

**EXPLORING ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES
OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES IN USING THE
U-DICTIONARY APPLICATION**

A THESIS

Submitted to Fulfill one of the Requirements for *Sarjana Pendidikan*
Degree in English Education



By :

INDHI RAHMASARI
SN.20522099

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
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2026**

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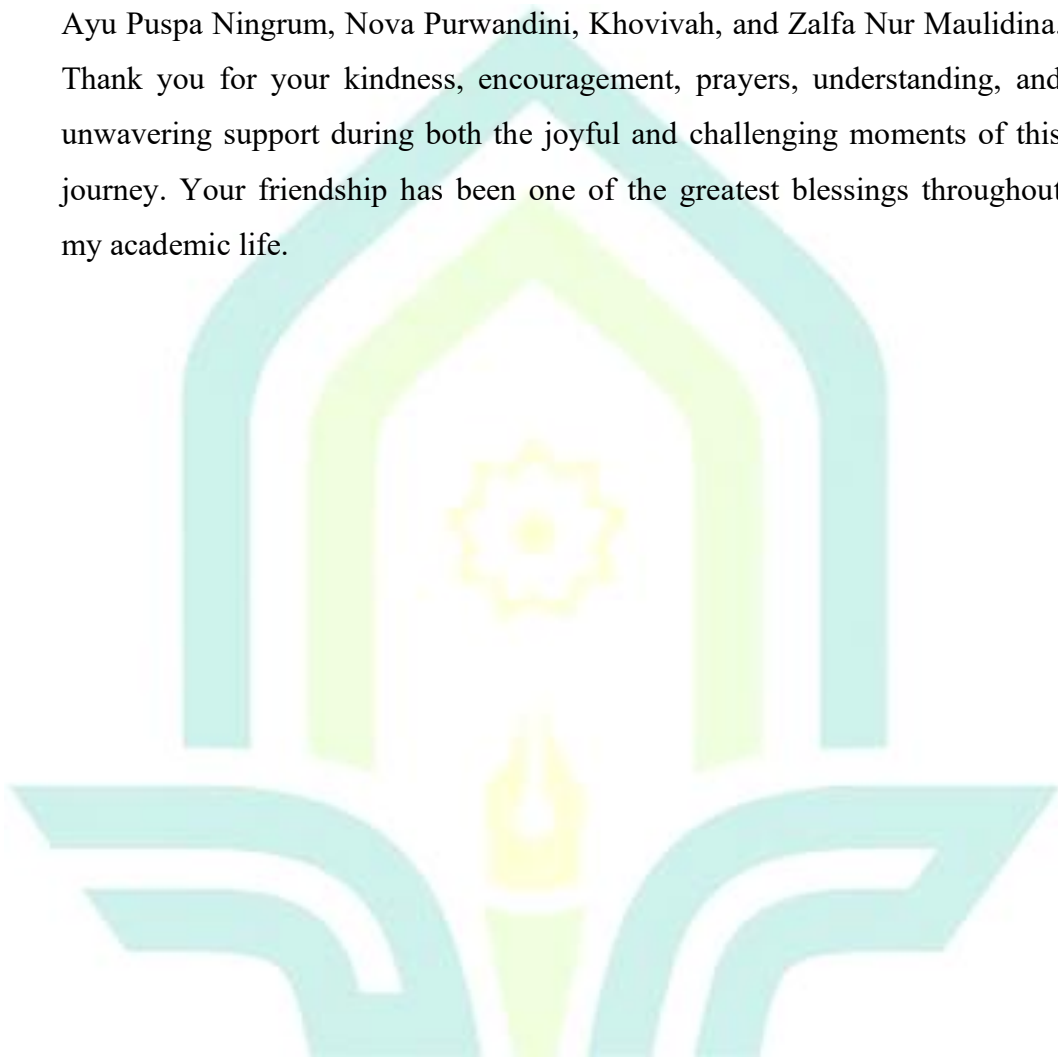
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Motto

“True greatness comes from having the courage to keep moving forward, even when the path is uncertain.”



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Kata kunci: pengalaman mahasiswa, strategi pembelajaran kosakata, U-Dictionary, pembelajaran kosakata, *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning* (MALL), Teori Sosiokultural Vygotsky.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris dalam menggunakan aplikasi U-Dictionary untuk pembelajaran kosakata serta mengidentifikasi strategi pembelajaran kosakata yang mereka gunakan selama memanfaatkan aplikasi tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain *narrative inquiry* untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai pengalaman belajar mahasiswa. Partisipan penelitian terdiri atas tiga mahasiswa semester enam Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang dipilih menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui *daily reflection sheets* selama tujuh hari berturut-turut dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Data dianalisis menggunakan *thematic analysis* berdasarkan enam tahapan Braun dan Clarke (2006), sedangkan interpretasi temuan didukung oleh Teori Sosiokultural Vygotsky dan teori *Language Learning Strategies* dari Oxford (1990). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa U-Dictionary tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kamus digital, tetapi juga sebagai mediational tool yang mendukung pembelajaran kosakata mahasiswa dalam berbagai aktivitas akademik, seperti membaca artikel ilmiah, menulis tugas, mempersiapkan presentasi, dan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris. Melalui fitur-fitur seperti terjemahan, pelafalan, contoh kalimat, sinonim, dan informasi tata bahasa, aplikasi ini menyediakan scaffolding yang membantu mahasiswa memahami dan menggunakan kosakata baru hingga secara bertahap mereka mampu belajar lebih mandiri. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa proses pembelajaran kosakata dipengaruhi oleh interaksi sosial dengan teman sebaya serta diwarnai oleh berbagai tantangan, seperti keterbatasan fitur premium, gangguan iklan, kosakata akademik yang kompleks, dan kesulitan mempertahankan kosakata baru dalam ingatan. Selain itu, seluruh partisipan menerapkan berbagai strategi pembelajaran kosakata yang meliputi strategi kognitif, strategi memori, strategi metakognitif, dan strategi sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan U-Dictionary mendorong mahasiswa untuk belajar secara aktif, reflektif, dan mandiri dalam mengembangkan penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan pembelajaran kosakata berbasis *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning* (MALL) dengan menunjukkan bahwa aplikasi kamus digital dapat berperan sebagai alat mediasi yang mendukung perkembangan kosakata sekaligus memfasilitasi kemandirian belajar mahasiswa.

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Keywords: students' experiences, vocabulary learning strategies, U-Dictionary, vocabulary learning, *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning* (MALL), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the experiences of English Language Education students in using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning and to identify the learning strategies they employ. The study adopted a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry design involving three sixth-semester students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through daily reflection sheets over seven consecutive days and semi-structured interviews, and were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006), with the findings interpreted through Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Strategies framework. The findings indicate that U-Dictionary serves as a mediational tool that supports vocabulary learning through features such as translation, pronunciation, example sentences, synonyms, and grammar, enabling students to learn more independently across various academic activities. The learning process was also influenced by social interaction and challenged by limitations such as restricted premium features, advertisements, complex academic vocabulary, and difficulties in retaining newly learned words. In addition, the students employed cognitive, memory, metacognitive, and social strategies in their vocabulary learning. These findings suggest that the use of U-Dictionary promotes active, reflective, and autonomous learning while contributing to the development of vocabulary learning through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

PREFACE

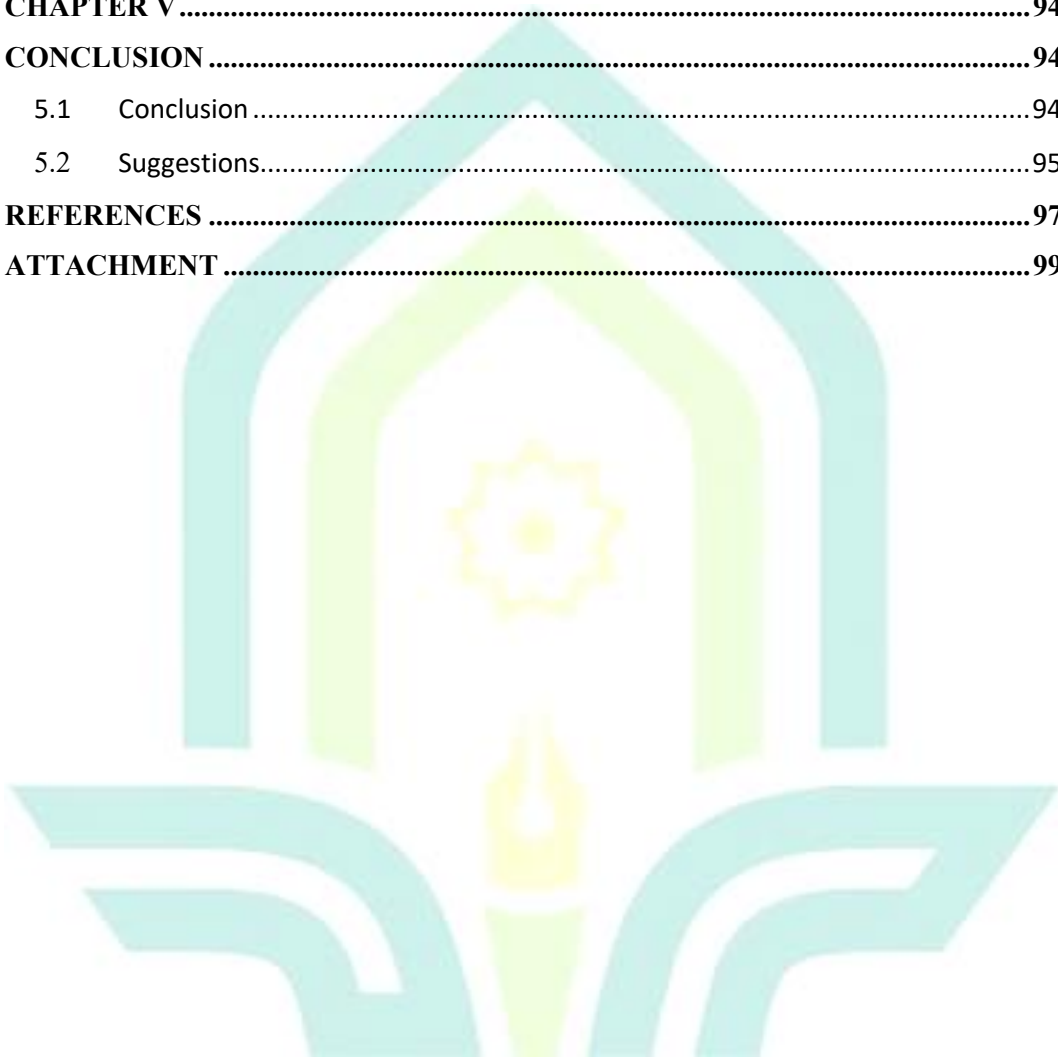
Praise and gratitude be to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and The Most Merciful. With His endless blessings, guidance, and strength, the researcher is finally able to complete this undergraduate thesis entitled **“Exploring English Major Students’ Experiences And Vocabulary Learning Strategies In Using The U-Dictionary Application”** as one of the requirements for obtaining a bachelor’s degree in the English Education Department. The completion of this thesis is not solely the result of the writer’s efforts, but also the support, guidance, and prayers from many individuals. Therefore, the researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have contributed to this work, either directly or indirectly.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Vocabulary is an essential component of language proficiency, serving as the foundation for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Schmitt (2010), vocabulary knowledge plays a central role in language development because it enables learners to understand and produce meaningful communication. In higher education, vocabulary becomes even more important because it directly influences students' academic success. English major students, in particular, are required to read complex academic texts, write well-structured papers, participate in discussions, and understand discipline-specific terminology. Supporting this view, Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) found that vocabulary knowledge significantly affects students' academic reading performance. Therefore, sufficient vocabulary knowledge is essential for English major students to comprehend scholarly materials, express ideas effectively, and participate actively in academic discourse.

Despite its importance, vocabulary learning remains challenging for many learners. Traditional vocabulary learning methods, such as memorizing word lists, translating words repeatedly, and relying on printed dictionaries, are often passive and repetitive. Schmitt (2010) argues that effective vocabulary learning requires repeated exposure and meaningful engagement with words rather than simple memorization. Although traditional methods may help learners recognize

words temporarily, they often fail to promote deeper understanding and long-term retention. Furthermore, these methods frequently lack meaningful contexts that enable learners to apply newly acquired vocabulary in authentic communication. Such challenges are particularly evident among sixth-semester English major students, who are expected to engage with increasingly complex academic texts and specialized vocabulary. Shintani (2019) emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge is strongly associated with successful reading comprehension in EFL contexts. Consequently, limited vocabulary knowledge may hinder students' comprehension, reduce fluency, and negatively affect their academic performance.

To address these challenges, digital technology has transformed language learning practices. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has emerged as an innovative approach that integrates mobile devices into language learning activities. Mahdi (2018) reported that mobile technologies positively influence vocabulary learning by providing learners with flexible access to learning resources anytime and anywhere. Unlike traditional methods, MALL applications enable learners to engage with vocabulary through multiple modes, including reading, listening, and interactive activities. Lin and Lin (2019), through a meta-analysis, found that mobile-assisted vocabulary learning significantly improves vocabulary acquisition and retention. In addition, these applications often provide immediate feedback, monitor learners' progress, and facilitate repeated exposure to target vocabulary, all of which contribute to more effective learning.

Among various MALL applications, U-Dictionary has become one of the most widely used tools for vocabulary learning. The application provides multiple features, including instant translation, pronunciation guides, example sentences, vocabulary exercises, and word-saving functions. Oxford (1990) explains that language learning strategies involve conscious actions that learners use to understand, remember, and apply new information. The features available in U-Dictionary can support cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies by helping learners understand meanings, review vocabulary, and monitor their learning progress. Previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of U-Dictionary in language learning. Yuliyanti and Siahaan (2022) found that U-Dictionary positively contributed to students' vocabulary mastery by helping them understand unfamiliar words more efficiently. Similarly, Sudhirahayu et al. (2024) reported that students perceived U-Dictionary as beneficial for improving pronunciation and increasing confidence in using English vocabulary. These findings indicate that U-Dictionary has the potential to support vocabulary learning through various interactive features.

However, despite the growing body of research on U-Dictionary, several limitations remain. Rasyidah et al. (2023) investigated the use of U-Dictionary among senior high school students and found that the application supported vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. Likewise, Suhardi et al. (2024) reported positive impacts of U-Dictionary on students' independent learning in secondary education. Although these studies provide valuable insights, they focused primarily on high school students or learners who were

not English majors. Their learning contexts and vocabulary needs differ considerably from those of English major students at the university level. Sixth-semester English major students are expected to engage with academic journals, scholarly articles, research reports, and discipline-specific texts that require a higher level of vocabulary knowledge. At this stage, students are no longer learning only general English vocabulary but are also required to use academic vocabulary accurately in reading, writing, speaking, and research-related activities. Therefore, the challenges they face and the strategies they develop may differ from those reported in previous studies.

Another limitation of previous studies is their emphasis on measurable learning outcomes, such as vocabulary achievement, reading comprehension, or pronunciation improvement. While studies conducted by Yuliyanti and Siahaan (2022) and Sudhirahayu et al. (2024) provide evidence of the usefulness of U-Dictionary, they offer limited insight into students' personal experiences, perceptions, challenges, and vocabulary learning strategies while using the application. Consequently, learners' voices and lived experiences remain underexplored. Understanding these experiences is important because learning is not solely a cognitive process but also a social and contextual experience. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning occurs through interaction with cultural tools and social environments. From this perspective, U-Dictionary can be viewed as a mediational tool that supports students in constructing meaning, understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, and developing independent learning strategies. Through features such as translation,

pronunciation guides, and example sentences, the application provides scaffolding that helps learners move from initial understanding toward more independent vocabulary use.

Among the many digital dictionary applications available today, U-Dictionary was selected for this study because it integrates multiple learning features within a single platform. These features allow learners to access vocabulary information quickly, review unfamiliar words, listen to pronunciations, and learn vocabulary in context. Such affordances make U-Dictionary a practical tool for supporting independent and self-regulated vocabulary learning. Li and Hafner (2021) argue that digital learning environments influence learners' engagement with language learning and shape their learning behaviors. Likewise, Boroughani et al. (2023) emphasize that technology-assisted vocabulary learning can foster learner autonomy and self-regulation, both of which are important for successful language learning in higher education.

Since learning experiences are personal, contextual, and shaped by individual interactions with technology, a narrative inquiry approach is considered appropriate for this study. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to explore how individuals make sense of their experiences and how those experiences influence their learning behaviors. Through this approach, students can share their stories, perceptions, challenges, and strategies while using U-Dictionary as part of their vocabulary learning process.

In addition, a preliminary survey was conducted among sixth-semester English major students to identify their use of U-Dictionary in vocabulary learning. The survey results indicated that students frequently used U-Dictionary while engaging with English-language content outside the classroom, such as watching movies, listening to music, reading online articles, and accessing social media content. Students reported that the application helped them understand unfamiliar words and expand their vocabulary independently. These findings suggest that U-Dictionary has become part of students' everyday learning practices. However, little is known about how students experience the use of the application, what challenges they encounter, and what vocabulary learning strategies they develop through these activities. Therefore, further exploration of students' lived experiences is needed.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how sixth-semester English major students experience the use of U-Dictionary in their academic vocabulary learning and how those experiences shape the vocabulary learning strategies they develop. By investigating students' perceptions, challenges, and learning behaviors, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of mobile-assisted language learning tools in supporting vocabulary development among English major students in higher education. The findings may also provide practical insights for educators, students, and curriculum developers regarding the effective integration of digital tools into vocabulary learning practices.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background described above, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What experiences do sixth-semester English major students have when using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning?
2. What vocabulary learning strategies do students develop through their use of U-Dictionary?

1.3 Aim(s) of the Study

Based on the study background, this research formulates questions to explore students' experiences and vocabulary learning strategies in using the U-Dictionary application.

1. To explore the experiences of sixth-semester English major students in using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning.
2. To identify the vocabulary learning strategies that emerge from students' experiences using U-Dictionary.

1.4 Operational Definitions

1. U-Dictionary

U-Dictionary is defined as a mobile-based English learning application that provides translation, pronunciation, and vocabulary support. Based on Vygotsky (1978), it is viewed as a mediational tool that supports students' vocabulary learning.

2. Students' Experiences

Students' experiences refer to English major students' experiences in using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning, including its use, benefits, and challenges (Vygotsky, 1978).

3. Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies refer to the conscious actions used by English major students to learn, understand, remember, and use English vocabulary while using U-Dictionary (Oxford, 1990).

1.5 Significance of the Research

1. Theoretical

This study contributes to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by examining the role of U-Dictionary as a mediational tool in vocabulary learning. It also supports Oxford's Language Learning Strategies theory by exploring the vocabulary learning strategies developed by students while using the application.

2. Empirical

This study will provide empirical insights into students' experiences and vocabulary learning strategies while using U-Dictionary.

3. Practical

This study presents valuable information for readers, especially teachers, students, and application developers, about using U-Dictionary as an interactive tool to improve English vocabulary learning.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Theoretical framework

Understanding students' experiences in vocabulary learning requires a theoretical perspective that explains how learning occurs and how learners develop strategies to acquire new knowledge. Vocabulary learning is not only a cognitive process of memorizing words, but also a social and contextual process influenced by interactions, learning tools, and individual learning behaviors. In the context of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), digital applications such as U-Dictionary can support students' vocabulary development by providing access to translations, pronunciation models, example sentences, and vocabulary practice activities. Therefore, this study draws on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) to understand how learning is mediated through technological tools and social interaction, as well as Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Strategies framework to examine the strategies students develop while using U-Dictionary. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for exploring students' experiences and vocabulary learning strategies in the context of digital vocabulary learning.

U-DICTIONARY APPLICATION



Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978)
(Mediation – Scaffolding – Social Interaction)



Students' Experiences
(Research Question 1 / RQ1)



Oxford's Language Learning Strategies (1990)
(Cognitive – Memory – Metacognitive – Social Strategies)



Vocabulary Learning Strategies
(Research Question 2 / RQ2)



Vocabulary Learning Development

2.1.2 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Learning Experience

This study is based on the sociocultural theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes that cognitive development cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which an individual exists. Vygotsky (1978) argued that higher mental functions first appear in the social plane. Therefore, learning experience is understood as the result of social interaction mediated by language and cultural tools. From this perspective, learning is not merely an internal mental process but a social construction formed through active participation in meaningful activities.

Aligned with this view, Vygotsky highlighted the principle of *social learning*, which suggests that students learn most effectively through interaction with more capable individuals, such as teachers or peers. These interactions allow for the exchange of ideas, clarification of meaning, and negotiation of understanding, which ultimately enrich learning experience. In the context of this study, the experiences of sixth-semester English major students using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning can be seen as socially mediated. Even though the application is used individually, students often discuss new vocabulary with peers, compare meanings, or share strategies for using the app, making the learning process collaborative.

Another key concept in Vygotsky's theory is the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), which refers to the gap between an individual's

actual level of development and their potential level of development that can be achieved with guidance or *scaffolding*. Students are in their ZPD when they cannot solve a task independently but can succeed with support from a more knowledgeable person. In this study, U-Dictionary features such as translations, example sentences, pronunciation, and synonyms can be considered forms of scaffolding that help students understand new vocabulary. Through this support, students move from not knowing a word to understanding and being able to use it independently.

Vygotsky's concept of *mediated learning* also emphasizes that learning is always mediated by cultural tools, especially language and symbols. In a digital learning environment, technology can serve as a cultural tool that facilitates knowledge construction. Therefore, using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning can be understood as a culturally mediated process, where the application supports meaning-making and the development of learning strategies.

Based on this theoretical framework, the students' experiences using U-Dictionary do not merely reflect the activity of finding word meanings. Instead, they represent a cognitive development process that occurs through social interaction, technological mediation, and internalization of knowledge.

2.1.3 Language Learning Strategies (Oxford, 1990)

Language learning strategies refer to the conscious actions that learners take to help them understand, process, and remember new language information (Oxford, 1990). These strategies support learners in managing their own learning and becoming more independent. In this study, Oxford's framework is used to understand how students develop vocabulary-learning behaviors while using U-Dictionary.

Oxford identifies several categories of strategies that are particularly relevant to vocabulary learning:

1) Cognitive strategies

These strategies involve mental processes used to work directly with the language. Examples include repeating new words, analyzing meanings, comparing translations, or paying attention to example sentences. When students use U-Dictionary, cognitive strategies appear when they check pronunciation, read example sentences, or explore synonyms and antonyms.

2) Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies help learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. Students may decide when to use U-Dictionary, set goals for reviewing new vocabulary, or monitor their understanding by revisiting difficult words. Features like history or bookmarks also support these strategies by helping students keep track of what they have learned.

3) Memory strategies

These strategies help learners store and recall new vocabulary. In the context of U-Dictionary, this may include saving unfamiliar words in the bookmark feature, reviewing word lists repeatedly, or creating associations to help remember new terms.

4) Social strategies

Social strategies involve interacting with others to support language learning. Students might discuss unfamiliar words found in U-Dictionary with classmates, ask for clarification during group discussions, or confirm their understanding with peers or lecturers.

Oxford's framework is used in this study to analyze how students turn their interactions with U-Dictionary into intentional vocabulary-learning strategies, and to understand how technology-assisted tools can support more effective and autonomous learning.

2.1.4 U-Dictionary as a Digital Vocabulary Learning Tool

U-Dictionary is a mobile-based digital dictionary application designed to assist language learners in understanding vocabulary through instant translation, pronunciation, and contextual examples. As part of the broader development of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), digital dictionary applications have become important tools that support language learners in accessing vocabulary quickly and efficiently. According to Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008), mobile technologies allow learners to engage with language learning materials anytime and anywhere, creating flexible learning

environments that extend beyond traditional classroom settings. In this sense, applications such as U-Dictionary function as portable learning resources that facilitate immediate access to vocabulary information during reading, writing, or communication activities.

Compared to traditional printed dictionaries, digital dictionaries provide more interactive and multimodal features. Lew (2011) explains that electronic dictionaries offer advantages such as faster word search, audio pronunciation, example sentences, and additional lexical information, which can support deeper vocabulary processing. Through these features, learners are able not only to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words but also to observe how the words are used in real contexts. The availability of example sentences and pronunciation models helps learners develop both semantic understanding and phonological awareness, which are essential components of vocabulary acquisition.

In addition, digital dictionary applications contribute to vocabulary learning by supporting repeated exposure and contextual learning. Nation (2013) emphasizes that effective vocabulary learning requires multiple encounters with words in meaningful contexts. Features available in U-Dictionary, such as example sentences, synonyms, antonyms, and pronunciation audio, provide opportunities for learners to engage with words in varied ways. These features help

students move beyond simple translation and toward a deeper understanding of word meaning, usage, and form.

Furthermore, the use of mobile dictionary applications can promote learner autonomy. According to Benson (2011), autonomous learning occurs when learners take responsibility for managing their own learning processes, including deciding what to learn and how to learn it. By using applications like U-Dictionary, students can independently search for unfamiliar words, review previously learned vocabulary, and monitor their own progress. This self-directed learning process supports the development of metacognitive awareness and encourages students to become more active participants in their language learning.

From a sociocultural perspective, digital applications can also function as mediational tools that support cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning is mediated by cultural tools, including language and technology. In this context, U-Dictionary can be understood as a technological tool that mediates vocabulary learning by providing linguistic information and scaffolding that helps learners understand new words. Even though students often use the application individually, the knowledge they gain can still be shaped through classroom interaction, discussion with peers, or feedback from teachers.

Therefore, U-Dictionary should not be viewed merely as a translation tool, but rather as a technological learning resource that supports vocabulary development through contextual information, repeated exposure, and learner autonomy. By integrating translation features, pronunciation models, and contextual examples, the application provides scaffolding that helps students understand unfamiliar vocabulary and gradually internalize new lexical knowledge. This perspective supports the idea that digital dictionary applications can play a meaningful role in enhancing vocabulary learning experiences among English language learners.

2.2 Previous Studies

Recent studies have highlighted A large and complex vocabulary is crucial for English majors to succeed academically and advance professionally. Having a large vocabulary is essential for comprehending difficult materials, clearly expressing concepts, and doing well on studies. A considerable number of studies in the field of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) have shown that digital tools can significantly support learners in improving their vocabulary knowledge. With the increasing accessibility of smartphones and online resources, learners today rely on technological tools such as mobile dictionaries, vocabulary apps, and digital flashcards to assist and accelerate their language learning process. Among these tools, U-Dictionary has become one of the most widely used applications due to its practical features and ease of access. Several previous

studies have examined the use of this application and other mobile learning tools in different educational settings.

Research by Yuliyanti and Siahaan (2022) demonstrated that U-Dictionary contributed positively to vocabulary mastery of non-English major university students. They reported that features such as pronunciation assistance, example sentences, and instant translation helped learners understand new vocabulary more efficiently. However, the study mainly focused on measuring improvements through pre- and post-tests, without exploring the deeper aspects of how students interacted with the application or the strategies they employed when learning new words. Because of this, the study does not provide insight into the role of U-Dictionary in supporting academic vocabulary, which is more complex and requires higher-level language skills.

Supporting these findings, Rasyidah et al. (2023) found that U-Dictionary assisted senior high school students in improving their reading comprehension and vocabulary. According to their research, contextual example sentences provided by the application helped students understand the meaning of words more quickly within a text. However, the study was carried out at the secondary school level, where students are still dealing with basic vocabulary and simple reading texts. The vocabulary difficulty and academic demands at this level differ greatly from those faced by English major students in higher education, who must understand discipline-specific terminology, academic articles, and research-related texts.

Another study conducted by Suhardi et al. (2024) further confirmed the usefulness of U-Dictionary for learning vocabulary among Grade XI students. The study highlighted that the application supported independent learning and increased students' exposure to new vocabulary. However, similar to previous school-based studies, it lacked an analysis of learners' perceptions and did not address higher-level vocabulary needs. The focus remained on vocabulary at the basic or intermediate level, making the findings less applicable to advanced language learners.

A qualitative study by Risnawati et al. (2023) provided valuable insight into how EFL students perceive mobile learning applications for vocabulary learning. The findings indicated that students viewed digital vocabulary applications as helpful, easy to use, and effective in supporting independent vocabulary learning. Participants also reported that the applications made vocabulary learning more enjoyable through interactive features and pronunciation support. However, the study focused on senior high school students rather than English major students at the university level. Furthermore, it did not specifically investigate the use of U-Dictionary or explore how advanced English major students utilize digital tools to support academic vocabulary development in higher education contexts.

Another relevant study was conducted by Alahmadi and Foltz (2020), who investigated the role of vocabulary learning strategies in supporting vocabulary acquisition among university students. Their findings indicated

that learners who actively employed vocabulary-learning strategies and digital resources were more successful in understanding and retaining new words. The study emphasized that technology-supported vocabulary learning can enhance learners' autonomy and vocabulary development. However, the research focused primarily on the effectiveness of learning strategies and vocabulary outcomes rather than examining a specific digital dictionary application. In addition, the study did not explore learners' experiences, perceptions, or actual practices when using a particular mobile dictionary such as U-Dictionary in academic contexts.

When examining all these studies together, it becomes clear that although research supports the use of mobile and digital tools for vocabulary learning, there are still several notable limitations. Most studies involving U-Dictionary were conducted with senior high school students or university students who are not majoring in English. Consequently, the vocabulary levels discussed in these studies remain relatively basic and do not reflect the academic vocabulary demands encountered by English major students, particularly those in higher semesters. Furthermore, many of the previous studies focused primarily on quantitative results, such as improvements in test scores, without exploring how students perceive the application, how they integrate it into their daily academic learning, or what specific strategies they use when engaging with the tool.

Another gap in the literature is the lack of research focusing on sixth-semester English major students, a group that is transitioning toward more

advanced academic tasks such as reading scholarly articles, preparing research proposals, and writing academic papers. These academic activities require a strong command of academic vocabulary, critical reading skills, and independent learning strategies. To date, no study has specifically examined how students at this level use U-Dictionary as part of their vocabulary learning process.

Therefore, although previous studies have contributed valuable findings regarding the benefits of digital applications for language learning, they have not fully addressed the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of advanced English major students. This leaves an important gap in the existing literature. The present study aims to fill this gap by investigating how sixth-semester English major students perceive and utilize U-Dictionary as an interactive tool for vocabulary development, particularly in the context of academic learning. By exploring their learning strategies, challenges, and actual experiences, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the role of U-Dictionary in supporting advanced vocabulary acquisition among English major learners.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative narrative inquiry design to explore students' lived experiences in using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning. Qualitative research aims to understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is appropriate because the present study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of how sixth-semester English major students experience the use of U-Dictionary in their vocabulary learning process.

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to look closely at students' personal accounts, including their feelings, challenges, routines, and habits when interacting with the application. Instead of measuring outcomes numerically, this method emphasizes the depth of participants' experiences. Following Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) view, narrative inquiry considers three key dimensions: temporality, sociality, and place. By using narrative inquiry, the study can capture how each student uses U-Dictionary differently, what strategies they develop.

3.2 Setting and Participants

1. Research Setting

This research was conducted at a university in Pekalongan, specifically in the English Language Education Study Program. This setting was selected because English major students frequently encounter academic vocabulary demands and often utilize digital tools to support their language learning activities.

2. Participant Selection

The participants consisted of three sixth-semester English major students, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique was chosen because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who can provide meaningful and relevant insights into the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015).

The participants of this study were three sixth-semester English major students, selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was employed because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who can provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon being studied, particularly their experiences in using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning (Patton, 2015). This approach ensures that the participants have sufficient exposure to academic vocabulary learning and are familiar with the use of digital tools to support their learning activities.

To capture different learning experiences, the study included three participants who regularly use U-Dictionary and engage with several of its features, such as translations, example sentences, pronunciation audio, bookmarks, and quizzes. Although all participants use the same application, each of them tends to utilize particular features more frequently depending on their academic needs and learning preferences. These differences allow the study to explore how the same digital tool can support vocabulary learning in various academic contexts.

The participant selection process began with the distribution of a screening questionnaire via Google Forms to fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program. The questionnaire was designed to identify students who had experience using U-Dictionary and were willing to participate in the study. The screening form included questions regarding the duration of U-Dictionary use, frequency of use, purposes of use, and willingness to participate in an interview.

The participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- a. They were sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program.
- b. They had used U-Dictionary for English vocabulary learning for at least six months
- c. They used U-Dictionary to support academic activities such as reading, writing, or completing assignments
- d. They were willing to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Based on the screening results, A total of 20 students completed the screening questionnaire. Among these respondents, 7 students reported that they actively used U-Dictionary as part of their English vocabulary learning activities. After reviewing the responses, three students were selected because they met all of the predetermined criteria, including having used U-Dictionary for at least six months, using the application regularly for academic purposes, and expressing willingness to participate in an in-depth interview. To maintain confidentiality, the participants were referred to as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and Participant 3 (P3) throughout the study.

In line with the principles of Narrative Inquiry, a small number of participants was considered appropriate because the focus of the study was to explore the depth and richness of participants' experiences rather than to generalize the findings to a larger population (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

By selecting participants who actively use U-Dictionary in different learning contexts, the study aims to explore how the application supports vocabulary development across multiple language skills. The differences in focus reading, writing, and speaking provide a broader understanding of how mobile-assisted learning tools can be integrated into students' academic learning processes.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected using daily reflection sheets and semi-structured interviews. These methods were selected to obtain rich and detailed

information regarding students' experiences and vocabulary learning strategies while using U-Dictionary. According to Moon (2006), reflection is a process through which individuals review and make sense of their experiences, enabling researchers to gain deeper insights into participants' thoughts, actions, and learning processes.

Daily reflection sheets were administered for seven consecutive days before the interview stage. Participants were asked to document their daily use of U-Dictionary, including the duration of use, academic activities, features used within the application, vocabulary learned, learning strategies employed, and personal reflections regarding their learning experiences. The activities recorded included reading journal articles, translating academic texts, preparing presentations, practicing speaking, and completing coursework. Reflection sheets allowed participants to record their experiences close to the time they occurred, thereby providing contextual and authentic accounts of their vocabulary learning practices (Moon, 2006). Furthermore, reflective journals are recognized as valuable tools in qualitative research because they capture participants' ongoing experiences and support deeper exploration during subsequent interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they provide a balance between structure and flexibility. While the researcher prepares a set of guiding questions, participants are also encouraged to elaborate on their experiences, opinions, and reflections in their own words. This flexibility allows researchers to explore participants' perspectives in

greater depth and obtain rich, detailed descriptions of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The use of semi-structured interviews was particularly appropriate for this study because the research aimed to explore students' personal experiences of using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning. Since Narrative Inquiry focuses on understanding how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences through stories and personal accounts, semi-structured interviews provide an effective means of eliciting these narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through open-ended questions and follow-up probes, participants were given opportunities to describe how they used U-Dictionary, which features they found useful, the challenges they encountered, and the impact of the application on their vocabulary learning process.

Each participant took part in one individual face-to-face interview conducted in a quiet room on campus to ensure privacy, comfort, and minimal distraction during the conversation. Creating a comfortable interview environment is important in qualitative research because it encourages participants to share their experiences openly and honestly (Patton, 2015). Face-to-face interviews also enable researchers to establish rapport with participants, observe non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures, and ask follow-up questions when clarification is needed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These advantages contribute to the collection of richer and more nuanced data compared to more structured forms of data collection.

Prior to the interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the information they provided. Ethical considerations are essential in qualitative research because participants are often asked to share personal experiences and reflections (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews began. Participants were also assured that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the research process and that pseudonyms would be used in all reports and publications.

The interviews lasted approximately 25–35 minutes, depending on the depth and complexity of each participant's responses. During the interview process, the researcher used guiding questions while remaining flexible to pursue relevant topics that emerged from the participants' narratives. This approach allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participants' vocabulary learning experiences and the meanings they attached to their use of U-Dictionary.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission to ensure accurate documentation of the conversations. Audio recording is recommended in qualitative interviewing because it allows researchers to capture participants' responses precisely and reduces the risk of losing important information during note-taking (Patton, 2015). Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' narratives. The transcripts then served as the

primary source of data for the subsequent stages of coding, thematic analysis, and interpretation.

3.4 Data Validation

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied triangulation strategies. Triangulation plays an important role in qualitative research because it strengthens the validity of the data by examining evidence from different sources and reducing potential researcher bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

First, method triangulation was implemented through the use of two different data collection methods, namely daily reflection sheets and semi-structured interviews. The reflection sheets documented participants' day-to-day vocabulary learning activities and immediate learning experiences while using U-Dictionary, whereas the interviews enabled the researcher to explore participants' perceptions, challenges, and vocabulary learning strategies in greater depth. Comparing information obtained from these two methods helped strengthen the credibility of the findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences.

Second, source triangulation was carried out by involving several participants with different learning experiences and preferences in using U-Dictionary for vocabulary learning. By comparing similarities and differences across participants' responses, the researcher was able to identify recurring patterns while still acknowledging individual learning journeys.

Third, time triangulation was applied through the collection of reflection data over a seven-day period and through repeated engagement with the data during the analysis process. The researcher revisited the reflection sheets and interview transcripts multiple times during coding and theme development to ensure consistency and accuracy in interpretation. This iterative review helped minimize subjective bias and strengthened the reliability of the themes generated.

In addition, member checking was conducted by sharing summarized interpretations with selected participants to confirm that their perspectives were accurately represented. Participants were invited to review the summaries and provide clarification if any interpretation did not accurately reflect their experiences. This step further enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Through these triangulation procedures, the findings were not based on a single viewpoint but reflected a comprehensive and well-validated interpretation of students' vocabulary learning experiences using U-Dictionary.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This approach was selected because it provides a clear and flexible way to identify patterns within qualitative data while still allowing participants' voices to remain central.

The analysis began with familiarizing the researcher with the data by reading the transcripts multiple times and noting initial impressions. In the

second phase, initial codes were generated by highlighting meaningful statements, experiences, or actions described by the participants. These codes were then examined and grouped into potential themes that reflected broader ideas related to students' vocabulary learning experiences.

Next, the themes were reviewed to ensure that they were consistent with the data and accurately represented participants' stories. Themes that were unclear or overlapping were refined. After that, each theme was clearly defined and named to capture the core meaning it represented. The final phase involved organizing the themes into a coherent narrative that connected back to the research questions and was supported by direct excerpts from the participants.

Although thematic analysis was used, the narrative structure of participants' stories was maintained, as narrative inquiry emphasizes preserving the flow of individual experiences. This combination allowed the researcher to identify patterns while still honoring each participant's unique learning journey.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 U-Dictionary as a Mediatlional Tool

The findings revealed that U-Dictionary became an important companion in participants' vocabulary learning journeys. Although each participant used the application for different purposes, all of them described how the application gradually became integrated into their everyday learning activities. Rather than functioning merely as a translation tool, U-Dictionary served as a readily accessible resource that supported participants whenever they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary in both academic and non-academic contexts.

P1's narrative showed that his relationship with U-Dictionary developed gradually over time. Initially, he used the application to understand song lyrics and English-language entertainment content. However, his experiences later expanded into academic learning activities.

(Original) “Awalnya, saya hanya ingin mengetahui arti lirik lagu yang saya dengarkan. Tetapi setelah sering menggunakan aplikasi ini, saya mulai...” (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

(Translation)” At first, I just wanted to know the meaning of the lyrics to the songs I was listening to. But after using this app frequently, I started...” (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

The reflection sheets further demonstrated how U-Dictionary became embedded in P1's daily academic routine. He used the application while translating lecture materials, reading journal articles, preparing

presentations, practicing speaking, and reviewing vocabulary. This pattern indicates that U-Dictionary functioned as a constant learning companion that was repeatedly consulted whenever vocabulary-related difficulties emerged.

A somewhat different experience was reported by P2. Unlike P1, whose use originated from entertainment-related activities, P2's use of U-Dictionary was primarily motivated by academic writing needs. She frequently encountered difficulties when writing articles in English and often felt uncertain about grammatical categories and word selection.

(origina) "Pas aku bikin artikel itu kan kadang kata-katanya enggak nyambung kalau enggak pakai bantuan tools kamus." (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation)"When I write those articles, the wording sometimes doesn't flow right unless I use a dictionary tool." (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

What happened during P2's vocabulary learning process was not merely the search for word meanings. Instead, she actively explored how words functioned grammatically within sentences. The application helped her identify whether a word belonged to a particular part of speech and provided alternative vocabulary choices through synonym features. Consequently, vocabulary learning became closely linked to her efforts to improve the quality of academic writing. This suggests that U-Dictionary supported not only vocabulary comprehension but also productive language use.

Meanwhile, P3 experienced U-Dictionary primarily as a tool that facilitated classroom communication and academic participation. She often used the application when preparing questions, participating in presentations, and completing course assignments.

(original) “Kalau ada di kelas presentasi atau ada mata kuliah yang diharuskan memakai bahasa Inggris, saya mencoba memasukkan pertanyaan saya ke dictionary.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “When I take presentation classes or courses that require the use of English, I try to look up the answers to my questions in a dictionary.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

P3 frequently relied on U-Dictionary in immediate classroom situations. Her narrative indicates that vocabulary learning occurred in response to communicative demands. When she wanted to express ideas in English but lacked the necessary vocabulary, the application provided instant support. As a result, U-Dictionary contributed not only to vocabulary acquisition but also to increased confidence during classroom interaction.

Overall, the findings indicate that U-Dictionary evolved beyond its basic function as a digital dictionary. For all three participants, the application became a learning companion that accompanied their academic activities, supported vocabulary development, and facilitated independent language learning across various contexts.

4.1.2 U-Dictionary as Digital Scaffolding

Another significant theme emerging from the participants' narratives was the role of U-Dictionary in supporting vocabulary learning through various academic activities. The findings showed that participants

frequently encountered unfamiliar vocabulary while engaging in tasks such as reading journal articles, translating academic texts, writing papers, preparing presentations, and consuming English-language content. In these situations, U-Dictionary became an important resource that enabled them to access meanings, understand contexts, and continue their learning activities with greater confidence.

The data revealed that vocabulary learning was often triggered by academic demands. Rather than learning vocabulary in isolation, participants encountered new words while attempting to complete meaningful academic tasks. Consequently, vocabulary acquisition became embedded within authentic learning experiences. This finding suggests that students' vocabulary development occurred as a by-product of engaging with academic materials rather than through deliberate memorization alone.

P1 frequently described situations in which U-Dictionary assisted him while reading journals, translating abstracts, and studying course materials. His reflection sheets indicated that he regularly encountered unfamiliar academic vocabulary during these activities. For example, he reported searching for words such as *framework*, *findings*, *approach*, *investigate*, *participants*, *analysis*, *interpretation*, and *perspective*. Reflecting on these experiences, he noted that the application helped him understand journal contents more effectively and enabled him to comprehend research-related texts more quickly.

A similar pattern was observed in P2's narrative. However, unlike P1, whose experiences were strongly connected to reading activities, P2 primarily encountered vocabulary challenges while producing academic writing. She explained:

(original) “Kalau di akademis, karena sekarang ini masih banyak banget disuruh bikin artikel, dan artikelnya kan otomatis dalam bahasa Inggris, itu kan aku kayak enggak mampu gitu loh kalau misalnya buat nerjemahin itu secara manual.”

(translation) (“From an academic standpoint, since we’re still required to write so many articles and those articles are automatically written in English I don’t feel capable of translating them manually.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

This statement illustrates how academic writing became a context for vocabulary learning. During the writing process, P2 frequently needed to search for appropriate words, identify grammatical categories, and explore alternative expressions. Her use of U-Dictionary was therefore closely associated with language production rather than language comprehension. The participant was not only attempting to understand vocabulary but also trying to select words that accurately conveyed academic meanings.

P3 reported another form of academic engagement with vocabulary learning. Her experiences were closely related to classroom communication and academic participation. She frequently used U-Dictionary while preparing questions, participating in presentations, and completing journal-writing assignments. She explained that the application helped her formulate English questions more effectively and allowed her to access vocabulary quickly during classroom activities.

4.1.3 Social Experiences in Vocabulary Learning

The findings revealed that vocabulary learning was not exclusively an individual process. Although participants frequently used U-Dictionary independently, their learning experiences were also influenced by interactions with classmates, peers, and academic communities. Through discussions, collaborative assignments, classroom communication, and informal conversations, participants were able to reinforce their understanding of newly acquired vocabulary. These experiences highlight the social dimension of vocabulary learning and demonstrate that vocabulary development often occurred through interaction with others.

The narratives indicated that after discovering new vocabulary through U-Dictionary, participants frequently shared, discussed, or practiced these words with their peers. Such interactions allowed them to confirm meanings, improve pronunciation, and develop greater confidence in using unfamiliar vocabulary. As a result, vocabulary learning extended beyond the interaction between learner and application and became part of broader social and academic engagement.

P1 described how discussions with classmates contributed to his vocabulary learning process. He stated:

(original) "Saat latihan presentasi, saya pernah bertanya kepada teman saya tentang pronounciation beberapa kata yang saya pelajari di U-Dictionary. Kadang kami juga berbagi kosakata baru yang ditemukan dari lagu, film, ataupun materi kuliah." (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) "During presentation practice, I once asked a friend about the pronunciation of some words I'd learned on U-Dictionary.

Sometimes we also share new vocabulary we've found in songs, movies, or lecture materials.” (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

A similar experience was reported by P2. She explained that vocabulary learning often became part of collaborative academic activities, particularly when working on articles and group assignments. During the interview, she stated:

(original) “Kalau itu paling sama teman mungkin pas buat artikel gitu kan, atau buat makalah atau sebagainya. Itu kan ya kita berkelompok gitu kan, jadinya kadang kalau misalnya ‘Loh, ini tuh apa? Kata apa?’ Nah, itu baru aku bisa ‘Ini loh, katanya U-Dictionary itu ini ini, terus kayak ini tuh termasuknya noun, termasuknya adjective.’” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “As for that, it’s probably best to work with friends maybe when writing an article or a paper or something like that. We work in groups, right? So sometimes, for example, someone might ask, ‘Wait, what’s this? What’s this word?’ That’s when I can say, ‘Oh, here according to U-Dictionary, it means this and that, and it’s classified as a noun or an adjective.’” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

P3's narrative provided perhaps the clearest example of the social nature of vocabulary learning. She frequently discussed newly discovered vocabulary with friends and practiced using it in conversations. During the interview, she explained:

(original) “Kadang tuh kalau di grup tuh kayak, ‘Oh ini tuh ternyata artinya ini ya,’ gitu loh, langsung bilang.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “Sometimes in the group, it’s like, ‘Oh, so that’s what it actually means,’ you know? We just say it right away.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

She further added:

(original) “Kadang di kelas tuh suka ngobrol pakai bahasa Inggris gitu-gitu loh. Kayak pakai kosakata baru yang baru kenal gitu, jadinya dipraktikin.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

(translation)” “Sometimes in class, we like to chat in English like using new vocabulary we’ve just learned so we get to practice it.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

These statements reveal that vocabulary learning was closely connected to social communication. Unlike situations where vocabulary remains passive knowledge, P3 actively incorporated newly learned words into conversations with classmates. Through repeated use in authentic interactions, vocabulary became more meaningful and memorable. The participant did not simply memorize definitions but learned how words functioned within real communication.

4.1.4 Challenges and Difficulties in Using U-Dictionary

Although participants generally perceived U-Dictionary as a useful learning tool, their narratives also revealed several challenges encountered during vocabulary learning. The findings indicate that learning vocabulary through a digital application was not always a smooth process. Participants faced obstacles related to application limitations, unfamiliar academic vocabulary, translation accuracy, vocabulary retention, and dependence on digital assistance. However, rather than preventing learning, these challenges often encouraged participants to develop strategies for overcoming difficulties and continuing their vocabulary development.

One of the most frequently reported challenges was the limitation imposed by premium features and advertisements. Both P2 and P3 expressed frustration with aspects of the application that restricted access to certain features or interrupted the learning process.

P2 explained:

(original) “Cuma minusnya itu banyak premiumnya. Heeh, jadi lumayan apa ya, aku pas buka itu aduh sayang banget ini kayak hampir semua itu premium.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “The only downside is that there are a lot of premium fitures. Hmm, so, is it worth it? When I opened it, oh my gosh, what a shame almost all of them were premium items.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

Similarly, P3 stated:

(original) “Kalau di dictionary itu kan banyak iklannya ya Mbak kalau enggak premium. Jadi tuh kayak harus nunggu.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “If you use the free version of that dictionary, there are a lot of ads, right? So, you’ll have to wait a moment.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

These experiences suggest that participants' learning activities were sometimes interrupted by technological constraints rather than linguistic difficulties. Although the application provided valuable learning support, participants occasionally felt limited by restricted access to advanced features. In particular, advertisements disrupted the flow of learning by requiring users to pause before accessing information. Such interruptions could potentially reduce learning efficiency, especially when vocabulary support was needed immediately during academic activities.

For P1, unfamiliar academic vocabulary initially created barriers to understanding scholarly texts. When reading journal articles, he often needed to stop and search for the meanings of key terms before continuing. Similarly, P3 described situations in which she encountered unfamiliar

vocabulary related to specific academic topics, such as history and interpreting courses.

The findings also revealed challenges related to vocabulary retention. Understanding a word once did not necessarily guarantee long-term retention. Participants sometimes struggled to remember vocabulary after searching for it. This challenge was particularly evident in P2's narrative. She admitted that she did not always intentionally memorize new vocabulary and often remembered words only when they appeared particularly interesting or unique.

(original) “Aku enggak yang dapat vocab baru terus nyatet di notes gitu tuh enggak. Tapi kalau misalnya vocab-nya menarik, ya aku otomatis ingat.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “I’m not the type to keep learning new vocabulary and jotting it down in my notebook like that. But if the vocabulary is interesting, I automatically remember it.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

This statement illustrates that vocabulary retention varied depending on personal interest and repeated exposure. While some words were easily remembered due to their uniqueness or relevance, others were quickly forgotten. This finding highlights an important reality of vocabulary learning: understanding a word is often easier than retaining it over time.

4.1.5 Cognitive Strategies

The findings demonstrated that participants developed various cognitive strategies while using U-Dictionary to support their vocabulary learning. According to Oxford (1990), cognitive strategies involve the mental processes learners use to manipulate, understand, and practice new

language. Rather than relying solely on memorization, participants actively processed unfamiliar vocabulary by searching for meanings, examining example sentences, listening to pronunciation, comparing translations, and applying newly learned words in authentic contexts.

The narratives suggest that these strategies emerged naturally from participants' academic experiences. Whenever they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary during reading, writing, or classroom activities, they attempted to understand the words through multiple features available in U-Dictionary. Vocabulary learning therefore became an active process of constructing meaning rather than simply receiving translations.

P1 consistently described how he combined several features while learning unfamiliar vocabulary. Instead of stopping after reading the Indonesian translation, he listened to the pronunciation, examined example sentences, and repeated the words aloud during speaking practice.

(original)"Biasanya saya cari artinya dulu, habis itu saya dengarkan pronunciation-nya. Kalau ada contoh kalimatnya saya baca juga supaya tahu cara pakainya." (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) "I usually look up the meaning first, and then I listen to the pronunciation. If there are example sentences, I read those too so I know how to use it." (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

Furthermore, the reflection sheets indicate that P1 repeatedly applied this strategy while reading journal articles, translating lecture materials, and practicing speaking. For instance, when encountering academic words such as framework, analysis, and significance, he first searched for their meanings before listening to pronunciation and examining contextual

examples. Through repeated application across different academic tasks, these cognitive strategies gradually became part of his habitual learning process rather than isolated actions.

P2 demonstrated a somewhat different pattern of cognitive strategy use. Her vocabulary learning primarily focused on improving academic writing. Rather than emphasizing pronunciation, she devoted greater attention to grammatical information, synonym selection, and contextual appropriateness.

(original) "Kalau aku biasanya lihat dulu itu noun atau adjective. Terus aku lihat sinonimnya juga supaya bisa milih kata yang paling cocok."

(translation) "I usually check first whether it's a noun or an adjective. Then I look up synonyms so I can choose the most appropriate word."
(Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

This quotation indicates that P2 processed vocabulary analytically. Instead of accepting the first translation provided by the application, she evaluated several linguistic aspects before deciding how to use the word. What happened during her learning process was a continual comparison of lexical alternatives. She analyzed grammatical categories, semantic differences, and contextual suitability to ensure that the vocabulary matched the academic sentence she intended to produce.

P3 reported another cognitive strategy. She frequently compared translations across several digital resources before deciding which meaning best matched the context.

(original) "Kadang saya lihat dulu di U-Dictionary, terus saya cek lagi di aplikasi lain kalau masih ragu."

(translation) “Sometimes I look it up in U-Dictionary first, then I check it again in another app if I'm still unsure.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

Unlike P1 and P2, who generally relied on the information available within U-Dictionary, P3 often verified vocabulary meanings through additional sources. This behavior suggests that vocabulary learning involved critical evaluation rather than unquestioning acceptance of digital information. When different translations appeared possible, she compared multiple explanations before selecting the most appropriate meaning.

Another important cognitive strategy identified from P3's narrative was immediate vocabulary application. After understanding unfamiliar words, she intentionally used them during classroom discussions and conversations with classmates. This process enabled her to transform receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary through repeated use.

4.1.6 Metacognitive Strategies

The analysis of the interview transcripts and daily reflection sheets revealed that participants not only employed cognitive strategies to process unfamiliar vocabulary but also developed metacognitive strategies to regulate their own learning. According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning process. The findings indicate that participants consciously managed how, when, and why they used U-Dictionary. Rather than opening the application randomly, they developed personal routines for vocabulary learning based on their academic needs and learning objectives.

The participants' narratives suggest that metacognitive strategies emerged as they became more experienced users of U-Dictionary. Initially, the application was mainly used to solve immediate vocabulary problems. However, as participants became increasingly aware of their learning habits, they began using the application more strategically. They planned when to study vocabulary, monitored their understanding while completing academic tasks, and reflected on whether newly learned vocabulary had been successfully understood and retained.

P1 demonstrated clear evidence of planning and self-monitoring throughout his vocabulary learning process. He explained that he intentionally used U-Dictionary before presentations, while reading journal articles, and during speaking practice because he anticipated encountering unfamiliar vocabulary.

(original) "Biasanya sebelum presentasi saya cek dulu kata-kata yang sekiranya sulit. Jadi pas presentasi saya sudah lebih siap."

(translation) "Sometimes I look it up in U-Dictionary first, then I check it again in another app if I'm still unsure." (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

This quotation illustrates that P1 did not wait until vocabulary problems occurred. Instead, he attempted to predict possible difficulties before engaging in academic tasks. What happened during his learning process was proactive preparation rather than reactive problem-solving. By identifying potentially difficult vocabulary in advance, he reduced uncertainty during presentations and increased his confidence when communicating in English.

The daily reflection sheets further support this pattern. P1 repeatedly reported using U-Dictionary before reading research articles, preparing classroom presentations, and practicing speaking. These records indicate that vocabulary learning became a planned component of his academic preparation rather than an activity performed only when problems unexpectedly arose.

P2 also demonstrated metacognitive awareness, although her learning process differed from that of P1. Her primary concern was ensuring that vocabulary was appropriate for academic writing. She explained:

(original) “Kalau masih ragu biasanya aku cek lagi. Kadang aku bandingin sama AI atau aplikasi lain buat memastikan artinya benar.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “If I’m still unsure, I usually check it again. Sometimes I compare it with AI or other apps to make sure the meaning is correct.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

This finding suggests that P2 possessed a high level of self-monitoring. She continuously questioned whether her vocabulary choices accurately represented the intended meaning. Rather than focusing solely on understanding words, she evaluated the quality of her own language production. Consequently, vocabulary learning became closely associated with reflection and decision-making.

Another important aspect of P2's metacognitive strategy was her awareness of personal learning needs. During the interview, she explained that she concentrated only on vocabulary that was directly relevant to her assignments. She did not attempt to memorize every unfamiliar word but

instead prioritized vocabulary that would likely be useful in future academic work. This selective learning demonstrates that participants actively regulated the scope of their vocabulary learning according to their individual goals.

P3 presented another form of metacognitive strategy. She frequently evaluated her own vocabulary knowledge by attempting to use newly learned words during classroom discussions and presentations. She explained that if she could successfully use the vocabulary without consulting U-Dictionary again, she considered the word to have been learned.

(original) “Kalau sudah bisa dipakai waktu presentasi atau ngobrol sama teman tanpa buka dictionary lagi, berarti saya sudah lumayan paham.”

(translation) “If I can use it during a presentation or when chatting with friends without having to look it up in a dictionary anymore, that means I’ve mastered it well enough.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

This quotation illustrates that P3 regularly evaluated her learning outcomes through actual language use. Instead of measuring success by the number of words memorized, she assessed whether she could apply vocabulary independently in authentic communication. Such evaluation reflects an important characteristic of metacognitive learning, namely monitoring one's own progress toward learning goals.

4.1.7 Memory Strategies

The findings revealed that participants also developed various memory strategies to help them retain newly learned vocabulary. According

to Oxford (1990), memory strategies enable learners to store, retrieve, and recall new information more effectively. In the present study, these strategies did not primarily involve traditional memorization techniques. Instead, participants attempted to strengthen vocabulary retention through repeated exposure, reviewing previously learned words, revisiting search histories, using vocabulary in meaningful contexts, and encountering the same words across different academic activities.

The participants' narratives indicate that remembering vocabulary was often more challenging than understanding it. While U-Dictionary enabled them to identify meanings quickly, they acknowledged that unfamiliar words could easily be forgotten if they were not encountered again. Consequently, vocabulary retention became an ongoing process that depended on repeated interaction with words rather than on a single learning event.

P1 demonstrated several memory strategies throughout his vocabulary learning experience. His reflection sheets showed that he frequently revisited words that had appeared in previous academic activities. Rather than searching for completely new vocabulary every day, he intentionally reviewed words encountered during journal reading, presentations, and lecture materials. One reflection entry described how he reopened his search history to review vocabulary learned earlier in the week before preparing another academic task.

During the interview, P1 also explained that he deliberately repeated pronunciation while reviewing vocabulary.

(original) “Kalau sudah tahu artinya, biasanya saya ulang lagi cara bacanya beberapa kali. Terus kalau nanti ketemu lagi di jurnal atau video, saya jadi lebih gampang ingat.” (Interview with P1, 23 June, 2026)

(translation) “Once I know what it means, I usually repeat how to pronounce it a few times. Then, if I come across it again in a journal or video, it’s easier for me to remember it.” (Interview with P1, 23 June, 2026)

This quotation suggests that vocabulary retention was achieved through repeated exposure rather than rote memorization. What happened during P1's learning process was the gradual strengthening of vocabulary knowledge through multiple encounters with the same lexical items. Repetition was not carried out mechanically; instead, it occurred naturally as he interacted with English through reading, listening, and speaking activities.

Furthermore, P1 often encountered the same academic vocabulary in different contexts. For example, words previously searched while reading journal articles later appeared during classroom discussions or presentation preparation. These repeated encounters enabled him to reinforce existing knowledge and reduced his dependence on the application over time.

P2 employed somewhat different memory strategies. Unlike P1, she rarely created vocabulary lists or intentionally memorized words. Instead, she relied on meaningful exposure and personal relevance to remember vocabulary.

(original) “Aku enggak pernah nyatet semua vocab baru. Tapi kalau kata itu sering muncul atau memang lagi aku pakai buat nulis artikel, biasanya jadi ingat sendiri.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “I never write down all the new vocabulary. But if a word comes up often or I’m actually using it to write an article, I usually end up remembering it on my own.” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

This statement illustrates that P2's vocabulary retention depended largely on frequency of use and contextual relevance. Rather than forcing herself to memorize isolated vocabulary items, she remembered words that repeatedly appeared in her academic writing or reading activities. Vocabulary became memorable because it was continuously associated with meaningful academic tasks.

P3 demonstrated another interesting pattern of memory strategy use. She frequently reviewed previously learned vocabulary by recalling conversations with classmates and classroom discussions. She explained:

(original) “Kalau habis belajar terus besoknya dipakai lagi waktu ngobrol sama teman atau presentasi, biasanya lebih gampang ingat daripada cuma dibaca sekali.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “After I’ve learned some new vocabulary and then use it the next day while chatting with friends or giving a presentation, I usually find it easier to remember than if I’d just read it once.” (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

This quotation suggests that active vocabulary use played an important role in strengthening memory. Rather than depending solely on visual recognition, P3 reinforced vocabulary through communicative practice. By using newly learned words during authentic interactions, she created meaningful associations that facilitated later recall.

4.1.8 Social Strategies

The final theme identified in relation to the second research question concerns the development of social strategies during vocabulary learning. According to Oxford (1990), social strategies involve learning through interaction with others by asking questions, cooperating with peers, seeking clarification, and practicing language in communicative situations. Although U-Dictionary was designed primarily as an individual learning tool, the findings indicate that participants frequently extended their vocabulary learning beyond the application by involving classmates and peers in the learning process. This suggests that vocabulary learning was not confined to individual interaction with technology but was strengthened through social engagement.

The participants' narratives revealed that they rarely considered the information provided by U-Dictionary as the final stage of learning. Instead, after obtaining vocabulary meanings from the application, they often discussed unfamiliar words with classmates, confirmed their understanding with peers, or applied newly learned vocabulary during conversations and collaborative academic activities. Through these interactions, vocabulary knowledge became more meaningful because learners received opportunities to negotiate meaning, obtain feedback, and observe how vocabulary was used by others.

P1 described how he frequently sought assistance from classmates, particularly when preparing presentations or practicing speaking. Although

U-Dictionary provided pronunciation models and example sentences, he still valued confirmation from peers.

(original) “Kalau latihan presentasi biasanya saya tanya teman juga. Misalnya cara bacanya sudah benar belum atau kata itu lebih cocok dipakai yang mana.” (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “When I’m practicing a presentation, I usually ask my friends for feedback. For example, I’ll ask if I’m reading it correctly or which word would be more appropriate to use.” (Interview with P1, 23 June , 2026)

This quotation demonstrates that vocabulary learning was not completed after searching for meanings in the application. Instead, P1 continued the learning process by seeking feedback from classmates. What happened during this stage was collaborative verification. While U-Dictionary supplied linguistic information, classmates helped determine whether vocabulary was appropriate for actual communication. Such interaction increased the participant's confidence before presenting in class and reduced uncertainty regarding pronunciation and vocabulary choice.

P2 also demonstrated strong use of social strategies, although her role within collaborative learning differed from that of P1. During academic writing activities, she frequently shared vocabulary knowledge with group members after consulting U-Dictionary.

(original) “Kalau kerja kelompok biasanya teman nanya, ‘Ini artinya apa?’ Terus aku bilang, ‘Di U-Dictionary itu dijelasin kayak gini, ini noun, ini adjective.’” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) “When we’re working in groups, my friends usually ask, ‘What does this mean?’ Then I say, ‘U-Dictionary explains it like this: this is a noun, this is an adjective.’” (Interview with P2, 23 June , 2026)

Rather than primarily seeking assistance, P2 often acted as a resource person within her group. After understanding unfamiliar vocabulary through U-Dictionary, she explained grammatical categories, meanings, and appropriate usage to classmates. This finding suggests that social interaction was reciprocal. Participants were not merely recipients of knowledge but also contributors to the learning of others.

Interestingly, explaining vocabulary to peers appeared to strengthen P2's own understanding. When she clarified meanings and grammatical functions for classmates, she simultaneously reviewed and reorganized her own knowledge. Therefore, teaching others became an additional learning opportunity that reinforced vocabulary retention and conceptual understanding.

P3's experiences illustrate another important dimension of social strategy use. She described how newly learned vocabulary was frequently incorporated into conversations with classmates.

(original) "Kadang kalau habis cari arti kata terus ketemu teman, saya langsung bilang, 'Eh ternyata kata ini artinya begini.' Terus kadang dipakai juga pas ngobrol pakai bahasa Inggris." (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

(translation) "Sometimes, after looking up the meaning of a word and then running into a friend, I'll immediately say, 'Oh, it turns out this word means this.' And sometimes I use it when chatting in English, too." (Interview with P3, 23 June , 2026)

Unlike P1 and P2, whose interactions were often associated with academic preparation, P3 emphasized spontaneous vocabulary sharing during everyday communication. She viewed informal conversations as

opportunities to practice newly learned vocabulary and determine whether she could use unfamiliar words naturally. Through repeated interaction, vocabulary gradually became part of her active language repertoire rather than remaining passive knowledge.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 U-Dictionary as a Mediational Tool

One of the most significant findings of this study is that U-Dictionary functioned as a mediational tool rather than merely a digital dictionary. According to Vygotsky, mediation occurs when cultural tools facilitate learners' interactions with knowledge and enable them to accomplish tasks that would otherwise be difficult to perform independently. The findings strongly support this perspective. Throughout participants' narratives, U-Dictionary consistently served as an intermediary between learners and unfamiliar English vocabulary encountered in authentic academic contexts.

The participants did not use U-Dictionary solely to obtain direct translations. Instead, they utilized multiple features, including pronunciation audio, example sentences, grammatical classifications, synonym suggestions, and translation functions, to construct a more comprehensive understanding of vocabulary. These features enabled learners to engage with English texts that initially appeared beyond their linguistic competence. Consequently, vocabulary learning

became an active process of meaning construction rather than passive information retrieval.

Although all three participants experienced the mediational role of U-Dictionary, the nature of this mediation differed according to individual learning goals. P1 primarily relied on the application while reading journal articles, preparing presentations, and improving speaking skills. For him, mediation involved connecting unfamiliar academic vocabulary with pronunciation and contextual usage. P2 experienced mediation mainly during academic writing, where U-Dictionary supported lexical selection and grammatical accuracy. Meanwhile, P3 experienced mediation during classroom participation, using the application to formulate questions, understand unfamiliar expressions, and communicate more confidently during discussions.

These differences indicate that mediation is not a uniform process but is shaped by learners' immediate academic purposes. Although participants interacted with the same technological tool, each participant constructed unique learning experiences based on individual needs. This finding extends Vygotsky's concept of mediation by illustrating how one digital application can mediate different forms of academic learning simultaneously.

The present findings are consistent with Yuliyanti and Siahaan (2022), who found that mobile dictionary applications facilitate vocabulary acquisition by providing immediate access to lexical

information. However, the present study extends their findings by demonstrating that mediation occurs continuously across diverse academic activities, including journal reading, academic writing, classroom communication, presentation preparation, and independent learning. Thus, U-Dictionary should be understood not merely as an information source but as a learning partner that supports ongoing vocabulary development.

4.2.2 U-Dictionary as Digital Scaffolding

Another important finding concerns the scaffolding function of U-Dictionary. Scaffolding refers to temporary assistance that enables learners to accomplish tasks beyond their current level of competence until they gradually become capable of performing independently. The findings indicate that various features within U-Dictionary provided precisely this type of support.

Participants consistently reported that unfamiliar vocabulary initially interrupted their understanding of academic texts and classroom communication. However, features such as translation, pronunciation audio, contextual example sentences, grammatical classifications, synonym suggestions, and search history reduced these difficulties by providing immediate guidance. Instead of abandoning challenging texts or assignments, participants were able to continue learning because the application supplied the assistance required at critical moments.

Importantly, scaffolding was not limited to vocabulary comprehension. The application also supported pronunciation accuracy, grammatical awareness, contextual understanding, and vocabulary application. For example, P1 frequently relied on pronunciation models before speaking activities, P2 used grammatical classifications while writing academic papers, and P3 utilized contextual examples to increase confidence during classroom discussions. These findings demonstrate that scaffolding addressed multiple dimensions of vocabulary learning simultaneously.

Another noteworthy finding is that participants' dependence on the application gradually decreased. As vocabulary appeared repeatedly across different academic activities, learners increasingly recognized words without consulting U-Dictionary. This gradual reduction of assistance reflects one of the fundamental characteristics of scaffolding.

These findings support Risnawati et al. (2023), who argued that digital vocabulary applications facilitate vocabulary development through supportive learning features. Nevertheless, the present study provides a deeper understanding of how scaffolding develops over time. Rather than describing application features individually, the participants' narratives reveal how different features worked together to support vocabulary acquisition throughout an extended learning process.

4.2.3 Vocabulary Learning through the Zone of Proximal Development

The findings also provide strong evidence for Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Throughout the interviews and reflection sheets, participants repeatedly encountered unfamiliar academic vocabulary that they were initially unable to understand independently. Words commonly found in journal articles, academic presentations, and research literature often exceeded their existing vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, participants experienced temporary gaps between what they already knew and what they needed to understand in order to complete academic tasks.

U-Dictionary played an essential role in bridging these gaps. Through immediate access to translations, contextual explanations, pronunciation guidance, and lexical information, participants gradually became capable of understanding vocabulary that had previously been beyond their independent ability. As learning continued, many participants reported recognizing previously searched vocabulary during later academic activities without requiring additional assistance. This progression illustrates learners' movement through the Zone of Proximal Development toward greater independence.

Interestingly, participants progressed through the ZPD in different ways. P1's development occurred primarily through repeated reading and speaking practice. P2 advanced through repeated

academic writing and lexical comparison. P3 developed through continuous classroom communication and practical vocabulary use. Although the learning pathways differed, all participants experienced gradual improvement resulting from sustained interaction with supportive digital resources.

These findings complement Suhardi et al. (2024), who emphasized that digital learning technologies facilitate vocabulary acquisition by reducing learning difficulties. However, the present study extends previous findings by illustrating the developmental nature of vocabulary learning. Participants were not simply receiving vocabulary information; rather, they gradually internalized vocabulary knowledge through repeated cycles of assistance, practice, and independent application.

4.2.4 The Importance of Social Interaction in Vocabulary Learning

Although U-Dictionary functioned as an individual learning tool, the findings clearly demonstrate that vocabulary learning remained fundamentally social. Participants frequently discussed unfamiliar vocabulary with classmates, sought confirmation regarding pronunciation and word choice, explained vocabulary to peers, and practiced newly learned words during classroom communication. These experiences strongly support Vygotsky's argument that learning originates through social interaction before becoming internalized by individuals.

An important contribution of this study is the finding that digital technology did not replace interpersonal communication. Instead, U-Dictionary often initiated further social interaction. Participants first obtained vocabulary information from the application and subsequently verified, discussed, or practiced that vocabulary with classmates. Consequently, technology and social interaction functioned as complementary rather than competing sources of learning.

The nature of social interaction varied across participants. P1 mainly sought feedback regarding pronunciation and vocabulary appropriateness before presentations. P2 frequently explained vocabulary to classmates during collaborative writing assignments, thereby reinforcing her own understanding. P3 emphasized conversational practice, using informal discussions as opportunities to transform receptive vocabulary into productive language. These differences demonstrate that social interaction fulfilled different educational purposes while contributing to the same overall outcome of vocabulary development.

The findings therefore reinforce Vygotsky's view that learning is inherently collaborative. Vocabulary acquisition was strengthened through discussion, negotiation of meaning, peer feedback, and authentic communication. Digital technology provided access to

vocabulary, whereas social interaction transformed vocabulary knowledge into meaningful language use.

4.2.5 Cognitive Strategies

The findings revealed that all participants employed cognitive strategies while using U-Dictionary to support their vocabulary learning. Rather than relying solely on direct translation, they actively processed unfamiliar vocabulary through multiple features provided by the application, including pronunciation, example sentences, grammatical information, synonyms, and contextual meanings. These findings indicate that vocabulary learning was not a passive activity of looking up definitions but an active process in which learners analyzed, interpreted, verified, and applied linguistic information according to their academic needs. This finding supports Oxford's (1990) explanation that cognitive strategies involve direct manipulation of language through reasoning, analyzing, practicing, and receiving language in meaningful ways. Participant 1 demonstrated these strategies by combining pronunciation, contextual examples, and speaking practice before considering a word fully understood, whereas Participant 2 focused on analyzing grammatical categories, comparing synonyms, and selecting vocabulary appropriate for academic writing. Meanwhile, Participant 3 frequently verified vocabulary meanings by comparing U-Dictionary with other digital resources to ensure that the selected meaning accurately

matched the intended context. Although their approaches differed, all participants actively engaged with unfamiliar vocabulary and processed it beyond literal translation, demonstrating that cognitive strategies were shaped by their individual academic purposes.

These findings are consistent with Oxford's (1990) framework, which explains that cognitive strategies involve analyzing language forms, comparing linguistic information, reasoning, practicing, and verifying language input in order to construct meaningful understanding. The participants' different learning behaviors illustrate the flexibility of cognitive strategies in authentic learning contexts. Participant 1 emphasized pronunciation and contextual understanding because he frequently engaged in reading and speaking activities. Participant 2 concentrated on grammatical accuracy and lexical selection to improve academic writing, while Participant 3 prioritized cross-checking vocabulary meanings to avoid misunderstanding during academic communication. These variations suggest that although learners used the same digital application, they adapted its features according to their own learning goals and academic demands, resulting in different but equally effective forms of cognitive engagement.

The present findings are also supported by previous studies. Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) reported that university students who actively employed vocabulary learning strategies achieved better

vocabulary acquisition because they processed new words through multiple cognitive activities rather than relying only on translation. Similarly, Yuliyanti and Siahaan (2022) found that U-Dictionary facilitated vocabulary learning by providing pronunciation models, contextual examples, and translation features that encouraged deeper interaction with unfamiliar vocabulary. However, unlike these studies, which primarily emphasized learning outcomes, the present study explains how learners cognitively process vocabulary while carrying out authentic academic activities such as reading journal articles, writing academic papers, preparing presentations, and participating in classroom discussions. These findings demonstrate that U-Dictionary functions not only as a digital dictionary but also as a cognitive learning tool that promotes active vocabulary processing, strengthens learners' understanding of academic vocabulary, and supports the development of higher-order vocabulary learning skills.

4.2.6 Metacognitive Strategies

The findings indicate that the participants employed metacognitive strategies by consciously planning, monitoring, and evaluating their vocabulary learning while using U-Dictionary. According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies enable learners to regulate their own learning by identifying learning goals, selecting appropriate strategies, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating learning outcomes. In this study, participants did not rely on U-

Dictionary indiscriminately but gradually developed personal learning routines based on their academic needs. For example, they became more selective in searching for unfamiliar words, evaluated the suitability of vocabulary before using it in academic tasks, and adjusted their learning behaviors based on previous experiences. These findings suggest that U-Dictionary supported not only vocabulary acquisition but also the development of learner autonomy through self-regulated learning.

The participants demonstrated metacognitive strategies in different ways depending on their learning objectives. Participant 1 improved the efficiency of his learning by reducing unnecessary dictionary consultation and focusing on important vocabulary, reflecting the monitoring and evaluation processes described by Oxford (1990). Participant 2 integrated U-Dictionary into her academic writing routine by carefully selecting vocabulary and checking grammatical information before using new words, demonstrating deliberate planning and self-monitoring. Meanwhile, Participant 3 frequently evaluated her understanding by verifying vocabulary meanings through multiple sources before applying them in classroom communication. Although their approaches differed, all participants actively managed their own learning process rather than depending solely on the application. This finding highlights that

metacognitive strategy use is flexible and influenced by learners' academic contexts and individual learning needs.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Alahmadi and Foltz (2020), which found that learners who actively regulate their vocabulary learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning process tend to achieve more effective vocabulary development. However, the present study extends these findings by showing that metacognitive strategies emerged naturally during authentic academic activities, such as reading journal articles, writing assignments, preparing presentations, and participating in classroom discussions while using U-Dictionary. Therefore, U-Dictionary functioned not only as a source of vocabulary information but also as a learning tool that promoted self-regulated learning and learner autonomy in vocabulary development.

4.2.7 Memory Strategies

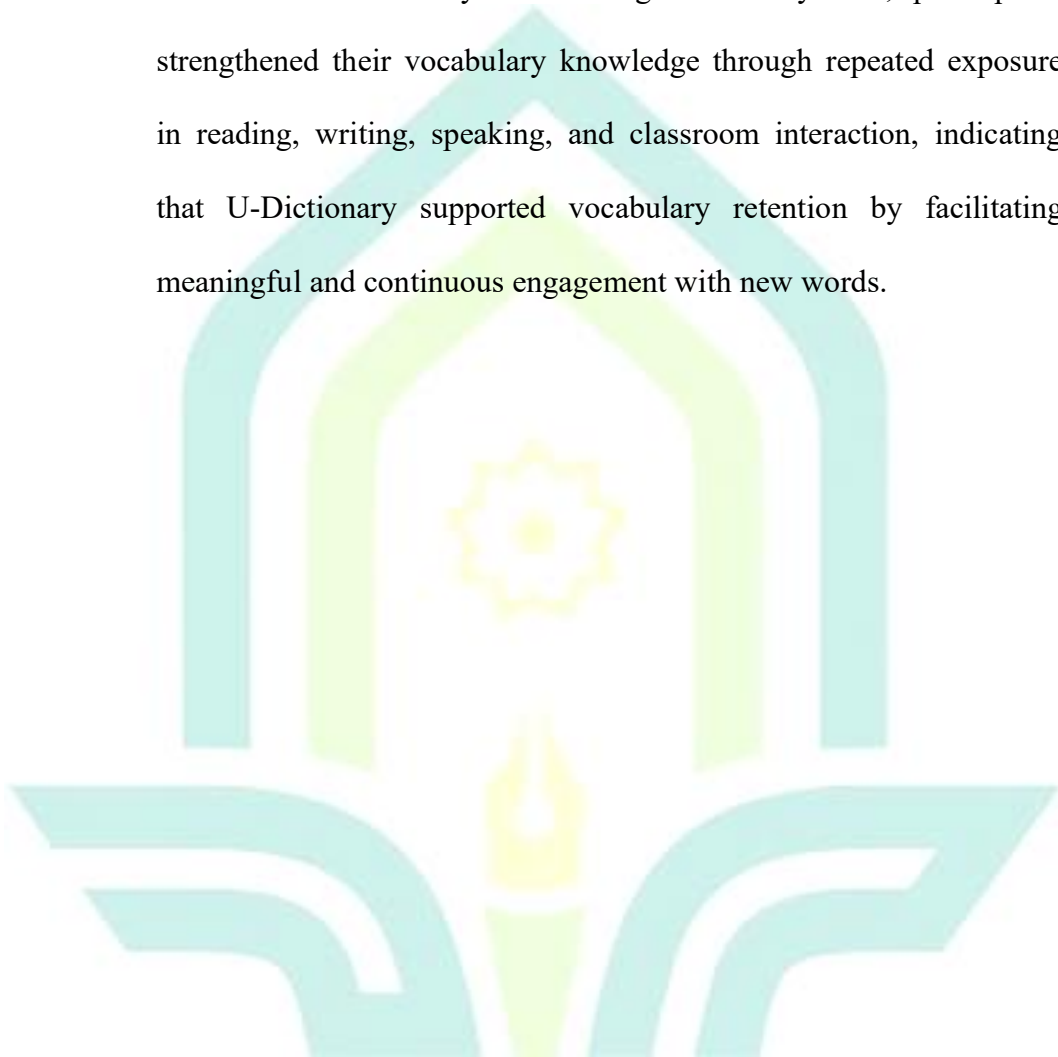
The findings indicate that the participants employed memory strategies to retain and recall newly learned vocabulary while using U-Dictionary. According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies help learners store and retrieve new information by creating meaningful connections, reviewing vocabulary, and repeatedly encountering words in different contexts. Rather than memorizing vocabulary through rote learning, the participants remembered new words by meeting them repeatedly in academic materials, example sentences,

classroom activities, and English media. This suggests that vocabulary retention was strengthened through meaningful exposure and contextual use, allowing learners to associate new vocabulary with authentic learning experiences instead of isolated word lists.

Although all participants demonstrated memory strategies, they applied them in different ways according to their learning preferences. Participant 1 strengthened vocabulary retention by repeatedly encountering academic words while reading journal articles, practicing presentations, and reviewing lecture materials. Participant 2 tended to remember vocabulary that she considered interesting or relevant to her writing tasks, indicating that meaningfulness influenced vocabulary retention. Meanwhile, Participant 3 reinforced her memory by using newly learned words in classroom discussions and daily conversations with classmates. These findings support Oxford's (1990) argument that vocabulary is more likely to be retained when learners actively connect new words with meaningful experiences and repeatedly use them in different communicative contexts.

These findings are consistent with Schmitt (1997), who argues that memory strategies, such as repetition, contextual association, and meaningful practice, play an important role in long-term vocabulary retention. Similarly, Alahmadi and Foltz (2020) found that learners retain vocabulary more effectively when they repeatedly encounter

and actively use new words rather than relying solely on translation or memorization. However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that memory strategies naturally developed through participants' authentic academic activities while using U-Dictionary. Instead of intentionally memorizing vocabulary lists, participants strengthened their vocabulary knowledge through repeated exposure in reading, writing, speaking, and classroom interaction, indicating that U-Dictionary supported vocabulary retention by facilitating meaningful and continuous engagement with new words.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of sixth-semester English major students in using the U-Dictionary application for vocabulary learning and identified the vocabulary learning strategies that emerged through its use. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry design, data were collected through daily reflection sheets and semi-structured interviews with three participants and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings revealed that U-Dictionary functioned as more than a digital dictionary. It served as a mediational tool that helped participants understand unfamiliar vocabulary encountered during various academic activities, such as reading journal articles, writing assignments, preparing presentations, translating texts, and participating in classroom discussions. In addition, features such as translation, pronunciation audio, example sentences, grammatical classifications, and synonym suggestions provided digital scaffolding that gradually supported participants in becoming more independent vocabulary learners. These findings are consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concepts of mediation, scaffolding, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and social interaction.

The study also found that participants developed four categories of vocabulary learning strategies based on Oxford's (1990) Language Learning Strategies framework: cognitive, metacognitive, memory, and social strategies. These strategies emerged naturally as participants completed authentic academic tasks and interacted with both digital tools and their peers. Overall, this study concludes that U-Dictionary contributed positively to vocabulary learning by supporting vocabulary comprehension, promoting learner autonomy, and encouraging the development of effective vocabulary learning strategies among English major students.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed for students, lecturers, and future researchers.

1. Suggestions for Students

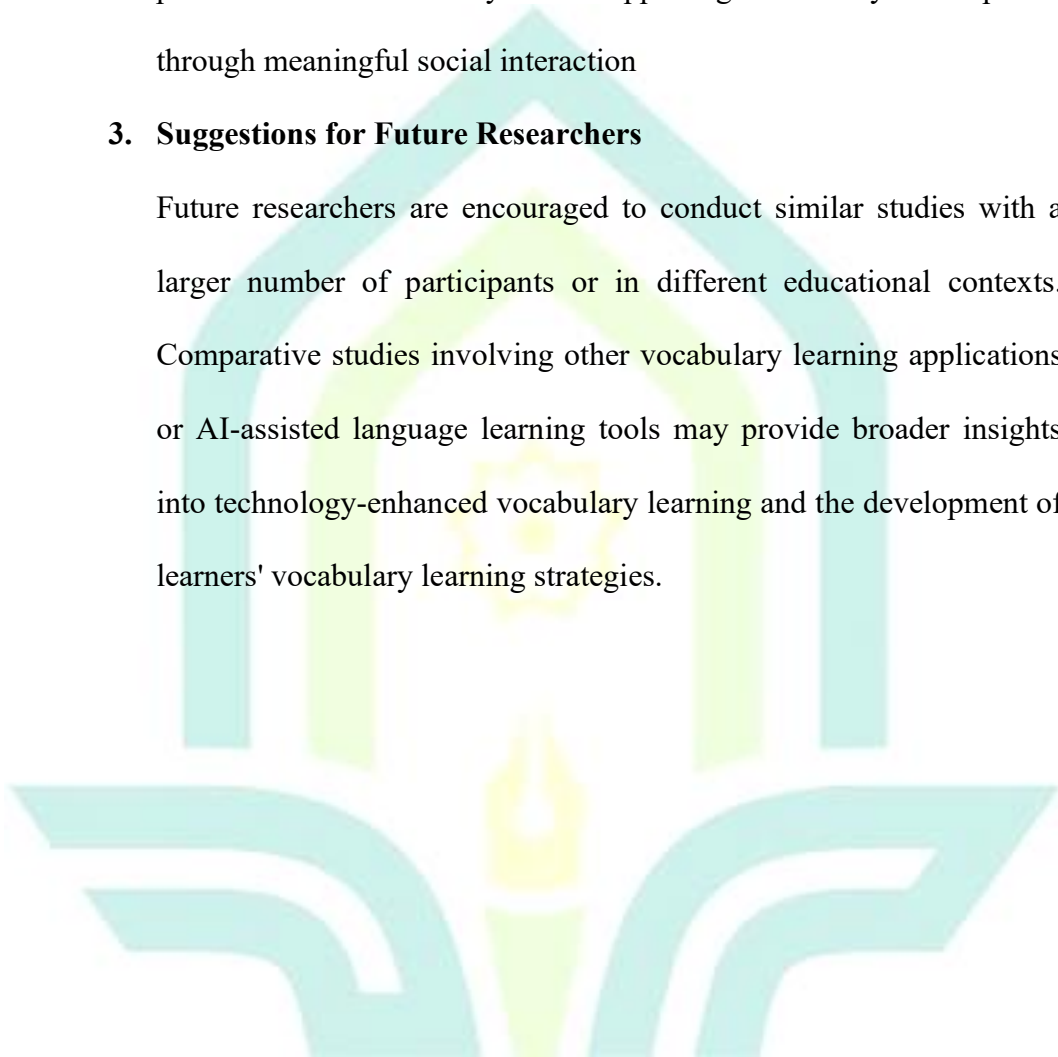
Students are encouraged to use U-Dictionary not only for translating unfamiliar words but also for exploring its features, such as pronunciation audio, example sentences, grammatical information, and synonyms, to develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary. They are also encouraged to combine independent learning with peer discussions, as meaningful interaction can strengthen vocabulary acquisition

2. Suggestions for Lecturers

Lecturers are encouraged to integrate digital vocabulary learning tools into classroom activities and guide students in using them strategically. Combining technology with collaborative learning can promote learner autonomy while supporting vocabulary development through meaningful social interaction

3. Suggestions for Future Researchers

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies with a larger number of participants or in different educational contexts. Comparative studies involving other vocabulary learning applications or AI-assisted language learning tools may provide broader insights into technology-enhanced vocabulary learning and the development of learners' vocabulary learning strategies.



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