



# Vocabulary Learning Strategies Possessed by an Indonesian EFL Undergraduate Student During Authentic Novel Reading: A Qualitative Case Study

Hasnah Angreiny<sup>1</sup>, Didik Santoso<sup>2</sup>, Ernita Daulay<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>English Education Department, Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty, Universitas  
Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan

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**Corresponding Author:**

Hasnah Angreiny  
[hasnah0333243001@uinsu.ac.id](mailto:hasnah0333243001@uinsu.ac.id)  
English Education Department,  
Tarbiyah and Teacher Training  
Faculty, Universitas Islam  
Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan

## Abstract

*Vocabulary acquisition constitutes one of the most demanding dimensions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly within environments where authentic exposure to the target language is constrained. This qualitative case study investigates the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) employed by an Indonesian EFL undergraduate student when engaging with an authentic literary text—specifically Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Guided by the first research question regarding what vocabulary learning strategies the learner possesses during novel reading, the study draws upon Schmitt's (1997) taxonomic framework and Nation's (2001) cognitive processing model as theoretical foundations. Data were gathered through non-participant observation sessions and semi-structured in-depth interviews, supplemented by documentary evidence comprising the participant's written annotations and personal vocabulary records. Findings reveal that the participant employed a multi-layered repertoire of strategies, encompassing contextual inference, selective dictionary consultation, deliberate re-reading, marginal annotation, and personal vocabulary list construction. Analysis further demonstrates that strategy selection was governed by the learner's appraisal of a word's narrative significance, the frequency of its*

*recurrence across chapters, and the extent to which lexical uncertainty disrupted overall reading comprehension. These findings underscore the inherently individualized and context-sensitive nature of vocabulary strategy use during sustained literary reading among EFL learners in Indonesian higher education. Pedagogical implications center on the need to foster explicit strategic awareness within EFL reading instruction, particularly through the integration of authentic literary texts as vehicles for vocabulary development.*

## 1. Introduction

In the domain of foreign language education, the development of lexical competence occupies a central position in shaping learners' ability to engage meaningfully with the target language across receptive and productive tasks. For learners of English in countries such as Indonesia, where the language functions as a foreign rather than a second language, the challenge of vocabulary development is especially formidable. Unlike their counterparts in primarily English-speaking environments who benefit from incidental acquisition through everyday exposure, Indonesian EFL learners encounter English predominantly through formal classroom instruction, prescribed academic materials, and sporadic contact with authentic English input. Within these constraints, lexical growth cannot be presumed to arise organically; it must instead be actively cultivated through purposeful, deliberate engagement with the language.

Against this backdrop, the study of vocabulary learning strategies—defined broadly as the intentional cognitive, behavioral, and metacognitive actions that learners employ to discover, consolidate, and retrieve new lexical items—has emerged as a productive line of inquiry in applied linguistics research. Scholarly interest in this area gained substantial momentum following Schmitt's (1997) influential taxonomic framework, which organized vocabulary learning strategies into two principal categories: discovery strategies, concerned with the initial identification of word meaning; and consolidation strategies, designed to strengthen and retain lexical knowledge following first exposure. Building on this foundation, Nation (2001) articulated a model of vocabulary learning premised on three interconnected cognitive operations—*noticing, retrieval, and generative use*—that trace the trajectory of a lexical item from its initial perception to its flexible deployment in novel contexts.

Despite the richness of existing scholarship, two persistent limitations constrain the current state of knowledge in this area. The first is methodological: the dominant mode of data collection has been the survey questionnaire or structured self-report instrument, yielding frequency-based accounts of learners'

perceived strategy preferences rather than real-time observations of strategy use as it unfolds during actual reading. As Nassaji (2003) cautioned, self-reported strategy frequencies and demonstrated strategy behaviors in authentic reading contexts do not invariably converge, raising questions about the ecological validity of survey-derived findings. The second limitation concerns the reading contexts investigated: the great majority of VLS studies have employed short excerpt-based tasks or specially graded reading materials as stimuli, failing to replicate the sustained and unpredictable lexical demands that characterize engagement with full-length authentic texts.

Literary works—novels in particular—represent an especially instructive medium for examining vocabulary learning strategy use precisely because they expose learners to linguistically diverse, contextually embedded, and narratively meaningful encounters with unfamiliar vocabulary over an extended reading arc. The sustained engagement that novel reading demands creates repeated opportunities for the same lexical items to be encountered, revisited, and progressively consolidated across chapters, thereby generating the kind of elaborative processing that Nation (2001) identified as foundational to deep vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, the authentic and unpredictable language of literary texts—encompassing figurative expression, psychological complexity, and culturally nuanced description—engages learners' inferential and self-regulatory capacities in ways that graded materials cannot replicate.

The present study addresses these gaps by investigating the vocabulary learning strategies possessed and applied by a single Indonesian EFL undergraduate student during reading of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*—a novella selected for its lexical density, sustained narrative demands, and the strategic challenges it presents to non-native readers. Adopting a qualitative single-participant case study design and drawing upon both observational and interview data, the study seeks to answer the following research question: What vocabulary learning strategies does the student possess while reading an English novel? By situating strategy investigation within an authentic extended reading context and employing process-oriented data collection methods, this research contributes a micro-level empirical perspective to the VLS literature while generating practically applicable insights for vocabulary instruction in Indonesian EFL settings.

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond descriptive documentation of strategy frequency. By examining the principles that govern the learner's strategic choices—including decisions about which words merit sustained attention, when external reference tools should be consulted, and how vocabulary consolidation efforts are organized across reading sessions—the study offers a nuanced account of the adaptive and self-regulatory dimensions of lexical strategy use. In doing so, it responds to calls within the field for closer examination of the why and how of strategy use, rather than merely cataloguing the what (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 2010).

## **2. Method**

This study was conducted within a qualitative descriptive case study paradigm, a methodological orientation widely recognized as appropriate for the deep examination of individual learning behaviors within naturalistic contexts (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The decision to adopt a single-participant design was deliberate and theoretically grounded. Single-case qualitative inquiry enables the researcher to construct richly detailed, process-oriented accounts of learning phenomena that larger-sample, quantitative approaches are typically not designed to capture (Dörnyei, 2007). This design was considered particularly well suited to the present study's focus on vocabulary learning strategy use as a dynamic, individualized cognitive process, rather than a population-level frequency measure.

The research participant was one Indonesian EFL undergraduate student enrolled in the English Education Program at a university in Padang Lawas Regency, North Sumatra. Purposive sampling procedures guided participant selection, with three criteria serving as primary determinants of eligibility: (1) active enrollment in the English Education Program with demonstrated completion of introductory reading and vocabulary courses, indicating a foundational level of academic English exposure; (2) self-reported limited prior experience with reading full-length authentic English novels, ensuring that vocabulary encounters during the study would be substantively novel and would naturally elicit strategic behavior; and (3) willingness to engage in sustained observation sessions and reflective interviews over the course of the data collection period. These criteria collectively ensured that the participant's strategic responses to lexical difficulty would emerge organically from genuine encounter rather than rehearsed familiarity.

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* was employed as the reading material throughout the study. The novella was selected on the basis of its lexical richness—encompassing items spanning a wide frequency range—as well as its figurative density, psychological narrative depth, and the varied contextual environments in which new vocabulary is encountered across chapters. It is important to note that the text functioned exclusively as a strategic reading medium in this study, providing the linguistic context within which unfamiliar vocabulary was encountered and processed. No literary analysis, thematic interpretation, or critical engagement with the narrative was solicited from the participant.

Data collection proceeded through three complementary instruments, implemented concurrently across multiple reading sessions to enable methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978). First, non-participant observation was the primary data collection mode, with the researcher maintaining detailed field notes documenting the participant's observable strategic behaviors in real time. Recorded behaviors included pausing at unfamiliar words, re-reading of passages, dictionary consultation, verbal expressions of uncertainty or confidence, annotation of text pages, and decisions to bypass unknown items without explicit processing. Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted following each observation session. Interview questions were designed to elicit the

participant's reflective accounts of strategy use, the reasoning underlying specific decisions, and the degree to which the participant was consciously aware of the strategies employed during reading.

Probing questions were used flexibly to explore emergent themes and to clarify points of interpretive ambiguity. Third, documentary evidence in the form of the participant's annotated text pages and self-maintained vocabulary notebook entries was collected and analyzed as corroborating data, providing a tangible record of consolidation activities that supplemented the observational and interview accounts.

Data analysis followed the interactive framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), proceeding through iterative cycles of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Observational field notes and interview transcripts were subjected to open inductive coding in the initial analytical phase, with emergent categories subsequently examined through the theoretical lenses of Schmitt's (1997) discovery–consolidation taxonomy and Nation's (2001) noticing–retrieval–generative use model. To enhance the trustworthiness of findings, member checking was conducted by returning transcripts to the participant for verification and correction prior to analysis. Confirmability was further supported through sustained engagement in the research setting across multiple data collection sessions and through peer debriefing with a researcher experienced in qualitative EFL inquiry.

The scope of this article is deliberately bounded by the first research question of the broader thesis study—namely, what vocabulary learning strategies the participant possesses during novel reading. The processes through which identified strategies are enacted in practice and the motivational underpinnings of strategic choices are addressed in companion analyses derived from the same dataset.

### **3. Result**

#### *Overview of the Participant's Strategic Repertoire*

Synthesis of observational field notes, interview transcripts, and documentary evidence revealed that the participant commanded a broad and purposefully differentiated repertoire of vocabulary learning strategies when confronting lexical difficulty during reading of *The Metamorphosis*. The data indicate that strategy selection was not a uniform or habitual process applied indiscriminately across all unfamiliar words. Rather, the participant engaged in continuous, real-time appraisal of each lexical encounter, drawing upon different strategies in accordance with the perceived communicative weight of the unknown item, the richness of surrounding contextual information, and the degree to which lexical uncertainty threatened coherent comprehension of the narrative.

The strategies identified across all data sources can be organized within two

overarching categories derived from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy: discovery strategies, oriented toward the identification of word meaning upon first encounter; and consolidation strategies, directed toward the reinforcement and long-term retention of lexical knowledge following initial processing. The subsequent subsections elaborate upon each identified strategy in terms of its observable manifestation, the frequency and conditions of its deployment, and the participant's reflective accounts of its perceived function and value.

#### *Contextual Inference: The Primary Discovery Mechanism*

The strategy most consistently observed across all reading sessions was the inferential construction of word meaning from surrounding textual context, a behavior that functioned as the participant's default first response to lexical uncertainty. Observational data documented this strategy repeatedly: the participant would pause upon encountering an unfamiliar word, visually scan backward and forward across the clause or sentence, occasionally re-read the immediate passage, and then proceed with a tentative interpretive hypothesis. This pattern was particularly pronounced in narrative episodes characterized by semantic transparency—scenes depicting physical sensations, relational exchanges between characters, or emotional responses—in which the surrounding language provided sufficient contextual scaffolding to support informed inference.

Interview data confirmed and enriched the observational record. The participant articulated a clear preference for contextual inference over immediate external reference, describing the inferential process as more engaging and as preserving the reading experience in a way that dictionary interruptions did not. The participant further noted that attempting to construct meaning from the story context often yielded a more memorable understanding of the new word than a dictionary definition would, as the word was understood in relation to a specific narrative moment rather than as an abstract lexical entry.

This account is theoretically consistent with Schmitt's (1997) identification of contextual guessing as a primary discovery strategy and with Nation's (2001) assertion that noticing—the conscious registration of an unfamiliar word as worth attending to—functions as the initial gateway to vocabulary processing. The participant's inferential behavior reflects an active noticing process that selectively assigned processing resources to words deemed both unknown and contextually significant.

#### *Selective Dictionary Consultation*

While contextual inference constituted the dominant discovery strategy, the participant did not rely upon it in isolation. A secondary discovery mechanism involved the targeted consultation of a digital dictionary application, deployed under specific conditions that distinguished it clearly from reflex or habitual dictionary use. Observational data consistently showed that dictionary access was

preceded by at least one attempt at contextual inference, suggesting that the participant treated it as a strategic fallback rather than an automatic first resort. Dictionary consultation was most frequently triggered when contextual information proved insufficient to support a plausible inference, or when the unknown word occupied a position of apparent narrative centrality—such as a key descriptor of the protagonist's psychological state or a recurrent term associated with significant plot events.

Interview data provided explicit articulation of the participant's rationale for selective dictionary use. The participant expressed concern that reaching for a dictionary too readily could undermine the development of inferential skill, and described a subjective sense of greater satisfaction when meaning was derived from the text rather than sourced externally. At the same time, the participant acknowledged that certain words resisted contextual interpretation and that proceeding without clarification in such cases risked misunderstanding that could accumulate across subsequent chapters. This calibrated approach to dictionary use reflects the selective attention mechanism identified by Gu and Johnson (1996), who found that proficient vocabulary learners made deliberate judgments about when external reference was warranted rather than applying dictionary consultation indiscriminately.

#### *Deliberate Re-reading as a Clarification Strategy*

A third strategy identified in the data was the deliberate re-reading of sentences or brief textual passages containing an unfamiliar lexical item. Unlike the initial reading of a sentence, which might yield an incomplete or imprecise interpretation, re-reading served a clarificatory function—allowing the participant additional processing time, providing a second opportunity to gather contextual clues, and enabling the testing of a preliminary inference against the fuller semantic content of the surrounding text. Observational data recorded this behavior across multiple reading sessions, typically in situations where the participant's initial inference appeared uncertain or where a new piece of narrative information complicated the meaning attributed to a previously encountered word.

Interview accounts elaborated upon the functional significance of re-reading. The participant described it as a means of checking—verifying that the word's provisional meaning remained consistent with the unfolding narrative logic, and revising the interpretation when inconsistency was detected. This self-monitoring function situates re-reading within the metacognitive dimension of vocabulary learning identified by Gu and Johnson (1996), wherein learners actively evaluate the accuracy of their comprehension and adjust their processing accordingly. From the perspective of Nation's (2001) model, re-reading also represents a form of retrieval: each re-encounter with a word-in-context requires the learner to reactivate and potentially refine the emerging form-meaning association, thereby contributing incrementally to lexical consolidation.

### *Marginal Annotation as a Consolidation Strategy*

Among consolidation strategies, marginal annotation emerged as the most pervasive and systematically enacted. Documentary evidence revealed that the participant consistently underlined or circled unfamiliar words within the reading text and inscribed brief meaning approximations alongside the relevant passages, sometimes in English and at other times in Indonesian, depending on the complexity of the concept being approximated. This annotation behavior was distributed across multiple chapters of the novella, indicating that it was not an isolated or situational practice but a stable feature of the participant's reading-and-learning approach.

The functional significance of annotation, as articulated by the participant in interview, was twofold. First, it served an immediate cognitive purpose by externalizing the participant's lexical processing—transforming what would otherwise remain a private, ephemeral mental act into a visible record that could be revisited during subsequent reading. Second, it created a resource for future review, providing a spatially organized reference system within the text that the participant could consult when the same word recurred later in the narrative.

This dual function is consistent with Schmitt's (1997) account of consolidation strategies as mechanisms that enable learners to transition lexical knowledge from the fragility of short-term awareness to the durability of longer-term retention, and aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasizing that depth of processing—the degree of elaboration brought to bear upon a new word—is a significant predictor of retention ( Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001).

### *Personal Vocabulary Record-Keeping*

A related but distinct consolidation strategy involved the maintenance of a personal vocabulary notebook in which the participant recorded target words alongside their inferred or dictionary-confirmed meanings. Documentary examination of this notebook revealed additional features beyond simple word-meaning pairings: several entries included brief example sentences constructed by the participant, drawing upon the narrative context in which the word had been encountered. In a number of instances, the participant had also recorded the chapter and approximate location within the novella where the word first appeared, suggesting an awareness of contextual embeddedness as a meaningful component of lexical knowledge.

Interview data shed light on the participant's motivations for maintaining this record. The participant described the notebook primarily as a review resource—a structured repository to which they intended to return after reading sessions, particularly when preparing for academic writing or reading tasks that might involve related vocabulary. The act of recording words, the participant further noted, also seemed to reinforce memory during the recording itself, a phenomenon consistent with the generation effect documented in cognitive

psychology research, which suggests that effortful production of information at the point of encoding enhances subsequent retrievability (Slamecka & Graf, 1978). This strategy reflects a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between active engagement with new vocabulary and the depth of learning that results from it.

### *Strategic Word Prioritization: A Governing Metacognitive Mechanism*

A particularly consequential finding to emerge from cross-instrument analysis was the existence of an implicit but consistently operating prioritization framework through which the participant regulated decisions about which unfamiliar words warranted strategic engagement and which could be set aside without strategic processing. Observational data made clear that the participant did not treat all unknown words with equivalent attention; certain lexical items were subjected to sustained inference attempts, annotation, and record-keeping, while others were encountered and passed over without observable processing effort.

Semi-structured interview data yielded explicit articulation of the criteria underlying these prioritization decisions. Three recurring principles were identified. The first concerned narrative centrality: the participant was more likely to invest strategic effort in words whose apparent function within the text seemed important to understanding character motivation, emotional state, or plot development. The second principle related to word frequency: items that recurred across multiple passages were assigned higher priority on the grounds that their persistence across the narrative indicated probable semantic significance. The third principle involved comprehension impact: words whose absence from the participant's active vocabulary produced noticeable disruption to reading coherence were more likely to trigger strategic response than those whose meaning could be adequately approximated or whose absence did not impair narrative understanding.

The participant articulated this framework with notable clarity, describing the capacity to distinguish between words worth pursuing and words that could safely be passed over as central to being able to keep reading without becoming overwhelmed. This metacognitive filtering behavior resonates directly with the selective attention mechanism proposed by Gu and Johnson (1996), who identified the capacity to make deliberate, principled decisions about lexical investment as a hallmark of strategically proficient vocabulary learners. It also reflects an intuitive grasp of the distinction between vocabulary that is essential to comprehension and vocabulary that is incidental—a distinction that Nation (2001) has identified as particularly important for managing cognitive resources during extended reading of authentic texts.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### *The Adaptive and Integrated Character of Strategic Behavior*

The findings of this study offer a detailed empirical account of vocabulary learning strategy use during authentic literary reading that both corroborates and extends existing theoretical frameworks. A first and fundamental observation arising from the data is that the participant's strategic behavior was neither uniform nor sequentially structured in the manner that stage-based models might imply. Rather than following a fixed progression from discovery to consolidation, the participant moved fluidly and responsively between different modes of strategic engagement in response to the moment-by-moment demands of the text. Inference attempts were sometimes abandoned in favor of dictionary consultation; re-reading preceded, followed, or accompanied annotation; and prioritization decisions occurred both preemptively—before sustained strategic effort was invested—and retrospectively, as the participant revised earlier judgments about a word's importance in light of subsequent narrative information.

This fluid, adaptive character of strategy use has important theoretical implications. It suggests that VLS taxonomies, while valuable as analytical and pedagogical frameworks, should not be interpreted as descriptions of fixed behavioral sequences. In authentic reading contexts, vocabulary learning strategies function as a dynamic repertoire from which learners draw flexibly and simultaneously, orchestrated by metacognitive monitoring and responsive to the complex and variable demands of the text. This aligns with perspectives offered by Oxford (2017), who proposed that language learning strategies operate within an interconnected regulatory system rather than as discrete, independently deployable units.

##### *Metacognitive Regulation as the Organizing Foundation*

A second significant finding is the centrality of metacognitive regulation to the participant's strategic functioning. The strategic prioritization framework described in the results section—through which the participant systematically distinguished words meriting sustained attention from those that could be bypassed—represents a form of ongoing metacognitive self-regulation that operated continuously throughout the reading process. This real-time regulatory behavior is consistent with the framework developed by Gu and Johnson (1996), who identified selective attention and comprehension monitoring as the defining characteristics of effective vocabulary learners.

Crucially, the participant's metacognitive regulation was not confined to post-reading reflection but manifested as an active, moment-to-moment process woven into the reading experience itself. This observation extends the findings of prior VLS research conducted in survey and questionnaire formats, which—by design—can capture only retrospective reports of strategic behavior rather than the real-time metacognitive adjustments that govern strategy deployment in situ.

The present data suggest that metacognitive awareness functions not as an occasional complement to cognitive vocabulary strategies but as their organizing foundation, shaping which strategies are activated, when transitions between strategies occur, and how the sufficiency of a given strategic response is evaluated.

### *The Contributions of an Authentic Literary Context*

The authentic literary context in which this study was embedded appears to have played a generative role in eliciting the diversity and sophistication of strategic behavior documented in the data. Unlike controlled vocabulary tasks or graded reading materials, *The Metamorphosis* presented the participant with a sustained, unpredictable stream of lexical challenges spread across an extended narrative arc. This structure created conditions for repeated encounters with the same lexical items across varying contextual configurations—conditions that Nation (2001) identified as particularly supportive of deep vocabulary learning through iterative cycles of noticing, retrieval, and generative use.

The literary qualities of the text also appear to have influenced the participant's engagement with specific words beyond the level of semantic decoding. The psychological and emotional weight of the narrative context made certain vocabulary items more personally resonant and therefore more likely to attract deliberate strategic attention and consolidation effort. This observation suggests that authentic literary texts may contribute to vocabulary learning not solely through the provision of rich and varied linguistic input but also through the affective and motivational dimensions of the reading experience—a dimension that is largely absent from research conducted with graded or decontextualized materials.

### *Positioning Within the Existing Literature*

Situating the present findings within the broader VLS literature reveals a complex picture of convergence and divergence. The dominance of contextual inference as the participant's primary discovery strategy is consistent with findings reported by Utami and Daulay (2024), who observed a preference for context-based meaning construction among Indonesian EFL undergraduates, and with those of Nassaji (2003), who documented the centrality of inferencing in L2 vocabulary learning from reading contexts. However, the present study moves beyond the frequency-based portrait produced by survey-driven research to document how this strategy is enacted and self-regulated in real time—a dimension that questionnaire approaches are structurally unable to capture.

The participant's selective and strategically rationalized approach to dictionary consultation contrasts with patterns identified by Ali (2020) in his investigation of Saudi EFL undergraduates, among whom external reference strategies featured more prominently in reading contexts. This divergence may reflect differences in reading experience, metalinguistic awareness, or the specific characteristics of the reading material employed across the two studies.

It reinforces the broader argument—articulated by Schmitt (1997) and echoed in subsequent scholarship—that vocabulary strategy use is a deeply individualized phenomenon shaped by the intersection of learner characteristics, learning history, and contextual variables. The strategic word prioritization behavior identified in this study has received comparatively limited attention in the existing literature, particularly in research focused on authentic literary reading, and represents a substantive contribution to the understanding of cognitive load management during lexically demanding reading tasks.

### *Pedagogical Implications*

The findings of this study carry several implications for vocabulary instruction within Indonesian EFL contexts. First, they suggest that explicit, systematic instruction in vocabulary learning strategies should be more consistently integrated into reading-focused courses at the tertiary level. While the participant in this study had developed functional strategic capacities through informal experience, the sophistication of this participant's metacognitive awareness may not be representative of the broader undergraduate student population. Deliberate pedagogical attention to strategy selection, inferential reasoning, and the organization of vocabulary consolidation activities could substantially expand the strategic repertoires available to learners who currently employ a narrower range of techniques.

Second, the findings support the pedagogically purposeful use of authentic literary texts in EFL reading instruction. Rather than confining authentic materials to courses in literary studies, educators might incorporate them into mainstream EFL reading programs as linguistically rich environments within which vocabulary strategy use can be practiced and refined under conditions of genuine communicative engagement. Third, the participant's spontaneous development of annotation and vocabulary notebook practices indicates that learners can benefit from structured pedagogical guidance on how to organize self-generated lexical records systematically. Introducing vocabulary journal frameworks, guided annotation protocols, or structured word study routines could help learners build upon existing inclinations toward written record-keeping while enhancing the depth and retrievability of the lexical knowledge those practices generate.

## **5. Conclusion**

This qualitative case study investigated the vocabulary learning strategies possessed by an Indonesian EFL undergraduate student during authentic literary reading, addressing the specific question of what strategies the learner employed while engaging with Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Through the combined analysis of non-participant observational data, semi-structured interview transcripts, and documentary evidence, the study identified a multi-dimensional strategic repertoire encompassing contextual inference as the dominant discovery

strategy; selective dictionary consultation as a strategic fallback governed by principled criteria; deliberate re-reading as a clarificatory and retrieval mechanism; marginal annotation as a primary consolidation tool; and personal vocabulary record-keeping as a supplementary retention strategy. Governing and organizing these individual strategies was an implicit metacognitive prioritization framework through which the participant continuously assessed the narrative significance, recurrence frequency, and comprehension impact of unfamiliar words, thereby managing cognitive resources across the extended reading experience.

These findings contribute to the VLS literature in several respects. By adopting a process-oriented, observation-based methodology within an authentic literary reading context, the study provides empirical access to strategic vocabulary learning behaviors that questionnaire-based research cannot adequately capture. The findings demonstrate that vocabulary learning during extended authentic reading is a dynamic, adaptive, and metacognitively regulated process rather than a sequential or habitual one—a characterization that has implications for how VLS taxonomies are theorized and how strategy instruction is designed.

The study is subject to several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. The single-participant design, while enabling analytical depth, constrains the extent to which findings can be transferred to other learner profiles or reading contexts. The study's scope is further bounded by its focus on the first of three research questions examined in the originating thesis.

Future research might productively expand the participant sample to examine whether the strategic patterns identified here characterize broader populations of Indonesian EFL readers, employ longitudinal designs to trace the development of strategic competence across extended reading programs, or investigate the relationship between specific strategy combinations and measurable vocabulary learning outcomes. The integration of eye-tracking or think-aloud protocols in future studies could also provide additional precision in documenting the micro-level cognitive processes that accompany observable strategic behavior during authentic literary reading.

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