

**EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING GAME “*CALL OF DUTY: MODERN
WARFARE*” IN INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING**

A THESIS

**Presented to the Department of English Language Education as Fulfilment of the
Requirements to Obtain the *Sarjana Pendidikan* Degree in English Language Education**



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2026**

APPROVAL SHEET

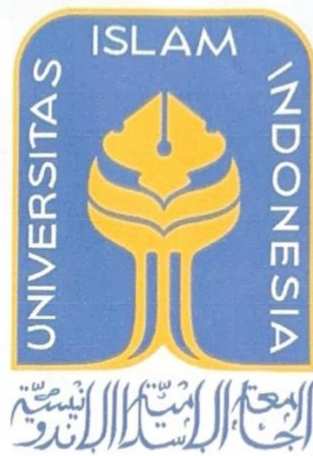
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RATIFICATION SHEET

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Experience of Playing Game “*Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*” in Incidental
Vocabulary Learning.

By

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Defended before the Board of Examiners on 23 June 2026 and Declared Acceptable.

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STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

I honestly declare that this thesis, which I have written, does not contain the work or parts of the work of other people, except those cited in the quotations and references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, 23 June 2026



Arif Alvary

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MOTTO

Fortis Fortuna Adiuvat

точность и аккуратность (Precision and Accuracy)

How you do anything is how you do everything. Called the first and last rules of life. (Marquis Vincent de Gramont, John Wick 4)

Things don't go as planned, it's normal, the only way is to do it as best as you can. (FSTVLST II)

God created a man's shoulder to support a woman's tears, and God created a woman's tears so that a man can forget his own tears. (Sudjiwo Tedjo)

And Allah did not make it except as good news so that your hearts will be at peace because of it.

And victory is only from Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-powerful, all-wise (QS Al-Anfal: 10)

And it is He who created the night and the day, the sun and the moon, each moving in its own orbit. (QS Al-Anbiya: 33)

DEDICATION

Gratefully and thankfully, I dedicate this thesis to:

1. I offer my praise and gratitude to the presence of Allah SWT because with His permission, blessings, sustenance and gifts, I can start writing, work on it and complete this writing with full blessings.
2. Expressing my deepest gratitude to my beloved Father Bambang Suparyono and Mother Alvin Junaidah who have educated, cared for, and provided full support both morally and materially.
3. To my only beloved sister, Hanifah Alvary, for every moment of your presence that gives meaning to this life.
4. To my friends, aka the Kendo family, who have accompanied me through thick and thin, from the first time we met face to face in college until now. Thank you for everything you'all done.
5. To Streamer Reza Auditore, who always cheers me up when I'm sad and at my lowest point in life. He keeps me entertained and motivated to write this thesis.
6. To my future Wife, whose name is written in the Lauhul Mahfudz, who will accompany me in my life. I dedicate this thesis to you and our future children.
7. To the supervisor who has accompanied me through the struggles of this final assignment.

Finally at last but not least, I would like to thank myself for always striving and praying to complete this paper until the final exam for my bachelor's degree. Thank you for staying alive and making this life meaningful by being able to get through difficult times and tough days that are not easy and not deciding to quit. And I would like to apologize to myself if all plans don't go as expected. But hopefully, after this, I believe that Allah SWT will always be with me and may Allah SWT make things easier for all of us.

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During the process of conducting this research and writing this thesis, the author encountered various challenges and obstacles. However, through the support, guidance, and encouragement of many individuals, this thesis was successfully completed. Therefore, the author would like to express sincere gratitude to:

1. Puji Rahayu, S.Pd., MLST., Ph.D., as the thesis supervisor, for her invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, patience, encouragement, and continuous support throughout the research and writing process.
2. The participant of this study, for willingly sharing experiences, insights, and reflections that became the primary source of data for this research.

Finally, the author realizes that this thesis is far from perfect. Therefore, any constructive criticism and suggestions are highly appreciated for future improvement. Nevertheless, the author sincerely hopes that this study will contribute to the field of English vocabulary learning, particularly regarding the role of digital games in facilitating vocabulary acquisition in the digital era.

Wassalāmu ‘alaikum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh.

Yogyakarta, 23 June 2026

Arif Alvary

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that digital games can support vocabulary learning; however, most have focused on educational games and quantitative approaches, with limited attention to learners' experiences using commercial video games. Therefore, this study aimed to explore students' experiences of playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* in relation to incidental vocabulary learning, investigate how vocabulary is acquired through gameplay, and examine the game's contribution to vocabulary learning.

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design involving one English Education student with experience playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and gameplay documentation and analyzed using restorying and thematic narrative analysis.

The findings indicate that vocabulary was acquired incidentally through repeated exposure to dialogues, subtitles, mission instructions, and military commands in authentic game contexts. The game also enhanced vocabulary retention and learner engagement through meaningful language exposure.

This study suggests that commercial digital games can be used as an alternative medium for English vocabulary learning. However, the findings are limited to one participant and one game. Future research is recommended to involve more participants and different game genres.

Keywords: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare; incidental vocabulary learning; narrative inquiry; situated learning; vocabulary acquisition.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Study

This research explores students' experience playing “*Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*” in relation to their incidental vocabulary learning. Previous research has shown that digital games can support English language learning by increasing motivation, providing authentic language exposure, and facilitating incidental vocabulary learning (Hulstijn, 2008; Peters & Webb, 2018; Ranalli, 2008). Incidental learning of vocabulary was supported by providing repeated and contextualized language exposure, allowing learners to acquire new words incidentally through meaningful interactions (Hulstijn, 2008; Peters & Webb, 2018; Ranalli, 2008).

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language learning because it enables learners to understand and communicate effectively in English. However, vocabulary acquisition does not always occur through intentional memorization or explicit instruction. Many learners acquire new vocabulary incidentally while engaging in meaningful activities, such as reading, listening, watching audiovisual media, or playing digital games. Incidental vocabulary learning occurs when learners focus primarily on understanding messages or completing tasks rather than consciously studying new words (Nation, 2001). This type of learning has gained increasing attention because repeated exposure to vocabulary in authentic contexts can improve vocabulary retention and promote meaningful language acquisition (SP Walker, 2015). Consequently, researchers have explored various learning environments that facilitate incidental vocabulary learning, including digital games.

Digital video games have emerged as one of the learning environments that provide authentic and contextualized language exposure. Unlike traditional vocabulary learning activities, digital games immerse learners in meaningful situations where English is used as the primary language for communication and task completion. One commercial game that offers such opportunities is *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* (2019). Throughout the gameplay, players are exposed to English through mission briefings, tactical commands, subtitles, character dialogues, and real-time interactions that require comprehension to accomplish game objectives. Because players concentrate on progressing through the game rather than memorizing vocabulary, new words are encountered naturally through repeated exposure in meaningful contexts. This immersive environment makes *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* a relevant context for investigating incidental vocabulary learning through digital gameplay (Peterson, 2010).

Previous studies have demonstrated the potential of digital games to support English vocabulary learning. Ranalli (2008) found that digital games could facilitate incidental vocabulary acquisition by providing contextualized language exposure. Similarly, Peterson (2010) reported that online games created meaningful opportunities for learners to acquire vocabulary through interaction and communication. Peters and Webb (2018) also showed that repeated encounters with vocabulary during gameplay contributed to vocabulary learning. More recently, Vnucko et al. (2024) highlighted the growing interest in digital game-based vocabulary learning across various research contexts. However, most previous studies have primarily employed quantitative or experimental approaches to measure vocabulary gains, while relatively few have explored learners' lived experiences of incidental vocabulary learning through commercial video games using a narrative inquiry approach. In addition, research specifically focusing on *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* as a context for incidental vocabulary learning

remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the participant's experiences of playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare in relation to English vocabulary learning, identify how vocabulary is acquired incidentally through gameplay, and describe the game's contribution to vocabulary learning through the participant's lived experiences.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the formulations of the problem are:

1. How do students experience playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare in relation to incidental vocabulary learning?
2. How is vocabulary acquired incidentally through playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare?
3. How does Call of Duty: Modern Warfare contribute to enhancing English incidental vocabulary learning through players' life experiences?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions.

Theoretically, it contributes to the literature on incidental vocabulary learning and situated learning by exploring learners' experiences of acquiring English vocabulary through playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare. Practically, this study may provide useful insights for English learners, educators, and future researchers regarding the potential of commercial digital games as an alternative medium for contextualized and engaging vocabulary learning.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Incidental Learning

Incidental learning refers to unintentional learning that occurs without deliberate effort to learn, often as a by product of engaging in meaningful activities (Hulstijn, 2008). It occurs when learners pick up language features naturally while focusing on other tasks or content, rather than through explicit or intentional study. It involves implicit acquisition of knowledge through engaging activities, such as playing online games, where learners naturally pick up vocabulary, reading, and communication skills while participating in game related interactions (Kerka, 2000). The evidence suggests that incidental learning can be effective, especially when the input is repeated a sufficient number of times, though attention to the relevant sounds and the level of cognitive demand also significantly influence the learning process. (Lee & Lloyd, 2025).

Digital games have been recognized as environments that facilitate incidental vocabulary learning. Rather than intentionally memorizing vocabulary, learners acquire new words while engaging in gameplay and completing meaningful tasks. Through exposure to dialogues, mission objectives, subtitles, and real time interactions, players encounter vocabulary in authentic contexts, allowing them to infer meanings and retain new lexical items more effectively (Peterson, 2010). This aligns with research on incidental vocabulary acquisition through multimedia and game-based learning (Peters & Webb, 2018). Vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental component of language proficiency. According to Nation (2001), There's no absolute number, but vocabulary typically needs to be encountered around 6-20 times to be

truly embedded in long term memory. Vocabulary acquisition occurs through repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts. Learners develop both receptive and productive knowledge when they encounter vocabulary multiple times across situations. However, the most frequently cited figure from Nation's research and other researchers is around 8–10 encounters/exposures.

Digital games provide immersive environments where learners are exposed to authentic language input. Narrative based and interactive games expose players to contextualized vocabulary through dialogue, mission instructions, and real time communication (Peters & Webb, 2018; Ranalli, 2008). Based on the theories discussed above, the diagram below illustrates the process by which playing digital video games contributes to vocabulary acquisition:



Motivation and Engagement in Game-Based Learning the interactive and immersive nature of video games increases learner motivation and engagement, which is critical for incidental learning outcomes. Situated Learning Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is particularly relevant to this study because it explains that learning occurs through participation in authentic contexts. The immersive environment of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare provides meaningful situations in which players are exposed to English vocabulary through gameplay. Emphasizes the importance of mastering inside actual contexts and communities of practice. Modern Warfare's immersive environments and multiplayer mode align with this angle, presenting possibilities

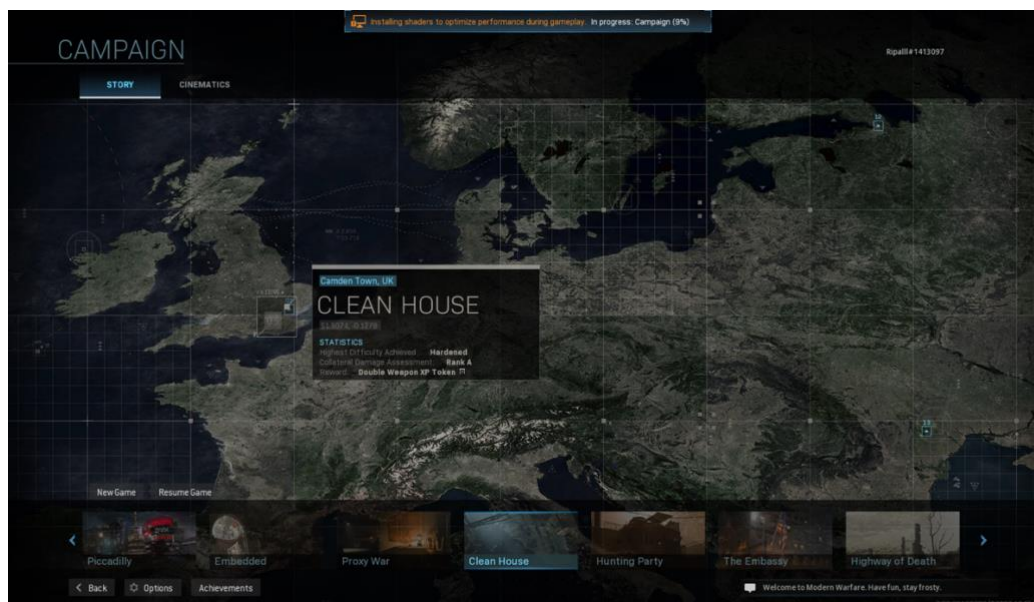
for contextualized vocabulary acquisition and interaction with other gamers. Moreover, quarter of proximal improvement and highlights the importance of scaffolding and guided studying. Modern Warfare's various difficulty ranges and capability for instructor integration may want to provide centered support for inexperienced persons within their man or woman, facilitating most useful vocabulary development.

2.2 Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning is an essential component of language learning because vocabulary enables learners to understand and use language effectively in communication. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge plays a central role in developing learners' language proficiency. Vocabulary learning can generally be classified into two types: intentional vocabulary learning, in which learners deliberately study new words, and incidental vocabulary learning, in which vocabulary is acquired naturally through meaningful language exposure during activities such as reading, listening, or playing digital games (Walker, 2015). Since this study focuses on vocabulary acquisition through gameplay, the discussion emphasizes incidental vocabulary learning.

Moreover, contextual learning plays an essential role in vocabulary acquisition. Kallimani et al. (2014) argues that vocabulary is best learned when it is presented in meaningful contexts, as learners can infer meaning and usage through interaction with language. Contextual learning helps learners develop deeper understanding and long term retention of vocabulary. Another important factor influencing vocabulary improvement is learner engagement and motivation. Tesfa (2013) states that motivation significantly affects how much effort learners invest in language learning, including vocabulary acquisition. Learners who are highly

motivated tend to engage more actively with learning materials, resulting in better vocabulary retention.



Picture 2 - Clean House Mission Select

2.3 Relevant Studies

Previous studies have consistently shown that digital games facilitate incidental vocabulary learning by providing meaningful contextual exposure and repeated encounters with vocabulary. Through authentic game interactions, learners acquire new words naturally while focusing on gameplay rather than intentional memorization. In addition, digital games promote learner engagement, motivation, and positive attitudes toward language learning, while also supporting the development of listening and speaking skills through dialogues and communication with other players (Ranalli, 2008; Peters & Webb, 2018; Peterson, 2010; Vnucko et al., 2024).

Research on digital game-based vocabulary learning has been conducted using various research methodologies. Ranalli (2008) and Peters and Webb (2018) employed experimental

approaches to examine incidental vocabulary learning through digital games, Peterson (2010) investigated vocabulary learning in online gaming environments using a qualitative approach, and Vnucko et al. (2024) conducted a scientometric review to analyze research trends in digital game-based vocabulary learning. Although Indonesia is among the leading contributors to this field, studies exploring learners' lived experiences with specific game genres remain limited. Most previous studies have focused on measuring learning outcomes rather than understanding how vocabulary is acquired through learners' personal experiences.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by adopting a narrative inquiry approach to explore the lived experience of an EFL learner while playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, particularly the "Clean House" mission. The study focuses on how authentic military dialogues, mission instructions, and repeated contextual exposure contribute to incidental vocabulary learning from the learner's perspective.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a narrative inquiry as the primary qualitative research methodology. Narrative inquiry is used because the focus of the research is to explore and understand the participant's lived experiences related to playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* and its contribution to English vocabulary learning. Rather than merely measuring vocabulary improvement through numerical scores or tests, this study seeks to investigate how the participant personally experiences the process of vocabulary acquisition while interacting with the game over time. Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to examine how experiences are remembered, interpreted, and connected to personal meaning within specific social and contextual situations (Clandinin, 2000). Through this approach, the participant's story becomes the central source of data, enabling the researcher to understand how gaming activities, language exposure, and personal reflections contribute to vocabulary learning. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the continuity of experience by examining how the participant's engagement with video games developed from adolescence, continued during university life, and shaped his perspective on English learning in the future.

3.2 Participants

Participant in this study is a 22 year old final year student majoring in English Education at a private university in Yogyakarta. To maintain ethical considerations and confidentiality, the participant's identity is not disclosed in this research. The participant was selected because he fulfills the criteria relevant to the objectives of the study, particularly having extensive experience in playing digital video games and being actively exposed to English language gaming environments. He has been playing video games since adolescence and regularly engages in

gaming activities several times a week. In particular, the participant has extensive experience playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, including completing its campaign mode and interacting with its English language features such as dialogues, subtitles, mission briefings, and tactical commands. As a student majoring in English Education, the participant is also capable of reflecting critically on his language learning experiences. His dual identity as both an English learner and an active gamer provides valuable insight into how digital games may contribute to incidental vocabulary learning through authentic and immersive experiences.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected through interviews adopted from the Hayem Ayache 2020 question instrument. And the following are the questions. Details of the interview sessions are presented in the Table 1:

Table 1 - Interview Sessions

Date and Years	Place	Main Focus	Note
28 May 2025	UD Djaya Coffe – Kaliurang Street	Explore participants experiences and perceptions about the use of video games for English language learning, especially vocabulary.	-
04 March 2026	Discord Voice Call	Participants experiences playing games and how those experiences unconsciously or directly contribute to English vocabulary learning.	Additionally, ask more questions to the interviewee so that the answers become more elaborate
11 March 2026	Discord Voice Call	The motivation of the informants in playing the	

video game Call of Duty
and the use of English as the
primary language while
playing the game.

And these are following question adopted from Hayem Ayache 2020 :

1. Your level in English language is?
2. According to you, learning vocabulary is very important to develop language proficiency?
3. Do you play video games?
4. Do you think video games can help you learn English vocabulary?
5. What type of video games do you play?
6. Do you think video games can help you improve your speaking skills?
7. Do you think video games can help you improve your listening skills?
8. Do you think video games can help you improve your reading skills?
9. Do you think video games can help you improve your writing skills?
10. Section Three: Open Ended Questions
11. What do you think about using video games in learning English vocabulary?
12. What are the advantages of using video games in learning English vocabulary?
13. What are the disadvantages of using video games in learning English vocabulary?
14. Do you have any suggestions for using video games in learning English vocabulary?
15. Any other comments?

The interview sessions were conducted progressively to support the structure of narrative inquiry, which emphasizes the reconstruction and interpretation of lived experiences. The first interview focused on obtaining general information regarding the participant's gaming habits and perceptions toward video games as a medium for English language learning. The second interview aimed to explore more detailed experiences related to vocabulary acquisition during gameplay. In this session, the researcher asked several follow up questions to encourage the participant to provide deeper reflections and more comprehensive narratives. Meanwhile, the final interview focused on understanding the participant's motivation in playing the game and how the use of English during gameplay influenced his vocabulary development and language exposure. Through these multiple interview sessions, the researcher was able to collect detailed narratives and meaningful reflections that supported the analysis of vocabulary learning through digital gaming experiences.

In addition to interviews, gameplay logs were also utilized to support the narrative data. The documentation included screenshots of game missions, dialogues, subtitles, tactical commands, and gameplay scenes that contained English vocabulary relevant to the research focus. Specific attention was given to the "Clean House" mission because it contains intensive military communication and contextual vocabulary exposure. These documentations functioned as supporting evidence to strengthen the participant's narratives and helped the researcher analyze how vocabulary was encountered and understood during gameplay experiences.

3.4 Data Analysis

After the interview recordings and gameplay logs had been collected, the data were analyzed using restorying and thematic narrative analysis. First, all interview recordings were transcribed manually by listening carefully to each voice recording and writing down the participant's responses verbatim. The transcripts were then checked repeatedly to ensure their accuracy and completeness.

Next, the interview transcripts and gameplay logs were read several times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participant's experiences. Relevant statements related to vocabulary learning while playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare were identified and organized chronologically through the process of restorying. This process allowed the researcher to reconstruct the participant's experiences into a coherent narrative, beginning with the participant's gaming background, gameplay experiences, and reflections on vocabulary learning.

After the narrative had been reconstructed, thematic narrative analysis was conducted by identifying recurring themes across the participant's stories. The themes included incidental vocabulary learning, repeated vocabulary exposure, contextual learning, motivation, and vocabulary acquisition. Finally, the identified themes were interpreted and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of this study, particularly Incidental Learning and Situated Learning Theory, to explain how the participant experienced vocabulary learning through gameplay. And below is a table 2 of analysis from interviews with participants:

Table 2 – The Example of Participant Analysis

No	Analysis Stage	Description	Focus of Analysis	Example from the Participant Experience
1	Identify Relevant Experiences	the researcher identifies and reconstructs experiences related to the participant's interaction with the game. The focus is on significant events and situations that contribute to English vocabulary learning.	What does the participant experience while playing the game? Which aspects of the game expose the participant to English? Dialogues- Mission instructions- Military commands- Communication between characters	The participant frequently heard military commands such as “breach,” “clear,” “hostile,” and “target” during missions. Repeated exposure helped him become familiar with these words and their meanings.
2	Interpret Experience	the researcher interprets the meaning of the participant's experiences and examines how these experiences contribute to English language learning.	What impact does the experience have on English learning? - What language skills are developed? - Vocabulary knowledge- Listening skills- Speaking skills	The participant reported that repeated exposure to in game commands improved his understanding of military vocabulary and enhanced his listening comprehension because he needed to understand instructions quickly to complete missions successfully.
3	Connect Experience Theory	the researcher relates the participant's experiences	Incidental Learning Theory- Situated Learning	Learning vocabulary such as “breach” and “hostile” occurred incidentally while the participant focused on completing game missions rather than intentionally

to relevant theoretical frameworks to explain how learning occurs through gameplay.	Theory- Game-Based Learning Theory	memorizing vocabulary. This supports Incidental Learning Theory. The use of vocabulary in authentic mission contexts also reflects Situated Learning Theory and Game-Based Learning Theory.
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This experience demonstrates incidental vocabulary learning because participants acquired vocabulary without explicit learning intentions. If you examine lived experiences in depth, not just learning outcomes. According to (D. Jean Clandinin, 2000) narrative inquiry is: a study of experience as story and not focused on “whether vocabulary increases” However, how the experience occurred, developed, and was interpreted by the participants, as well as the Method Section with the Data Collection Method, namely by means of two way interviews.

3.5 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is essential to ensure the credibility and quality of the findings. According to (Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. 1985), trustworthiness consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this study, several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

First, credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the participant and the use of multiple interview sessions. Conducting interviews on different occasions enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences and to clarify information when necessary. In addition, member checking was conducted by allowing the participant to review the interview transcripts and interpretations to ensure that the findings accurately represented his experiences.

Second, transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the participants, research context, and data collection procedures. Such detailed descriptions enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts.

Third, dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear record of the research process, including interview schedules, interview transcripts, field notes, and analytical procedures. This audit trail allows the research process to be transparent and traceable.

Finally, confirmability was established by grounding the findings in the participant's narratives and supporting evidence obtained from interview data and gameplay documentation. The researcher also practiced reflexivity throughout the study to minimize personal bias and ensure that the interpretations were based on the participant's experiences rather than the researcher's assumptions. Through these strategies, the researcher sought to ensure that the findings of the study were credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the participant's experiences in learning English vocabulary through playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the researcher reconstructed the participant's lived experiences related to gaming activities and vocabulary learning from past experiences to current gaming practices. The participant explained that video games had become part of his daily activities since he was around 18 years old. At the beginning, he played games mainly for entertainment and stress relief. However, over time, he gradually realized that playing English language video games exposed him to many unfamiliar English words, expressions, and phrases. Through repeated interaction with mission instructions, subtitles, dialogues, menus, and communication within the game, the participant unconsciously learned and memorized new vocabulary. As his gaming experience developed, he became more familiar with military terms, action commands, and conversational expressions commonly used in the game. Currently, the participant continues to play video games regularly and considers gaming as one of the media that supports his English learning process, especially vocabulary development. In addition, the participant stated that continuous exposure to English content while gaming increased his confidence in understanding English words contextually and motivated him to learn vocabulary independently by searching for unfamiliar words encountered during gameplay.

4.1 Past Gaming Experience

Participant experienced incidental vocabulary learning naturally while playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*. Without intentionally studying English, he was repeatedly exposed to military terms, mission instructions, subtitles, and dialogues during gameplay. Over time, these

experiences helped him understand and remember new vocabulary through meaningful and authentic contexts. The participant explained that his interest in video games started when he was approximately 18 years old. During that period, gaming was mainly used as a form of entertainment and relaxation after daily academic activities. During the interview, the participant did not realize that video games could contribute to language learning, especially vocabulary acquisition. He played various online and offline games, including shooting and action games that predominantly used English as the main language. At first, the participant often found difficulties understanding mission objectives, instructions, and dialogues because many unfamiliar English words appeared throughout the gameplay.

However, through repeated exposure to the game environment, the participant gradually became familiar with many English vocabulary items. He explained that he often guessed the meanings of words based on context, visual actions, and game situations. In some cases, he also searched for unfamiliar vocabulary using dictionaries or translation tools to better understand the game storyline and objectives. According to the participant, this process happened naturally because he wanted to progress further in the game and complete missions successfully. The participant also mentioned that playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* introduced him to many military related vocabulary items and action commands such as “reload,” “mission,” “target,” “enemy,” “cover,” and “squad.” Repeated exposure to these words during gameplay helped him remember and understand their meanings without formal memorization. These experiences demonstrate that vocabulary learning occurred incidentally while the participant focused primarily on playing the game and achieving gaming objectives.

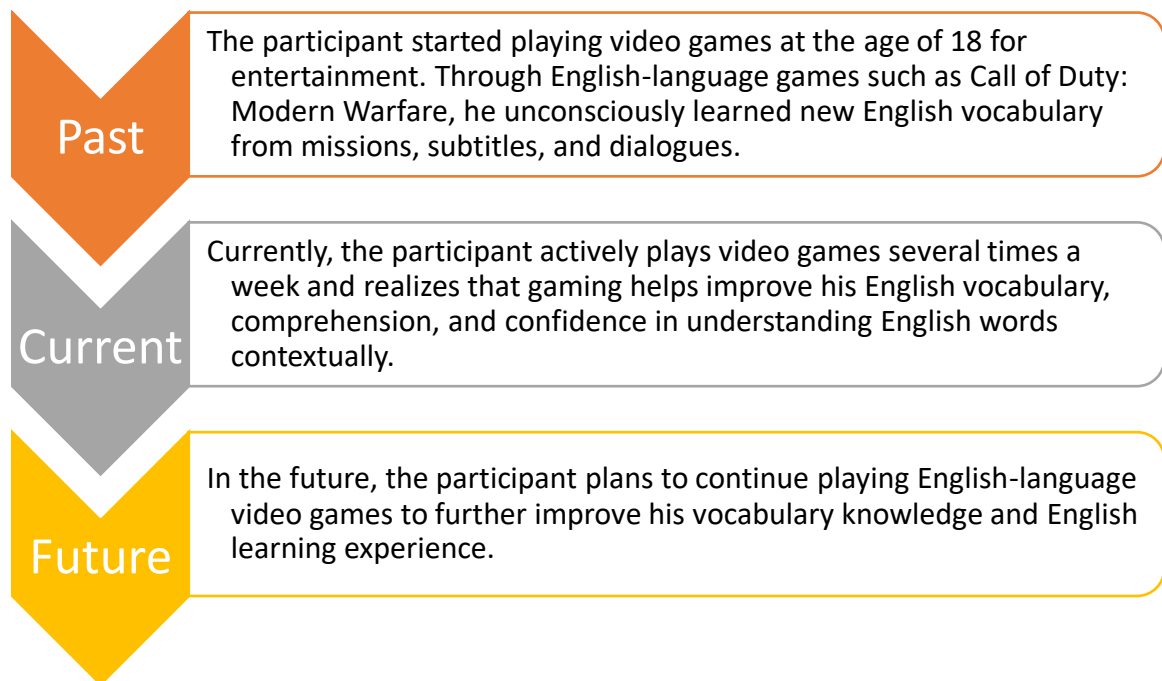
4.2 Current Gaming Experience

Vocabulary was acquired incidentally through repeated exposure to English during gameplay. The participant learned new words by listening to dialogues, reading subtitles, following mission objectives, and interpreting military commands based on the game context. Continuous encounters with the same vocabulary enabled the participant to infer meanings and retain new words without explicit memorization. Currently, the participant still actively plays video games five times a week in every afternoon and night, especially *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* and other English language games. Unlike his earlier gaming experiences, the participant is now more aware of the educational value of video games, particularly in improving vocabulary mastery and English comprehension. He stated that his current understanding of English vocabulary has improved significantly because of continuous exposure to English content in games over the years.

The participant explained that he now understands mission instructions, dialogues, subtitles, and in game communication more easily compared to when he first started gaming. He also feels more confident interpreting unfamiliar words contextually without relying heavily on translation tools. In addition, the participant revealed that gaming motivated him to learn English independently because he wanted to fully understand the storyline, communication, and objectives presented in the game.

Furthermore, the participant emphasized that the use of English as the primary language in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* contributed significantly to his vocabulary development. Through continuous interaction with authentic English language content, he became familiar with pronunciation, spelling, and contextual usage of words. The participant also stated that gaming

created a more enjoyable and less stressful learning environment compared to conventional vocabulary learning methods. Therefore, he considered video games not only as entertainment media, but also as meaningful tools that supported his English vocabulary learning process over time.



Experience of Playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* in Incidental Vocabulary Learning

The Participant's Experience of Incidental Vocabulary Learning While Playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*. Playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* offers a dynamic environment that helps enhance vocabulary acquisition through natural language exposure in the context of listening and speaking.

1. Listening to Game Dialogue and Command Prompts

The participant explained that listening to the narrator's commands and character dialogues helped him acquire new military related vocabulary during gameplay. As he stated: "*During*

gameplay, listening to the narrator's commands and instructions enhanced my ability to pick up specific military-related vocabulary. Phrases such as 'hostile down,' 'enemy spotted,' and 'we've got movement' became familiar through repeated exposure. The dialogue between characters also helped me understand conversational English and improve my listening skills." (Participant)

This finding indicates that repeated exposure to authentic in-game dialogue contributed to the participant's incidental vocabulary learning.

2. Immersive Audio Environment for Vocabulary Acquisition

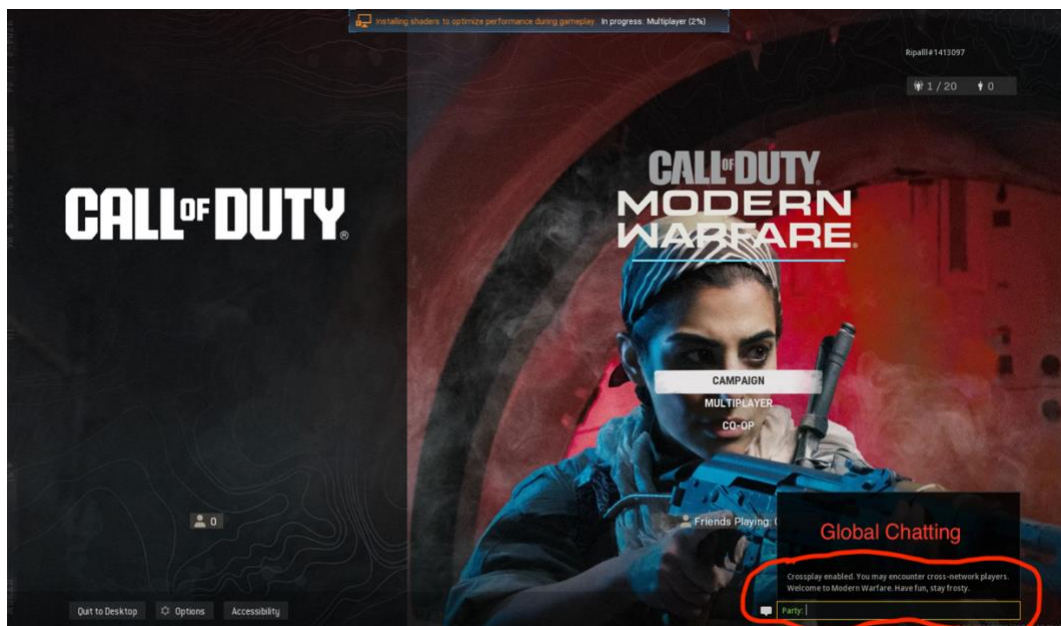
The audio design in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* is highly immersive, with realistic background sounds, tactical chatter, and dialogues. This realism simulates real life environments where I could hear both formal and informal language usage. Listening to these conversations under time pressure helped improve my ability to quickly comprehend spoken English and adapt to different dialects or speaking speeds.

4. Contextual Learning through Game Narratives

Campaign mode of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* includes highly detailed and engaging cutscenes that rely heavily on dialogue. The narrative driven missions provide context rich situations where military jargon, tactical terms, and common everyday language are used. For instance, words like "breach," "flank," or "exfil" are repeatedly mentioned in context, helping me understand and remember their meanings through repetition and action.

5. Real Time Communication and Vocabulary Reinforcement

The fast paced nature of multiplayer matches requires quick responses, both in understanding instructions and delivering commands. In such scenarios, I practiced speaking skills by giving orders, requesting assistance, or describing enemy locations. This reinforced my ability to use newly learned words in practical, real world situations. Repeatedly using phrases like "cover me," "take point," or "fall back" in an appropriate context solidified my grasp of the vocabulary associated with team based strategy games.



Picture 3 - Call Of Duty Global Chat Box



Picture 4 - During Gameplay Player can Communicate with Other Players with Microphone



Picture 5 - Game Chat Channel Settings

4.3 Player Experience

In the "Clean House" mission of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* 2019, the vocabulary often includes military terms, tactical phrases, and dialogue related to special operations. In table 3 there are examples of vocabulary and how it might affect listening and speaking skills. "Clean House" mission is particularly relevant to this research because of its emphasis on tactical communication and close coordination between team members. Players must listen carefully to commands,

observe environmental cues, and act, accordingly, making language comprehension a crucial component of successful gameplay. Consequently, this mission provides a clear example of how video games can serve as a medium for vocabulary exposure and reinforcement in a realistic and engaging context. For the examples in table 3:

Vocabulary from "Clean House" mission :

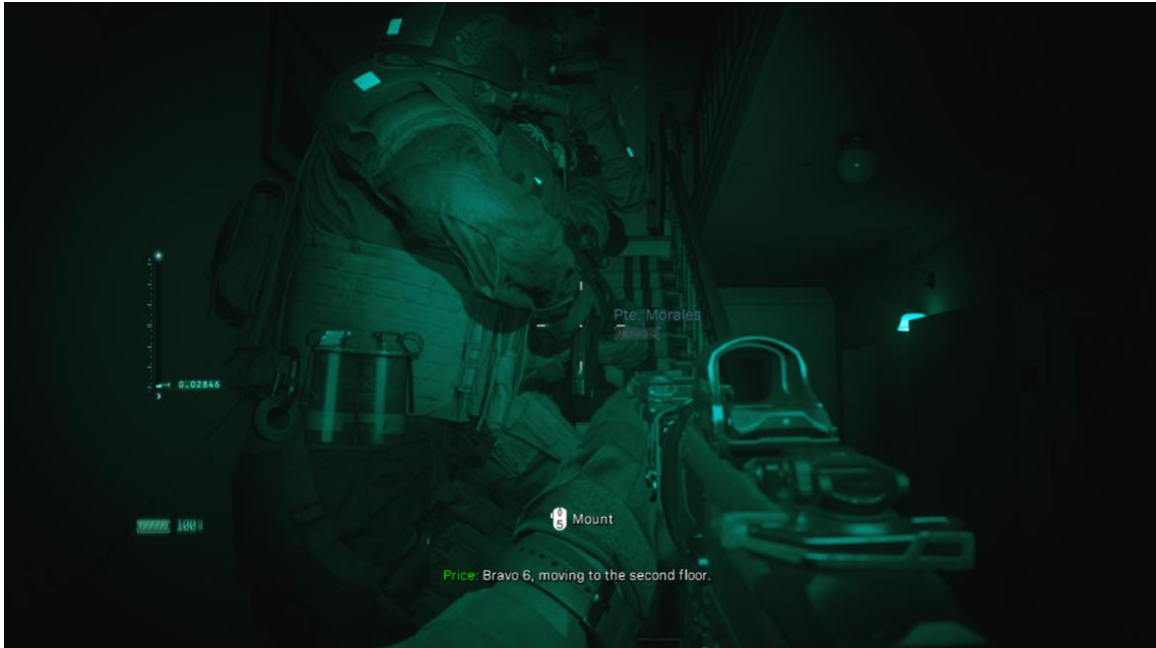
Table 3 - Vocabulary from "Clean House" mission

VOCAB	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES IN GAME
Tango	A coded military term referring to an enemy target	"Tango down." (used to confirm an enemy has been neutralized)
Hostile	A person or group showing aggression or opposition	"Multiple hostiles in the next room."
Breach	To force entry into a building or room	"Breach the door and clear the room."
Target down	Confirmation that an enemy has been defeated	"Target down. Room secure."
Stack up	A tactical formation where soldiers line up before entering a room	"Stack up on the door."
Clear	A command indicating that an area is free of threats	"Clear. Move to the next room."
Rogering up	A military expression meaning acknowledgment or confirmation	"Roger that."
Suppressor	A firearm attachment used to reduce gunshot noise	"Use your suppressor."
HVT (High Value Target)	An important or priority individual in a mission	"HVT is inside the building."
Engage	To initiate combat or take action against the enemy	"Engage the target quietly."

Vocabulary items such as “breach,” “clear,” “hostile,” and “target down” were learned through contextualized use rather than explicit explanation. Meanings of these words became clear as they were consistently associated with specific actions and visual cues during gameplay. This supports previous research suggesting that repeated exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts facilitates retention and understanding without formal instruction.



Picture 6 - “Clean House” game mission when it starts



Picture 7 - Clean House Mission Gameplay



Picture 8 - Clean House Mission Gameplay



Picture 9 - "Clean House" Mission

Vocabulary Learning through Contextualized Gameplay Vocabulary presented in the table shows that the "Clean House" mission exposed players to a variety of military related terms that were repeatedly used in meaningful contexts. Rather than learning vocabulary through memorization, participants acquired these words incidentally while focusing on completing mission objectives in the Call of Duty game. Participant reported learning military vocabulary through repeated exposure during gameplay. This finding is consistent with Peterson (2010), who found that digital games expose learners to authentic language through mission instructions and dialogues. It also supports Peters and Webb (2018), who argued that repeated encounters with vocabulary in meaningful contexts improve vocabulary retention. Similar results were reported by Ranalli (2008), who showed that commercial digital games facilitate incidental vocabulary learning through contextual interaction rather than explicit instruction. These findings further support the concept of incidental vocabulary learning proposed by Kerka (2000).

Impact on Listening Skills

- **Active Listening:** Players must listen closely to team commands, which are often given quickly and with military jargon. This requires attention to detail and quick processing of new or unfamiliar words.
- **Contextual Understanding:** Vocabulary like "stack up" or "breach" might not be common in everyday language, but players can infer meaning based on the context of the mission. This helps with understanding instructions in fast paced situations.

Impact on Speaking Skills

- **Repetition of Terms:** Players may begin using terms like "clear" or "target down" in the correct context during gameplay. This practice reinforces the pronunciation and usage of the words.
- **Tactical Communication:** In multiplayer settings or cooperative gameplay, speaking becomes vital. Players can practice fluency and accuracy when issuing commands or describing situations using new vocabulary.

4.4 Participant's Future Plans for Learning Vocabulary Through Games

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare contributed to the participant's vocabulary learning by providing authentic and immersive English-language experiences. Through long-term engagement with the game, the participant developed a broader vocabulary, improved listening comprehension, and became more familiar with English expressions used in realistic situations. These experiences demonstrate that commercial digital games can support incidental vocabulary learning by combining meaningful context, repeated exposure, and learner engagement. The findings of this study indicate that vocabulary learning occurs incidentally during gameplay. The participant did

not intentionally study English vocabulary while playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* instead, vocabulary was acquired naturally through repeated exposure to in game dialogue, mission instructions, and tactical commands. This process aligns with the concept of incidental learning, which refers to learning that occurs without deliberate intention while learners are engaged in meaningful activities (Kerka, 2000; Lee & Lloyd, 2024). From a language learning perspective, participants experiences reflect the principles of communicative language learning, where language is learned through use rather than memorization. Listening to authentic dialogue and responding to prompts directly required participants to process English as a tool for action, which strengthened listening comprehension and vocabulary recognition. These findings support the idea that language learning is more effective when learners are exposed to meaningful input in authentic situations. In addition, the immersive environment of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* reflects situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which emphasizes learning through participation in authentic contexts. Game places players in realistic scenarios where understanding language is essential to completing tasks, thereby reinforcing vocabulary learning through experience. This suggests that digital games can function as effective supplementary tools for English vocabulary development.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the participant's experiences of playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare in relation to English vocabulary learning, to identify how vocabulary was acquired incidentally through gameplay, and to describe the game's contribution to vocabulary learning through the participant's lived experiences. The findings revealed that the participant acquired English vocabulary incidentally while engaging in gameplay, particularly through repeated exposure to dialogues, mission briefings, subtitles, military commands, and interactions within the game. The participant also reported that learning vocabulary in meaningful and authentic contexts enhanced vocabulary retention, listening comprehension, and confidence in understanding and using English.

The findings suggest that commercial digital games, such as Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, can provide meaningful opportunities for incidental vocabulary learning by exposing learners to authentic language in an engaging environment. Therefore, this study implies that digital games may serve as a complementary learning resource for English vocabulary development, particularly for learners who are motivated by interactive and contextual learning experiences.

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APPENDICES

The following questions are adapted from Hayem Ayache 2020

Section One: Background Information

Q1. Your level in English language is:

Q2. According to you, learning vocabulary is very important to develop language proficiency.

Section Two: Video Games and Vocabulary Learning

Q3. Do you play video games?

Q4. Do you think video games can help you learn English vocabulary?

Q5. What type of video games do you play?

Q6. Do you think video games can help you improve your speaking skills?

Q7. Do you think video games can help you improve your listening skills?

Q8. Do you think video games can help you improve your reading skills?

Q9. Do you think video games can help you improve your writing skills?

Section Three: Open Ended Questions

Q10. What do you think about using video games in learning English vocabulary?

Q11. What are the advantages of using video games in learning English vocabulary?

Q12. What are the disadvantages of using video games in learning English vocabulary?

Q13. Do you have any suggestions for using video games in learning English vocabulary?

Q14. Any other comments?

DATA COLLECTION BY INTERVIEW

This data was obtained from a student majoring in English Education, class of 2020, at a private University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Part 1 : 28 May 2025

Q : What Your level in English language?

A : The subject's English proficiency level is classified as Upper Intermediate. At this level, the participant is capable of producing clear, detailed text and can interact with native speakers with a significant degree of fluency and spontaneity.

Q : According to you, learning vocabulary is very important to develop language proficiency?

A : According to the participant, learning vocabulary is essential for developing language proficiency for several reasons. First, it serves as a communication foundation; vocabulary is the fundamental building block for interacting with others in a target language. The broader one's vocabulary, the more effectively they can communicate. Second, a strong vocabulary significantly enhances other language skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking. Finally, it plays a crucial role in confidence building. Having a wide range of vocabulary allows a learner to feel more self pleassured when communicating with others.

Q : Do you play video games?

A : I play a lot of video games in different ways. Playing these games helps me learn new vocabulary and keeps me refreshed on my English language knowledge.

Q : Do you think video games can help you learn English vocabulary?

A : Yes, I believe playing video games helps us learn vocabulary because it introduces us to new words. Since many games use English as the primary language, gamers are exposed to new words and phrases used in different contexts. It also improves our reading and listening skills, as many games require players to read texts or listen to instructions in English.

Q : What type of video games do you play?

A : Before answering that, I play various types of popular video games such as action adventure, horror, and fighting games. My favourite genre is Role Playing Games (RPGs), which allow players to create characters and develop their abilities through experience points, combat, and exploration. These include activities like shooting and fighting.

Q : Do you think video games can help you improve your speaking skills?

A : Yes, playing video games can help players develop their language skills. It improves all aspects of the English language, including listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

Q : Do you think video games can help you improve your listening skills?

A : Yes, of course. Many video games feature English dialogue, so players can practice their listening and language comprehension skills by interacting with the game's spoken content. They noted that many games rely heavily on English dialogue, which allows players to practice their auditory processing and language comprehension skills in a natural, immersive environment.

Q : Do you think video games can help you improve your reading skills?

A : Of course. Many video games include written text such as narration, dialogues, or instructions, so players can practice their reading and language comprehension skills. Some games even feature

in game books or journals to read, which further helps in improving those skills. Noted that games often feature written components such as narrations, dialogues, and mission instructions. Furthermore, some games provide immersive reading materials like books or journals, which allow players to practice their reading comprehension and expand their vocabulary in a more detailed context.

Q : Do you think video games can help you improve your writing skills?

A : Yes, some video games have chat or messaging features, so players can practice their writing skills while communicating with others. Additionally, games that feature strong stories or extensive reading materials can also help players develop their writing style by observing the language used in the game. These tools allow for real time communication with other players. Furthermore, the participant suggested that exposure to a game's narrative and written content can help players develop their own writing style by observing how sentences and stories are structured.

Q : What do you think about using video games in learning English vocabulary?

A : In my opinion, using video games to learn English vocabulary is very effective. As a gamer, I find it much easier to learn because games are immersive; we can hear the character's voices, speak to other players, send text chats, and read the game's narration. It provides a complete way to practice the language. Participant emphasized that utilizing video games as a medium for English vocabulary acquisition is highly effective. As a gamer, the participant found the learning process to be more intuitive and engaging due to the multimodal nature of modern games. The integration of auditory elements (voice acting), verbal interaction (speaking with other players), written communication (text chat), and narrative content (game descriptions and lore) provides a comprehensive environment for language development.

Part 2 : 04 March 2026

Q: When was the specific time you remember playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare?

A: The first time was probably when I was 18 years old. At that age, it started with experimentation and because of my environment.

Q: Approximately what year was that?

A: 2019, around the end of 2019.

Q: After you graduate from college, will you continue playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare?

A: I don't play anymore, but I might not play again in the future because I get *motionsickness*, so I rarely play FPS games at the moment.

Q: Did you realize that when you played games in the past, you were learning to improve your English vocabulary?

A: At that time, I wasn't aware because my initial intention was just to play with my friends.

Q: Are you still playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare?

A: Not today.

Q: In the future, after you realize this, will you continue to play games? Games here do not only refer to Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, but any game you want to play. Will you play games to learn or for your own enjoyment?

A: For the future, I will definitely continue playing games, because games have always been exciting for me, but if the intention is to learn, I think it's not just for my own enjoyment.

Q: With your experience playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, have you noticed any development and learning of English vocabulary in yourself? Do you feel that your vocabulary has increased or not?

A: I feel like I'm learning a little bit at a time, but when it comes to my vocabulary, I don't feel like I know much, maybe just a little.

Q: If you played games before becoming a student, continued playing games while you were a student, and will continue playing games after you graduate, will this have an impact on your English vocabulary learning?

A: Maybe, at least I know certain vocabulary, so when I study tomorrow, I will know that vocabulary from the game.

Part 3 : 11 March 2026

Q: What made you choose to download and play Call of Duty: Modern Warfare?

A: Because I like war themed games. Then, while browsing the internet, I found the sequel to Call of Duty: Modern Warfare on a game sales platform called Steam. I became interested after watching videos of gamers playing the game, so I chose and bought Call of Duty: Modern Warfare.

Q: So when you played the game, what was your first impression when you opened and played Call of Duty: Modern Warfare?

A: At first, I liked it because the game presented a story about the war on terrorism and introduced me to various names and types of firearms and bladed weapons, as well as tactical warfare strategies.

Q: What do you imagine when you play a game in English?

A: I feel like I'm in the game, playing a heroic character who fights terrorism and defends the country alongside the army. English is the second language I learned after Indonesian because it attracted my attention to play more and delve deeper into the military warfare story in the game Call of Duty: Modern Warfare.

Q: When you see the main menu with language options, which language do you choose first?

A: I choose English.

Q: Why do you choose English?

A: Because Indonesian wasn't available, and the second language I understood at that time was English.

Q: When you graduate from college, will you continue playing Call of Duty?

A: No, because I have already completed the game's storyline.

Q: If you no longer play Call of Duty, will you continue to play games? What games will you play?

A: Currently, I enjoy and play story oriented RPG (Roleplaying Games) such as Hogwarts Legacy, Blue Archive, and The Witcher 3.

Q: When you play those three games, what language do you choose? Is it still English?

A: Yes, I definitely play using English, as I explained earlier, because English is the only language available and that I understand in the game. There are many language options in the

game, such as: English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. And since I only understand English, I choose English.

Q: So from the beginning of playing Call of Duty: Modern Warfare until you finished it, and playing other games, you consistently used English only?

A: Yes, I always used English only because that's the only language I understand.

Q: You mentioned yesterday that you experience *motionsickness*. May I ask what *motionsickness* is? What causes it, and how often do you experience it when playing games?

A: *Motionsickness* is nausea, dizziness, or headaches that arise due to sensory conflict in the brain. The condition where I experience nausea and dizziness when playing games is caused by the first person perspective and movements that are too fast. I often experience motion sickness at least when playing games such as Call of Duty: Modern Warfare for an hour.

The data was collected on May 28 2025, March 4, 2026, and March 11 2026 using a two way interview technique via telephone using the Discord platform. The interview was conducted three times. The first interview was conducted at a café in Yogyakarta on May 28, 2025, using a mobile phone recording and in English. The second interview was conducted via Discord voice call on March 4, 2026 and third interviews was conducted via Discord voice call on March 11, 2026 using Indonesian language to meet the requirements of narrative inquiry using the theory of incidental learning in games. The informant was not initially aware that while playing games, he was learning English vocabulary. However, during the interview, the informant realized that playing games broadened his knowledge and improved his vocabulary learning. The informant also realized the progress he had made over time because playing games could improve his English

vocabulary learning. In this case, the informant indirectly learned English vocabulary through games unintentionally, which occurred as a by product of other activities, often at work or through daily experiences. The main theoretical framework was developed by Marsick and Watkins. (Marsick et al., 2017) Its main components include reflection on experiences, context bound situations, and knowledge acquisition.