

**STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH EDUCATION  
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**ABSTRACT**

Vocabulary mastery is a crucial component of language learning, as it directly influences students' ability to communicate effectively. This study explores the perceptions and experiences of English Education students regarding vocabulary mastery, focusing on the strategies they employ, the challenges they encounter, and how they overcome them. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive design, the research provides detailed insights into participants' learning experiences. Ten undergraduate students majoring in English Education, including second- and third-year students, were purposefully selected to offer in-depth perspectives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing open discussions. The findings reveal that students employ various strategies to master vocabulary, including exposure-based learning through reading, watching movies with subtitles, listening to music, and using technology such as apps like Duolingo and Quizlet. However, the students also face several challenges in vocabulary learning include memorization difficulties, lack of motivation and engagement, cognitive overload, and the complexity of specific word types like idioms and phrasal verbs. To address these challenges, students apply several solutions, such as using repetition, mnemonic techniques, and multimedia aids to improve memorization, engaging in regular review and contextual use of vocabulary to enhance retention, and incorporating enjoyable activities like games and watching movies to increase motivation.

*Keywords:* Challenges, English Education Students, Strategies, Vocabulary Mastery

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Mastering vocabulary is essential to language development, as it forms the foundation for comprehension and communication. Acquiring a strong vocabulary supports students' ability to speak, listen, read, and write effectively. According to Syarifudin et al. (2014), vocabulary is the first step students must take to achieve their language learning goals. Similarly, Machfudi (2022) highlights that one of the most important linguistic skills for students studying English as a second language is vocabulary mastery. Without sufficient

vocabulary knowledge, learners often face challenges that hinder their progress (Surmanov & Azimova, 2020).

Given its foundational role in language acquisition, vocabulary mastery also significantly impacts students' academic achievements and practical language skills. A broad and varied vocabulary enhances a learner's ability to communicate effectively and comprehend texts in the target language. Students with a solid vocabulary foundation are better equipped to understand academic materials, engage in classroom discussions, and express their ideas clearly in both spoken and written forms. Additionally, vocabulary proficiency plays a crucial role in standardized language assessments, where a strong command of words can significantly improve test performance.

In an ideal learning environment, students should be exposed to English both within and outside of the classroom in order to increase their vocabulary. For English Education students, the goal is to build a strong enough vocabulary to help them understand different texts, communicate clearly in various situations, and complete academic tasks successfully. This involves being able to identify words while reading and listening, use them appropriately when speaking and writing, and independently apply vocabulary acquisition techniques to continue honing their language skills. Vocabulary mastery should be shown by using the language actively and remembering new words to use them in real situations.

However, many English Education students continue to struggle with vocabulary mastery. In the context of Nias University, English Education students face specific challenges in mastering vocabulary. Many struggle to retain words learned in isolation due to limited opportunities for contextual practice. Key obstacles include insufficient exposure to new terms in everyday contexts, lack of repetition, and uninteresting learning methods (Hariati, 2020). Additionally, students often encounter difficulties with complex vocabulary types, such as prepositions, verbs, and pronouns, which require nuanced understanding (Harselina et al., 2024). These struggles are compounded by low motivation and limited use of English in daily life (Telaumbanua et al., 2024).

In light of these challenges, this study investigates the strategies and difficulties experienced by English Education students at Nias University in mastering vocabulary. Additionally, it seeks to examine how students overcome the challenges they encounter in mastering vocabulary. By shedding light on effective practices, obstacles, and coping mechanisms, this research contributes to the ongoing effort to improve language learning outcomes in higher education settings. The study will address three key research questions: (1) What strategies do English Education students use to master vocabulary? (2) What challenges do they face in vocabulary mastery? (3) How do they overcome these challenges?

## **B. METHOD**

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive design to examine the perceptions of English education students regarding their strategies and challenges in mastering vocabulary. Qualitative research is particularly suited for capturing detailed and nuanced understandings of participants' experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This approach was chosen to provide an in-depth exploration of the subjective and contextual factors influencing students' strategies and challenges in vocabulary mastery. The research was conducted at Nias University, ten undergraduate students majoring in English Education were selected as participants using purposive sampling. This method, as Patton (2015) suggests, emphasizes depth over breadth, enabling the collection of richer and more detailed data. Participants

were chosen based on their enrollment in courses with a strong emphasis on vocabulary mastery and their willingness to share their experiences. The sample included a diverse group of students in terms of age, gender, and academic progress to ensure a comprehensive perspective.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, enabling participants to freely express their opinions while also addressing particular topics related to the research questions. The interviews explored topics such as strategies for learning vocabulary and challenges faced during the process. The data was extensively analyzed using thematic analysis. This technique, commonly employed in qualitative research, helps identify key themes within the findings (Johnson, 2014). The process involved coding the transcripts, identifying recurring patterns, and interpreting the themes to understand the participants' strategies and challenges in mastering vocabulary. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking and peer debriefing were implemented. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their involvement.

### **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study explores the learning strategies and challenges faced by English Education students at Nias University in mastering vocabulary. Based on the interview data, the findings highlight various strategies students use, difficulties they encounter, and the ways they overcome these challenges. Below are the specific results related to the research question:

#### **1. Strategies used by English Education Students in Vocabulary Mastery**

##### **Exposure-Based Learning**

Exposure-based learning is a dominant strategy employed by students to enhance their vocabulary mastery. Participants reported engaging with English through various media, such as reading, watching movies with subtitles, and listening to music or podcasts. This various exposure helps students encounter vocabulary in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated word lists. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I usually learn new vocabulary through reading English books, watching movies or videos with subtitles, and using flashcards."* (R1)

This response (R1) clearly demonstrates the integration of multiple learning strategies, such as reading, visual media, and flashcards. The combination of different exposure sources helps reinforce vocabulary acquisition. The use of movies with subtitles provides an immersive learning experience, allowing students to associate words with real-life situations and improve both comprehension and retention. Yuliastuti (2021) states that students greatly enjoy learning vocabulary through English films, making them an effective medium for vocabulary mastery.

*"I learn the meaning of the song in the music platform and then note down the new vocabulary, look it up in the dictionary again, then mention and note down the pronunciation."* (R6)

This response (R6) highlights how the participant incorporates music into their vocabulary learning. By engaging with song lyrics and following up with dictionary research and pronunciation practice, the participant reinforces learning through repetition and phonetic awareness. Vitasromo & Jatmiko (2018) found that listening to music influences students' vocabulary mastery. It would be valuable to investigate how students view music as a motivational tool for vocabulary learning and whether it enhances long-term word retention.

*"When I read, I highlight unfamiliar words and look up their meanings. While listening, I focus on pronunciation and try to imitate it. Writing sentences with new words helps solidify my understanding of their usage."* (R4)

This response (R4) emphasizes the combination of reading, listening, and writing as a comprehensive strategy for vocabulary mastery. Katamba (1994) in Panjaitan et.al (2024) vocabulary is all the words in a language that is used by a personal provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, write, and read. The participant not only highlights words while reading but also actively works on pronunciation and usage in writing, demonstrating a holistic learning approach. This multimodal engagement strengthens vocabulary retention and application in different contexts.

### **The Use of Technology**

Students use technology extensively for vocabulary learning, relying on mobile apps like Duolingo, Quizlet, and Anki, which incorporate gamification and spaced repetition to enhance retention. Digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram expose students to vocabulary in authentic contexts, improving understanding and pronunciation. These tools support multi-modal learning, combining reading, listening, and visual aids, reinforcing vocabulary through various sensory channels. The flexibility and accessibility of these platforms allow students to practice anytime, integrating learning into daily life. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"Yes, I use mobile apps like Duolingo, Quizlet, and Anki for vocabulary learning. These apps help me memorize words quickly and make the learning process more enjoyable with interactive features."* (R4)

*"I use YouTube and TikTok to watch English-language videos and podcasts. These platforms help me learn new vocabulary in context, improving both my understanding and pronunciation."* (R2)

These responses from participants proved that technology has a big impact on vocabulary mastery. The use of mobile apps like Duolingo, Quizlet, and Anki highlights how interactive features and gamification help students memorize vocabulary quickly while keeping the learning process engaging. The mention of platforms like YouTube and TikTok shows how students leverage digital media to encounter vocabulary in context, improving both their understanding and pronunciation. Additionally, the preference for Duolingo reflects how its accessibility and flexibility allow students to integrate vocabulary practice into their daily routine, making learning more consistent and adaptable to their schedules. As Ajisoko (2020) notes that Duolingo is an effective program for enhancing English language skills, particularly vocabulary acquisition.

### **Writing and Memorization**

Writing is a common strategy for vocabulary retention, as it engages students in actively processing and recalling new words. By writing vocabulary down, students reinforce spelling, meaning, and context. This approach also helps with memory retention, as the physical act of writing makes the learning process more deliberate and memorable. Moreover, writing allows students to create sentences or associations with words, further embedding them in their long-term memory. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"The way I learn vocabulary is by writing it down on a piece of paper and sticking it on top of my dorm room and then memorizing it."* (R9)

*"One strategy I use is to create sentences with new vocabulary to help me remember them better."* (R2)

These responses from participants demonstrate that writing and memorization are key strategies for vocabulary learning. Nemati (2009) support this, memory tactics like grouping, using images, and revisiting, which help in memorizing vocabulary. By physically writing words down and repeating them, students enhance their memory retention. This process allows them to internalize new vocabulary, making it easier to recall and use in different contexts. Writing also serves as a tool for active engagement with the vocabulary, reinforcing learning through repetition and contextual use.

### **Interactive Methods**

Interactive methods, such as games and group activities, make vocabulary learning more engaging and enjoyable. These methods create a dynamic and participatory learning environment, helping students retain vocabulary through fun, engaging practices. Group activities and games encourage competition and collaboration, which can motivate students and provide opportunities for social learning. Additionally, these methods often incorporate context and application, enhancing vocabulary comprehension and recall. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I have used games and group activities. This method is very effective because it makes learning more engaging and interactive."* (R2)

*"Yes, I've played vocabulary games like Scrabble and participated in group quizzes. These methods are effective because they make learning fun and engaging."* (R4)

*"Yes, I've used word association games, it is effective because they make learning fun and encourage me to recall words quickly."* (R5)

These interview results proved that interactive methods are effective tools for vocabulary learning. Sandy & Bram (2024) support this, interactive methods in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among English as a Second Language (ESL) students. The use of games and group activities fosters engagement, encourages social interaction, and makes learning enjoyable. Participants indicated that such methods help them recall vocabulary more easily, suggesting that gamified and interactive approaches enhance both retention and the motivation to learn.

### **Real-Life Application**

Using real-life objects or real-life examples (realia) to understand vocabulary makes learning more practical and relevant. By connecting words with tangible, everyday items, students deepen their understanding of vocabulary in context. Real-life application helps students to not only remember words but also to understand their real-world usage, making learning more meaningful and relatable. This approach bridges the gap between abstract vocabulary and its actual usage in daily life. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I have used real objects like fruits or household items to learn the names of things in English."* (R3)

*"Yes, I've used real-life objects, especially when learning words related to everyday activities. For example, learning the names of kitchen utensils while cooking."* (R4)

*"I have, for example when I want to memorize new vocabulary then I use objects around me to apply the vocabulary directly so that I remember it more easily."* (R7)

These responses from participants proved that real-life application is an effective strategy for learning vocabulary. By using tangible objects or relating vocabulary to daily activities, students gain a deeper, more practical understanding of words. Using real-world objects during the teaching process improved students' vocabulary knowledge (Hariati, 2020). This approach helps students visualize the words in context, making them easier to remember and apply in real-life situations. The use of realia connects language learning to the students' everyday experiences, improving both comprehension and retention.

## **2. Challenges faced by English Education Students in Vocabulary Mastery**

In this section, we will explore some of the main challenges students encounter when trying to master English vocabulary, including issues related to memorization, contextual Vocabulary usage, retention over time, lack of motivation, cognitive overload and specific word type and more.

### **Challenges in Vocabulary Memorization**

One of the most difficult parts of learning English for many students is memorizing vocabulary. This includes not only recalling words but also remembering their correct spelling, pronunciation, and application in context. The difficulty is compounded when words are infrequently used or have multiple meanings. This often leads to frustration and the need for repetition and review. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I think the big problem is memorization."* (R1)

*"For me, the most difficult aspect in learning new English vocabulary is to memorize the word and how to use it in a context with different grammar formulas."* (R7)

These responses from participants showed that memorization, including recalling words and their correct usage, is a significant challenge in vocabulary learning. Students frequently felt capable or understand the meaning of vocabulary but sometimes they were unable to express it (Arochman, et al., 2023). In addition, Machfudi (2022) supports that the big challenge for students is experiencing difficulties in vocabulary, namely pronunciation, spelling, memorizing long syllables, and understanding the meaning of words. Students expressed

difficulty in retaining and applying new vocabulary, particularly when it comes to infrequently used words or words with complex usage rules.

### **Challenges in Contextual Vocabulary Usage**

Many students struggle with applying vocabulary in the correct context. They may find it difficult to understand how words fit naturally into sentences or conversations, particularly when words have multiple meanings or are rarely used. This challenge is frequently linked to a lack of exposure to real-world language usage or opportunity for practice in actual contexts. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"The hardest part for me is remembering words that are rarely used, the correct pronunciation, and understanding words in context."* (R3)

*"I have more difficulty with in-context usage and pronunciation of similar words."* (R6)

*"I find it difficult to remember words with similar spellings or pronunciations. Additionally, applying new words naturally in conversation is challenging without enough practice."* (R4)

These responses from participants highlighted that using vocabulary correctly in context is a major challenge. They note difficulties in not only remembering but also applying vocabulary accurately, especially when words are similar or used infrequently. Students face difficulties with pronunciation, spelling, writing, and grammar patterns, often due to limited practice and exposure to real-life language contexts (Susanto, 2021).

### **Challenges in Long-Term Vocabulary Retention**

Students often struggle with retaining vocabulary over time, especially when they do not use the words frequently. This issue is compounded by insufficient review and lack of meaningful context, which hinders long-term retention. Without regular practice, vocabulary can be easily forgotten. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"Yes, retaining vocabulary is challenging. Causes: Insufficient review and practice, lack of context and meaningful associations, and limited exposure to authentic materials."* (R1)

*"Yes, I struggle to remember vocabulary for a long time because I don't use those words frequently."* (R3)

*"Yes, retaining vocabulary over time can be challenging, especially when I don't encounter the words frequently. Without regular practice, it's easy to forget new words."* (R5)

These responses from participants indicated that retention is a common challenge, often linked to infrequent use and lack of practice. Without continuous exposure to and use of new vocabulary, students find it difficult to remember words over time. Vocabulary mastery and reading habits demonstrate the necessity of revision and meaningful exercise in vocabulary memorization (Frijuniarsi & Marliansih, 2016). This suggests the importance of regular review and meaningful practice in retaining vocabulary.

### **Challenges in Motivation and Engagement in Vocabulary Learning**

Some students experience a lack of motivation and boredom when studying vocabulary, especially when the methods used are repetitive or unengaging. A monotonous study routine can reduce interest in learning and hinder progress. Conversely, students who find learning enjoyable or who engage with context-rich materials tend to stay more motivated. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"Sometimes I feel bored when studying vocabulary, especially if I'm just memorizing without engaging with interesting contexts."* (R2)

*"Sometimes I get bored learning vocabulary, especially if the method is monotonous and unengaging."* (R3)

These responses from participants demonstrated that motivation can decline when vocabulary learning becomes monotonous or lacks engaging elements. Susanto et al. (2019) support this, motivation is very important in learning English. Repetitive and uninspiring study methods contribute to feelings of boredom and disengagement, suggesting that a more dynamic and context-rich approach could help maintain student interest.

### **Challenges of Cognitive Overload in Vocabulary Learning**

Students often experience cognitive overload when trying to learn too many new words at once. This can result in feeling overwhelmed, leading to difficulty in retaining and recalling the vocabulary. Strategies like breaking down the vocabulary into smaller chunks and spacing out learning sessions are commonly used to manage this challenge. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"Yes, cognitive overload happens. Management strategies: Break learning into smaller chunks, set realistic goals and schedules, use spaced repetition techniques."* (R1)

*"Yes, I've experienced cognitive overload when trying to learn too many words in one session. To manage it, I break the list into smaller chunks and focus on a few words each day."* (R5)

*"Yes, I have. It was when I was learning scientific vocabulary, which has a higher difficulty level than everyday vocabulary. While I think the way to overcome it is to learn it slowly and don't need to force yourself to understand immediately."* (R7)

These responses from participants showed that cognitive overload is a real issue when learning vocabulary. Liu (2024) support this Cognitive overload can make vocabulary acquisition difficult to understand and retain. especially when attempting to tackle a large volume of words in a single session. To manage this challenge, students use strategies like chunking, setting manageable goals, and spacing out their learning. These techniques help reduce the cognitive burden and improve retention.

### **Challenges with Specific Word Types: Idioms, Phrasal Verbs, and Irregular Verbs**

Idioms, phrasal verbs, and irregular verbs are among the word categories that are thought to be more challenging to acquire because of their complexity, irregular forms, and nonliteral meanings. These words often defy simple rules and can be difficult to grasp, particularly for



learners who are just starting to build their vocabulary. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I find idioms and phrasal verbs harder to understand because their meanings are not always clear."* (R3)

*"Idioms and phrasal verbs are the hardest for me because their meanings are not always literal."* (R4)

These responses from participants suggested that certain word types, such as idioms and phrasal verbs, are particularly challenging for learners. Anjarini & Hatmanto (2021) support this, Mastering idioms and phrasal verbs poses considerable hurdles in vocabulary learning. The difficulty lies in their abstract meanings and irregular forms, making them harder to understand and memorize compared to more straightforward vocabulary. This highlights the need for targeted strategies to teach these more complex word types.

### **3. How Students Overcome Challenges in Vocabulary Mastery**

Mastering vocabulary is essential for language proficiency, but many students face challenges that hinder their learning process. These challenges include difficulties with memorization, retaining learned vocabulary, staying motivated, and maintaining engagement in the learning process. To overcome these obstacles, students adopt various strategies, such as using mnemonic techniques, practicing words in meaningful contexts, leveraging multimedia resources, and incorporating fun, interactive learning methods. This section explores the different ways students tackle these challenges, supported by their personal experiences and relevant research.

#### **Solution to Memorization Challenges**

To overcome difficulties with memorizing new vocabulary, students employ various strategies. These strategies often involve connecting the new vocabulary to something familiar, using mnemonic techniques, and practicing the words in meaningful contexts such as sentences or daily activities. Some students use external aids like flashcards, writing words repeatedly, or even associating words with images or songs to aid recall. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"Use the words in sentences or try to connect them with images or situations from my daily life. Repetition is key."* (R1)

*"If I have trouble memorizing, I try writing the words repeatedly, drawing pictures, or using the words in sentences. Sometimes, I also learn by listening to songs or watching videos to make it easier to remember."* (R2)

*"Use flashcards, repetition, and associate words with images or examples."* (R7)

These responses highlighted the variety of techniques students use, including contextualizing words, repetition, and engaging with multimedia resources like songs and videos. Such methods enhance memory retention and make learning more effective. Experts have also identified several effective vocabulary memorization techniques. One widely recognized approach is the use of mnemonic devices, which involve linking words to images or stories to strengthen memory. Research by Amiryousefi & Ketabi (2011) found that mnemonic

techniques significantly improve vocabulary learning and recall. Additionally, drawing strategies have been shown to enhance long-term retention. A study by Iman et al. (2020) revealed that drawing definitions helped individuals remember information more effectively than simply rewriting them.

### **Solution to Vocabulary Retention**

To retain the vocabulary they have learned, students focus on regular review and active use of the vocabulary in various contexts. This can involve incorporating new words into daily conversations, assignments, or even using language learning apps. Additionally, some students create personal dictionaries, use flashcards, or participate in academic discussions to keep the words fresh in their memory. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I retain vocabulary by reviewing it regularly using spaced repetition techniques. Apps like Duolingo are helpful for this."* (R1)

*"I often review the words by reading, writing, or speaking them. I also try to use the vocabulary when talking to friends or in school assignments."* (R2)

*"I practice using the vocabulary in sentences, and review often."* (R7)

These responses highlighted that retention is strengthened through consistent practice and repetition. Students integrate new vocabulary into their daily language use by speaking, writing, and leveraging learning tools like spaced repetition and educational apps. Research supports these strategies as effective ways to enhance vocabulary retention. Spaced repetition, for example, has been shown to improve long-term memory by reviewing information at increasing intervals. Additionally, task-based learning can further aid retention. A study by Ramadhan et. al., (2021) found that engaging in contextual tasks helps students recall and apply new vocabulary more effectively in reading and communication.

Some students also highlight the importance of learning vocabulary in context. By using vocabulary in everyday situations, assignments, or real-life conversations, students can enhance their retention. This approach allows the vocabulary to become part of their active language repertoire, rather than remaining static in their memory. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I use the vocabulary in conversations or writing in my daily life."* (R1)

*"I use it in assignments, debates, or class presentations to reinforce my understanding."* (R3)

*"I practice using the vocabulary in some contexts for my assignments in some courses."* (R9)

These responses emphasize that students believe in the value of contextual learning for better retention. Actively using vocabulary in discussions, writing, and coursework reinforces understanding and helps integrate new words into their language skills. Research supports the effectiveness of contextual learning in vocabulary retention. According to Omolu & Marhum (2022), contextual teaching and learning are effective methods to enhance vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach

also can improve students' motivation to learn as well as their reading comprehension (Haerazi, et al., 2019).

### **Solutions for Enhancing Motivation**

When faced with a lack of motivation, students find ways to make vocabulary learning more enjoyable and relevant. This includes setting clear and achievable goals, engaging with media like movies and songs, and participating in extracurricular activities. Some students also remind themselves of the personal or professional benefits of expanding their vocabulary, such as improved fluency or career advancement. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I remind myself of the long-term benefits of expanding my vocabulary, like improving my fluency and confidence in communication."* (R1)

*"I try to learn in fun ways, like playing games or watching movies. I also think about how new vocabulary will help me become smarter and more confident when speaking English."* (R2)

*"I boost my motivation to learn new vocabulary by setting clear and measurable goals. I keep track of my learning progress, and seeing how much I have learned is very motivating."* (R4)

These responses highlight that students increase their motivation by linking vocabulary learning to their personal interests and long-term aspirations. They stay engaged by making the process enjoyable through games, media, and goal-setting, all of which sustain their progress over time. Research supports this connection between motivation and vocabulary learning. According to Nasution et al. (2023), many theories, such as expectancy theory, self-determination theory, self-regulation theory, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, can be used to explain learning motivation. Motivation is influenced by both internal factors, such as personal interests and goals, and external factors, such as the learning environment and teaching methods.

Additionally, to counter boredom and make vocabulary learning more enjoyable, some students adopt fun, interactive methods. This includes learning through songs, games, watching movies, or even joining English clubs. These methods provide an enjoyable break from traditional studying, while also reinforcing vocabulary acquisition in a more informal, engaging way. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

*"I happen to really like songs, so the more song verses I memorize, the more new vocabulary I remember and understand the context in which they are used."* (R5)

*"The way to increase motivation to learn new vocabulary is by doing things we like, such as watching English films, so that we can increase our insight and vocabulary."* (R6)

*"I try to learn in fun ways, like playing games or watching movies."* (R2)

These responses highlight the role of enjoyment in vocabulary learning. Students who incorporate entertainment into their study routine find themselves more motivated and better able to understand and retain new words. Research supports the effectiveness of using entertainment in vocabulary learning. Rohmah & Indah (2021) found that songs have an

important role in the development of children learning a second language. The Self-Determination Theory by Deci & Ryan (2017) further explains this phenomenon. This theory states that intrinsic motivation—driven by enjoyable and personally meaningful activities—enhances learning and retention. Engaging in activities like listening to music or watching films can stimulate intrinsic motivation, making vocabulary learning feel less like a chore and more like an enjoyable experience.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This research investigates the strategies, challenges, and solutions in vocabulary mastery among English Education students at Nias University. The findings highlight three main aspects: (1) strategies used, (2) challenges faced, and (3) how students overcome these challenges.

The findings reveal that students use various strategies to improve vocabulary. Exposure-based learning is significant, with students engaging with English through reading, movies with subtitles, and music or podcasts. Technology, including language learning apps, is also widely utilized. Writing and memorization help students retain words by recalling them in context. Interactive methods, such as games and group activities, make learning more engaging. Real-life application, like associating words with objects or using them in conversation, strengthens understanding and retention.

However, students face several challenges in vocabulary mastery. Memorization difficulties arise from complex spelling, pronunciation, and contextual usage. Many struggles with applying words correctly, particularly those with multiple meanings. Retaining vocabulary over time is tough without regular review and usage. Motivation fluctuates, with some students finding study methods monotonous. Cognitive overload occurs when trying to learn too many words at once. Words like idioms and phrasal verbs are also difficult due to their irregularities.

To overcome these challenges, students use several solutions. They link new words to familiar concepts, use mnemonic devices, and employ flashcards or songs for memorization. Retention improves with regular review, active use in conversation, and participation in academic discussions. Contextual learning helps by using words in real-life situations. Motivation is sustained through achievable goals, enjoyable media like movies and games, and recognizing long-term benefits. Fun, interactive methods like English clubs or games also make learning more engaging.

In conclusion, a multifaceted approach combining exposure-based learning, interactive strategies, contextual application, and motivation techniques is crucial for vocabulary mastery. Educators should integrate varied methods to help students overcome challenges and retain vocabulary in the long term.

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