

**A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO EFL STUDENTS'
INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING EXPERIENCES
THROUGH LISTENING TO SPOTIFY**

A THESIS

Submitted to fulfill one of the requirements for *Sarjana Pendidikan Degree*
in English Education



By:

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

2026

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2026

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EXPERIENCES THROUGH LISTENING TO SPOTIFY

Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

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

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

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MOTTO

“Lebih baik mencoba lalu gagal daripada tidak sama sekali.”

”Never Try, Never Know”



ABSTRACT

Amry, Sirli. 2026. *“A Narrative Inquiry into EFL Students’ Incidental Vocabulary Learning Experiences Through Listening to Spotify”*. Thesis. English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Advisor : Hafizah Ghanny Hayudinna, M.Pd.

Keywords: Incidental Vocabulary Learning, Spotify, EFL Students, Narrative Inquiry, Vocabulary Development.

Vocabulary is essential in the process of learning the English language, as it enhances learners' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nevertheless, numerous EFL students continue to face challenges in achieving a comprehensive mastery of vocabulary. One possible avenue for vocabulary acquisition beyond the classroom is through incidental learning, particularly by listening to English songs on Spotify. Despite the increasing popularity of Spotify as a digital platform for learning, there is a scarcity of research investigating students' personal experiences with incidental vocabulary learning. Consequently, this study seeks to examine how EFL students engage with incidental vocabulary learning while using Spotify, focusing on the difficulties they face and the strategies they adopt. This research utilized a qualitative narrative inquiry approach. Three students in their sixth semester from the English Education Department at a university in Pekalongan were purposefully chosen due to their regular use of Spotify and their experience in listening to English songs. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and documentation, which included Spotify playlists and Spotify Wrapped. The analysis of the data was conducted using the thematic analysis method proposed. The results indicated that incidental vocabulary acquisition took place organically through repeated exposure to English songs on Spotify. Participants gained new vocabulary by focusing on unfamiliar terms, reading synchronized lyrics, replaying tracks, deducing meanings from context, and utilizing dictionaries or translation tools when necessary. Their learning experiences were shaped by individual listening habits, musical preferences, emotional states, and their academic backgrounds as English Education students. Participants also faced challenges such as unfamiliar vocabulary, idiomatic phrases, pronunciation issues, and the rapid tempo of songs. To address these challenges, they implemented various strategies, including replaying songs, reading lyrics, translating unknown words, and connecting vocabulary to contextual meanings. The Conclusion indicate that Spotify offers significant opportunities for incidental vocabulary acquisition by immersing EFL students in authentic English language content within a pleasurable and adaptable learning setting beyond the traditional classroom.

ABSTRAK

Amry, Sirli. 2026. *A Narrative Inquiry into EFL Students' Incidental Vocabulary Learning Experiences Through Listening to Spotify*. Skripsi. Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Pembimbing : Hafizah Ghanny Hayudinna, M.Pd.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Kosakata Insidental, Spotify, Mahasiswa EFL, Narrative Inquiry, Pengembangan Kosakata.

Kosakata adalah salah satu elemen krusial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris karena mendukung kemampuan mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis. Namun, masih banyak mahasiswa EFL yang mengalami keterbatasan dalam penguasaan kosakata. Salah satu cara untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata di luar kelas adalah melalui pembelajaran insidental saat mendengarkan lagu berbahasa Inggris di Spotify. Meskipun Spotify semakin banyak digunakan sebagai media pembelajaran digital, penelitian yang meneliti pengalaman nyata mahasiswa dalam memperoleh kosakata secara insidental melalui platform ini masih sangat terbatas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa EFL dalam proses pembelajaran kosakata secara insidental melalui Spotify, termasuk tantangan yang mereka hadapi serta strategi yang mereka terapkan. Penelitian ini mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain narrative inquiry. Tiga mahasiswa semester enam dari Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu universitas di Pekalongan dipilih secara purposif karena mereka memiliki pengalaman rutin dalam menggunakan Spotify dan terbiasa mendengarkan lagu-lagu berbahasa Inggris. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, jurnal reflektif, dan dokumentasi yang mencakup playlist Spotify serta Spotify Wrapped. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguasaan kosakata secara insidental terjadi secara alami melalui paparan berulang terhadap lagu-lagu berbahasa Inggris di Spotify. Para partisipan memperoleh kosakata baru dengan memperhatikan kata-kata yang belum mereka kenali, membaca lirik yang ditampilkan secara bersamaan, memutar ulang lagu, menafsirkan makna berdasarkan konteks, serta menggunakan kamus atau aplikasi penerjemah jika diperlukan. Pengalaman belajar mereka dipengaruhi oleh kebiasaan mendengarkan musik, preferensi genre lagu, kondisi emosional, serta latar belakang akademik sebagai mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Di samping itu, partisipan juga menghadapi berbagai tantangan, seperti kosakata yang belum dikenal, ungkapan idiomatik, kesulitan dalam pengucapan, dan tempo lagu yang cepat. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, mereka menerapkan berbagai strategi, seperti memutar ulang lagu, membaca lirik, menerjemahkan kosakata yang belum dipahami, serta mengaitkan makna kosakata dengan konteks lagu. Kesimpulannya, Spotify menjadi media yang efektif dalam mendukung pemerolehan kosakata secara insidental bagi mahasiswa EFL melalui paparan bahasa Inggris yang autentik di luar kelas.

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The Writer,

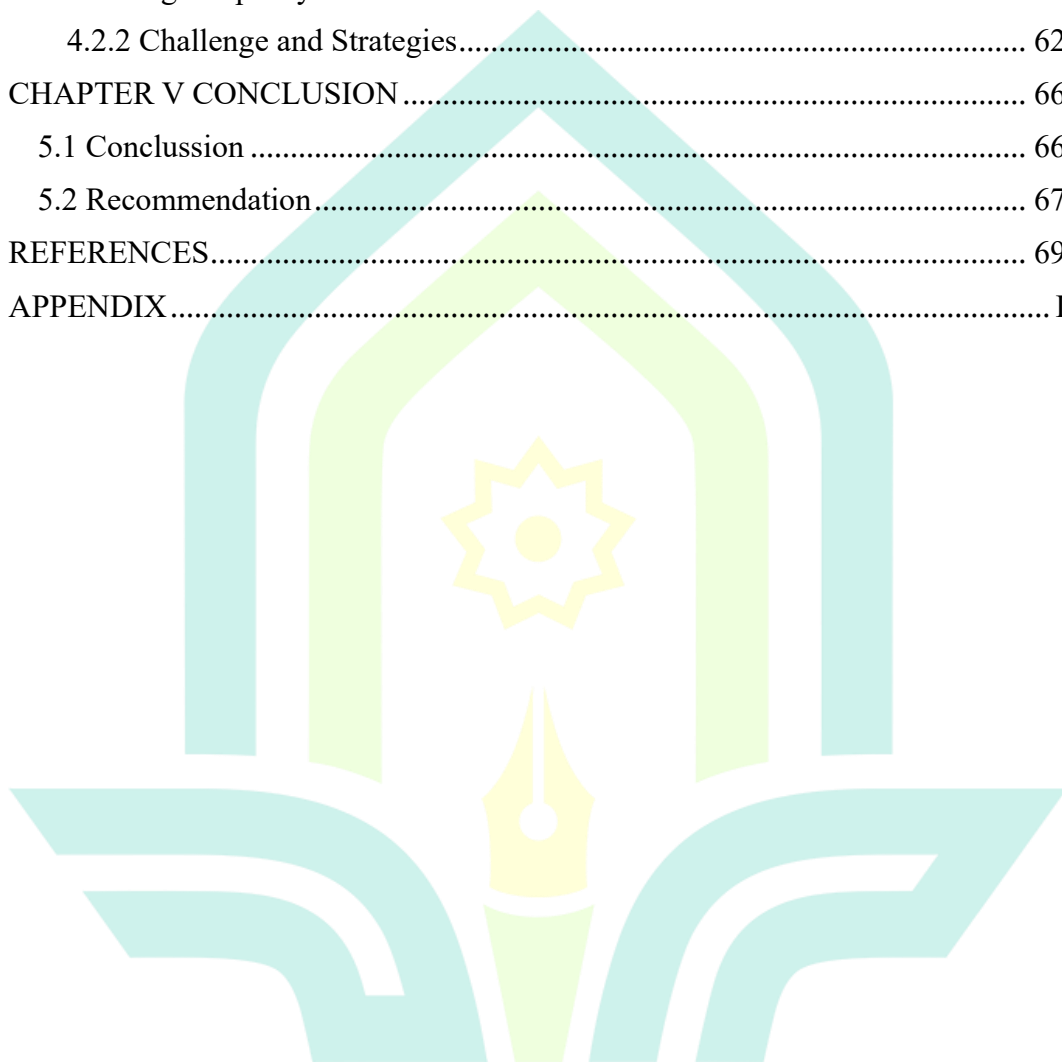


Sirli Amry
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Vocabulary is one of the important components of linguistics that students must possess in learning English (Afidah & Machfudi, 2022). Mastering vocabulary is the key or the first step for students in learning other English language skills. With a broad vocabulary, students can become more confident when expressing their opinions, ideas, or concepts in English, both orally and in writing (Arifin et al., 2025). Furthermore, good vocabulary mastery can also help students understand information, both from the texts they read and the educational videos they listen to in English (Devitriana & Suciana, 2025). This means that vocabulary is essential for students to support the development of listening, reading, writing, and even speaking skills, especially in English.

However, after researchers conducted brief observations on several students, many of them still found it difficult to acquire vocabulary. Some also stated that they currently have limited vocabulary. Limited vocabulary often makes students feel hesitant to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in English (Amalia & Anggraeni, 2021). Therefore, strategies and learning media are needed that can help students improve their vocabulary mastery more effectively and interestingly (Kanza et al., 2025). In addition, the lack of exposure to English in daily life is one of the factors that hinder

the development of students' vocabulary (Sinaga & Napitupulu, 2026). Thus, a learning approach is needed that provides more natural language exposure, enabling students to acquire new vocabulary in a more meaningful and sustainable way.

One natural approach students can take is learning outside the classroom (Ramos, 2023). This allows students to acquire additional vocabulary beyond the limited space of a classroom. One approach outside the classroom that is rarely recognized is incidental learning (Prandi et al., 2023), where students are indirectly learning something new. This can occur while students are engaging in small activities like watching videos, reading books, or even listening to music (Teng, 2024). These activities allow students to receive more exposure to words, especially if they do it continuously without realizing it.

Listening to music is an effective methods of natural language input because it can help students indirectly understand vocabulary and language structure (Sadiqzade, 2024). Furthermore, this activity provides English language development with effectively and enjoyable way (Babayev, 2025). Through song lyrics, students can recognize everyday expressions rarely encountered in classroom instruction (Purba & Zaki, 2022). Furthermore, the repetition in the lyrics helps reinforce the retention of new vocabulary (Nie et al., 2022). Thus, music can be a contextual and engaging learning medium for second language learners.

Technology is not only useful as a tool, but can become an interactive environment that contains meaning in the process of language acquisition (Walker & White, 2013). With the advancement of technology, numerous digital platforms can be used to support students' language exposure (Younas & Dong, 2024), such as YouTube, Instagram, and Spotify. In the context of music listening, Spotify is one of the most popular platforms (Butar & Katemba, 2023) among young people today. This platform can be used as a flexible and easily accessible source of language exposure anywhere and anytime, without being limited by the scope of learning (Ramadhanti & Farida, 2025). Language exposure through music tends to occur subconsciously (Ludke & Morgan, 2022), as students enjoy songs without the demands of specific assignments. Therefore, using music through digital platforms can be an effective way to support the natural language acquisition process (Sadiqzade, 2024).

The phenomenon of indirect language exposure through music listening is known as Incidental Learning, a learning process that occurs without an explicit goal of learning a language (Teng, 2024). Through this activity, students acquire new vocabulary, understand meaning, and recognize language patterns naturally through repeated and meaningful exposure (Manning, 2022). However, most previous research has focused on the use of formal learning media or intentionally designed strategies, leaving the aspect of incidental learning through everyday activities underexplored. Furthermore, research specifically examining how EFL

students experience incidental vocabulary learning while listening to music on digital platforms is still limited. Each student has different experiences and ways of absorbing vocabulary from the songs they listen to.

Students may experience incidental vocabulary learning differently depending on their listening habits, song preferences, and personal experiences while engaging with Spotify. These differences highlight the importance of exploring students' personal stories and lived experiences in understanding how incidental vocabulary learning occurs through music listening. Therefore, this study is crucial to fill this gap by exploring students' real-life experiences in acquiring vocabulary indirectly through music listening.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

This study was conducted to explore how language students improve their vocabulary comprehension through listening to English songs.

Therefore, this study was conducted with the following questions:

1. How do EFL students experience the process of incidental learning while listening to Spotify?
2. What challenges and strategies do EFL students experience in Incidental Vocabulary Learning through Spotify?

1.3 Aims of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problems, this study aims to:

1. This study aims to describe how EFL students experience the process of incidental vocabulary learning while listening to Spotify.
2. To identify the challenges encountered by EFL students and the strategies they use in incidental vocabulary learning through Spotify.

1.4 Operational Definitions

To avoid any misunderstanding about the terms used in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to the study as follows:

1. Incidental Learning Unintentional, a by-product of another activity (Marsick & Watkins, 1990)
2. Vocabulary Knowledge of words and meaning (Hiebert; & Kamil, 2005).
3. EFL Students' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the learning of English in a context where the language is not used as a means of daily communication. In such contexts, learners have limited natural exposure to English, as it is primarily learned in formal settings such as classrooms (Ellis, 1995).

4. Spotify

Spotify is a digital music streaming app that offers a variety of songs from around the world, complete with lyrics that are often displayed in real time, thus giving listeners the opportunity to focus on contextual language use (Permani et al., 2025).

1.5 Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the Incidental Learning theory proposed by Marsick and Watkins (1990). By examining several language students at a university in Pekalongan, this study contextualizes and strengthens the Incidental Learning theory in a higher education environment, especially in the field of language.

2. Practical Significance

This research offers practical implications for educators, students, and institutions. For educators, the findings can provide insights into out-of-class learning designs that encourage increased student vocabulary mastery. For students, these

findings raise awareness of the importance of language exposure outside the classroom to support broader vocabulary acquisition and not solely rely on lecturer-based materials. For institutions, the results of this research can encourage the creation of out-of-class learning that better supports vocabulary mastery, thus providing opportunities for deeper language understanding.

3. Empirical Significance

This study provides qualitative evidence on how students experience incidental vocabulary learning through listening to songs on Spotify. The study not only documents the students' experiences but also the challenges they face and how they overcome them using their respective strategies.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that EFL students experienced incidental vocabulary learning while listening to English songs on Spotify, even though their primary goal was entertainment and not learning English. Through repeated exposure to English lyrics, participants naturally encountered unfamiliar vocabulary and gradually constructed meaning from their listening experience. Although one of Marsick & Watkins's points, concerned with tacit dimensions that must be made explicit, was not found in this study, this finding broadly reflects the characteristics of Incidental Learning theory. The theoretical findings that were strengthened specifically were learning from experience, learning embedded in organizational contexts, action-oriented learning, learning in non-routine conditions, and delimiters from problem that framed.

In addition, the study found that participants encountered several challenges, including unfamiliar slang, ambiguous vocabulary, unclear pronunciation, and the fast pace of song lyrics. To overcome these difficulties, they employed various strategies, such as reading Spotify lyrics, replaying songs, using Google Translate, DeepL, ChatGPT, TikTok, and discussing unfamiliar words with friends. These strategies demonstrate the proactivity and creativity emphasized in Marsick and Watkins (1990),,

showing that learners actively make use of available resources to support their learning.

Overall, the findings suggest that Spotify provides an authentic informal learning environment where vocabulary development occurs naturally through everyday listening experiences, while learners' initiative plays a crucial role in transforming entertainment into meaningful language learning.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. EFL students are encouraged to take greater advantage of Spotify not only as a source of entertainment but also as an opportunity for incidental vocabulary learning. Paying attention to song lyrics, replaying unfamiliar parts, and utilizing available digital resources such as dictionaries, translation tools, or AI applications may help learners expand their vocabulary more effectively. Furthermore, English lecturers are encouraged to recognize the value of informal learning experiences outside the classroom. Integrating authentic materials, such as English songs from Spotify, into learning activities may increase students' motivation while promoting vocabulary development through meaningful and enjoyable language exposure. The last of researcher recommendation is for future researchers are recommended to explore incidental vocabulary learning

through Spotify with a larger number of participants or different educational contexts to obtain more comprehensive findings. Future studies may also examine other language skills, such as listening, pronunciation, or speaking, or investigate the effectiveness of different digital platforms in supporting informal language learning.



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