixed-method design, the interview findings were used to support and clarify the quantitative results. Finally, the researcher described the findings and drew conclusions regarding the types, frequency, and students' opinions of vocabulary learning strategies.

3. Research Findings and Discussion

Findings

Quantitative Findings

Table 1 Types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used

No	Vocabulary learning Strategies	Positive	Neutral	Negative
		(%)	(%)	(%)
	Memory strategy	49	38	13
1	I learn new words by using physical action when learning a word	44	44	12
2	learn new words by grouping them according to their synonyms and antonyms	36	56	8
3	I learn new words by Study the spelling of the word	47	21	32
4	I learn new words by grouping them based on topics or themes.	47	41	12
5	I learn new words by relating them to my personal experiences	70	27	3
	Determination strategies	56	31	13
6	I learn new words by using an English Indonesian dictionary to find their meanings	59	35	6
7	I learn new words by using an English-English dictionary to find their meanings	61	24	15
8	I learn new words by guessing their meanings from the context in a sentence or paragraph	88	12	0
9	I learn new words by Analyze any available pictures or gestures to guess the word	50	38	12
10	I learn new words by analyzing word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and root words) to understand their meanings	23	47	30
	Cognitive strategies	60	26	14

11	I learn new words by repeatedly saying them along with their meanings	70	24	6
12	I learn new words by making vocabulary flashcards for practice	42	23	35
13	I learn new words by writing them down in my notebook	59	23	18
14	I learn new words by listening to vocabulary lists in videos or audio recordings	53	35	12
15	I learn new words by repeatedly using them in sentences	76	24	0
Metacognitive strategy		53	28	19
16	I learn new words by setting target for new vocabulary and planning how to achieve it daily.	38	21	41
17	I learn new words by reviewing the vocabulary I have learned regularly	50	41	9
18	I learn new words by using vocabulary tests	56	26	18
19	I learn new words by listening to podcasts, music, or movies	79	15	6
20	I learn new words by reading materials such as journal, articles, stories or advertisement	41	38	21
Social strategy		53	19	28
21	I learn new words by interacting in social media	88	12	0
22	I learn new words by practicing communication with my teacher or friends	53	24	24
23	I learn new words by participating in group discussion with my classmates	47	21	32
24	I learn new words by speaking directly with native speaker	39	17	44

25	I learn new words by asking for clarification when not understanding a word in conversation	38	23	39
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Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data obtained from interviews with 10 selected participants provide deeper insight into how students perceive the vocabulary learning strategies they use.

1. Most Effective Strategies.

Students highlighted four main strategies as most effective. Cognitive strategies such as repeating words or using them in sentences were frequently mentioned for improving memory and recall. Determination strategies, especially guessing meaning from context, were valued for helping students understand words more naturally. Metacognitive strategies like listening to English songs, podcasts, or movies built familiarity through repeated exposure. Social strategies, such as interacting through social media were chosen for showing how words are used in real life.

2. How These Strategies Support Learning.

Students consistently explained that repetition strengthened memory, while habitual exposure through media increased familiarity. Learning from context helped them connect words to real situations, and interaction through social media reinforced understanding by seeing words used in authentic communication.

3. Contribution to Other Language Skills.

The strategies students frequently used also supported skills beyond vocabulary. Listening activities improved pronunciation and comprehension, while repeated speaking practice enhanced confidence and fluency. Context-based learning contributed to better reading comprehension, and writing example sentences helped students develop grammar awareness and written expression.

4. Strategies Rarely Used.

Several strategies were reported as rarely used. Reading long texts, using flashcards, or memorizing spelling were perceived as boring, difficult, or not aligned with students' learning styles. Social strategies such as speaking with native speakers or group discussions were limited due to low confidence or lack of opportunity. Some students also avoided relying on bilingual dictionaries because they offer meaning without sufficient context.

5. Reasons for Avoiding Certain Strategies.

Students explained that certain strategies felt less effective because they required more effort, did not match their preferred way of learning, or lacked contextual richness. Limited motivation, low confidence, and time constraints also played a part. Personal factors, such as introverted personalities or unsupportive environments, further influenced students' reluctance to engage in more socially demanding strategies.

Overall, the interview data reveal that students choose strategies that feel practical, enjoyable, and personally suitable, while avoiding those that demand higher cognitive effort, direct social interaction, or sustained concentration.

Discussion

The findings reveal clear patterns in the students' use of vocabulary learning strategies. Quantitatively, cognitive strategies were used most frequently, followed by determination, metacognitive, social, and memory strategies. This suggests that students favor strategies involving active engagement, such as repetition, contextual guessing, and exposure through media, over mechanical memorization or strategies that require interaction with others. These results support previous studies such as Tahmina (2023), who found that repetition is widely preferred among high-proficiency learners, and align with Schmitt's (1997) view that determination strategies play an important role in helping learners infer meaning.

A closer look at each category shows consistent tendencies. Within cognitive strategies, using new words in sentences and repeating them were the most preferred, reflecting students' reliance on practice to reinforce memory (Oxford, 1990). In contrast, flashcards were less popular, indicating that learners prefer contextual strategies. In the determination category, guessing meaning from context was dominant, it confirmed that many students rely on contextual clues when encountering new words. Metacognitive strategies like listening to English media were also frequently used, it showed the value of natural exposure. However, planning or setting vocabulary goals was less common due to the discipline required. Memory strategies showed a preference for connecting words to personal experience, while mechanical memorization (e.g., spelling) was less appealing to students. Socially, interacting through social media was highly used, whereas speaking with native speakers or joining discussions was limited by low confidence and lack of opportunity. These patterns reinforce trends reported in earlier research (Liu & Guo, 2021; Al-Bidawi, 2018).

The qualitative findings deepen this picture. Students reported that their preferred strategies were those that felt practical, enjoyable, and compatible with their learning style. Many emphasized that repetition, using words in sentences, and learning through media were effective because they offered meaningful engagement and supported long-term retention. Others valued

contextual guessing because it helped them understand texts more naturally. Social media interaction was also seen as beneficial for exposing students to authentic language use in informal settings. These views echo arguments by Schmitt (1997) and Nation (2001) that contextual and incidental learning promote deeper vocabulary development.

At the same time, students acknowledged several challenges. Reading long texts was avoided due to difficulty, time constraints, and lack of interest. Strategies involving direct communication, such as speaking with native speakers or participating in discussions, were hindered by low confidence and anxiety. More systematic strategies, such as analyzing word parts or memorizing spelling, were seen as demanding or less meaningful. Importantly, some students believed that these less used strategies were actually effective but difficult to practice regularly due to external factors (e.g., limited exposure) or internal ones (e.g., shyness or low motivation).

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative results point to an important conclusion: **students prefer strategies that offer practical, contextual, and emotionally engaging ways to learn vocabulary.** Strategies that require higher cognitive effort, stronger discipline, or greater confidence tend to be used less frequently, it is not because they are ineffective, but because they feel less suitable to students' current abilities and learning environments. This highlights the need for instructional support that helps learners build confidence, develop metacognitive habits, and practice a wider range of strategies to enhance vocabulary learning more effectively.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the types, frequency, and students' perceptions of vocabulary learning strategies used by second semester English Education students at Nusa Cendana University. The findings show that all five strategy categories were used, with cognitive strategies being the most dominant, followed by determination, metacognitive, social, and memory strategies. Students tended to rely on practical and active strategies such as repetition, contextual guessing, and learning through English media, while more demanding strategies like analyzing word parts or interacting with native speakers were used less frequently. Qualitative insights confirmed that students preferred strategies they found meaningful, enjoyable, and easy to apply, while limited confidence, time, and motivation hindered the use of others. Overall, effective vocabulary learning was influenced not only by strategy frequency but also by how well the strategies matched students' learning preferences.

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