



**INVESTIGATING NON-ENGLISH LEARNERS'
INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING
THROUGH SKY CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT
GAME**



KARIMATUL ULYA

SN. 2521066

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A THESIS

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirement for the
Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education**



By:

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2025**

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c.q. Ketua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris
di
PEKALONGAN

Assalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Setelah diadakan penelitian dan perbaikan, maka bersama ini saya kirimkan naskah Skripsi :

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Jurusan	:	Tadris Bahasa Inggris
Judul	:	"INVESTIGATING NON-ENGLISH LEARNERS' INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LARNING THROUGH SKY CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT GAME"

Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Pekalongan, 30 Juni 2025

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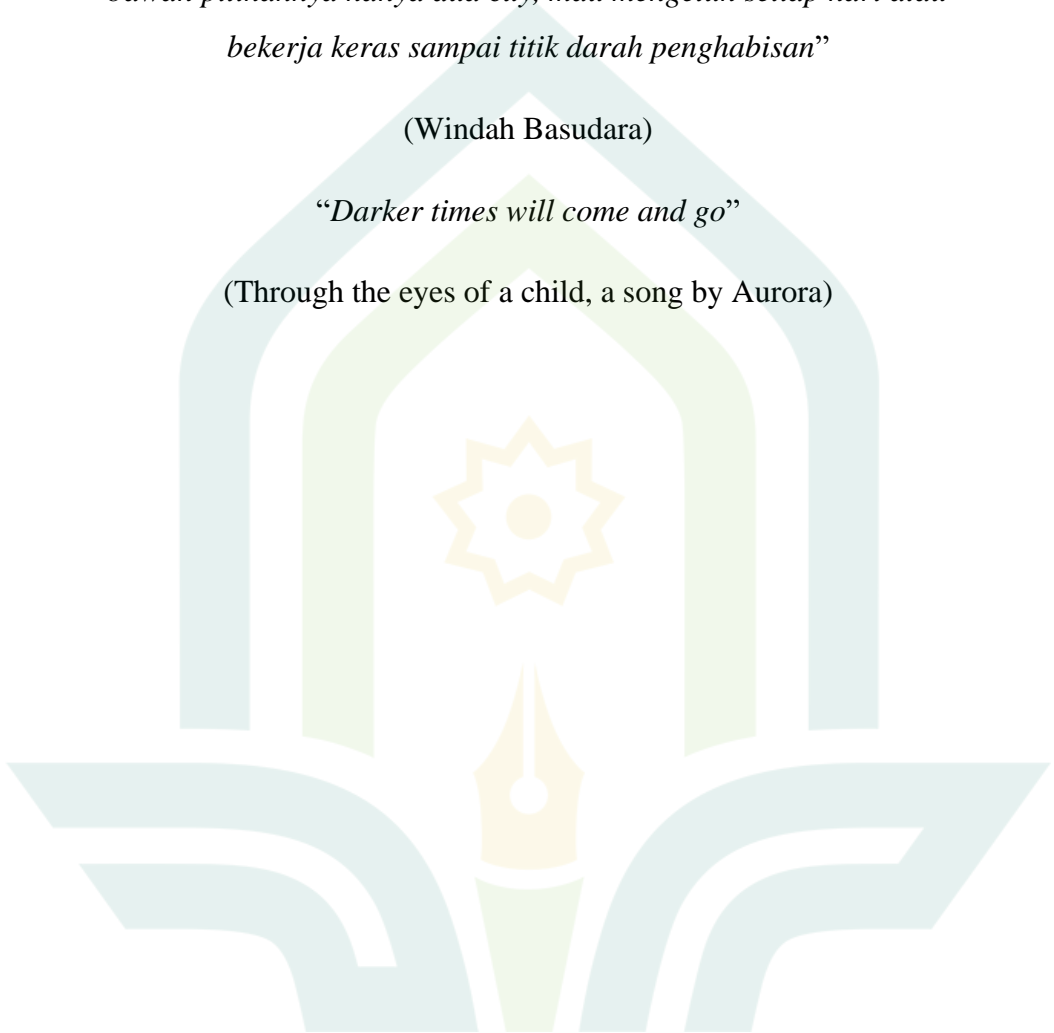
MOTTO

“Orang-orang yang lahir dari keluarga sederhana atau menengah ke bawah pilihannya hanya dua cuy, mau mengeluh setiap hari atau bekerja keras sampai titik darah penghabisan”

(Windah Basudara)

“Darker times will come and go”

(Through the eyes of a child, a song by Aurora)



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ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran kosakata secara insidental melalui permainan digital masih kurang dieksplorasi di kalangan pembelajar non-bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pembelajar non-bahasa Inggris Indonesia memperoleh kosakata secara insidental melalui Sky Children of the Light dan mengidentifikasi tantangan mereka. Studi kasus kualitatif digunakan dengan mengumpulkan data dari tiga pemain Indonesia melalui studi diary dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Analisis tematik diterapkan untuk mengkaji mekanisme dan hambatan perolehan kosakata. Temuan mengungkapkan lima tahapan pembelajaran insidental meliputi paparan melalui misi dan interaksi sosial, perhatian yang didorong oleh pengulangan dan kebutuhan, interpretasi melalui konteks dan teks, retensi yang dibantu oleh frekuensi dan penggunaan, dan potensi salah interpretasi. Tantangan utama meliputi ketergantungan pada petunjuk kontekstual yang terbatas, beban kognitif berlebihan selama percakapan waktu nyata, dan perbedaan gaya belajar. Permainan memfasilitasi perolehan kosakata melalui interaksi sosial yang autentik, meskipun efektivitasnya bergantung pada dukungan kontekstual dan pengetahuan sebelumnya. Penelitian ini menyoroti potensi permainan petualangan sosial untuk pembelajaran kosakata dan memberikan wawasan untuk penelitian pembelajaran insidental.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Kosakata Insidental, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Akuisisi Bahasa, Permainan Dunia Terbuka.*

ABSTRACT

Incidental vocabulary learning through digital games remains underexplored among non-English learners. This study investigates how Indonesian non-English learners acquire vocabulary incidentally through Sky Children of the Light and identifies their challenges. A qualitative case study was employed, collecting data from three Indonesian players through diary studies and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was applied to examine vocabulary acquisition mechanisms and obstacles. Findings revealed five stages of incidental learning including exposure through missions and social interactions, attention driven by repetition and need, interpretation through context and text, retention aided by frequency and use, and potential misinterpretation. Key challenges included reliance on limited contextual cues, cognitive overload during real-time chats, and disparities in learning styles. The game facilitated vocabulary acquisition through authentic social interactions, though its effectiveness depended on contextual support and prior knowledge. This study highlights the potential of social adventure games for vocabulary learning and provides insights for incidental learning research.

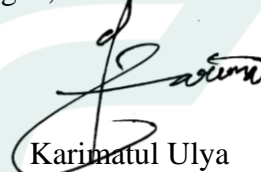
Keywords: *Incidental Vocabulary Learning, English Language Learning, Language Acquisition, Open World Game.*

PREFACE

Praise and gratitude we offer to the presence of Allah SWT who has bestowed His grace and kinds so that the process of writing a thesis entitled “Investigating Non-English Learners’ Incidental Vocabulary Learning Through Sky Children of The Light Game” can be completed. This thesis is submitted to the English Language Education Department of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan to fulfill one of the requirements to obtain a Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan. This thesis can be completed thanks to the support of various parties. Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Incidental vocabulary learning represents a natural and powerful mechanism through which language learners acquire new words without explicit intention to study vocabulary (Nation, 2001). Unlike traditional vocabulary instruction that emphasizes deliberate memorization and structured learning activities, incidental learning occurs when learners encounter unfamiliar words while engaged in meaningful activities such as reading, listening, or interactive communication. This learning process is particularly significant because it mirrors how native speakers naturally expand their vocabulary through contextual exposure and repeated encounters with new words in authentic communicative situations (Webb, 2008).

The importance of incidental vocabulary learning becomes even more pronounced for non-English learners who acquire language through social participation in communities where English is used (Weisi & Hajizadeh, 2025). These learners rely heavily on authentic input and meaningful interactions to develop their English proficiency, making the quality and context of their language exposure crucial for successful vocabulary acquisition (Teng, 2021). For this population, incidental learning serves as the primary pathway for vocabulary development, as they lack systematic instruction and structured learning frameworks typically available in formal educational environments.

Digital games have emerged as promising platforms for facilitating incidental vocabulary learning due to their interactive nature and authentic communication opportunities (Zou et al., 2019). Among various gaming platforms, Sky Children of The Light presents unique characteristics that create natural contexts for vocabulary exposure. This social adventure game allows players to communicate with others from different countries around the world,

fostering cross-cultural interactions where English serves as the lingua franca. The game's emphasis on social interaction rather than competitive gameplay creates a supportive environment where players engage in authentic conversations, encounter diverse vocabulary through real-time communication, and develop language skills through meaningful social participation (Lai & Chen, 2023).

However, despite the potential of digital games as platforms for incidental vocabulary learning, limited research has specifically examined how non-English learners implement incidental vocabulary acquisition through gaming environments. Most existing studies focus on formal language learners in educational settings, leaving a significant gap in understanding how individuals without formal English education backgrounds navigate vocabulary learning through digital gaming (Farhan, 2022; Calvo-Ferrer, & Belda-Medina, 2021; Zou et al., 2019; Weisi & Hajizadeh, 2025; Fadzil & Sulaiman, 2022). This research gap is particularly important because non-English learners face unique challenges and employ different strategies compared to formal learners, requiring specialized investigation to understand their vocabulary acquisition processes.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how non-English learners implement incidental vocabulary learning through Sky Children of The Light game and identify the obstacles they encounter during this process. By examining the specific mechanisms through which these learners encounter, process, and internalize new vocabulary during gameplay, this research will contribute to both theoretical understanding of incidental learning processes and practical applications for supporting vocabulary development among diverse learner populations.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

In the digital era, technology has transformed language learning approaches, with video games emerging as innovative educational tools. Sky Children of the Light, a social adventure

game, creates opportunities for cross-cultural communication where Indonesian players naturally interact with international players using English. However, the phenomenon of incidental vocabulary learning through gaming remains underexplored, particularly among non-English learners who are not enrolled in formal English education. While these players engage in meaningful gameplay experiences that require English communication, little is known about how they unconsciously acquire vocabulary through game-based interactions, what specific mechanisms facilitate this learning process, and what obstacles they encounter during their language acquisition journey. This gap in understanding limits our knowledge of informal language learning through digital gaming environments.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

The scope of this study is limited to Indonesian non-English learners aged 19-23 years who actively play Sky Children of the Light and regularly communicate with international players. The research focuses specifically on participants who are not enrolled in any formal English language education but have played the game for at least three months with high gaming intensity. The study is geographically limited to players residing in Central Java (Surakarta, Purworejo, and Semarang) and temporally restricted to a one-week data collection period. The research examines only incidental vocabulary learning processes and obstacles within the specific context of Sky Children of the Light game environment, excluding other forms of intentional language learning or different gaming platforms.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

This research poses two research questions:

1. How do non-English learners implement incidental vocabulary learning through Sky Children of the Light game?
2. What are the obstacles faced by the non-English learners when playing Sky Children of the Light?

1.5 Aims of the Study

This research has two aims:

1. To describe how non-English learners implement incidental vocabulary learning through Sky Children of the Light game.
2. To explore the obstacles faced by the non-English learners when playing Sky Children of the Light.

1.6 Significance of The Research

1. Theoretical significance : This research will enrich literature on incidental vocabulary learning in digital gaming contexts and support theories of informal language acquisition by exploring how English vocabulary acquisition occurs naturally through player interactions in gaming environments.
2. Empirical significance: The research will provide empirical evidence about incidental vocabulary learning by deeply identifying vocabulary acquisition mechanisms and player obstacles through systematic data collection.
- 3, Practical significance: The research presents practical information for learners and researchers about the potential of games as language learning media, by showing the challenges and players progress to acquire English vocabulary unintentionally.

1.7 Operational Definitions

1. Incidental vocabulary learning :	The process of accidentally gaining new words when learners are involved in activities like reading or listening, without a conscious intention to focus on learning vocabulary (Webb, 2008).
2. Sky Children of The Light :	An adventure game that allow players to freely explore, dress up characters, and communicate with other players without being tied to mandatory mission or demands for competition between players (NetEase Games, 2025).
3. Non-English Learner :	English language learners who acquire the language through social participation in communities where English is used, rather than through formal education or enrollment in an English department (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The study revealed that non-English learners successfully acquired vocabulary incidentally through Sky Children of the Light game, demonstrating Nation's (2001) and Rieber's (1991) theoretical framework through five key stages: natural exposure to vocabulary in gameplay and social interactions, focused attention driven by repetition and curiosity, contextual processing of word meanings, retention through frequent encounters, and occasional misinterpretations during application. Participants faced varying challenges including unpredictable learning outcomes, dependence on contextual clues, cognitive overload, individual differences in learning styles, and limitations imposed by their prior knowledge. These findings collectively highlight both the potential and limitations of open-world social games as platforms for natural vocabulary acquisition.

5.2 Recommendations

For English teachers and EFL students, Sky Children of the Light offers valuable opportunities to supplement vocabulary learning through its immersive social interactions and authentic language exposure. Future researchers should expand on this study by exploring diverse learner across different gaming platforms, and investigating strategies to mitigate identified obstacles like misinterpretation risks and uneven prior knowledge.

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