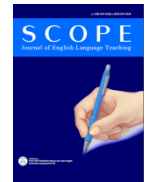




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Research Article

EFL Students' Preferences on Vocabulary Learning

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KEYWORDS

EFL Students' Preferences;
 Vocabulary;
 Multimodal Approach.

ABSTRACT

Inadequate and monotonous vocabulary-teaching media fails to engage EFL students' interests and limits their vocabulary achievement. Thus, proper preparation before teaching will assist lecturers in identifying various teaching media that align with students' needs and interests, ensuring that the instructional activities are effective, enjoyable, and reach the learning objectives. The study aims to investigate preferences and explore preferred vocabulary learning media and mobile learning applications before teaching a vocabulary course. Guided by the explanatory sequential design of a mixed-method design, 41 respondents from a private university in Jakarta enrolled in a Vocabulary course in the third semester of the English Education Program. They completed the questionnaires and participated in an open-ended interview as part of a two-phase data collection. The study found that EFL students preferred vocabulary learning media such as English films with subtitles, songs, games, online/offline dictionaries, books, academic journals, technology-supported images, YouTube, and Quizziz. Furthermore, the reasons for using the preferred media for vocabulary learning include vocabulary acquisition, improving listening skills, pronunciation practice, word/lexical understanding (including slang words), language practice and cross-cultural exchange through online interactions, moral values, quick translation, vocabulary enhancement, academic purposes, and visual engagement. They favored YouTube and Quizziz as mobile learning applications because of their accessibility, simplicity, efficiency, and enjoyment. The study suggests that lecturers should switch from monotonous teaching approaches to multimodal ones while teaching vocabulary at the university level.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning vocabulary is crucial for higher education language proficiency and academic success. English represents the first stage of learning a foreign language (Hanafiah et al., 2022). With a large vocabulary, students can comprehend complex reading materials, interact with

meaningful classroom discussions, and express their ideas in written assignments. Moreover, vocabulary knowledge is directly related to language proficiency (Yang, 2021). Students with extensive vocabulary can communicate with greater fluency, comprehending and employing nuanced language expressions and demonstrating higher academic comprehension. According to Farjami & Aidinlou (2013); Haddad (2016), students indirectly improve their

vocabulary through the skills of English. As a result, learning vocabulary is critical to language competency and academic success, allowing students to read challenging texts, engage in meaningful discussions, and convey their thoughts.

Students' previous experiences and background knowledge influence their vocabulary development. In support of this, Hasannejad et al. (2015) point out that learning vocabulary is essential due to the numerous elements involved. Discovery methods, such as decision-making and social processes, are emphasized to gain preparatory knowledge about unknown terms and understand their lexical meanings. Furthermore, integration strategies that include memory, cognitive functions, and metacognitive processes, as identified by Moody et al. (2018) and Song et al. (2017), play an important role. Consequently, the coherent integration of these parts emphasizes the comprehensive nature of vocabulary learning, highlighting its critical role in language development.

The researcher conducted two similar studies to investigate the strategies used for vocabulary learning. The findings indicated that the metacognitive strategy was the predominant approach employed, with a preference for utilizing a technology-based learning medium—the millennial generation employed strategies connected with their interests and passions. (Hendrawaty, 2015; Hendrawaty & Retnomurti, 2021). However, the use of teaching media in the Vocabulary class has been limited to online/offline dictionaries from cell phones, the internet, and videos, leaving insufficient vocabulary performance.

One of the factors that makes EFL students need more vocabulary achievement is monotonous vocabulary-teaching strategies. The researcher interviewed students from three different classes and lecturers who took a vocabulary course in the 2022-2023 academic year. Due to the less exciting teaching method, the EFL students needed help comprehending vocabulary, particularly Compound Words, Phrasal Verbs, and English Idioms in Use. They said the lecturers needed expertise in the subject matter, resulting in an excessive focus on module use. In addition, they provided monotonous vocabulary exercises and never incorporated mobile learning application quizzes or games. In every online class, a lecturer instructed students to complete vocabulary exercises for one hour via WhatsApp group, followed by either GMeet or Zoom discussions. The utilization of insufficiently innovative instructional materials for vocabulary teaching may result in a monotonous vocabulary learning experience since it is unvarying. Moreover, it fails to meet undergraduate students' interests and social development requirements in the current digital age.

Based on the interview results, lecturers depend on text-based instructions such as textbooks, worksheets, or written exercises. Reading and writing exercises help EFL students acquire new vocabulary with less reliance on other sensory modalities. In this case, EFL students receive information through listening and note-taking. In verbal instructions, lecturers might use language and examples to convey word meanings without including additional visual aids or interactive activities and games. Consequently, traditional teaching, where the lecturers teach without incorporating various teaching modes, can be considered monomodal. The study emphasizes the need for more innovative and varied instructional materials for vocabulary teaching.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate EFL students' preferences and explore the use of the preferred media on vocabulary learning.

The following research questions drive this study:

1. What are EFL students' preferences on vocabulary learning media?
2. How and why do they choose and use the preferred media for vocabulary learning?

METHOD

This study investigated EFL students' preferences and explored the use of preferred media in vocabulary learning. According to Crewell (2012), mixed-method research design is a method of gathering, assessing, and combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a study or set of studies to better understand research problems. Furthermore, Sugiyono (2014 in Azhari et al., 2023) noted that research methods that mix or combine quantitative and qualitative methods will provide more comprehensive, valid, reliable, and objective results. The mixed method used in this study is an explanatory sequential design, also known as a two-phase model, which consists of first collecting quantitative data and then qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results (Crewell, 2012), as the use of the explanatory sequential design is aligned with the formulated research questions.

The participants were students from semester three of the English Education Program in Jakarta, chosen randomly from one class. The female students were 27, and the male students were 14. As a consequence, 41 participants were ranging in age from 19 to 20 years. They actively participated in a Vocabulary course as part of their academic curriculum in the academic year 2023-2024.

The explanatory sequential method required two independent phases of data collecting. The data was gathered using a series of questions administered via Google form and open-ended interviews. A questionnaire is a research tool that collects primary data

from a selected sample of people in order to elicit reliable responses (Collis & Hussey, 2014 in Zainal & Rahmat, 2020). In gathering quantitative data, we employed one closed-ended questionnaire to investigate EFL students' viewpoints, particularly their awareness of vocabulary learning. The items were presented using a four-point Likert scale (4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree). In addition, we investigated EFL students' preferences for using vocabulary learning media and mobile learning applications without using a Likert scale because they were allowed to give other options and choose more than one choice. In the second phase, which is qualitative data, we utilized two open-ended questions to investigate EFL students' viewpoints, especially their challenges in learning and even mastering English vocabulary so far and their purposes in learning and even mastering English vocabulary in the Vocabulary course. In addition, an open-ended interview was carried out after distributing the questionnaires to verify the responses of students' preferences in vocabulary learning media. Consequently, four out of forty-one students were chosen randomly to represent all participants based on the questions asked.

For the quantitative data analysis, the questionnaire data were visually depicted using charts, and descriptive statistics analysis was explained using percentages. In contrast, data from open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively. In addition, open-ended interview questions were analyzed qualitatively as well by assigning participant numbers such as S1, S2, S3, and S4. The report was then divided into two portions, with the names of the participants on the left and excerpts from each on the right (Djandjuri et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collection consisted of a questionnaire and open-ended interview, which provided insights into the preferences of EFL students regarding vocabulary learning. They enrolled in the English Education Program and participated in a Vocabulary course that utilized a blended learning system. Blended learning was introduced as an institutional policy in 2022 in response to the era after the COVID-19 pandemic.

At first, we collected data from closed and open-ended questionnaires. We used the data as an introduction to know EFL students' viewpoints before we went deeper to investigate students' preferences in vocabulary and explore their preferred vocabulary learning media and mobile learning applications.

The statement from a closed-ended questionnaire was learning and mastering English vocabulary are important for me.

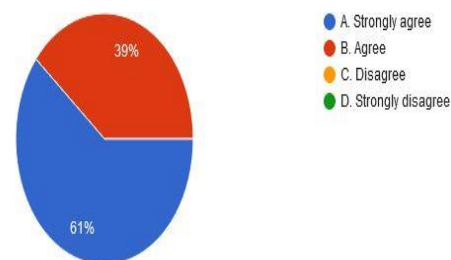


Figure 1. The Result of EFL Students' Self-Awareness in Vocabulary Learning

Figure 1 depicts the percentage of self-awareness among EFL students during vocabulary learning. The results revealed most students, precisely 61%, strongly agreed, while the remaining 39% agreed about the importance of acquiring and mastering English vocabulary. Hence, the data indicated the participants' high level of self-awareness in their vocabulary learning.

The open-ended questionnaire discussed the challenges of learning and mastering English vocabulary so far and their purposes taking the Vocabulary course.

Question 1: What are your challenges in learning and even mastering English vocabulary so far?

My challenge in learning vocabulary is that I often need to remember the vocabulary I learn. Sometimes, I need to remember the words because I do not write them down, practice them, or encounter unfamiliar words and must use them. There are too many words to remember, particularly those frequently used for educational purposes. It is easier to recall English vocabulary if the words are not memorable. When I listen to English music, I need help to acquire new vocabulary. A large number of words with similar meanings confused me. I need help with spelling, idioms, slang, and American and British pronunciation. I need help to have conversations with fluent speakers through online applications. I sometimes become readily bored when required to memorize words that could be more memorable.

Question 2: What are your purposes in learning even mastering English vocabulary in this Vocabulary course?

According to the results, most students stated, "My objective in this vocabulary course is to acquire new vocabulary and comprehend its meanings. In addition, I would like to increase my vocabulary because I have not yet mastered it. I learn vocabulary to enhance my speaking performance, use it in both academic and everyday contexts and can communicate with foreigners. I can also comprehend English reading texts and write English correctly with the help of new vocabulary. In addition, I wish to master vocabulary to enhance my pronunciation and diction. Because I will be an English teacher, I want to master vocabulary."

Figure 1 illustrates how most EFL students strongly agreed that learning English vocabulary is crucial. Since they were pursuing a bachelor's degree in the English Education Study Program, this issue indicated they had high self-awareness in vocabulary learning. According to Patahuddin et al. (2017), the greater a student's vocabulary, the easier it is to acquire four English language skills. Susanto et al. (2019) discovered that university students who use greater strategies to increase their understanding of unfamiliar terms should have a higher level of integrativeness and positive attitudes toward learning situations to achieve higher vocabulary skills. Therefore, the study proved the importance of English vocabulary learning among EFL students.

Third-semester students shared their viewpoints on vocabulary learning objectives in the first meeting of the academic year 2023-2024. First, they wished to learn new words and comprehend their meanings. Moreover, they wanted to expand their vocabulary because they had not yet mastered it. Susanto et al. (2022) revealed that most students' vocabulary achievement test was between 2,000 and 3,000 words. In contrast, the minimum level of competence for independent reading of complex texts was between 3,000 and 5,000 words. Second, they learned vocabulary to improve their speaking abilities, implemented it in both academic and everyday contexts, and were able to communicate with foreigners. Previous research demonstrated that academic vocabulary positively affects English-speaking abilities (Br Bangun & Simanjuntak, 2022). Then, they desired to improve their pronunciation and diction by mastering vocabulary. Utilizing websites outfitted with automatic speech recognition technology improved vocabulary and pronunciation skills (Bashori et al., 2022). They could also comprehend English reading texts and write accurately with new vocabulary. Li & Kirby (2015) and Walad et al. (2022) indicated the importance of lexical skills in L2 literacy development. In addition, vocabulary knowledge contributed significantly to reading, writing, and proficiency in a foreign language (Ariyanti & Hanifah, 2016; Karakoç & Köse, 2017; Kim et al., 2022; Zhong, 2018). Lastly, as pre-service English teachers, they would be English instructors; consequently, they needed to have a vocabulary with a high frequency level (Wulyani et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a vital need for a shift from monotonous approach to the multimodal approach in teaching vocabulary.

Regarding EFL students' challenges, as long as they have been learning English, they often need to remember the vocabulary they learned. There are too many words to remember and use, particularly those frequently used for educational purposes. When they listen to English music,

they need help to acquire new vocabulary. A large number of words with similar meanings confused them. They need help with spelling, idioms, slang, and American and British pronunciation. They need help to have conversations with fluent speakers through online applications. They sometimes become readily bored when required to memorize words that can be more memorable. Additionally, prior studies showed that other EFL students struggled with vocabulary acquisition. (Fahira et al., 2022; Kesmez, 2021; Lutfiyah et al., 2022). As a result, lecturers should implement various vocabulary teaching modes relevant to students' needs and interests to overcome obstacles.

EFL Students' Preferences

After getting the results of EFL students' viewpoints on vocabulary learning, we gathered data through Questions 1 and 2, presented in Figures 2 and 3, to answer the first research question as follows:

1. What are EFL students' preferences on vocabulary learning media?

Question 1: Which of the following media do you utilize to learn or acquire English vocabulary?

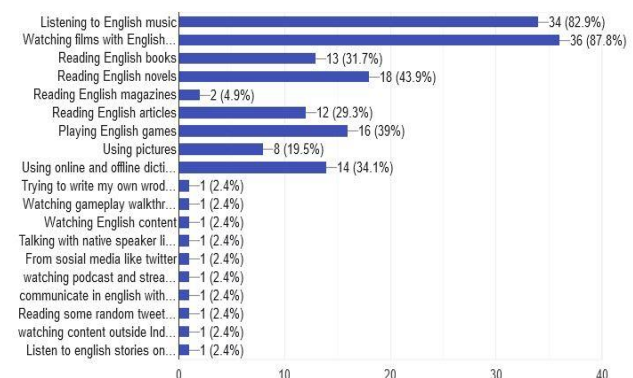


Figure 2. EFL Students' Preferences in Utilizing Vocabulary Learning Media

Figure 2 shows that 87.8% of EFL students preferred watching English films with subtitles. It is similar to the previous result that 82.9% of them enjoyed listening to English songs. 43.9% were interested in reading English novels, 39% felt enthusiastic about playing English games, 34.1% utilized online and offline dictionaries, and 31.7% liked reading English books and articles. However, 19.5% of them used pictures, and 4.9% chose to read English magazines to learn or acquire English vocabulary.

Question 2: Which of the following mobile learning applications do you utilize to acquire or learn English vocabulary?

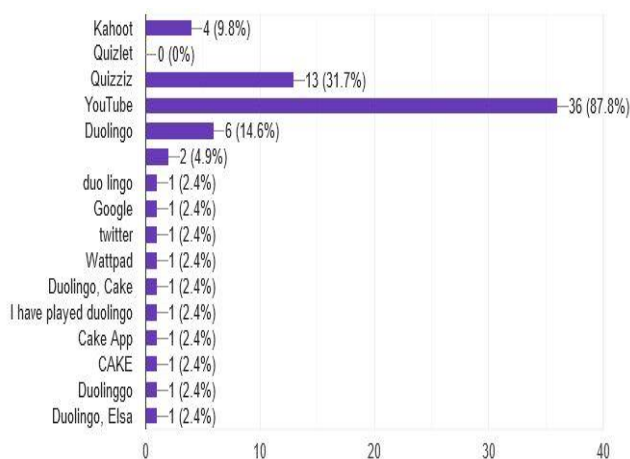


Figure 3. EFL Students' Preferences in Utilizing Mobile Learning Applications

Figure 3 demonstrates that 87.8% of EFL students favored YouTube videos. 31.7% of them were interested in Quizziz, followed by 14.6% who used Duolingo, and 9.8% who chose Kahoot. In short, the most frequently used mobile learning application was YouTube, while the least one was Kahoot.

To confirm the results of Figures 2 and 3, we randomly selected four of the forty-one students as respondents. The interview result consisted of two columns, whereby the left column displayed the participants, and the right column had their corresponding extracts.

Herein are the open-ended interview questions and the answers to address the second research question as follows:

2. How and why do they choose and use the preferred media for vocabulary learning?

Question 1: What the most and least vocabulary-learning media have you frequently used in learning or even mastering vocabulary so far, and why?

Table 1. The Preferences of Vocabulary-Learning Media

Participants	Extracts
S1	<p>Playing English video games, I can comprehend vocabulary, including slang words.</p> <p>I have even caught on the conversations of the film's main characters.</p> <p>I am accustomed to translating and comprehending English song lyrics when I listen to English music.</p> <p>Online and offline dictionaries make it simple to determine the meanings of words and translate them quickly, even if the translations are only sometimes accurate. It improves my pronunciation of words spoken by native speakers.</p> <p>I use images from the internet to learn new words.</p>
S2	<p>I frequently watch animated and action films in English to expand my vocabulary.</p>

	<p>The English songs I frequently listen to are from Europe, for example, songs by Dash Berlin, as the vocals are better, making it easier for me to acquire vocabulary.</p> <p>I utilize offline and online dictionaries when completing assignments.</p> <p>To increase my vocabulary, I frequently use English games, particularly those involving missions against crime, because I learn positive and negative moral values.</p>
S3	<p>Much of my time is spent listening to English music, and I frequently look up the lyrics to expand my vocabulary.</p> <p>To improve my pronunciation of new words, I watch more English-language films.</p> <p>I use online and offline dictionaries frequently when working on assignments.</p> <p>I frequently play English games like "Plato" because their chat features enable me to interact with non-native speakers.</p> <p>I use Twitter and TikTok images frequently.</p>
S4	<p>I listen to English songs because many songs have lyrics in English today, which encourages me to learn their meanings.</p> <p>Watching movies of various genres is a fun method to expand my vocabulary.</p> <p>I use online and offline dictionaries, especially the Oxford Dictionary when completing tasks and getting new words in novels.</p> <p>I use English images sourced from quotes or memes on Twitter and Pinterest.</p> <p>I have just started reading English e-books and academic journals to increase my vocabulary.</p>

Question 2: What the most and least mobile learning applications have you frequently used in learning or even mastering vocabulary so far, and why?

Table 2. The Preferences of Mobile Learning Applications

Participants	Extracts
S1	<p>YouTube is a readily accessible source of entertainment, and it contains numerous enjoyable and informative vocabulary-learning videos.</p>
S2	<p>YouTube makes learning vocabulary simpler for me.</p>
S3	<p>I watch YouTube videos with subtitles; whenever I encounter a new word, I pause it and look up its definition.</p> <p>I also used Quizziz when I was at school. It was simple to do an English vocabulary quiz.</p>

S4	<p>Many interacting English-language YouTube videos introduce me to various new words.</p> <p>Quizziz is an interactive platform for increasing vocabulary mastery.</p>
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Figure 2 demonstrated that English films with subtitles were the most popular learning medium, followed by songs, novels, games, online/offline dictionaries, and books and articles. Nevertheless, pictures and magazines were the least utilized instruments for learning. As shown in Figure 2, the results were quite similar to the question 1 of the open-ended interview. On the one hand, most students preferred vocabulary-learning media such as games, film, music, and online/offline dictionaries. They were best loved with games because of getting word/lexical understanding, including slang words, learning moral education, and fostering language practice and cross-cultural exchange through online interaction: "Plato." Secondly, they favored watching English films due to listening skills, vocabulary expansion, and pronunciation improvement of new words. Next, they liked listening to English music due to translation, vocabulary acquisition, and vocabulary enhancement. Lastly, they preferred online and offline dictionaries for quick translation, pronunciation improvement, and academic practices. On the other hand, the least frequently chosen media were images, e-books and journals. Students were interested in using pictures from online platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, Pinterest, e-books, and academic journals to learn new vocabulary due to visual engagement, sources of quotes and memes, and vocabulary enhancement since all students were from the Z generation, they favored technology-based learning media.

The results above were supported by the previous research by Alam & Ashrafuzzaman (2018) and Patahuddin et al. (2017). Regarding students' strategies for learning and gaining vocabulary through films, numerous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of watching English films with transcripts in enhancing vocabulary among students in Indonesian schools and university students. Moreover, students showed positive attitudes while viewing popular and educational films (Andriani & Angelina, 2020; Damanik & Katemba, 2021; Fikri et al., 2022; Giawa et al., 2021; Kurniawan & Purwati, 2023; Salmawati, 2023; Wei Ning, 2018). Young and adult learners in Indonesia demonstrated positive responses and greater comprehension when vocabulary was enhanced through songs (Hendrawaty & Nurhayati, 2019; Kayyis, 2015; Ma'rifat, 2017; Rachmawati et al., 2020; Rohmah & Indah, 2021; Triwardani, 2022). Concerning students' strategies for learning and acquiring vocabulary through English literature, Patahuddin et al. (2017) discovered that reading is primarily a means of obtaining information and provides

students with the most effective means of learning new words and reviewing words they have already learned. Additionally, students were interested in learning vocabulary through innovative, interactive, and entertaining activities. Previous research demonstrated that video games' vocabulary learning applications were advantageous for university students concerning vocabulary achievement, enthusiasm, self-efficacy, and communication abilities. (Bin-Hady, 2023; Rui, 2021). Using an online flashcard website could also increase students' lexical knowledge (Chien, 2015). Jannah et al. (2020) also revealed that teachers should utilize games based on instructional material and media development classes to provide students with effective learning.

Regarding mobile learning applications in Figure 3, the top two preferred mobile learning applications for learning or even mastering vocabulary were YouTube and Quizziz. As shown in Figure 3, the results were the same as question 2 of the open-ended interview. Most EFL students preferred YouTube because it was an easily accessible, simple, and efficient platform for amusement and instructive material, notably vocabulary-learning videos. YouTube videos with subtitles, as well as pausing to learn the definitions of new words. Moreover, they used Quizziz due to the interactivity, simplicity, and efficiency of taking English vocabulary quizzes at school. Consequently, EFL students enjoyed learning with pleasure.

According to Woods et al. (2019), YouTube is commonly used to seek videos that simulate language learning. It is the most popular application among students because it can enhance their language skills and provide universities in Indonesia with alternative methods for teaching foreign languages. Students from the English Education Department at Universitas Negeri Manado exhibited favorable attitudes toward YouTube in vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, it positively affected the classroom environment (Mokodompit et al., 2020). In addition to YouTube, Quizziz was also the preferred vocabulary-building application for undergraduate students. Dewi et al. (2020) revealed that first-semester students firmly agreed that Quizziz was user-friendly, simulated their interests, helped them concentrate in class, and decreased test anxiety. In addition, students felt that the online formative assessment administered via Quizziz was significantly more engaging than the paper examination.

As stated previously, EFL students' preferences in utilizing vocabulary media were English films with subtitles, songs, games, online and offline dictionaries, pictures, and e-articles supported by technology. In addition, they were interested in using videos from YouTube and Quizziz as the vocabulary mobile learning applications. According to Djamdjuri et al. (2021), researchers find multimodal-based media to be very attractive since it provides technological

improvements. Therefore, the study proposes that lecturers implement more vocabulary teaching modes because EFL students prefer multimodal learning to enhance their vocabulary achievement.

Previous studies demonstrated that implementing the multimodal approach to learning were both fascinating and practical and that it could assist students in learning English. In English language classrooms of the twenty-first century, the multimodal approaches allowed for interactivity between lecturers and students (Djandjuri et al., 2021; Sakulprasertsri, 2020). In addition, the multimodal approaches improved vocabulary acquisition, learning, and retention among students (Cárcamo et al., 2016; Djandjuri et al., 2021; Teng, 2023). Moreover, the purpose of the English teaching activities in multimodal approaches is to enhance undergraduate students' comprehensive English proficiency (Wu, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated EFL students' preferences and the reasons for the preferred vocabulary learning. The findings showed that EFL students preferred vocabulary learning media: English films with subtitles, songs, games, online/offline dictionaries, books, academic journals, and technology-supported pictures. In addition, they favored YouTube and Quizziz as mobile learning applications. Furthermore, most EFL students preferred watching English films because it helped them improve their listening skills, expand their vocabulary, and pronounce new words. They preferred games to improve word/lexical comprehension, including slang vocabulary, receive moral education, and improve language practice and cross-cultural interchange through online interactions. They preferred watching English films because it helped them improve their listening abilities, expand their vocabulary, and pronounce new words. Next, they enjoyed listening to English music for translation, word acquisition, and vocabulary enhancement. Then, they favored online and offline dictionaries for quick translation, pronunciation practice, and academic purposes. After that, they preferred reading e-journals due to vocabulary enhancement. Lastly, they preferred utilizing technology-supported pictures due to visual engagement through social media to discover new words. In addition, for the mobile learning applications, they were familiar with utilizing YouTube and Quizziz. For them, these applications were easily accessible, simple, and efficient platforms. YouTube was used for amusement and vocabulary-learning videos, while Quizziz was used for taking English vocabulary quizzes.

The study suggests the need for a shift from monotonous teaching methods to a multimodal approach. Further research could focus on implementing multimodal teaching strategies in higher education settings, exploring how lecturers can effectively integrate diverse resources

and instructional strategies to enhance EFL students' vocabulary achievement. However, the current study was limited to the sample since it was conducted with a specific group of EFL students from semester three in the English Education Program in Jakarta before taking a Vocabulary course when implementing the blended-learning system; as a result, the findings might not apply to students from different regions, academic levels, or cultural backgrounds.

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